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More women in economic and social decision-making bodies

Report[1]
Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men
Rapporteur: Ms Gisèle GAUTIER, France, Group of the European People's Party

Summary

Although women in Europe represent an increasingly high proportion of the labour market, they remain considerably under-represented in top management, including in economic and social decision-making bodies.

In order to redress this situation, which is the result of multiple forms of discrimination, radical changes in society should be promoted, to eradicate the mentality which precludes women access to certain key sectors which are erroneously considered to be men's strongholds. Furthermore, progressive measures should be introduced to enable women to reconcile family and professional responsibilities without having to choose between them. Finally, positive measures should be envisaged to help women break through the "glass ceiling" which holds them back in the area of professional competition, including the obligation for large companies to have at least 40% of women on their governing boards.

1. Reference to committee: Doc. 12144, Reference 3650 of 12 March 2010.

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A. Draft resolution [2]

1. Although women in Europe represent an increasingly higher proportion of the labour market they remain considerably under-represented in top management. There are still too few women in the governing and supervisory boards of major companies, both in the private and the public sector, as well as in the governing structures of trade unions, professional and trade associations and administrations.

2. The Parliamentary Assembly considers that a balanced representation of women and men at all hierarchical levels, including top management, is a matter of justice, respect for human rights and good governance. Furthermore, it notes from recognised studies that the companies in which equal opportunities are both taken into account and implemented not only provide women with better career and self-development prospects, but also achieve better productivity and business profitability.

3. Women's limited access to top management and decision-making posts is the result of multiple forms of discrimination to which they are exposed throughout their lives. In order to redress this state of affairs, radical changes in society should be promoted, in order to eradicate the tendency to conceive stereotyped gender roles, which confine women to subordinate posts and preclude them from accessing sectors which are erroneously considered as men's strongholds.

4. To achieve equal opportunities and treatment between women and men in employment, it is not only necessary to set up and effectively implement far-reaching and comprehensive anti-discrimination policies, but also to introduce progressive measures to enable women to reconcile family and professional responsibilities without having to choose between them. In addition, positive measures should be envisaged to help women break through the glass ceiling which holds them back in the area of professional competition.

5. The Assembly has on several occasions advocated the adoption of positive measures, including quotas geared to promoting access by women to the political arena, for example in its Resolution 1706 (2010) and Recommendation 1899 (2010) on increasing women's representation in politics through the electoral system and its Resolution 1641 (2008) and Recommendation 1853 (2008) on involving men in achieving gender equality. In the Assembly's view, gender quotas are a transitional but necessary exception to allow positive discrimination with a view to bringing about a change in attitudes and achieving*de jure* and *de facto* gender equality.

6. The Assembly believes that the experience of quotas could be advantageously transposed to the private and socio-economic sectors. In this context, it notes that a number of Council of Europe member states have already introduced, or are considering introducing, quotas to improve the representation of women on the governing boards of major firms. In some cases, in the absence of legal obligations, large companies have taken similar initiatives.

7. In view of these considerations, the Assembly calls on member states of the Council of Europe to:

7.1. take strong and resolute action to combat gender discrimination in education and employment;

7.2. introduce progressive measures to ensure reconciliation of private and working life, in particular as regards parental leave, balanced participation of women and men in family life, flexible work arrangements, leave for family reasons, protection of workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding, reintegration in the work market for women who left it to take care of family members, including the obligation for the employer to retrain the person concerned, and availability of childcare for working parents;

7.3. take prompt action to encourage employers to tackle the gender salary gap, as recommended in Assembly Resolution 1715 (2010) on the wage gap between women and men;

7.4. encourage action against gender stereotypes in education, at all levels, and at work and promote training on gender equality in schools and public administration;

7.5. support the preparation and implementation of training programmes and databases geared to supporting women in their professional careers and in access to top management and decision-making posts in the public and private sectors;

7.6. encourage women's networking initiatives and exchanges of good practices in this field;

7.7. ensure that the gender dimension is included in all calls for public tender;

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2. Draft resolution adopted unanimously by the committee on 17 February 2011.

