Basic information

1995/0308(CNS) CNS - Consultation procedure Decision	Procedure completed
Balanced participation of women and men in decision-making process (Council Recommendation 96/694) **Subject** 4.10.04 Gender equality	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
FEMM Women's Rights	CREPAZ Irene (PSE)	23/01/1996

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
Social Affairs	1930	1996-06-03
Social Affairs	1892	1995-12-05
Social Affairs	1974	1996-12-02

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
29/11/1995	Legislative proposal published	COM(1995)0593	Summary
12/02/1996	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
24/04/1996	Vote in committee		
24/04/1996	Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading	A4-0149/1996	
24/05/1996	Debate in Parliament		
30/05/1996	Modified legislative proposal published	COM(1996)0252	Summary
03/06/1996	Debate in Council		Summary
02/12/1996	Act adopted by Council after consultation of Parliament		
02/12/1996	End of procedure in Parliament		
10/12/1996	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	1995/0308(CNS)
Procedure type	CNS - Consultation procedure
Procedure subtype	Legislation
Legislative instrument	Decision
Legal basis	EC Treaty (before Amsterdam) E 235
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	FEMM/4/07551

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, 1st reading/single reading		A4-0149/1996 OJ C 152 27.05.1996, p. 0005	24/04/1996	
Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading		T4-0307/1996 OJ C 166 10.06.1996, p. 0236-0269	24/05/1996	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Legislative proposal	COM(1995)0593	29/11/1995	Summary
Modified legislative proposal	COM(1996)0252	30/05/1996	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2000)0120	07/03/2000	Summary

Other institutions and bodies

Institution/body	Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
EESC	Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report	CES0532/1996 OJ C 204 15.07.1996, p. 0021	24/04/1996	Summary

Additional information

Source	Document	Date
European Commission	EUR-Lex	

Final act

EP/Council Recommendation 1996/0694
OJ L 319 10.12.1996, p. 0011-0015

Balanced participation of women and men in decision-making process (Council Recommendation 96/694)

1995/0308(CNS) - 03/06/1996

The Presidency noted that one delegation still had difficulties concerning the content of the draft Council Recommendation submitted by the Committee of Permanent Representatives. Independently of this reserve, the UK delegation recalled its general position linked to the problem of BSE concerning decisions to be taken by unanimity. The Presidency expressed the wish that this text be adopted as soon as possible.

Balanced participation of women and men in decision-making process (Council Recommendation 96/694)

1995/0308(CNS) - 29/11/1995 - Legislative proposal

- OBJECTIVE: the aim of the recommendation is to encourage Member States to consider the question of a balanced representation of men and women in decision-making in all sectors (political, social, economic and cultural) and in all its different forms (places and bodies where decisions are taken) and also to adopt a comprehensive and integrated strategy designed to promote such a balance. - SUBSTANCE: It was recommended that the Member States: * adopt a comprehensive strategy to promote the balanced representation of men and women in decision-making and to introduce suitable legislative and regulatory measures, and incentives, to achieve this; * provide for measures: . in education and training: to alert all levels of education to the role and contribution of women and the sharing of professional and family responsibilities, . in the media sector: to ensure that advertisements do not reinforce the unfair stereotyping of women, . in publicity campaigns: to alert public opinion to the importance of a more balanced society, . to encourage the social partners, political groups, associations, NGOs and the media to develop equal opportunities plans; * in the information sector: . to promote the publication of statistics illustrating how women are represented in the economy and in social and cultural life, . to develop studies on the legal, social and cultural obstacles barring the access of women to strategic decision-making posts, . to support initiatives for the dissemination of good practice in this area, * to take measures designed to ensure a fairer representation of women in decision-making posts through: . the promotion of a more balanced participation at all levels of government, . "mentorship actions" designed to encourage a more balanced political representation at European, national, regional and local level (particularly in committees, working groups, etc.), . equal opportunities plans for the public sector (especially on competition committees and selection boards), . the implementation of incentives in the private sector to increase the presence of women at all levels of decision-making, . the adoption by the media of measures to promote a balanced participation on executive bodies. The Commission is therefore called on: - to step up its efforts to alert public opinion and promote pilot projects aimed at a more balanced participation of women in decision-making, - to promote the exchange of experience and the evaluation of policies which are designed to achieve this objective, - to present a report to the Council within 3 years of the adoption of the recommendation on progress achieved in its implementation.

