Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1348 (2003)[1]

Gender-balanced representation in the Parliamentary Assembly

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly recalls that according to the Universal Declaration on Democracy of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (16 September 1997) "The achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work in equality and complementarity, drawing mutual enrichment from their differences".

2. It also recalls that at their 4th European Ministerial Conference on Equality between Women and Men (Istanbul, 13 and14 November 1997) the European ministers adopted a declaration on equality between women and men as a fundamental criterion of democracy, together with multidisciplinary strategies aiming at the balanced representation of both sexes in all walks of life, including political life. At their 5th conference (Skopje, 22 and 23 January 2003) the insufficient presence of women in political decision making was highlighted.

3. The Assembly notes that all national parliaments of member states include women members, and that their proportion ranges from 3.1% to 45%. However, to be truly representative, a parliament should reflect the electorate it seeks to serve, half of whom are women. It is essential to introduce parity thresholds for candidates in elections at all levels and to promote a greater participation of women in political life, inter alia, by means of education, through media awareness-raising campaigns among voters regarding male and female equality and by ensuring a more balanced representation of women in national parliaments

4. It welcomes the fact that, on 12 March 2003, the Committee of Ministers adopted Recommendation Rec(2003) 3 on the balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making.

5. The Assembly recalls that since the 1970s it has been endeavouring to improve the representation of women in its midst and refers in this connection to Resolution 1079 (1996) on increased representation of women in the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly and Recommendation 1413 (1999) on equal representation in political life.

6. It is convinced that new initiatives are necessary in favour of a better-balanced gender representation in the national delegations to the Assembly. Furthermore, it considers that the principle of gender equality should be better respected in the composition of the bureaux of Assembly committees and sub-committees and at the level of its vice-presidents.

7. The Assembly consequently:

7.1. invites national parliaments when electing their delegates to the Parliamentary Assembly:

a. to ensure that women are included in the national delegations to the Parliamentary Assembly, at least in the same percentage as is present in the national parliament, with the aim of including, as a minimum, a 30% representation of women;

b. to avoid in any case the election of a single-gender delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly;

1. Assembly debate on 30 September 2003 (29th Sitting) (see Doc. 9870, report of the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Immunities, rapporteur: Mr Kroupa; and Doc. 9915, opinion of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, rapporteur: Mrs Zwerver). Text adopted by the Assembly on 30 September 2003 (29th Sitting).

7.2. invites the political groups of the Parliamentary Assembly to respect the principle of gender equality in their proposals of candidates for the bureaux of Assembly committees (Rule 45.1 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure);

7.3. invites national delegations, when submitting proposals for the vice-presidencies of the Assembly, to take into account the principle of gender equality (Rule 14.3 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure);

7.4. invites Assembly committees:

a. to appoint more women as chairs or vice-chairs of sub-committees and as rapporteurs;

b. to take gender dimension into consideration in their reports;

7.5. invites its members to support, at national level, the creation of a European network of women parliamentarians, in order to elaborate general strategies on parity in decision making and equal participation in political life;

7.6. decides to modify as follows the Assembly's Rules of Procedure:

a. to replace the second sentence of Rule 6.2 by the following text: "National delegations should include the under-represented sex at least in the same percentage as is present in their parliaments and in any case one representative of each sex. Each parliament shall inform the Assembly of the methods used to appoint seats on the delegation and of the number of its women members."

b. to replace Rule 7.1.b by the following text: The principles in Rule 6.2, that national parliamentary delegations should be composed so as to ensure a fair representation of the political parties or groups in their parliaments and should include in any case one representative of each sex."

c. to add the following words at the end of Rule 14.3: "while taking into account the principle of gender equality";

d. to add the following words at the end of Rule 45.1: "while taking into account the principle of gender equality".

8. The Assembly decides that these changes shall enter into force at the opening of the Parliamentary Assembly's January 2004 part-session and that their effectiveness shall be reviewed by the Assembly in two years' time.