

For debate in the Standing Committee — see Rule 15 of the Rules of Procedure

Doc. 11436
12 October 2007

In favour of a Parliamentary Assembly “Gender Equality Prize”

Report
Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men
Rapporteur: Mr Jean-Guy BRANGER, France, Group of the European People's Party

Summary

Despite the progress made in Council of Europe member states, the Parliamentary Assembly is deeply concerned to find that women account for less than 20% of members of parliament in nearly half the 47 Council of Europe member states and less than 25% of members of the Parliamentary Assembly.

The Assembly stresses the special responsibility political parties have for fostering equal opportunities for women and men, bringing women into politics, assuring them of equal access to posts carrying responsibility and to positions on party lists that give them a chance of being elected and in contributing to a fairer and more democratic society.

In this context, the Assembly could intend to draw attention to exemplary schemes introduced by political parties and decide to award a "Gender Equality Prize". This Prize is designed to reward action, schemes or initiatives that have been or are in the process of being carried out by political parties and have brought about a significant improvement in women's participation in elected assemblies, political parties and their respective executives.

The “Gender Equality Prize” would be presented every five years by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly to the winners chosen by the Assembly's Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

In awarding the Prize, the Parliamentary Assembly is seeking to highlight the importance it attaches to promoting women's access to elected office and decision-making positions in political parties and elected assemblies.

A. Draft resolution

1. Despite the progress made in Council of Europe member states, the Parliamentary Assembly is deeply concerned to find that women account for less than 20% of members of parliament in nearly half the 47 Council of Europe member states, and less than 25% of members of the Parliamentary Assembly.

2. The Parliamentary Assembly is convinced that a gender balance in politics is essential if democracy and society are to function more effectively. The Assembly would draw attention in this connection to Recommendation Rec(2003)3 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member states, which stipulates that balanced participation of women and men means that the representation of either women or men in any decision-making body in political or public life should not fall below 40%.

3. The Parliamentary Assembly observes that institutional mechanisms for fostering women's participation in political life often prove inadequate or ineffective. It further observes that politics in Europe is based on political parties, which therefore have a key role to play in bringing women into politics, assuring them of equal access to posts carrying responsibility and to positions on party lists that give them a chance of being elected, and in contributing to a fairer and more democratic society.

4. The Parliamentary Assembly intends, in this connection, to draw attention to exemplary schemes introduced by political parties and has decided to award a "Gender Equality Prize" (hereinafter referred to as "the Prize").

5. The Prize is designed to reward action, schemes or initiatives that have been or are in the process of being carried out by political parties and have brought about a significant improvement in women's participation in elected assemblies, political parties and their respective executives.

6. The political groups in the Parliamentary Assembly, in the European Parliament and in member states' national parliaments will be allowed to submit a candidate for the award by means of a file describing specific action taken by one or more political parties that has helped to achieve the objective of the Prize, namely a gender balance in political life.

7. The Parliamentary Assembly invites the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, in liaison with the Sub-Committee on Equal Participation of Women and Men in Decision-Making:

7.1. to draw up rules setting out the technical conditions applicable to the submission of nominations and the designation of the prize-winners;

7.2. to appoint a jury of three independent figures known for their expertise and competence in gender equality, who will be responsible for analysing the entries and short-listing candidates;

7.3. to choose the winners of the first, second and third prizes.

8. The "Gender Equality Prize" will be presented every five years by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly.

9. The winner of the first prize will receive a trophy and will be offered the opportunity to take part in a co-operation activity under the aegis of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. The winners of the second and third prizes will receive a diploma.

10. In awarding the Prize, the Parliamentary Assembly is seeking to highlight the importance it attaches to promoting women's access to elected office and decision-making positions in political parties and acknowledge the special responsibility political parties have for fostering equal opportunities for women and men.

B. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Branger, Rapporteur

I. Introduction

1. In its study of "Mechanisms to ensure women's participation in decision-making" (Document 10743), the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was disappointed to find that women's participation in politics in Council of Europe member states¹ and in elected assemblies remained low. Although women form an active base in political parties and a committed electorate, they are still under-represented in the top ranks of political parties and have difficulty in asserting themselves enough to gain their party's support and be able to stand for election. A similar picture can be observed in the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, where women accounted for just 24.84% of members in June 2007. This figure reflects the low participation of women in numerous political assemblies in Europe: they account for less than 20% of members of parliament in nearly half (21) the 47 Council of Europe member states².

2. Considering that balanced participation by women and men in politics is a prerequisite for improving the functioning of democracy and society and that political parties had a special role to play here, the committee proposed introducing a "Gender Equality Prize" to encourage political parties in Europe to aim for equal representation and to achieve the objective of balanced participation by women and men, which means that the representation of either women or men in any decision-making body in political or public life should not fall below 40%³.