7.8. award *Equality Labels* to actors encouraging recruitment of women and establishing support programmes for women's careers;

7.9. promote the feminisation of post titles;

7.10. set an example by adopting action plans aimed at improving the representation of women in decision-making bodies in all branches of administration, at local, regional and central levels, as well as in state-owned companies;

7.11. introduce the obligation for state-owned and large private companies to guarantee a minimum 40% of representation of women on their governing and management boards;

7.12. implement the Action Plan "Taking up the Challenge of the Achievement of *de jure* and *de facto* Gender Equality" adopted by the Ministers responsible for Equality between Women and Men at the 7th Council of Europe Ministerial Conference (Baku, 24-25 May 2010).

8. The Assembly calls on Council of Europe member states to encourage companies, firms and associations operating in the private and voluntary sectors to:

8.1. promote women success models at the different hierarchical levels and decision-making structures;

8.2. promote career plans for women;

8.3. establish far-reaching equal opportunities policies and organise annual gender-equality audits;

8.4. set up effective measures to combat sexual harassment at work;

8.5. introduce rules aimed at ensuring balanced representation of women and men in top management and decision-making bodies, guaranteeing a minimum 40% representation of women on governing and supervisory boards.

B. Draft recommendation [3]

1. The Parliamentary Assembly welcomes the resolve of the Ministers responsible for Equality between Women and Men meeting at the 7th Council of Europe Ministerial Conference (Baku, 24-25 May 2010) and the adoption of the Action Plan "Taking up the Challenge of the Achievement of *de jure* and *de facto* Gender Equality".

2. Referring to its Resolution ... (2011) "More women in economic and social decision-making bodies", the Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to pursue and develop its efforts to:

2.1. implement the Action Plan "Taking up the Challenge of the Achievement of *de jure* and *de facto* Gender Equality";

2.2. analyse and gather statistics, particularly concerning women's positions in economic and social life;

2.3. highlight best national practices;

2.4. establish qualitative indicators of women's participation in economic and social decision-making bodies.

3. In the context of the implementation of the Baku Action Plan, the Assembly asks the Committee of Ministers to address two recommendations to member states, respectively on ensuring equal opportunities for women and men in access to employment and promotions, and on equal opportunities and the reconciliation of private and professional life.

3. Draft recommendation adopted unanimously by the committee on 17 February 2011.

C. Explanatory memorandum by Ms Gautier, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. Over the last few years, the Parliamentary Assembly has on several occasions addressed the issue of women's representation in top-level political bodies, adopting a number of reference texts. [4] However, the need to promote the presence of women in decision-making bodies does not only concern the political sphere. It also applies to the economic and social sectors, where women are still under-represented, even though they play an ever greater part in the world of work.

2. It is unfair that the governing and supervisory boards of both private and public-sector firms, the governing bodies of trade union and professional organisations, diplomatic and consular services and major trade associations, as well as industrial tribunals, all still include too few women. This situation is due to multiple types of discrimination faced by women when trying to have access to certain careers, and to get promoted to management jobs. This situation undermines good economic governance; balanced participation of women in decision-making in the socio-economic field would increase business profitability, improve productivity and create more jobs. It would also offer women more motivating careers and enhance their economic independence and their empowerment.

3. Under my terms of reference as rapporteur, I proposed that the committee organise a parliamentary hearing on 10 September 2010, to which the following participants were invited:

– Ms Beatrice Castellane, lawyer of the Paris Bar Association, international arbitrator and President for the international activities of the French Association of Female Lawyers, who took stock of the requisite strategies for promoting access by women to economic and social decision-making posts;

– Ms Veronica Nilsson, administrative officer responsible for gender equality at the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), who described the place of women in social dialogue and outlined the ideas which her organisation is exploring with a view to improving the situation of women in decision-making bodies;

– Ms Leena Linnainmaa, Director of the Finnish Central Chamber of Commerce and former President of the European Women Lawyers Association, who reported on the experience in her country, which has succeeded, without resorting to legislation, in considerably improving the presence of women in company governing boards.

4. After these presentations, a productive exchange of views with committee members highlighted the enormous range of different situations in Europe and facilitated discussion of many ideas which are reflected in this report.

5. *De facto* equality between women and men is far from being a reality, also in so far as access to employment and promotion are concerned. This objective, which is a matter not only of democracy, social justice and respect for fundamental rights but also of sound economic governance, cannot be achieved without a political impetus and resolve which have so far been conspicuous by their absence.

