



## Resolution 2386 (2021)<sup>1</sup>

# Enhancing participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision making

Parliamentary Assembly

1. In recent decades, significant progress has been made with regard to the participation of women in political and public decision making in Europe. Women have reached high positions of power and several European countries are close to parity in their parliaments.
2. This progress has nevertheless been too slow and uneven. In addition, there is still a lack of participation and representation in political and public decision making of women with disabilities; young women; lesbian, bisexual, trans or intersex (LBTI) women; Roma women; women of colour; women with an immigration background; women belonging to minorities and indigenous women; women from rural areas; and women with a lower socio-economic background.
3. The Parliamentary Assembly is concerned about the numerous obstacles still faced by women that impede their active participation in political and public decision making. These obstacles have been exacerbated during the Covid-19 pandemic, in particular for women from under-represented groups. Their participation is limited by the weight of prejudice and stereotypes, the risk of violence, the lack of consideration for their skills and expertise, unequal sharing of care responsibilities, social norms, high levels of discrimination, barriers within political parties, the lack of targeted measures and a lack of accessibility in general. Profound structural changes are needed to tackle these challenges and enhance the participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision making at all levels.
4. The study “Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe”, carried out in 2018 by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Assembly, demonstrated that violence against women was widespread in the world of politics. Hate speech and online harassment attacking women in politics or public life hinder women’s engagement in politics, in particular women from under-represented groups, who face disproportionately higher levels of violence and may choose not to participate for fear of being specifically targeted. The Assembly reiterates its determination to combat violence against women in politics, referring to its [Resolution 2274 \(2019\)](#) “Promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment” and the #NotInMyParliament initiative led by the former President of the Assembly, Liliane Maury Pasquier. Enhancing political participation is closely linked to preventing and combating violence against women and no efforts should be spared to this end.
5. The Assembly recalls its [Resolution 2222 \(2018\)](#) “Promoting diversity and equality in politics”. Concrete recommendations to enhance the participation of persons with disabilities were formulated in its [Resolution 2155 \(2017\)](#) “The political rights of persons with disabilities: a democratic issue”. Political systems and structures should be made more open, inclusive and attractive to persons from various backgrounds. An intersectional approach to decision making as well as targeted measures can contribute to the goal of leaving no one behind. The participation of women and girls, in all their diversity, in political and public decision making will send a powerful message of recognition of the importance of inclusive societies, increase representativeness and strengthen the legitimacy and relevance of decisions.

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1. *Assembly debate* on 23 June 2021 (20th sitting) (see [Doc. 15301](#), report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Eglantina Gjermeni). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 23 June 2021 (20th sitting).



6. Enhancing participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision making requires action at several levels. Society at large and political parties need to make space for women's active participation and engagement. The Assembly underlines that men also have an important role to play in this respect by combating violence and discrimination against women in politics and speaking out against gender-based stereotypes and sexism. Men can be allies and actively engage in promoting equality and participation of women in leadership positions. A profound change in both mindsets and political culture is essential to ensure that political and public decision making will be more inclusive and accessible for persons from various backgrounds.

7. The Assembly welcomes the visibility given at the global level in 2021 to the importance of increasing participation of women from under-represented groups in decision making, including leadership – for instance, women's political participation was the theme chosen for the United Nations (UN) 65th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (15-26 March 2021). It also looks forward to the 2021 UN Generation Equality Forum. Supporting the participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision making is an accelerator for sustainable development and peace and contributes to the UN's Agenda 2030 for sustainable development. Addressing the over-representation of men and the under-representation of women is important for making democracies more legitimate and accountable.

8. In the light of these considerations, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States, observers and partners for democracy:

8.1. with regard to preventing and combating gender-based stereotypes, sexism, discrimination and violence against women, to:

8.1.1. sign and ratify, if it is not yet the case, the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210), and accelerate implementation in those States which are parties;

8.1.2. introduce measures to implement Assembly [Resolution 2274 \(2019\)](#) "Promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment" and Assembly [Resolution 2290 \(2019\)](#) "Towards an ambitious Council of Europe agenda for gender equality";

8.1.3. work towards the implementation of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023 and raise public awareness of the added value of an inclusive political environment;

8.1.4. implement without further delay Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 on preventing and combating sexism;

8.1.5. ensure that all public institutions apply zero-tolerance policies in regard to violence, discrimination and abuse, including through ratification of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Violence and Harassment Convention (No. 190);

8.1.6. promote inclusive education with the aim of preventing and combating gender-based stereotypes and sexism from an early age;

8.1.7. repeal discriminatory legislation against all under-represented groups, as this hinders their participation in political and public decision making;

8.1.8. create safe and enabling environments for participation by introducing measures to prevent and combat all forms of discrimination, racist and sexist hate speech and violence against women in politics, and allocate sufficient resources to this end;

8.1.9. encourage the participation of women in the world of politics and the labour market by ensuring the provision of affordable childcare and adopting measures in favour of a better balance between private and professional life;

8.2. with regard to access to political and public decision making and promoting the participation of women from under-represented groups, to:

8.2.1. implement Assembly [Resolution 2111 \(2016\)](#) "Assessing the impact of measures to improve women's political representation" and Assembly [Resolution 2222 \(2018\)](#) "Promoting diversity and equality in politics";

8.2.2. implement Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec(2003)3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making;

8.2.3. collect disaggregated data and support research on the participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision making, and analyse the composition of parliaments at national and regional levels with an intersectional perspective;

- 8.2.4. introduce legislation and policies to implement Assembly [Resolution 2155 \(2017\)](#) “The political rights of persons with disabilities: a democratic issue” and make the accessibility of electoral processes, information and procedures a priority;
- 8.2.5. sign and ratify the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS No. 157) and the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level (ETS No. 144), if this is not yet the case;
- 8.2.6. work towards the implementation of the Council of Europe Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025);
- 8.2.7. cap the financing of electoral campaigns to enable broader participation and ensure equal access to funds;
- 8.2.8. assess the needs of women from under-represented groups who are willing to participate in political and public life, in order to provide adequate support, including for women experiencing multiple and intersectional discrimination;
- 8.2.9. set up and fund leadership and mentorship programmes for women from under-represented groups;
- 8.2.10. promote the creation of women’s networks or caucuses in national parliaments, as well as youth-led parliaments;
- 8.2.11. provide financial support to non-governmental organisations working on the promotion of gender equality, inclusion and the participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision making;
- 8.2.12. foster and sustain civic space and engagement for women’s rights organisations to hold decision makers to account on gender equality concerns;
- 8.2.13. engage with the media to promote role models from under-represented groups and combat gender stereotypes and sexism;
- 8.2.14. ensure fair, non-stereotypical and equal media coverage of candidates and politicians, irrespective of their gender.

9. The Assembly encourages political parties to:

- 9.1. actively promote the participation of women from under-represented groups in their internal structures, including at leadership levels, and consider the introduction of voluntary quotas;
- 9.2. set up rules for the selection of candidates for elections at local, regional and national levels to ensure that gender equality and diversity are actively promoted;
- 9.3. analyse their internal composition and discuss how to increase participation of women and men from diverse backgrounds, and their representation;
- 9.4. use a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach in supporting candidates for election;
- 9.5. sign the Council of Europe “Pledge on political representation of Roma and Traveller women” and take concrete steps for its implementation;
- 9.6. organise training on inclusiveness, intersectionality and gender equality for all their members, irrespective of their gender, and ensure their accessibility;
- 9.7. organise specific capacity- and confidence-building training in accessible formats for persons from under-represented groups, to enhance their political skills;
- 9.8. work to increase the visibility of role models from political and public life, including in the media.