

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

1999



2004

Session document

FINAL
A5-0333/2003

7 October 2003

REPORT

on Election 2004 : How to ensure balanced representation of women and men
(2003/2108(INI))

Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities

Rapporteur: Lone Dybkjær

CONTENTS

	Page
PROCEDURAL PAGE	3
MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION.....	4
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT	8

PROCEDURAL PAGE

At the sitting of 3 July 2003, the President of Parliament announced that the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities had been authorised to draw up an own-initiative report, pursuant to Rule 163 of the Rules of Procedure, on Election 2004 : How to ensure balanced representation of women and men .

The Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities had appointed Lone Dybkjær rapporteur at its meeting of 11 June 2003.

The committee considered the draft report at its meetings of 11 September and 2 October 2003.

At the latter meeting it adopted the motion for a resolution by 18 votes in favour, with 2 abstentions.

The following were present for the vote: Anna Karamanou, chairperson; Olga Zrihen Zaari, vice-chairperson; Lone Dybkjær, rapporteur; Ulla Maija Aaltonen, María Antonia Avilés Perea, Regina Bastos, Johanna L.A. Boogerd-Quaak, Armonia Bordes, Ilda Figueiredo (for Geneviève Fraisse), Fiorella Ghilardotti, Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou, Thomas Mann, Maria Martens, Ria G.H.C. Oomen-Ruijten (for Emilia Franziska Müller), Miet Smet, Patsy Sörensen, Joke Swiebel, Feleknas Uca, Elena Valenciano Martínez-Orozco, Sabine Zissener.

The report was tabled on 7 October 2003.

MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on Election 2004 : How to ensure balanced representation of women and men (2003/2108(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the EC Treaty, in particular to Articles 2, 3(2), 13 and 141(4) thereof,
- having regard to Article 23(1) of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights¹,
- having regard to the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW),
- having regard to the Athens Declaration of 3 November 1992 on the occasion of the first "Women in Power" European summit,
- having regard to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, as adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights on 25 June 1993,
- having regard to the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing on 15 September 1995 and its resolution of 18 May 2000 on the follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action²,
- having regard to the Charter of Rome, by the EU's women ministers of 18 May 1996,
- having regard to its resolution of 11 February 1994³, its resolution of 24 May 1996⁴ and its resolution of 2 March 2000⁵ on women's representation in decision-making,
- having regard to the Council Resolution of 27 March 1995⁶ and to Council Recommendation 96/694/EEC of 2 December 1996 on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process⁷,
- having regard to the ministerial declaration of 17 April 1999 in Paris on women and men in power,
- having regard to its resolution of 18 January 2001 on the Commission report on the implementation of Council Recommendation 96/694 of 2 December 1996 on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process⁸,
- having regard to Council Decision N° 2001/51/EC of 20 December 2000 establishing a Programme relating to the Community framework strategy on gender equality (2001-

¹ OJ C 364, 18.2.2000, p. 1

² OJ C 59, 23.2.2001, p. 258

³ OJ C 61, 28.2.1994, p. 248

⁴ OJ C 166, 10.6.1996, p. 269

⁵ OJ C 346, 4.12.2000, p. 82

⁶ OJ C 168, 4.7.1995, p. 3

⁷ OJ L 319, 10.12.1996, p. 11

⁸ OJ C 262, 18.9.2001, p. 248

2005)¹,

- having regard to its resolution of 19 December 2002 on the Commission report on Equal Opportunities for women and men in the European Union, 6th annual report²
 - having regard to the Public Hearing of its Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities "Elections 2004 - How to ensure balanced representation of women and men", held in the European Parliament, on 11 June 2003, at which all experts spoke out for electoral systems which ensure equal representation of women and men,
 - having regard to the conclusions of the Ministerial Conference on 'Women in decision and policy-making processes' held in Syracuse on 12 September 2003,
 - having regard to Rule 163 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities (A5-0333/2003),
- A. whereas equality of men and women is a fundamental principle of Community law according to Article 2 of the Treaty and thus part of the Community acquis; whereas this principle is, therefore, an essential requirement for membership of the European Union,
- B. whereas Article 3 (2) of the Treaty lays down the principle of gender mainstreaming by stating that in all its activities the Community shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality of men and women,
- C. whereas Article 141(4) of the Treaty ensures that the principle of equal treatment does not prevent any Member State from maintaining or adopting measures providing for specific advantages in order to make it easier for the underrepresented sex to pursue a vocational activity or to prevent or compensate for disadvantages in professional careers,
- D. whereas the Vienna Declaration on Human Rights (Article 18) clearly imposes the obligation to promote the full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life, at the local, regional, national and international levels, and declares the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex as a priority objective of the international community,
- E. whereas the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) stressed the need to ensure that responsibilities, powers and rights are shared equally; whereas the Member States are committed to implementing the Platform for Action,
- F. whereas the Council, in its recommendation of 2 December 1996, stresses that the under-representation of women in decision-making posts leaves the specific experiences of women unused and undervalued, and thus constitutes a loss for society as a whole and may prevent the interests and needs of the entire population from being catered for in full and recommends the Member States and associations and organisations in all areas of