6. The Council of Europe has recently taken a step in the right direction: the Ministers responsible for Equality between Women and Men, meeting at the 7th Council of Europe Ministerial Conference in Baku, adopted the Action Plan on "Taking up the challenge of the achievement of *de jure* and *de facto* gender equality". [5] This plan promotes the implementation of common standards in the member states and measures to encourage women and men to share equitably the responsibilities and advantages of paid and unpaid work, particularly domestic and family responsibilities.

7. Achieving equal opportunities requires a radical reworking of attitudes. It is also up to women to change in order to break through the glass ceiling which prevents them from reaching the higher levels in some hierarchies. As Ms Castellane pointed out, women have the glass ceiling in their heads. The aim is to facilitate the identification of competences and promote training courses, networking and exemplarity. It is mainly up to women to make themselves visible and not to worry about competing with men in male-dominated areas.

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4. See, for example, Resolution 1706 (2010) and Recommendation 1899 (2010) on increasing women's representation in politics through the electoral system.

5. Action Plan adopted in Baku on 25 May 2010, www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/equality/05conferences/ministerial-conferences/7th-Ministerial%20Conference/MEG-7%282010%292_ActionPlan_en.pdf.

2. Role of women on the labour market

8. According to Eurostat, in recent years the female employment rate has increased steadily in Europe and moved closer to the male rate. In 2009, the highest rate was in Iceland (76.5% for women, as against 80% for men), while the lowest was in Turkey (24.2% for women, as against 64.5% for men). The average employment rate in the European Union was 64.6% (women: 58.6%; men: 70.7%).

9. This increased access by women to the labour market, coupled with improved results at secondary school and university level, has not altered the male domination of decision-making bodies. It has, however, fundamentally changed the labour market: more women are entering professions where men were previously in the majority, thereby paving the way for a more balanced distribution of roles and decision-making in the future.

3. Situation in various sectors

3.1. Too few women in the highest posts in politics

10. The critical threshold for the representation of each sex in order to achieve balanced representation in a decision-making body in the political or public sphere is 40%, according to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. [6] This threshold should not apply only to political decision-making bodies but is a valid criterion for ensuring a balanced representation of women and men in the economic and social sectors.

11. While the quota system has resulted in better representation of women in national parliaments, the quantitative improvement is not reflected in a qualitative improvement. Women in politics still fail to reach certain key posts, they are excluded from some networks and find it hard to advance beyond junior positions. Unfortunately, there are not enough statistical tools to assess the actual proportion of women in key posts more accurately. As an example of good practice, Norway publishes a detailed annual report on the progress made in its equality policy. [7]

12. This exclusion of women can also be seen in the composition of ministerial cabinets and in terms of appointments to high-level public posts, where men still tend to co-opt one another all too often.

13. Governments and parliaments must set an example for the whole of society to follow. Norway already has a government which comprises as many women as men, and four of the seven members of the Swiss Federal Council are women. It is by incorporating this exemplarity principle at the highest level that a radical change can be effected in society.

3.2. Too few women leaders in the public service

14. While women are now well represented in public service employment in Europe, the same does not apply to managerial positions. In most European countries, men outnumber women in all senior public service posts. [8]

15. The situation in the education sector – where most teachers and staff are women, but management remains predominantly male – speaks volumes. In France, there is a particular over-representation of men among rectors, university presidents and deans, whereas most of the teachers are women.

16. The same phenomenon occurs in local and regional authorities, whereas they should be setting an example by increasing the number of women in management posts, as advocated by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, in order to guarantee implementation of a positive equality and integration policy. [9]

17. In the judiciary and legal services, there are too few women in senior positions. In this connection, the European Union has gathered much data concerning the distribution of roles in the management of national and European courts and legal services (supreme, administrative and constitutional courts, as well as public

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6. See Appendix to Recommendation Rec(2003)3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making,https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=Rec(2003)3.
7. www.ldo.no/Global/SaLDO%202009/SaLDO_2009_hele.pdf.
8. European Commission, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Database: women & men in decision making, http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=764&langId=en.
9. Equality and diversity in local authority employment and service provision, report by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, 5 March 2009: Resolution 281 (2009) and Recommendation 262 (2009) on equality and diversity in local authority employment and service provision.

prosecutors). [10] Having long been backward here, this profession is now becoming more female, thanks to population trends that are favourable to women. Nevertheless, there is a lack of accurate data to explain why women are still under-represented in the leading courts.