3. Drawing on the prizes and awards conferred by the Council of Europe and other organisations, and further to the discussions held on 3 October 2006 and on 11 May 2007 by the members of the committee on the Rapporteur's preliminary proposals, the Rapporteur put forward guidelines for the award of the Parliamentary Assembly's Gender Equality Prize.

II. A prize to recognise mechanisms developed by political parties which have promoted women's access to political decision-making positions.

4. The Parliamentary Assembly believes that balanced participation by women and men in decision-making is a prerequisite for improving the functioning of democracy and society, as are respect for women's rights, their financial independence and their education, in a context where responsibilities are shared by women and men. Ongoing under-representation of women in political and economic decision-making reflects a basic democratic deficit both in European countries and in the broader international context.

5. The Assembly is also convinced of the need for affirmative action measures. This need cannot be called into question in the name of the principle of the equality of all citizens, in view of the under-representation of women in decision-making bodies, an imbalance that needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

6. The passing of national legislation to promote the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process is an essential factor, but it is not always sufficient. It is agreed that many players - and I am thinking firstly about the world of work - have a vital role to play in putting these legislative provisions into practice and enabling women to reach decision-making posts. But I also take the view that political parties, which are a vital force in political life in Europe, play a key role in promoting women's access to elected office. They therefore have a responsibility to promote equal access by women and men to nomination as candidates and to elected office, especially in uninominal votes. It is this specific aspect that we should like to work on with a view to the award of a Parliamentary Assembly Gender Equality Prize.

7. In its Resolution 1546 (2007), the Parliamentary Assembly took the view that the code of good practice it wished to propose to political parties should focus amongst other things on good practices for increasing equality between men and women in political parties. One such practice is "putting into place mechanisms which allow women to stand for election, by drawing inspiration from the experience of other political parties which have introduced quotas and other forms of positive action for women not only for parliamentary elections but also for elections to decision-making posts, both inside the party (chairmanships,

¹ Doc. 10743 on mechanisms to ensure women's participation in decision-making, Rapporteur Ms Cliveti, Romania, Socialist Group; Doc. 10202 on women's participation in elections, Rapporteur Mr Paschal Mooney, Ireland, Liberal, Democratic and Reformers' Group.

² www.iup.org, figures as at 18 July 2007.

³ Appendix to Recommendation Rec(2003)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making.

vice-chairmanships, steering committees, etc.) and outside the party (posts in government, on parliamentary committees, etc)" (paragraph 13.2.1).

8. The Rapporteur believes that the Prize would be an additional measure to complement the proposals set out in Mr Van den Brande's report⁴. Awarding this prize would be an illustration of the importance placed by the Parliamentary Assembly on promoting women's access to elected office and decision-making positions within parties. The Prize would consequently be awarded by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly. In addition, it would also be important for the winners to be given media coverage. This would, at the same time, enable publicity to be given to the activities carried out by the Parliamentary Assembly, and particularly by its Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, to promote balanced participation of women and men in decision-making.

9. Clearly, existing institutional mechanisms are not sufficient to overcome stereotypes, facilitate a change of attitudes and enable women to break through the "glass ceiling" that exists in politics as in other areas. In this context, political parties have the capacity to develop measures and good practices to promote women's access to elected office and positions of responsibility within their organisations. Sanctions, especially fines, may be helpful or even necessary in order to change attitudes and force political parties to field a certain number of women candidates in elections. The committee is confident, however, that incentives and affirmative action will help to spread good practice in Europe and encourage political parties to ensure a better gender balance.

10. In this context, the Rapporteur hopes that the Prize will put the spotlight on the special efforts made by parties or political groups, in particular in countries where women have a particularly low participation rate in elected bodies. He also hopes that the mechanisms and initiatives identified will serve as an incentive to other political parties in Europe and encourage them to bring about the balanced participation of women and men in political life.

11. The Rapporteur would like the Prize to reward action and schemes that have 1) made it possible to bring about a significant improvement in women's participation in elected assemblies, political parties and their respective executives; 2) produced compelling results and 3) fostered women's participation in elected bodies, in particular in countries where this is particularly low. By "action" and "schemes", the Rapporteur means transparent, sustainable mechanisms, original awareness-raising campaigns and exemplary initiatives that have been completed or are under way. The Prize should thus make it possible to reward efforts to change political parties' internal culture and move towards greater gender parity.

12. At the committee's meetings on 3 October 2006 and 11 May 2007, the Rapporteur presented members with several avenues to be explored. In particular, the committee was invited to express its views on the eligibility of candidates, the conditions for the submission of entries, the frequency of the award of the Prize, and the method and criteria for selecting candidates. The Rapporteur also fine-tuned the committee's proposals in the light of the Council of Europe's experience of awarding prizes.

