Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 2394 (2021)[1]

Gender representation in the Parliamentary Assembly

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The sharing of responsibilities in political and public decision making between women and men is an inherent element of any true and effective democracy, a matter of equity and justice, and responds to the necessarily legitimate aspirations that have been expressed in our societies for decades. Women's empowerment and capacity building are essential to achieve women's effective and active participation in representative institutions and decision-making bodies. Our societies are composed of an equal number of men and women. Combining this reality with political representation and establishing parliamentary parity are legitimate objectives; where there is political will and where the impetus is given at the highest institutional level, parity can become the norm.

2. In ten years, the proportion of women in the Parliamentary Assembly has increased to 37%, reflecting the clear progress made in most member States' national parliaments, where the entry of more women into each new legislature has been made possible by proactive electoral legislation. However, whether it is in the Assembly or in national parliaments, women are still the under-represented sex; in only 10 national parliaments in Europe do women hold more than 40% of the seats.

3. The Assembly congratulates the member States which, through their proactive legislation and also through awareness-raising, accompanying, support and training policies, have made it possible to open the doors of legislative power more widely to women and to keep them open. It recalls all the recommendations it made in its Resolution 2290 (2019) "Towards an ambitious Council of Europe agenda for gender equality", its Resolution 2111 (2016) "Assessing the impact of measures to improve women's political representation", its Resolution 1781 (2010) "A minimum of 30% of representatives of the under-represented sex in Assembly national delegations" and its Resolution 1585 (2007) "Gender equality principles in the Parliamentary Assembly". The Assembly once again urges the national parliaments of member States, in particular the 16 national parliaments with less than a quarter of women members, to make women's access to elective office a priority, in line with the recommendations of the Assembly and the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, as contained in Recommendation Rec(2003)3 of the Committee of Ministers on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making and Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)17 of the Committee of Ministers on gender equality standards and mechanisms.

4. In 2007, the Assembly set a target for national parliaments to ensure that their delegations include "a percentage of women at least equal to the percentage of women in their national parliament, with a target of at least 30%, bearing in mind that the threshold should be 40%". Of 47 national delegations, 32 include a percentage of women greater than or equal to 30%, of which 21 delegations have a percentage greater than or equal to 40%. In this respect, the Assembly congratulates the national parliaments of Albania, Andorra, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, the Republic of Moldova, Monaco, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, San Marino and the Slovak Republic for guaranteeing parity in their parliamentary delegations to the Assembly, even though some of them come from parliaments with a much lower percentage of women.

1. *Assembly debate* on 28 September 2021 (26th sitting) (see Doc. 15366, report of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs, rapporteur: Ms Nicole Trisse; and Doc. 15376, opinion of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Petra Bayr). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 28 September 2021 (26th sitting).

5. All the parliamentary delegations shall comply with the requirement set out in Rule 7.1.*b* of the Rules of Procedure to include at least one woman representative (full member). This requirement, which is binding for small delegations, is unquestionably a minimum requirement for medium-sized delegations and even more so for large delegations of 20, 24 or 36 members. In order to promote progress towards parity, and to call on certain parliaments to set a higher example, the regulatory requirements will have to be increased.

6. The Assembly therefore intends to redefine the representation criteria that national parliaments must meet when setting up their delegations to the Assembly. In this respect, it considers that a delegation made up entirely of women does not respect the principle of equal gender representation in the Assembly.

7. Finally, the Assembly supports the political objective in the Council of Europe of promoting the threshold to be reached for participation of women and men that is a minimum of 40% for each sex. However, such an objective cannot at present be regarded as a regulatory principle, the disregard of which by national delegations would be sanctioned. The Assembly therefore formally undertakes to increase the minimum representation of each sex in its delegations to 40% as from the opening of its 2026 session.

8. In order to make the Assembly more representative and to encourage national delegations to promote more effectively the political objective of equal representation of women and men in the Assembly, in keeping with a non-discriminatory approach, which takes into account the size of the delegations, the Assembly decides to amend its Rules of Procedure as follows:

8.1. with regard to the *composition of national delegations*, in Rule 6.2.*a*, delete the second sentence and add the following new sub-paragraph [new Rule 6.2.*b*]:

"Each national delegation must include both women and men among its representatives. As long as women are under-represented in the Assembly, each national delegation shall include a percentage of women as members that is at least equal to the percentage in its parliament or, if this is more favourable to the representation of women, ensure gender representation as follows:

