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Women in political decision-making

European Parliament resolution of 13 March 2012 on women in political decision-making – quality and equality (2011/2295(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty on European Union, in particular Articles 2 and 3(3) thereof,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in particular Articles 21 and 23 thereof,
- having regard to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
- having regard to the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),
- having regard to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women on 15 September 1995 and to the subsequent outcome documents adopted at the United Nations Beijing+5 (2000), Beijing +10 (2005) and Beijing +15 (2010) special sessions,
- having regard to the Agreed Conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women of 2006 on ‘Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels’,
- having regard to the Commission on the Status of Women Agreed Conclusions 1997/2 on the Critical Areas of Concern of the Beijing Platform for Action 1996-1999,
- having regard to UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/58/142 on women and political participation and to UN General Assembly Resolution III women and political participation, approved on 18 November 2011; Resolution A/C.3/66/L.20/Rev.1,
- having regard to the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020), adopted by the European Council in March 2011¹,
- having regard to the Commission Communication entitled ‘Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015’ (COM(2010)0491),
- having regard to the Commission Decision of 19 June 2000 relating to gender balance within the committees and expert groups established by it²,
- having regard to the Council Recommendation 96/694/EC of 2 December 1996 on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process³,
- having regard to the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of

¹ Annex to Council Conclusions of 7 March 2011.

² OJ L 154, 27.6.2000, p.34.

³ OJ L 319, 10.12.1996, p. 11.

Europe Rec (2003)3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making, adopted on 12 March 2003, and the results of the two rounds of monitoring of the progress made in the implementation of this Recommendation Rec (2003)3, based on a questionnaire on gender-segregated data on the participation of women and men in political and public decision-making, completed in 2005 and 2008 respectively,

- having regard to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Resolution (PACE) 1079 (1996), on the increased representation of women in the PACE, Recommendation 1413 (1999) on equal representation in political life, Resolution 1348 (2003) on gender-balanced representation in the PACE, Recommendation 1665 (2004), on women’s participation in elections and Resolution 303 (2010) on achieving sustainable gender equality in local and regional political life,
 - having regard to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe Resolution 85 (1999), Recommendation 68 (1999) on women’s participation in political life in the regions of Europe and Recommendation 111 (2002) on women's individual voting rights and democratic requirements,
 - having regard to the Declaration on Women’s participation in elections adopted by the European Commission for Democracy through Law (‘Venice Commission’),
 - having regard to the handbook ‘Gender budgeting: practical implementation’ prepared by the Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs of the Council of Europe (April 2009),
 - having regard to Recommendation 1899(2010) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on increasing women’s representation in politics through the electoral system, adopted on 27 January 2010,
 - having regard to its resolution of 2 March 2000 on women in decision-making¹,
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (A7-0029/2012),
- A. whereas there is an imbalance in participation by women and men in political and public decision-making and clear under-representation of women in elected and nominated political positions at the level of the European Union and in its Member States; whereas there is an alarming under-representation of women in the mid-term elections within the European Parliament;
- B. whereas the participation of women in political decision-making and the methods, strategies and cultural attitudes and tools to combat discrepancies vary greatly at national level within the EU and among its Member States, political parties and social partners;
- C. whereas women’s representation in the European Parliament has increased to 35% but has not yet reached parity; whereas women are even more under-represented in leading positions in committees and political groups; whereas the representation of women in the

¹ OJ C 346, 4.12.2000, p.82.

European Commission is stagnating at one third, and the Commission has never been chaired by a woman;