13. Taking the view that the Prize targets political parties, the Rapporteur proposes that that political groups be approached and mobilised - within the Parliamentary Assembly, the European Parliament and member states' national parliaments - so that they are aware of the special role they play in facilitating women's access to elected office. These political groups should be allowed to nominate candidates for the Prize.

14. As regards the technical arrangements for nominating candidates and selecting the prize-winners, the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men should be invited to draw up rules governing the award of the Prize. Files on candidates should include a detailed description of the action taken, which should, in particular, provide answers to the following questions, based on the "Good practices to achieve gender-balanced representation in political and social decision-making"⁵ identified by the Council of Europe:

14.1 Are the decision-making bodies in political parties, such as the executive council, balanced in terms of gender?

⁴ See Doc 11210 and the opinion of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, rapporteur: Ms Bilgehán (Doc. 11242).

⁵ "Practices to achieve gender-balanced representation in political and social decision-making", report by the Council of Europe Directorate of Human Rights, EG-S-BP (2001) 1.

14.2 To what extent are women's interests taken into account in the policy and platform preparation work of the party?

14.3 To what extent are gender issues taken into account in each party's political platform?

14.4 Do strategies to improve the position of women within parties include:

- targeted recruitment efforts ?
- awareness-raising campaigns directed at the public at large ?
- awareness-raising within the party ?
- creation of better databases on potential office-holders ?
- training of both male and female activists in gender issues and political skills ?
- quantitative targets for improvement (through quotas and voluntary targets) ?

14.5 What practical initiatives have enabled women to accede to decision-making positions?

14.6 What kind of practical measures make it easier to balance a political career, work (where applicable) and family life?

15. The committee examined the selection procedures currently in use for other Parliamentary Assembly prizes. Winners could be chosen by a sub-committee, for example the Sub-Committee on the Europe Prize of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, responsible for choosing the winners of the Council of Europe's Europe Prize, or with the assistance of an independent panel, such as the one that advises the Committee on Culture, Science and Education in selecting the winner of the Council of Europe's Museum Prize. The Rapporteur proposes that the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, in liaison with the Sub-Committee on Equal Participation of Women and Men in Decision-Making, should be made responsible for selecting the winners, so as to indicate the importance attached by the Parliamentary Assembly to promoting women's access to elected office.

16. It is suggested that a jury of three independent figures recognised for their expertise and competence in the area of gender equality be appointed to analyse and assess the nominations and short-list candidates. The decision concerning the choice of prize-winners would, as already stated, rest with the members of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

17. The committee was asked to consider the frequency with which the Prize should be awarded, the idea being that it should be a regular event. Having consulted the committee members, the Rapporteur suggests that the Prize be awarded every five years. The presentation of the Prize could be the opportunity for an event that would give prominence to the Parliamentary Assembly and highlight its commitment to affirmative action to promote the participation of women in political life.

18. The committee also considered the various awards given to the winners of the different Council of Europe prizes which are of a number of types:

- A **trophy** that would be kept by the winner of the first prize for the duration of the competition (Europe Prize)
- A **medal and/or certificate** (European Human Rights Prize, "Young active citizens" prize)
- A **sculpture or statuette** crafted by an artist (Council of Europe's Museum Prize, the Prix Europa for television programmes, European Prevention Prize, North-South Prize)
- A **sum of money** (Council of Europe's Museum Prize, Prix Europa for television programmes, "Young active citizens" prize)
- A **sum of money for funding a relevant project** (Europe Prize, European Prevention Prize)

19. In order to accommodate the wide variety of political cultures across Council of Europe member states, the Rapporteur suggests that the Prize be awarded to three winners, with a first prize, second prize and third prize. The winner of the first prize could receive a trophy and be offered the opportunity by the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men to take part in a co-operation activity. The winners of the second and third prizes would receive a diploma.

20. The committee did not consider it appropriate for the Prize to be accompanied by the award of a sum of money to a political party. On the other hand, it does propose that the award of the trophy go hand in hand with a co-operation activity under the aegis of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (study visit to the Council of Europe, or to another Council of Europe member state which has

developed good practice in relation to the promotion of women's access to elected office) for four representatives of the prize-winning political party.

III. Conclusions

21. The Rapporteur hopes that the award of the "Gender Equality Prize" will make it possible to foster good practice in political parties and political groups in Europe and reward schemes and action that have, in practice, brought about significant improvements in women's access to elected office or executive positions in elected assemblies or political parties, especially in countries where such participation is particularly low.

