Women in political decision making - quality and equality

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The European Parliament adopted by 508 votes to 124, with 49 abstentions a resolution on women in political decision-making – quality and equality.

Parliament emphasises that it is necessary to adopt multifaceted strategies consisting of non-binding measures such as targets and voluntary party quotas, enabling measures such as gender education, mentoring and awareness-raising campaigns and legally binding measures such as electoral gender quotas, bearing in mind that legally binding measures, which are compatible with the institutional and electoral system and which entail rank-order rules, monitoring and effective sanctions for non-compliance, have proved most effective in achieving gender balance in politics.

Parliament recalls that despite the numerous actions undertaken, an absence of parity prevails, and women' s representation in political decision-making has stagnated in recent years instead of displaying linear improvement, the gender balance in national parliaments across the EU remaining unchanged at 24% women and 76% men, with women accounting for only 23% of ministers overall. It calls for appropriate measures, including positive measures, to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life.

Women's representation in elected positions: Parliament invites the Council, the Commission and the Member States to design and implement effective gender equality policies and multifaceted strategies for achieving parity in participation in political decision-making and leadership at all levels, especially in the areas of macro-economic policy, trade, labour, budgets, etc. assessing the impact and making it available to the public by means of appropriate equality indicators, ensuring quantified targets, clear action plans and regular monitoring mechanisms followed up with binding corrective actions and their monitoring where the set targets are not met by the deadlines.

Parliament welcomes the parity systems/gender quotas for elections introduced by legislation in some Member States and calls on the Member States to consider introducing legislative measures, such as positive action measures, to make progress toward parity and ensure the efficiency of these measures, when compatible with the electoral system and when the political parties are in charge of the composition of the electoral list, through **zipper systems**, monitoring and effective sanctions in order to facilitate more balanced participation of women and men in political decision-making.

Other measures are suggested, such as:

- enforcing parity at all levels by sending clear anti-discrimination messages, by providing appropriate resources, by using specific tools and by promoting necessary training for civil servants responsible for preparing budgets in gender budgeting;
- paying special attention to gender educational programmes aimed at civil society and young people in particular, starting from an early age;
- launching a pledge to be endorsed by all political parties at European, national and regional level to take measures to **encourage women's active participation** and involvement in political life and in elections;
- linking and setting targets based on parity between sexes for the political parties as a **prerequisite for funding**;

- setting up and implementing quota systems and other types of positive action, to apply rank-ordering rules to electoral candidate lists for regional, national and EU elections, and to define and enforce effective sanctions for non-compliance;
- introducing a quota system for candidate lists for party organs and elections, when compatible with the electoral system and when the political parties are in charge of the composition of the electoral list, especially as regards the lists for the 2014 European elections;
- emphasising the need for concrete steps designed to achieve parity in elected offices in the national parliaments and the European Parliament (such as those of the President, Vice- Presidents, Chairs and Vice-Chairs), for instance by setting a target of 50 % representation of men and women in each of those offices.

The Commission is also called upon to: (i) ensure in its relevant annual work programmes that enough funding is available in 2013-2014 for financing, inter alia, appropriate awareness-raising campaigns in the media to encourage the election of women; (ii) encourage and fund actions related to promoting parity in decision-making positions and political activities when programming the next funding period, 2014-2020; (iii) launch parity-targeting campaigns for the electoral lists for the European Parliament at least two years ahead of each election announcement and to encourage Member States to carry out similar actions in their local and regional elections.

Women's representation in nominated positions: Members call on the Member States to support parity by proposing a woman and a man as their candidates for the office of **European Commissioner**.

Parity is also called for:

- within the EU institutions: the Commission and the Council are called upon to commit to meeting the target of parity in all their decision-making bodies, by establishing and implementing quota systems and other types of positive action when recruiting high-level officials;
- within national governments: the nomination of both women and men to high-level positions at EU level.

Taking note of the Commission commitment expressed in its Strategy for Equality between Women and Men – 2010-2015 to monitor progress towards the aim of 40% of members of one sex in its committees and expert groups, Parliament calls on the EU institutions, bodies and agencies to take concrete action and set up strategies with the aim of achieving balanced participation in their decision-making processes. Parliament calls on the Member States to promote positive action measures, including binding legislative measures, with a view to ensuring parity in all governing bodies and public appointments and to develop **tools for gender monitoring** of nominations and elections.

Measures to promote women's participation in political life: Parliament encourages the Commission and the Member States to implement positive action measures, such as preferential treatment, when a gender is under-represented.

Member States and the Commission are called upon to:

- increase measures supporting women's organisations, including by providing them with adequate funding and creating platforms for cooperation and gender campaigning in elections;
- facilitate women's networks and to promote mentoring, adequate training and exchange of good practices and programmes, with a special emphasis on women policy-makers in their early careers;
- ensure that women have access, if necessary by preferential treatment, to leadership training and positions of leadership as part of career promotion in order to enhance women's leadership skills and experience;

- promote and welcome the efforts of employers' organisations and trade unions, the private sector, non-governmental organisations and all organisations that normally form part of advisory councils related to government to achieve equality of women and men in their ranks;
- enable women and men to take an active part in political decision-making by promoting reconciliation and a balance between family life and working life.

Parliament recalls the importance of preferential treatment and special measures in promoting the representation of people from different backgrounds and disadvantaged groups, such as people with disabilities, migrant women and members of ethnic and sexual minorities, in decision-making positions. It underlines the importance of raising the awareness of the media, and to promote efforts to eliminate stereotypes and **encourage the portrayal of positive images of women as leaders**.

The Commission is called upon to continue to collect and disseminate comparable data at EU level through the use of its database on women and men in decision-making positions and to develop this observatory towards a **European map of gender balance**.

This map should include at least:

- the objectives for promotion of gender balance, expressed as a percentage of representation, that are incorporated in the legislation of Member States and of European regions with legislative powers to regulate their electoral processes;
- the percentages of representation of each sex in the European, state and regional parliaments and in local institutions; etc.

Parliament calls on the Commission to submit a yearly report to the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality on the progress of gender equality in decision-making in the European Union.

Promotion of gender-balanced representation in politics in external relations: Parliament recalls its demand for gender parity at all levels in the appointment of staff of the European External Action Service (EEAS). It calls on the EEAS to promote women's participation in decision-making in the external relations of the European Union. It points out the need i) to increase the number of women serving as mediators and chief negotiators in processes to observe the situation with regard to human rights and prevention of corruption and in peace building; ii) for adequate financial and technical assistance for special programmes focusing on enhancing women's participation in electoral processes; iii) to take measures to promote balanced representation of women at all levels in political life in multinational organisations such as the UN, in governments and in national parliaments as well as at regional and local level and in local authorities.