- D. whereas, according to statistics and despite the numerous actions undertaken, an absence of parity prevails, and women's representation in political decision-making has stagnated in recent years instead of displaying linear improvement, the gender balance in national parliaments across the EU remaining unchanged at 24 % women and 76 % men, with women accounting for only 23 % of ministers overall¹;
- E. whereas today an informal system of quotas is de facto in play, where men are privileged over women and where men choose men for decision-making positions, which is not a formalised system but nevertheless a systematic and very real deep-rooted culture of positive treatment of men;
- F. whereas equal representation of women and men in political decision-making is a matter of human rights and social justice and a vital requirement for the functioning of a democratic society; whereas the persistent under-representation of women is a democratic deficit that undermines the legitimacy of decision-making at both EU and national level;
- G. whereas decision-making is based on administrative preparations and thus the number of women in administrative positions, especially in leadership, is a matter of equality and ensures that gender aspects are taken into account in the preparation of all policies;
- H. whereas the European elections to be held in 2014, followed by the appointment of the next European Commission and the nominations for the EU 'Top Jobs', is a chance to move toward parity-based democracy at the EU level and for the EU to be a role model in this area;
- I. whereas the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women states, inter alia, that State parties should take all appropriate measures, including positive measures, to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life;
- J. whereas the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe encourages:
 - reforms in electoral systems to make them more favourable to women's representation;
 - gender-based anti-discrimination provisions in constitutions and electoral laws, with the necessary exception of allowing positive discrimination measures for the under-represented sex;
 - gender-sensitive civic education and elimination of gender stereotypes and 'built-in' bias against women candidates, especially within political parties but also in the media;
- K. whereas the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on women in power and decision-making underlines the fact that equal participation is a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning; whereas it reaffirms also that the active participation of women, on equal terms with men, at all levels of decision-making is essential to the

¹ See the quarterly update of the European Commission's database on women and men in decision-making.

achievement of equality, sustainable development, peace and democracy;

- L. whereas owing to persisting gender stereotypes there is still a severe segregation in key political decision-making positions, with care and distributive tasks such as health, social welfare and the environment being entrusted more to women, while men are assigned powerful, resource-related tasks such as economic and monetary affairs, trade, budget, defence and foreign affairs, which distorts the power structure and resource allocation;
- M. whereas political parties, which bear responsibility for selecting, ranking and nominating candidates for leading positions, have a central role in guaranteeing the equal representation of women and men in politics and should therefore endorse good practices such as voluntary party quotas for elections, which have already been introduced by some political parties in 13 EU Member States;
- N. whereas the World Bank's 1999 study on 'Corruption and Women in Government' concludes that lower levels of government corruption are found where there are higher levels of female participation, because, according to the findings of this research, women have higher ethical behaviour standards and show themselves to be more concerned with the 'common good';
- O. whereas comprehensive multifaceted strategies are needed, consisting of non-binding measures such as targets and voluntary party quotas, enabling measures such as gender education, mentoring and awareness-raising campaigns and legally binding measures such as electoral gender quotas, bearing in mind that legally binding measures, which are compatible with the institutional and electoral system and which entail rank-order rules, monitoring and effective sanctions for non-compliance, have proved most effective in achieving gender balance in politics;
- P. whereas women's access to electoral campaign funding is often more restricted, owing to discrimination within political parties, women's exclusion from moneyed networks and their lower income and savings;
- Q. whereas procedures in electoral systems, political institutions and political parties play a decisive role and have a serious impact on the effectiveness of strategies applied and on the extent to which gender balance is achieved in politics;
- R. whereas women's participation and leadership in political decision-making is still affected by various obstacles such as the absence of enabling supportive environments in political institutions and in society's welfare structures, the persistence of gender-based stereotypes and the consequences of the recent economic crisis and its negative repercussions on gender equality issues;
- S. whereas the low level of participation of women in decision-making and governance is highly attributable to problems in reconciling work and family life, the unequal distribution of family responsibilities, which lie heavily on women's shoulders, and the persisting discrimination at work and in occupational training;

Women's representation in elected positions

1. Invites the Council, the Commission and the Member States to design and implement effective gender equality policies and multifaceted strategies for achieving parity in

participation in political decision-making and leadership at all levels, especially in the areas of macro-economic policy, trade, labour, budgets, defence and foreign affairs, assessing the impact and making it available to the public by means of appropriate equality indicators, ensuring quantified targets, clear action plans and regular monitoring mechanisms followed up with binding corrective actions and their monitoring where the set targets are not met by the deadlines;