18. Access by women to decision-making posts in diplomatic services is not progressing either. No member state has achieved the figure of 40% of women ambassadors. [11] Nor has the European Union shown the way, since there are only six women among the 28 ambassadors recently appointed to the European Union External Service.

3.3. Too few women in decision-making posts in major companies

19. In Europe, achieving diversity and equality on the governing boards of the largest publicly listed companies is a distant target. Within the European Union nearly 97% of board chairpersons and 88% of board members are male. The representation of women is rising, but painfully slowly (around half a percentage point per year). If progress continues at this pace it will be at least another fifty years before corporate boardrooms have at least 40% of each gender. [12]

20. In addition, women in the private sector are frequently confined to less important management posts: when they do reach senior management level, they are often appointed to positions in communication or human resources. [13]

21. The European Union is very active in the promotion of equal opportunities at work also at managerial and decision-making level. It "support[s] and complement[s] the activities of the Member States … [in promoting] equality between men and women with regard to labour market opportunities and treatment at work". [14] In 2010, the European Commission reviewed the roadmap for gender equality for 2010-2015, while maintaining the promotion of gender equality in decision-making as a priority. [15]In 2008, it established the "European Network of Women in Decision-making in Politics and the Economy" and has collected data on the breakdown of women and men in decision-making processes in 34 countries since 2003. [16]

22. Similarly, the International Labour Organization (ILO) collects regular data on this matter and has produced a number of in-depth studies and publications. [17] The ILO also promotes the signature and ratification of international conventions such as the ILO Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156) and the ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183).

3.4. Too few women leaders in political parties and trade unions

23. While more and more political parties in Europe have appointed women leaders, party management bodies are still dominated by men. The Assembly has shown its commitment here by encouraging political parties to foster equality internally, including in their management bodies, through the Parliamentary Assembly Gender Equality Prize launched in 2009. [18]

24. The situation in trade unions is unsatisfactory. [19] Of the 80 trade union organisations affiliated to the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), only five are headed by women. And yet by adopting the *Framework for actions on gender equality* in 2005 (ETUC, BusinessEurope, UEAPME and CEEP), social partners in Europe did show that they were aware of the parlous state of female representation. This Action Plan was finalised and implemented at the end of 2009.

25. Some trade union organisations have endeavoured to improve the access of women to executive positions. In Italy, for instance, the Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL) carried out voluntary reforms to bring female representation up from 21% in 1991, to 33% in 1996 and 40% in 2006. The organisation is currently on the verge of achieving parity.

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10. http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=776&langId=en.
11. "Council of Europe, Parity democracy – A far cry from reality", analysis prepared by Ms Regina Tavares da Silva, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2010.
12. http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=762&newsId=965&furtherNews=yes.
13. http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=2878&langId=en.
14. See Article 153i TFEU of the Lisbon Treaty.
15. http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=422&langId=en.
16. http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=764&langId=en.
17. ILO, Breaking through the glass ceiling – Women in Management, Update 2004.
18. http://assembly.coe.int/Communication/Campaign/EqualityPrize/default_EN.asp.
19. Contribution by Ms Nilsson at the hearing on 10 September 2010.

26. In Europe, while 44% of the members of ETUC organisations are women, the latter are under-represented at all their hierarchical levels. The issue of the access of women to decision-making posts will be prioritised at the forthcoming ETUC Congress in May 2011. Ten proposals will be discussed:

– making the arguments for gender balance a main priority;

– actively promoting gender equality at all levels of the organisation through gender mainstreaming;

– introducing statutory rule changes on gender balance (quotas for example);

– preparing women for decision-making and leadership roles;

– engaging men to build a consensus for balanced gender representation;

– addressing the organisation's image and culture;

– supporting women's activism and involvement in decision-making roles at all levels;

– promoting gender diversity in internal human resources;

– providing gender-disaggregated data;

– developing concrete action plans to improve gender balance.