Balanced participation of women and men in decision-making process (Council Recommendation 96/694)

1995/0308(CNS) - 05/12/1995

The Council instructed the Permanent Representatives Committee to start examining the proposal for a recommendation immediately and to report back at a meeting in the near future.

Balanced participation of women and men in decision-making process (Council Recommendation 96/694)

1995/0308(CNS) - 24/05/1996 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

In adopting the report by Mrs Irene CREPAZ (PSE, A), Parliament approved the proposal for a recommendation on the balanced participation of women and men in decision-making, with the following amendments: - the recommendation must be seen primarily as a platform for action to be undertaken in this area, the central objective being the establishment of democracy based on equality and full participation by women in decision-making; - the proposed measures must go hand in hand with an awareness both of the particular obstacles which women encounter and the special qualities they bring to society. In this respect, particular attention must be paid to the continuing segregation in the labour market, in the decision-making process, and even within the Community institutions; - there must be a change in attitude on the part of all those involved in the public and private domains and in economic, political and family life in order to improve the image of women. More specifically, pointing out that the governments of the Member States had pledged in Beijing to adapt their electoral systems with a view to achieving a better political representation of women, Parliament called for: - legislative, regulatory and administrative measures to be taken to promote balanced participation by women and men in the decision-making process at all levels of political, economic and cultural life, - women to assume greater responsibility in key positions in political life, -

the countries of the Union to ensure that the principles of balanced participation and an equal share of responsibilities between men and women was encouraged in education and training, - specific measures to be taken to counteract stereotyping and the image of women and men presented by advertising, - campaigns to be run in conjunction with elections to show the advantages for society of a balanced participation by women and men in decision-making. In this respect, Parliament called for studies to be carried out on the effects of different electoral systems on the political representation of women and for appropriate adjustments to be implemented, - "equality" ombudspersons to be appointed to oversee the implementation of equal opportunities legislation, - in the private sector, measures to be taken to improve the position of women: better integration into personnel policy, promotion of female entrepreneurship, greater access for women to the professions and the legal sphere; - at Community level, measures to be taken to set a good example.

Balanced participation of women and men in decision-making process (Council Recommendation 96/694)