2. Welcomes the parity systems/gender quotas for elections introduced by legislation in some Member States; calls on the Member States to consider introducing legislative measures, such as positive action measures, to make progress toward parity and ensure the efficiency of these measures, when compatible with the electoral system and when the political parties are in charge of the composition of the electoral list, through zipper systems, monitoring and effective sanctions in order to facilitate more balanced participation of women and men in political decision-making;
3. Invites, moreover, the Council, the Commission and the Member States to enforce parity at all levels by sending clear anti-discrimination messages, by providing appropriate resources, by using specific tools and by promoting necessary training for civil servants responsible for preparing budgets in gender budgeting;
4. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to pay special attention to gender educational programmes aimed at civil society and young people in particular, starting from an early age, acknowledging that women's rights are human rights and parity is essential in political life;
5. Calls on the Commission and Member States to launch a pledge to be endorsed by all political parties at European, national and regional level to take measures to encourage women's active participation and involvement in political life and in elections, to achieve real parity in their internal decision-making, in their nominations for elected office and in party electoral lists through the introduction of quotas and, when compatible with the electoral system and when the political parties are in charge of the composition of the electoral list, to pay attention to the position of women candidates on these lists;
6. Acknowledges the role of political parties as key factors in the promotion of gender parity; calls in consequence for the Member States to require national parties, when compatible with the electoral system and when the political parties are in charge of the composition of the electoral list, to set up and implement quota systems and other types of positive action, to apply rank-ordering rules to electoral candidate lists for regional, national and EU elections, and to define and enforce effective sanctions for non-compliance; calls on the Member States to link and set targets based on parity between sexes for the political parties as a prerequisite for funding;
7. Calls on political parties across Europe to introduce a quota system for candidate lists for party organs and elections, when compatible with the electoral system and when the political parties are in charge of the composition of the electoral list, especially as regards the lists for the 2014 European elections; regards the procedure for drawing up electoral lists whereby women candidates alternate with men at the top of the list as the best way of improving women's participation in politics;
8. Emphasises the need for concrete steps designed to achieve parity in elected offices in the national parliaments and the European Parliament (such as those of the President, Vice-

Presidents, Chairs and Vice-Chairs), for instance by setting a target of 50 % representation of men and women in each of those offices;

9. Welcomes the Commission's intention of encouraging participation of women in the next European Parliament elections through the financial programmes 'Fundamental Rights and Citizenship' and 'Europe for Citizens'; calls on the Commission to ensure in its relevant annual work programmes that enough funding is available in 2013-2014 for financing, inter alia, appropriate awareness-raising campaigns in the media to encourage the election of women and to ensure that this funding is easily accessible to national parties and to civil society organisations for project initiatives aimed at increasing women's participation in decision-making;
10. Calls on the Commission to encourage and fund actions related to promoting parity in decision-making positions and political activities when programming the next funding period, 2014-2020, for the abovementioned programmes or their successors, as well as when planning actions for the planned European Year of Citizens 2013;
11. Calls on the Commission to launch parity-targeting campaigns for the electoral lists for the European Parliament at least two years ahead of each election announcement and to encourage Member States to carry out similar actions in their local and regional elections;

Women's representation in nominated positions

12. Calls on the Member States to support parity by proposing a woman and a man as their candidates for the office of European Commissioner; calls on the President of the Commission to achieve parity when forming the Commission; calls on the Commission to publicly support this procedure; recalls that Parliament should have particular regard to gender balance in this procedure and reiterates the importance of taking the equal representation of women and men into account when giving its consent to the new Commission, in accordance with Rule 106;
13. Calls on the Commission and the Council to commit to meeting the target of parity in all their decision-making bodies, by establishing and implementing quota systems and other types of positive action when recruiting high-level officials; calls on the national governments to nominate both women and men to high-level positions at EU level;
14. Takes note of the Commission commitment expressed in its Strategy for Equality between Women and Men – 2010-2015 to monitor progress towards the aim of 40 % of members of one sex in its committees and expert groups, and calls on the EU institutions, bodies and agencies to take concrete action and set up strategies with the aim of achieving balanced participation in their decision-making processes;
15. Calls on the Member States to promote positive action measures, including binding legislative measures, with a view to ensuring parity in all governing bodies and public appointments and to develop tools for gender monitoring of nominations and elections;

Measures to promote women's participation in political life

16. Encourages the Commission and the Member States to implement positive action measures, such as preferential treatment, when a gender is under-represented;