4. Measures to ensure balanced representation of women in top management

4.1. Gender quotas

27. In Finland, a study published by the employers' organisation has shown that companies which implement equal opportunities increase their productivity. [20] In this country, acknowledgement of the qualities of female entrepreneurship has led to a rapid improvement in women's representation on governing boards, without any need for legal measures, because the corporate governance code itself requires that "both genders shall be represented on the boards". [21]

28. According to Ms Linnainmaa, whereas employers had rejected the mandatory positive measures, women's representation was gradually improved thanks to the commitment of the then Prime Minister, the active involvement of Ms Mari Kiviniemi, the current Prime Minister, at the various stages in negotiations, and the media support from Mr Jorma Olilla, chairperson of Nokia and Shell. The implementation of this voluntary approach, supported by the economic media, has made Finland one of the countries in which women are best represented on company governing boards.

29. Unlike Finland, Norway has resorted to legislative measures to introduce quotas ensuring that more women accede to economic decision-making posts in the private sector.

30. Rather than requiring the feminisation of managerial posts, the law imposed a 40% threshold of women on the governing boards of public enterprises and certain categories of private companies, setting them a deadline to comply with this obligation. In order to guarantee the implementation of the reform, a number of increasingly heavy sanctions can be applied, going as far as the winding-up of any company which fails to observe the quota. [22]

31. This law, which initially caused controversy, was supported by several political parties from both the majority and the opposition. The overall assessment is positive: from 2003 to 2010 female participation on the governing boards of almost 400 state-owned and listed companies increased from 7 to 40%.

32. The risk of sanctions had a successful deterrent effect, because the number of companies complying with the new quota requirement considerably increased from 2008 onwards, which was the deadline for compliance with legislation. Moreover, the implementation of the reform met with no criticism or problems. [23] On the contrary, it led to an open public debate on issues of equal opportunities and equal results between

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20. Annu Kotiranta, Anna Kovalainen and Petri Rouvinen, Female Leadership and Firm Profitability, EVA Analysis, No. 3, 24 September 2007. A 2009 study, at the initiative of the Catalan Federation of SME employers (FEPIME), produced similar conclusions, www.afaemme.org/docs/INFORME_FINAL_CATALAN_VERSION_SIMPLE.pdf.

21. Recommendation 9: Number, composition and competence of managers, from the Corporate Governance Code (adopted in 2008).

22. Written contribution by Mr Haugli at the hearing on 10 September 2010.

23. Spiegel online international, "Women on board: Norway's experience shows compulsory quotas work", 7 August 2010.

women and men, including in the economic field. [24] Furthermore, it prompted the creation of databases of CVs of women with the requisite profiles for joining governing boards, as well as the organisation of training courses to improve their skills.

33. Norway is not the only country to have introduced quotas: in 2007, Spain followed suit by introducing the legal obligation for state-owned companies to have 40% female membership of their governing boards within eight years; and in March 2010, Iceland introduced a quota for public and private companies. In Belgium, Sweden and the United Kingdom, similar proposals are being discussed. [25]

34. Since 1972, my own country, France, has adopted six successive laws on gender equality. Positive measures have been adopted, but the situation has not substantially changed because no effective sanctioning mechanism has been forthcoming.

35. In January 2011, the law on balanced representation of women and men on governing and supervisory boards and on occupational equality was adopted. It sets out the progressive introduction of quotas to promote women's representation in the governing structures of large companies, in particular on governing and supervisory boards of companies listed on the stock market and public companies. Two stages are foreseen: within three years from the adoption of the law, the bodies concerned should include at least 20% of women; within six years from the adoption of the law, the quota of women on governing bodies should reach 40%. Non-compliance with these quotas will result in the appointments (but not the deliberations) being null and void.

36. Irrespective of the existence of legal obligations, some companies have unilaterally decided to introduce gender quotas: Deutsche Telekom has a target of women holding 30% of senior posts by 2015; Deutsche Post and KPN (the leading telecommunications firm in the Netherlands) are pursuing similar objectives; in 2008, the AREVA group launched ODEO (*Open Dialogue through Equal Opportunities*), a scheme designed to raise awareness of equality issues, including gender equality, among the group's human resources officers, managers and staff representatives in 12 countries in Europe.

4.2. Promoting exemplarity

37. Women's limited access to managerial posts stems from discrimination, amounts to discrimination and perpetuates it. In order to break this vicious circle, all stakeholders must be mobilised at the highest level to value women's competences and bring forward radical changes.

