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EUROPEAN COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE  
(CDDG)

BALANCED PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND MEN  
IN DECISION-MAKING:  
POSSIBLE ACTION BY THE CDDG

For information and action

Secretariat Memorandum  
prepared by the  
Directorate General of Democracy  
Democratic Governance Department

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## Introduction

The CDDG, on the basis of the exchanges at its May 2016 meeting, requested the Secretariat, in cooperation with the gender equality rapporteurs, to subsequently present issues of gender mainstreaming and the practical implications of policies and actions plans affecting public administration for consideration by the Committee. In doing so they were also asked to take into account the findings of the report by the GEC on the implementation of [Recommendation Rec\(2003\)3 of the Committee of Ministers on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making](#).

Following the third round of monitoring, the Gender Equality Commission, in September 2017, published an [analytical report](#) on the implementation of Committee of Ministers' Recommendation Rec(2003)3 on the balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making.

## Findings

The recommendations set out in the report (pages 12 and 112-113 – see also the Executive Summary appended) include two elements that can be identified as particularly relevant for consideration by the CDDG:

- Adopt strategies, policy and legislative measures to implement paragraph VI of the Recommendation and meet the 40% minimum target. This could be done through a double approach: a 'problem-driven focus' for the most problematic areas; and an 'opportunity-driven focus' for those areas where progress has been made and where only an 'extra mile' is needed to reach the 40% minimum target.
- One recommendation would be to not only organize training sessions for women candidates, but also for party leaders, party executives and party's bodies responsible for selecting candidates for elections (selectorates). Such training sessions would not only focus on ways to recruit women candidates, but also on identifying, tracking and amending existing gender stereotypes and biases in how parties recruit, select and support candidates, and in the practices and criteria that drive the selection of men and women candidates.

Actions by the CDDG could therefore focus on:

- Compiling in cooperation with the Gender Equality Unit and Gender Equality representatives as well as the electoral division, measures and practices from across member States in terms of problem-driven and opportunity driven solutions as well as steps and programmes put in place at the level of political candidates and parties. Such “good practices”, should bring about the greatest possible improvements sought in relation to a specific legislative and/or electoral framework and might include measures requiring legislative changes.
- Elaborating, on the basis of these good practices, a handbook, compendium, or introducing specific measures within relevant toolkits, presenting practical measures and changes that can be included or elaborated separately in policies and action plans by authorities at national and local and regional level.

#### Action required

The CDDG is invited to take note of the information presented and, taking into consideration the proposals set out above, to decide on the follow-up to be given.

## APPENDIX

Balanced Participation of women and men in decision-making  
Analytical report – 2016 data - Gender Equality Commission

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2003, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted [Recommendation Rec\(2003\)3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making](#) (hereafter referred to as the Recommendation). The governments of the member states committed themselves to report regularly to the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers on the measures taken and the progress made in achieving a balanced participation of women and men in political and public life, defined as a minimum representation of 40% of each sex.

Two earlier monitoring rounds took place in [2005](#) and [2008](#) and a [comparative study on the results of the first and second rounds of monitoring of the Recommendation](#) was published in 2010 (Council of Europe, 2010). For the third monitoring round, an online questionnaire was made available to all 47 Council of Europe member states in January 2016, and 46 of them participated in the survey. The data gathered reflect the situation in member states as of 1 January 2016, *except* for data on political representatives which refer to election-day results (up to 15 July 2016).<sup>1</sup> This report analyses the data gathered in 2016 and where possible, comparisons are made with data collected in the two earlier monitoring rounds, in order to identify evolutions and trends.