22. The Parliamentary Assembly could, by means of this prize, highlight the key role that political parties play in promoting improved participation by women in political parties, elected assemblies and their respective executives. The Prize is accordingly designed to reward action taken or schemes introduced by political parties. The political groups in the Parliamentary Assembly and the European Parliament and political groups in member states' national parliaments should be made aware of this objective and support the Parliamentary Assembly's efforts. It is therefore proposed that they be allowed to submit candidates.

23. The Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women, in liaison with the Sub-Committee on Equal Participation of Women and Men in Decision-Making, could be responsible for selecting prize-winners with the help of a jury comprising independent figures, appointed by the committee.

24. The files on candidates will include a detailed description of exemplary action or mechanisms which, in particular, meet the criteria of the "Good practices to achieve gender-balanced representation in political and social decision-making"⁶ identified by the Council of Europe.

25. The Prize could be awarded to three winners, with a first prize, second prize and third prize. The winner of the first prize would be awarded a trophy and be offered the opportunity to take part in a co-operation activity under the aegis of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

26. The Prize would be presented every five years by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly at a ceremony designed to constitute an event giving prominence to the Parliamentary Assembly.

27. In awarding the Prize, the Parliamentary Assembly is seeking to highlight the importance it attaches to promoting women's access to elected office and decision-making positions in political parties and acknowledge the special responsibility political parties have for fostering equal opportunities for women and men.

⁶ See paragraph 14.

Reporting committee: Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

Reference to Committee: Doc 10800, reference N°3173 of 27 January 2006

Draft resolution unanimously adopted by the Committee on 4 October 2007.

Members of the Committee: Mrs Gülsün **Bilgehan** (Chairperson), Mrs Anna **Čurdová** (1st Vice-Chairperson), Mrs Svetlana Smirnova (2nd Vice-Chairperson), Mr José **Mendes Bota** (3rd Vice-Chairperson), Mrs Željka Antunović, Mrs Aneliya Atanasova, Mr John Austin, Ms Marieluise Beck, Mrs Oksana Bilozir, Mrs Raisa Bohatryova (alternate: Mr Ivan **Popescu**), Mrs Olena Bondarenko, Mr Pedrag Bošćović, Mrs Mimount Bousakla, Mr Paul Bradford, Mr Jean-Guy **Branger**, Mrs Ingrida **Circene**, Mr James Clappison, Mrs Minodora Cliveti, Mr Cosidó Gutiérrez, Ms Diana Çuli, Mr Ivica **Dačić**, Mr Marcello Dell'utri, Mr José Luiz Del Roio, Mrs Lydie **Err**, Mrs Catherine Fautrier, Mrs Maria Emelina Fernández Soriano, Ms Sonia Fertuzinhos, Mr Piotr Gadzinowski, Mrs Alena Gajdůšková, Mrs Claude **Greff**, Mr Attila **Gruber**, Mrs Carina **Hägg**, Mr Ilie Ilaşcu, Mrs Halide Incekara, Ms Nataša **Jovanović**, Mrs Eleonora Katseli, Mr Marek Kawa, Mrs Krista Kiuru, Mrs Angela Leahu, Mr Dariusz Lipinski, Mr Arthur Loepfe (alternate: Mr John **Dupraz**), Mrs Mirjana **Malić**, Ms Assunta Meloni, Mrs Danguté Mikutienė, Mrs Ilinka Mitreva, Mr Burkhardt Müller-Sönksen, Mrs Christine Muttonen, Mrs Hermine Naghdalyan, Mr Mark Oaten, Mr Kent Olsson (alternate: Ms Marietta **de Pourbaix-Lundin**), Mrs Vera **Oskina**, Mr Ibrahim Özal, Ms Elsa Papadimitriou, Mr Jaroslav **Paška**, Mrs Fatma Pehlivan, Mrs Maria Agostina Pellegatta, Mrs Antigoni **Papadopoulos**, Mr Leo Platvoet, Mrs Majda Potrata, Mr Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando, Mr Kamal Qureshi, Mr Frédéric Reiss, Mrs Mailis Reps, Mrs Marlene **Rupprecht**, Mrs Klára Sándor, Mr Steingrímur J. Sigfússon, Mr Giannicola Sinisi, Mrs Darinka Stantcheva, Mr Vasile Ioan Dănuţ Ungureanu, Mrs Ruth-Gaby **Vermot-Mangold**, Mrs Betty Williams, Mr Gert Winkelmeier (alternate: Ms Angelika **Graf**), Ms Karin S. **Woldseth**, Mrs Gisela **Wurm**.

N.B. The names of the members who took part in the meeting are printed **in bold**.

Head of the Secretariat : Ms Affholder, a.i.

Secretaries to the Committee: Ms Devaux, Mr Diallo, Ms Araujo