38. Women throughout Europe have shown their professionalism by acceding to the highest responsibilities in competition with men. To mention just a few: Ms Anne Lauvergeon, Chief Executive Officer of AREVA (energy) in France, Ms Simone Bagel-Trah, chairperson of the supervisory board of Henkel group (chemicals) in Germany, Ms Cynthia Carroll, Chief Executive Officer of Anglo-American PLC (mining sector) in the United Kingdom, Ms Guler Sabanci, chairperson of Sabanci Holding in Turkey, Ms Nancy McKinstry, CEO and chairperson of the executive board of Wolters Kluwer (publishing) in the Netherlands, Ms Ana Patricia Botin, chairperson of the Banesto group (banking) in Spain, and Ms Hilde Myrberg, executive vice-president of Orkla in Norway. These women constitute role models for others wishing to accede to top responsibilities.

39. Their stories, and the careers of other less prominent businesswomen, open the door to new generations of women leaders. These women have a highly symbolic responsibility and should encourage other women to follow in their footsteps by sponsoring them.

40. As Ms Castellane explained during the hearing organised by the committee, in addition to promoting these models, it is useful to "reshuffle the cards" wherever possible, that is to say, to break with old customs and replace them with new approaches, by refounding a new structure in which a number of places are set aside for women. In endeavouring to enhance the status of women, it is easier to impose a gender conception on a new organisation than on an older body.

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24. Aagoth Storvik and Mari Teigen, Women on Board: the Norwegian Experience, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, June 2010.
25. Business publications, "'There is no denying the effectiveness of quotas': why Europe will surpass the U.S. in changing the face of the corporate board", http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_go2446/is_5_34/ai_n56248109/.

4.3. Enabling women to reconcile family and professional life

41. The traditional distribution of roles in society has had its day. In Europe, we have a whole battery of texts to promote *de jure* gender equality. In reality, however, women still have the primary responsibility for managing family life, which often prevents them from launching or continuing their careers. In 2009, 4 000 Spanish women had to give up their careers to look after their children, whereas only 200 men did the same.

42. It is a fact that more and more women work, and some of them also manage to reach top management posts. But often the cost of this professional success is that they choose not to have children.

43. It is proven that pregnancy and maternity have a negative impact on women's careers. The European Working Conditions Observatory (a European Commission agency) has highlighted the findings of the "Génération 98" study conducted in France in 2005 by the Céreq research centre on the first seven years in employment of young workers of all levels. [26] The pay of women who had children failed to keep pace with that of their male colleagues or women who did not have children. Yet maternity is the foundation of any society's dynamism, ensuring the future financing of pensions.

44. Moreover, in our societies, the distribution of household tasks is highly unfavourable to women, which limits the time they have available and their ability to adapt to some working hour arrangements designed by men for men. The culture of "presenteeism" limits the role of women, who often seek better reconciliation of work and family life. Nevertheless, new approaches such as teleworking can help reconcile private and working life, and are conducive to employment, for example in the dynamic personal homecare sector.

45. The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (a European Commission agency) provides governments, employers, trade unions and the European Commission with data and good practices based on independent and comparative research in this area. [27]

46. Encouraging access by women to decision-making bodies first of all helps enhance the career plans of women who really wish to succeed, by encouraging the various organisations to recruit and promote talented women, organise training courses to learn how to speak in public in order to demythologise such responsibilities and help women to realise their own potential.

47. Some examples of best practice, such as mentoring and coaching of women wishing to accede to higher responsibilities by a woman or man in a senior position, have proved effective.

4.4. Influencing attitudes

48. Women are much less well represented than men in prestigious training programmes that lead to careers in decision-making bodies, and tend not come forward for positions of this kind. They are often held back by psychological barriers. Unfortunately, women frequently also give up their ambitions voluntarily. Researchers have referred to this kind of self-demotivation as the "emotional ceiling". [28]

49. The traditional separation of cognitive fields between girls and boys at school (unruly boys like mathematics while docile girls prefer literature) certainly helps make girls more likely to avoid rivalry and belittle their own qualities. Schools must work more on managing emotions and on the issue of self-esteem so that girls can compete with boys on an equal footing. [29]

50. Staff (both women and men) must be alerted to this issue via training in the gender perspective, in order to promote the values of respect which are necessary in working life, in society and at home. Employers must be firm about combating sexist and discriminatory behaviour and sexual harassment. [30]

51. Promoting the feminisation of post titles and gender precaution in communications help prepare people for access by women to new responsibilities. Society must get used to the fact that women can occupy executive posts.