¹ OJ L 17, 19.1.2001, p. 22

² P5_TA (2002) 633

society to promote women's access to the decision-making process and balanced participation of women and men in decision-making bodies,

- G. whereas the draft treaty establishing a constitution for Europe (text of 18 July 2003) clearly states in Article I-2 (part I) that equality is one of the European values, which have to be respected by the Member States to avoid suspension of their Union membership rights, as well as by the accession countries to join the Union (Articles I-58 and I-57 respectively (Title IX, part I)),
 - H. whereas equality between women and men is established by Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which is now an integrated part of the draft treaty establishing a constitution for Europe (text of 18 July 2003), just as the balanced participation of women and men in positions of power and in decision-making is regarded as a matter of democratic principle and is also a part of the Charter of Fundamental Rights,
 - I. whereas women make up at least half of the electorate and have attained the right to vote and hold office in all Member States, they continue to be seriously underrepresented in political decision-making,
 - J. whereas the low representation of women among the observers from the accession countries in the European Parliament (14%) gives rise to the fear that women will be less well represented in the European Parliament in the new legislature (2004-2009),
 - K. whereas too many women must cope with the dual burden of, on the one hand, attending to their family tasks and responsibilities and, on the other, of pursuing their professional careers,
 - L. whereas there are strong empirical indications that the involvement of both sexes in policy formation leads to better policy which is more attuned to the needs of a very diverse population,
 - M. whereas the participation of women in decision-making has been defined by the Commission as the priority theme for 2003 in the Gender Equality Programme (2001-2005), since parity in political life remains an issue of preoccupation at both Member State and European level,
 - N. whereas fighting against inequalities in all areas means political involvement and a better representation of women,
 - O. whereas the full accomplishment of the universality of human rights requires that equal treatment of, and equal opportunities for, women and men, both de jure and de facto, is considered a basic human right,
1. Calls on Governments in all Member States and accession countries, to urgently review the differential impact of electoral systems on the political representation of women in elected bodies and to consider the adjustment or reform of these systems and, if needed, take legislative measures and/or encourage political parties to introduce quota systems, such as the zipper system and/or take measures so as to promote a balance in participation;

2. Calls on political parties, on national as well as on European level, to review their party structures and procedures to remove all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against the participation of women, and to adopt adequate strategies to reach a better balance of women and men in elected assemblies;
3. Calls on political parties, in the light of the conclusions of the Ministerial Conference on 'Women in decision and policy-making processes', to agree on common policies providing for women candidates to make up at least 30% of their party lists in the European elections, to initiate a gender sensitisation of their party leadership, to encourage promotion, including financial promotion, of the empowerment of women in politics (training, meeting, monitoring), and to ensure that their media strategies take gender balance into account;
4. Invites the Member States and the accession countries to take initiatives, including legislative ones, and to develop policies aiming at combining work with family life, by ensuring access to appropriate and high quality child-care; calls on the Commission to promote and give funding to support methods with regard to combining work with family life;
5. Stresses the Commission's commitments (in the 2002 annual report on equal opportunities for women and men in the EU) to developing the participation of women in decision-making and making financial resources available in 2003 to promote gender-balanced representation in decision-making fields; in particular asks the European Commission to initiate dissemination of information before the European election 2004 on the concept of parity democracy, hereunder the lessons learned from the countries which have inserted in their constitutions the principle of parity democracy or introduced specific legislation on the subject (e.g. France and Belgium);
6. Urges the Commission, national governments and national parliaments, as well as women's organisations, to fund and organise awareness raising campaigns targeted towards the promotion of women's political participation, in advance of the European election 2004 ;
7. Underlines, in this regard, the need to take into account different national settings and especially to take into account the special situation in the accession countries ;
8. Stresses the importance of involving gender experts, women's organisations and networks when drafting possible positive action legislation or programmes, information material, etc. and when arranging awareness raising campaigns;
9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Member States and the accession countries .

