Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 1825 (2011)[1]

More women in economic and social decision-making bodies

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Although women in Europe represent a high and growing share of the labour market they remain considerably under-represented in top management. There are still too few women on 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 other administrative bodies.

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 personal 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 necessary not only 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 a world of work that is highly competitive.

5. The Assembly has on several occasions advocated the adoption of positive measures, including quotas geared to promoting access for women in 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 sector and socio-economic domain. 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, large companies have taken similar initiatives without the legal obligation.

7. In the light 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;

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1. Assembly debate on 23 June 2011 (26th Sitting) (see Doc. 12540, report of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, rapporteur: Ms Gautier; and Doc. 12637, opinion of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, rapporteur: Ms Naghdalyan). Text adopted by the Assembly on 23 June 2011 (26th Sitting). See also Recommendation 1977 (2011).

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 labour market for women who interrupted their career 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 offer incentives 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 administrations;

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 practice in this field;

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

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

7.9. promote the feminisation of job 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. adopt legislation requiring that public and private institutions achieve a minimum 40% representation of women in management and decision-making positions within a clearly defined time frame, and put in place the necessary mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of such legislation;

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

7.13. 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 and 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 successful female role 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.