1995/0308(CNS) - 07/03/2000

PURPOSE : to establish a report on the implementation of Council Recommendation 96/694 on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process. CONTENT : in order to redress the under-representation of women, which amounts to a democratic deficit in addition to being an under utilisation of human resources, the Council on 2 December 1996 adopted a Recommendation on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making processes through: - an integrated strategy to promote a balanced participation of women and men; - including awareness raising campaigns; - the collection of data; - encouraging examples of good practice and; - the promotion of a gender balance at all levels of governmental bodies and committees. The Recommendation calls on the Commission to report on its implementation to the European Parliament, the Council and the Economic and Social Committee, for the first time three years after the adoption. The present report fulfils this obligation. It reveals that in spite of a host of different measures adopted by Member States the under representation of women in governments and Parliaments, and committee preparing decisions as well as in the higher levels of the labour market has not changed considerably. The average percentage of women in the Governments of all Member States and EEA countries is 24.5% and 22.5% in the national parliaments, varying from 6.3% in Greece to 43.6% in Sweden. The number of women in committees preparing decisions is even lower. Even in those countries (Belgium and Germany) where data on the composition of committees is collected systematically and where laws provide for an equal or a minimum of a one third participation of the underrepresented sex in decision-making bodies, the percentage of women is only 18.68% and 12.2% respectively. A considerable number of committees do not have even one woman. Efforts and results vary considerably in the Member States of the European Union and the European institutions. As the Recommendation does not define the term "balanced participation" Member States have a choice which percentage of women in decision-making bodies they consider as being balanced. Whereas the Scandinavian countries and the United Kingdom target a 50% participation, most countries consider a participation rate of at least 30% to consitute the critical mass above which women or men can exercise any real influence. Substantive progress in women's participation has been shown in countries with longstanding traditions of equal opportunities policies such as Sweden and Finland with a participation of 52.6% and 44.4% of women in the governments respectively. 68% of the Finnish public sector committees have a female participation of 44%. The balanced participation of women and men in decision-making is increasingly recognised as a requirement for democracy, as well as having a positive outcome for society, in that different ideas and values will be fed into the decision-making processes, leading to results which take into accountthe interests and needs of the whole population. What is needed to promote gender balance is a policy mix including - as the most important factor - long term political commitment, sound statistics, regular monitoring, appropriate structures -depending on the culture of the Member States - anchored in legislation and the provision of financial resources. There is a growing awareness for the need to recruit and promote qualified women in most European institutions and many of them have adopted positive action policies to redress the staff balance. Less has been done on the gender balance in committees. While legislative measures have some impact on the public sector, the private sector needs particular attention and possibly a different approach. Austria, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Finland and the UK are promoting projects aimed at making employers aware of the economic benefits of employing women. More progress also needs to be made regarding women in senior positions in the civil service and public sector bodies. Finally, the report has revealed a certain lack of comparable data submitted to the Commission which has not facilitated the systematic evaluation of development. It should be noted that discussions should be encouraged in the Council with a view to improving the collection of data and an eventual decision on new action.

Balanced participation of women and men in decision-making process (Council Recommendation 96/694)

1995/0308(CNS) - 24/04/1996 - Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report

The Committee welcomes the proposal for a Council Recommendation. The Committee would urge Member States to set clear goals with specific measures. The reference to targets should at least be backed up by timetables and other monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Positive actions could be better highlighted in the text, particularly in the fields of education and training. The Commission proposal does not sufficiently underscore the need for measures to encourage men to take a fairer sharing of family responsibilities. Direct reference should also be made in the Recommendation to "employment" and to work organization and working time. Labour market segregation, unequal pay, unequal promotion possibilities and career structures and the casualization of women's employment should be addressed.

Balanced participation of women and men in decision-making process (Council Recommendation 96/694)

1995/0308(CNS) - 30/05/1996 - Modified legislative proposal

In its amended proposal, the Commission took over only 9 of the 36 amendments adopted by Parliament in the House, namely those seeking to strengthen or widen the scope of the initial proposal as regards: - the importance of reconciling family and working life, - the close links between the decision-making process and women's involvement in the labour market as well as the necessary "equal opportunities" component to be incorporated into all policies, - the need to launch awareness campaigns aimed at the general public (especially at election times), - monitoring and assessing the objectives of the recommendation (not least with a view to achieving equal representation of women and men in the political sphere, particularly by means of research into voting systems and their effect on women's representation), - the promotion of entrepreneurial spirit in women. The rejected amendments: - clearly added nothing new or useful to the initial text (19 amendments including, for example, the amendment seeking to change the image of women in advertising or the amendment calling for studies on women's access to decision-making posts, and so on), - proposed very new concepts which had not yet been sufficiently developed by the Commission or the Member States (6 amendments including those calling for a change of attitude with regard to women in the public and private sectors, the appointment of "equality" ombudspersons to oversee the implementation of equal opportunities legislation, public contracts for which only women could tender, and access to every judicial office for women), - related to areas in which the Commission had a right of initiative (amendment on the measures to be taken by the Community institutions to promote equal opportunities) or called on the Commission to engage in activities outside its sphere of responsibility (amendment calling for a change in the Member States' electoral systems).