- *delegations with 2 seats (4 members) shall include at least one woman as representative;*
- *delegations with 3 seats (6 members) shall have a minimum of 2 women, including at least one woman as representative [footnote 1];*
- *delegations with 4 seats (8 members) shall have a minimum of 3 women, including at least one woman as representative;*
- *delegations with 5 seats (10 members) shall have a minimum of 3 women, including at least 2 women as representatives;*
- *delegations with 6 seats (12 members) shall have a minimum of 4 women, including at least 2 women as representatives;*
- *delegations with 7 seats (14 members) shall have a minimum of 5 women, including at least 3 women as representatives;*
- *delegations with 10 seats (20 members) shall have a minimum of 7 women, including at least 4 women as representatives;*
- *delegations with 12 seats (24 members) shall have a minimum of 8 women, including at least 4 women as representatives;*
- *delegations with 18 seats (36 members) shall have a minimum of 12 women, including at least 6 women as representatives."*

[footnote 1: "Pursuant to Resolutions 1113 (1997) and 1376 (2004), the delegation of Cyprus can only fill 4 of the 6 seats to which it is entitled; it should be considered as a 4-member delegation"];

8.2. in order to clarify the procedural grounds for a challenge to the credentials of a national delegation relating to its composition, replace Rule 7.1.*b* with the following:

"the conditions set out in Rule 6.2.a and Rule 6.2.b";

8.3. with regard to the *election of Assembly Vice-Presidents*, as delegations are encouraged to present candidates who are women, add the following sentence at the end of Rule 16.3:

"A delegation may propose a man as Vice-President only if it includes at least 40% women".

9. In order to encourage the effective role of women in the decision-making process and in parliamentary work, the Assembly calls on the its political groups to promote more proactively the balanced representation and participation of women and men in the Assembly's decision-making bodies, and in particular to:

9.1. strengthen consultation when nominating candidates for the bureaux of the nine Assembly committees so as to achieve parity in the offices of chairpersons and vice-chairpersons;

9.2. establish the principle that, when proposing members of ad hoc committees, the gender breakdown is no less balanced than the composition of the group proposing them or, if this is more favourable to the promotion of gender equality, according to the "one in three" principle;

9.3. follow the "one in three" principle in the appointment of women and men as group spokespersons in Assembly debates;

9.4. aspire to parity and alternation between men and women for group chairperson and vice-chairperson positions;

9.5. aspire to follow the "one in three" principle in the appointment of women and men as members of ad hoc committees in charge of election observation.

10. Moreover, the Assembly considers that the "one in three" principle shall apply to the composition and functioning of committees. It therefore decides to amend its Rules of Procedure as follows:

10.1. with regard to the appointment of members of the Monitoring Committee, the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs, and the Committee for the Election of Judges to the European Court of Human Rights, add the following sentence to the end of Rule 44.3.*a*:

"At the beginning of each ordinary session, the candidatures presented by each political group to each of these committees must include at least one-third women where the group holds at least three seats. The Bureau shall appoint members, ensuring that the committees concerned always include at least one-third women";

10.2. with regard to the composition of ad hoc committees, in Rule 44.4.*c*, after the second sentence add the following sentence:

"An ad hoc committee, with the exception of ad hoc committees in charge of election observation, shall include at least one-third women";

10.3. with regard to the *appointment of rapporteurs by committees*, in Rule 50.1, after the third sentence, add the following sentence:

"A committee shall include at least one-third women among its rapporteurs".

11. Finally, the Assembly instructs its Bureau to ensure that this "one in three" principle is applied in all appointment decisions for which it is responsible, in particular in the institutional representation of the Assembly.

12. The Assembly invites the Bureau to report to it at least once annually on the implementation of the above measures, including on efforts to promote gender mainstreaming and change parliamentary culture on gender equality in the Assembly's work more generally, and to publish this report. In addition, it invites the Bureau to draw up guidelines for committees regarding the promotion of gender balance in their work. These guidelines should aim, *inter alia*, to ensure that committees pay due attention to gender balance among external interlocutors invited to participate in their work and in the appointment of representatives to external events. Committees should also be required to report at least once annually to the Bureau on the implementation of these guidelines and on their efforts to promote gender mainstreaming in their work.

13. The Assembly underlines that progress towards gender equality in parliamentary structures will be hampered if due attention is not paid to the need to eliminate sexism and sexual harassment within these structures. It recalls the crucial recommendations made in its Resolution 2274 (2019) "Promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment", and instructs the Bureau to report to it by January 2022 on the steps taken to implement that resolution within the Assembly.

14. The Assembly considers that the implementation of the obligations and objectives set out in this Resolution is the collective responsibility of each national parliament and each political party or group. This responsibility should be shared equally within each delegation between all political parties and, in the case of bicameral parliaments, between the two chambers.

15. The Assembly decides that the changes to the Rules of Procedure contained in this Resolution shall enter into force at the opening of the January 2023 part-session. The bodies concerned (national delegations, groups, committees) are invited to make adaptations over the months in order to achieve the objective of a more balanced representation of women and men by that date at the latest.