The main findings of the 2016 third monitoring round are:

*Legislative Power**Legislative power – summary table 2016*

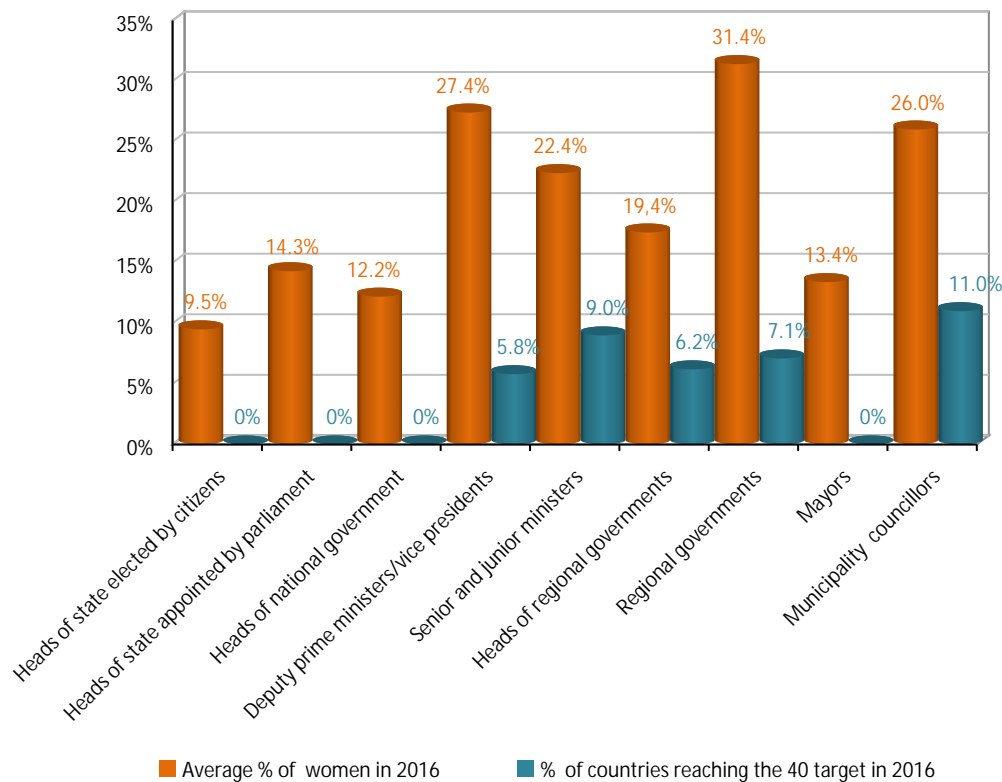
	Countries reaching the 40% target in 2016	Average % women in 2016	Evolution 2005-2016
Lower/single houses	2 (4%)	25.6%	+
Upper houses	0	23.9% (elected)	+
		35.8% (appointed)	+
Regional parliaments	3 (18%)	25.6%	+

<sup>1</sup> Member states communicated the following information regarding changes which took place after July 2016: Luxembourg: the revised Law of 15 December 2016 (Bill 6892) on the financing of political parties now provides that political parties shall receive the full public allowance on the condition that they respect a quota of 40% of candidates of each sex for the national legislative elections and of 50% of each sex for the European elections. These provisions do not apply to communal elections. Iceland: parliamentary elections took place in October 2016 and women's representation reached 48%. Croatia: parliamentary elections took place in September 2016 and women's representation amounted to 18.5%. The share of women deputy prime ministers was 25% (one of four in total) and the share of women ministers was 20% (four of twenty in total). Germany: elections took place in November 2016 and a woman was elected president of the upper house. Elections took place at the level of federal states in September 2016; the percentage of women members of regional parliaments was 31.9%. Changes took place in the federal government in November and December 2016; the percentage of women senior and junior ministers was 33.3%. Changes also took place in relation to mayors; the percentage of women mayors in Germany was 9.3%.

Only a few countries met the Recommendation's minimum target of 40% elected women and men in any of their legislative bodies in 2016. The average proportion of elected women stayed at around 25% and was consistent across the legislative assemblies surveyed (lower/single houses, upper houses and regional parliaments). Although almost all the countries surveyed witnessed an increase in the representation of women in lower/single houses in the last decade (2005-2016), the proportion of countries within the 30-39.9% remained stable between 2005 and 2016. In the same way, the number of countries with a proportion of women legislators below 20% decreased but remained significant: 46% of the countries participating in the monitoring exercise in 2005, 44% in 2008 and 30% in 2016. The trend identified at the level of the lower houses/single parliaments also applies to the regional level: only three countries met the 40% minimum target in 2016. Trends at national level vary from sharp increase or decrease in some of the member states. A better gender balance in assemblies was accompanied by a better gender balance among internal positions of power within the legislative branch. Overall, the 2016 monitoring round points towards slight improvement for some indicators, but also towards stagnation.