17. Calls on the Member States to make the selection procedures for nominating men and women for appointment to decision-making bodies transparent, including by publicly requesting curricula vitae and basing selection on merit, competence and representativeness;
18. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to increase measures supporting women's organisations, including by providing them with adequate funding and creating platforms for cooperation and gender campaigning in elections;
19. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to facilitate women's networks and to promote mentoring, adequate training and exchange of good practices and programmes, with a special emphasis on women policy-makers in their early careers;
20. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that women have access, if necessary by preferential treatment, to leadership training and positions of leadership as part of career promotion in order to enhance women's leadership skills and experience;
21. Acknowledges the other actors as a relevant part of the wider democratic process and thus invites the Council, the Commission and the Member States to promote and welcome the efforts of employers' organisations and trade unions, the private sector, non-governmental organisations and all organisations that normally form part of advisory councils related to government to achieve equality of women and men in their ranks, including equal participation in decision-making;
22. Calls on the Council, Commission and Member States to enable women and men to take an active part in political decision-making by promoting reconciliation and a balance between family life and working life by means of measures such as sharing the costs of parenthood equally between both parents' employers and ensuring accessible and adequate services for e.g. child and elderly care and calls on the Commission to support equal access to services, minimum income and freedom from gender-based violence by appropriate legislative proposals in the form of directives;
23. Recalls the importance of preferential treatment and special measures in promoting the representation of people from different backgrounds and disadvantaged groups, such as people with disabilities, migrant women and members of ethnic and sexual minorities, in decision-making positions;
24. Takes note of the importance of media and education in promoting women's participation in politics and in reforming societal attitudes; underlines the importance of raising the awareness of the media, and of public broadcasters in particular, of the need to ensure fair and balanced coverage of men and women candidates during elections and of monitoring the media to identify gender bias and means to address it and thus to promote efforts to eliminate stereotypes and encourage the portrayal of positive images of women as leaders, including women politicians as role models, at national, regional and European level;
25. Urges the Member States, the Council and the Commission, by strengthening the role and resources of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and by facilitating cooperation with women's non-governmental organisations, to promote and exchange good practices that contribute to achieving gender balance in decision-making positions;
26. Invites the Member States and the Commission, especially through the involvement of the EIGE where appropriate, to collect, analyse and disseminate data broken down by sex for

the purpose of monitoring gender equality in decision-making in all sectors (public and private) and at all hierarchical levels and as a basis for further measures if the set targets are not met; calls on the Commission to continue to collect and disseminate comparable data at EU level through the use of its database on women and men in decision-making positions and to develop this observatory towards a European map of gender balance that includes the annual variations experienced at EU, state and regional levels with regard to gender balance, on the basis of common indicators; considers that this map should include, at least:

- the objectives for promotion of gender balance, expressed as a percentage of representation, that are incorporated in the legislation of Member States and of European regions with legislative powers to regulate their electoral processes;
- the percentages of representation of each sex in the European, state and regional parliaments and in local institutions;
- the percentage of representation of each sex in the executive bodies elected or controlled by the above-mentioned legislative institutions;

27. Calls on the Commission to submit a yearly report to the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality on the progress of gender equality in decision-making in the European Union;

28. Calls on the Commission and Member States to assess the impact of the various electoral systems at national, local and European levels, and also of the measures and good practice implemented at the various levels, on the balance of women's representation;

Promotion of gender-balanced representation in politics in external relations

29. Recalls its demand for gender parity at all levels in the appointment of staff of the European External Action Service (EEAS); calls on the EEAS to promote women's participation in decision-making in the external relations of the European Union and to ensure that all delegations representing the EU respect the principle of gender parity as regards their composition and that there is balance in speaking time allocated to women and men in these contexts; points out the need to increase the number of women serving as mediators and chief negotiators in processes to observe the situation with regard to human rights and prevention of corruption and in peace building as well as in other negotiation processes such as international trade and environment negotiations;

30. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that adequate financial and technical assistance is provided for special programmes focusing on enhancing women's participation in electoral processes through training, civic education and media mobilisation and the involvement of local NGOs, in addition to funding general education programmes promoting gender-sensitive civic awareness, elimination of gender stereotypes and 'built-in' bias against women;

31. Calls on the Commission and the EEAS to take measures to promote balanced representation of women at all levels in political life in multinational organisations such as the UN, in governments and in national parliaments as well as at regional and local level and in local authorities and to increase cooperation with other actors at the international level, such as UN WOMEN and the Inter-parliamentary Union, in order to promote these goals;

32. Calls on its policy departments to ensure that briefing notes for delegations always include a gender perspective and highlight issues of importance for gender equality;

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33. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments of the Member States.