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26. Centre d'études et de recherches sur les qualifications, www.cereq.fr/ (in French).
27. www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/gender/index.htm.
28. See article by Flore Thomasset published (in French) on 24 June 2010: www.slate.fr/story/23437/education-filles-garcons-emotions-reussite-ecole.
29. Capital émotionnel filles-garçons: quelles différences à l'école? Actes du Symposium Genre et Education – Carrières scolaires, Bénédicte Gendron, University of Montpellier III, www.congresintaref.org/actes_pdf/AREF2007_Benedicte_GENDRON_211.pdf.
30. See the report by Ms Doris Stump on combating sexist stereotypes in the media, Assembly Doc. 12267.

52. In order to support strategies to promote women to decision-making posts, gender research should be used to help reveal inertias that curb the advancement of women and to spotlight new decision-making bodies which exclude women.

53. Women must show female solidarity in order to cope with conflicts and day-to-day resistance. Women wishing to accede to decision-making bodies are in a conquering mood on the same basis as their male competitors.

54. Various women's associations active in several European countries seek to help women to overcome these difficulties and boost their presence in decision-making posts, through sponsorship and advocacy. They include:

– at European level: Association of Organisations of Mediterranean Businesswomen, Business and Professional Women's Foundation, European Professional Women's Network, European Women Lawyers' Association (EWLA), *Femmes 3000*, Gender-IT Project, Women's Forum for the Economy and Society;

– in Germany: Deutsche Juristinnenbund; FidAR – die Initiative für mehr Frauen in die Aufsichtsräte;

– in France: Association française des femmes juristes; Force femmes; Femmes 3000; Grandes Ecoles au Féminin (GEF);

– in Sweden: All Bright;

– in Switzerland: *CEO Generation.*

55. While female entrepreneurship has shown its dynamism, according to Ernst & Young it often comes up against the problem of funding. It would be wise to encourage the initiatives of certain investment funds in growth enterprises directed by women or evincing an exemplary gender balance in their governing bodies. [31]

5. Conclusions

56. It would be difficult to impose one single method of achieving the objective of balanced representation of women and men in economic and social decision-making bodies and top management given the wide variety of situations; some countries have only just set changes in motion, others have undertaken radical reforms or are about to achieve the objective.

57. The key to success is a new collective awareness which would enable a strong political will to firmly support a change of attitudes in both women and men. Balanced access of women to managerial and decision-making posts, including in the socio-economic field, would be a genuine qualitative leap forward towards achieving de facto equality between women and men in society.

58. The member states of the Council of Europe should take forceful positive action to improve women's access to decision-making bodies, including economic and social ones. Introducing a legal obligation on large companies to have a minimum 40% quota of women on their governing or management boards – drawing on the Norwegian model – could be an appropriate measure to ensure that we can take this qualitative leap.

59. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the organisers of the World Economic Forum in Davos have for the first time asked that at least one woman should be included among the five representatives of each company belonging to the group of strategic partners. [32]

60. Furthermore, with an eye to efficiency, the introduction of quotas should be accompanied by sanctions, going as far as the winding-up of companies which fail to comply with this obligation.

61. The Council of Europe member states should also set an example by applying a gender dimension to their internal operations and relations with their partners in the private and voluntary sector, with a view to improving the representation of women in decision-making bodies.

62. Lastly, they should back the implementation of measures to support women willing and able to accede to decision-making bodies, as well as the Action Plan "Taking up the Challenge of the Achievement of *de jure* and *de facto* Gender Equality" adopted in Baku on 25 May 2010.

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31. Such initiatives include that of Dunya Bouhacene, the associate founder of Women Equity for Growth, a European capital management company: www.women-equity.org/women-equity/who.

32. The Guardian, "Davos imposes gender quota" 12 January 2011, www.guardian.co.uk/business/2011/jan/12/davos-imposes-gender-quota.