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Objectives of the Report on a balanced representation of women and men at the European Parliament Election 2004

In order to work for gender equality in decision-making, it is useful to keep in mind a few strong arguments¹:

- Firstly, member states of the European Union have committed themselves to gender equality many times at international, European and national level.
- Secondly, gender equality is related to fundamental notions about the quality of social justice, human rights and the nature of democracy.
- Thirdly, there are strong empirical indications that the inclusion of both sexes in policy making leads to better policy making that better fits a diverse citizenry.
- Finally gender balance leads to the introduction of forgotten and/or new issues on the policy agenda.

Initiatives to combat lack of balanced representation between women and men

Initiatives to combat the lack of balanced representation between women and men in decision making can generally be grouped in three categories²:

- Initiatives addressing structural conditions. These mandate change through legislation, changes in the electoral and selection procedures and directives, which may involve quotas or other forms of positive action and mandatory targets for a higher percentage of women.
- initiatives directed at changing the cultural acceptance of balanced decision making through awareness raising campaigns directed at diverse publics.
- Programmes directed at increasing the efficiency of the transition of new candidates into positions of power. This includes efforts to enlarge pools of candidates through training and construction of databases. They may address organisational culture and develop strategies to enable gender-balanced groups to work together in better ways.

Current status

The European Union is founded upon the existence of a representative democracy in each of its Member States. The functioning of a democratic system and the image it projects to its actors, has a determining influence on the whole of society. The ideal of democracy rests on the ideas of progress and social justice. Reflection on the possibilities of how to realise these ideas needs a permanent examination of who can legitimately represent the people and partake in decision-making in the name of everyone. Who talks and who decides? Who determines the law? Who manages daily life in international, European, national, regional and local assemblies? Who, by his or her presence, personifies public power? The answer to each of these questions in terms of the categories of women and men - supported by statistics, however incomplete or unsatisfactory - is that it is the men who do this. Men, especially at the highest levels of

¹ Council of Europe: Going for gender balance: a guide for balancing decision-making - Good practices to achieve gender-balanced representation in political and social decision-making (EG-S-BP (2001)

² Ibid.

decision-making, hold a quasi-monopoly in politics. Consequently public office, institutional organisations (juridical or consultative) and democratically elected representation give a masculine image to the role of "representative of the people".

A clear under-representation of women in political decision-making poses the problem of the legitimacy of existing political structures. When there are hardly any women participating in decision-making, the legitimacy of the outcome of political decision-making may not be the same for both women and men. This may give rise to public mistrust towards the representative system. An ultimate consequence may be that women will refuse to accept laws and policies that have been drafted or adopted without their participation.

There simply cannot be a true democracy if women are excluded from positions of power.

Thanks to international agreements and local actions, the level of gender balance in many areas of decision-making in EU countries has improved very much in the last 25 years. Yet, progress has been very uneven, and backlashes in women's representation are not uncommon. Parity in decision-making is still a distant dream almost everywhere, also in the European Parliament. With 10 new countries as members at the 2004 elections there is a great risk that female representation will fall even lower than the current 31% in the European Parliament (See annex 1). Information and awareness raising as well as a strong political commitment from political parties, from national governments and parliaments and from the European Parliament will be crucial to ensure a sufficient female representation. Female voters in the new member countries as well as in some of the old member countries are the most EU-sceptical. The European Parliament's signal should be very clear. We need more women in politics.

Structural conditions

Need for positive action measures

It has to be recognised that positive action is an inherent part of achieving a balanced representation of women and men. The fact is, that even if women have been granted equal rights with men, traces of their former inferior status remain in the thinking and attitudes of many. Social institutions and behaviour continue to reflect such attitudes in a way that special efforts are needed to give women a real equality of opportunity.

The concept of parity democracy

In connection with positive action measures the concept of parity democracy needs to be evaluated. Parity democracy means the equal representation of women and men in political decision-making bodies. The history of the concept of parity democracy does not go back very far, but it has already been quite broadly disseminated and sometimes put into practice, mainly in Europe. Parity does not only mean greater participation of women in the decision-making process, it also implies the recognition of social change altering the social contract, which has assigned different roles to women and men for centuries. Especially interesting in this regard is the part of the parity law, as it is in France for example, whereby financing of political parties depend on the gender balance - for each new woman candidate the supporting amount is raised. Dissemination of information on the experiences and lessons learnt from parity democracy as it has been introduced in the constitutions of France and Belgium would be highly useful prior to the European Parliament elections June 2004.

Awareness raising and information campaigns

Governments, parliaments and international institutions can play a very important role in changing people's attitudes toward the integration of women in politics. Government agencies can organise awareness raising campaigns, for example by using specific allotted television time, by publishing popular leaflets, by placing advertisements in papers or by placing posters in public space.

Need to take account of the special situation in the Accession countries

The transition process in most of the Accession countries has spurred a reverse development from the recommendations in this report, where the percentage of women in parliament has seriously declined with the transformation to market economy and free parliamentary elections. As pointed out by gender equality experts from accession countries (Marina Blagojevic, Alexandra Bitusikova¹) the state-enforced quotas under Communist rule has not given the idea of quota-systems a warm welcome in the accession countries today. This problem needs to be addressed further by EU's institutions, the governments and parliaments concerned as well as by women's organisations. Certainly the Eastern European experience confirms that the establishment of pluralist parliamentary democracy does not in itself guarantee equal representation of women and men in political decision-making (See annex 1).

The possibility of legislative action and increasing the pool of women candidates

As it was pointed out many times at the European Parliament hearing on June 11 2003, the problem with achieving a balanced representation of women and men has never been the electorate not voting for women. It has been within the constituency parties and the selection mechanisms.

Initiatives to enlarge further the pool of women candidates to run for European Parliament elections belong mainly with the respective political parties in the Member States. However, considering the immense structural barriers and thus the need for positive action, national governments should be encouraged, to demand through legislative measures, that political parties nominate a certain percentage women for the parliamentary party. Likewise, initiatives to encourage the exchange of best practice², gender sensitisation of political parties and training of candidates could be expanded much further. Party support to female candidates, intellectually, emotionally and financially is essential for election and for later good performance in public office.

Engaging more women in political decision-making can also help restore some of the belief in politics and democracy, which seems to have been declining in the last decade: It will increase the democratic character of parliament and the legitimacy of decision-making; it can help parties to regain their importance as an intermediary between government and citizens and having more women politicians can help make politics more acceptable and attractive to citizens. Now it is time to take action and get more women into political decision-making.

Annex 1

¹ As discussed at the Hearing in the European Parliament June 11 2003 as well as on several other occasions.

² One very good example is the "Power booklet - a quick DIY on how to obtain real personal power" produced by the Swedish Social Democrats (Council of Europe: Going for gender balance: a guide for balancing decision-making - Good practices to achieve gender-balanced representation in political and social decision-making (EG-S-BP (2001))

Women in European Union Institutions

Main political groups of the European Parliament

Groups	Seats	in %	Women	Women in %
European People's Party	232	37,1	62	26,7
Party of European Socialists	181	28,9	68	37,6
European Liberals, Democrats and Reform Party	52	8,3	17	32,7
Greens / European Free Alliance	46	7,3	20	43,5
GUE/NGL	49	6,7	16	35,7
UEN	21	3,4	4	19,0
TDI	19	3,0	1	5,3
EDD	19	3,0	3	15,8
NI	14	2,2	4	28,6
Total	626	100	194	31,0

Women in National parliaments (lower chamber, if existing)¹

EU Countries	%Women 1995	% Women, 2003	Future MS.	% Women in 2003
More than 40% in 2003			More than 20%	
Sweden	40	45,3		
More than 20 % in 2003				
Denmark	33	38	Bulgaria	26,2
Finland	34	37,5	Poland	20,2
Netherlands	31	36,7	Latvia	21,0
Austria	25	33,9	More than 10%	
Germany	26	32,8	Slovakia	19,3
Spain	23	28,3	Estonia	18,8
Belgium	11	35,3	Czech Rep.	17,0
Less than 20% in 2003			Slovenia	12,2
Portugal	12	19,1	Romania	10,7
UK	9	17,9	Cyprus	10,7
Luxembourg	17	16,7	Lithuania	10,6
Ireland	13	13,3	Less than 10%	
France	6	12,2	Hungary	9,8
Italy	14	11,5	Malta	9,2
Greece	6	8,7	Turkey	4,4
Average EU	18	25,0	Average future MS	14,6

¹ The European Women's Lobby: "Resource Paper: Women in Decision-making", May 2003.