### Executive Power

#### Executive power positions – summary figure 2016



The positions at the very top of the political power in 2016 in Europe were almost exclusively male dominated: less than 11% of the countries met the 40% minimum target for each sex, for those executive positions examined. The average proportion of women heads of state or government, heads of regional governments and mayors was below 17%. When comparing 2005 and 2016, a positive evolution was discerned only with regard to heads of states appointed by parliaments, heads of national governments and heads of regional governments, although women's representation among heads of governments remained on average at a low 12.2%, and 19.4% for heads of regional governments (compared to none and 6%, respectively, in 2005). The function of minister remained more or less stable, reaching 22.4% of women senior and junior ministers in 2016. At regional level, the 2005-2016 evolution was predominantly positive. In 2016, all regional governments observed but two were below the 40% minimum target, but they performed substantially better than national ones (22.4% women ministers in national governments on average compared to 31.4% in regional governments). At local level women counted on average for about a quarter of municipality councillors but the positive trend was less stable with sharp increases or decreases in certain countries. Overall at the executive level, the results in 2016 presented only a minor increase in the number and percentage of countries reaching the 40% minimum target. The average proportion of women mayors (on average 13%) and of national executives were in general well below the targeted standard.

*Impact of electoral systems, of gender quotas or parity systems and of gender-sensitive regulations of political parties*

Proportional electoral systems were more favourable to a balanced participation of women and men in political decision-making bodies, compared to majoritarian electoral systems. In 2016, the highest proportion of women members of the single/lower houses was found in countries using proportional list systems, while the lowest proportion of women members was found in single majority systems.

A number of countries introduced gender quota legislation or parity systems between 2005 and 2016: five countries reported having them for national elections in 2005 and 17 in 2016, which represents progress with regard to the implementation of the 2003 Recommendation. Such legislation, especially when it was strong, had a positive impact on achieving a better gender balance in a number of countries and at different levels. Countries that only had political party quotas performed better in terms of gender balance in the lower/single houses than countries with quota legislation or legal parity systems, even when such legislation was combined with voluntary political party quotas. There was a strong correlation between the strength of the legislative quotas (measured in terms of quota percentage, whether they include a rank order for women and men, and whether they include sanctions and, if so, the type of sanction) and the percentage of women elected in national elections. In the five countries that had quota legislation or parity systems both in 2005 and 2016, women's representation increased significantly. This seems to point at a positive impact of such measures over time, notwithstanding interval fluctuations.

Countries with political party quotas, rules or regulations, either for national elections or for internal party decision-making bodies, had on average higher levels of women in national lower houses, among party executives and among party members, than countries without such measures. However, including gender equality principles in legal frameworks for political parties or in laws on the public funding of political parties did not seem to automatically lead to significantly better results.

Furthermore, the provision of training for women candidates appears to have played a moderate role and did not lead to substantially better gender balance in national lower houses, among party executives or among party leaders. Training party leaders, executives and bodies responsible for the selection of candidates could increase the impact of training.

### *Judicial Power*

#### *Judicial power – summary figure*



The findings show *some* positive evolutions in 2016, compared to 2005, regarding the judiciary but very few courts reached the 40% minimum target set by the Recommendation. On average, the representation of women in High/Supreme Courts was 33%, 28% in High Councils of the Judiciary and 26% in Constitutional Courts. The proportion of countries reaching the 40% minimum target was significantly higher in the High Councils of the Judiciary (36%) than in High/Supreme Courts (28%) or Constitutional Courts (22%). High/Supreme Courts witnessed a positive evolution between 2005 and 2016. This general trend should be read together with the sometimes significant increases and decreases in the number of women judges at the individual country level. In addition, the data show no link between the appointment method (whether by the head of state, government, high council of the judiciary, or in another way) and gender balance among judges in High/Supreme Courts.

### *Diplomatic service*

The number of countries where the various functions of the diplomatic service reached the 40% minimum target was very low, especially for the highest functions, and in 2016 some countries had no women diplomats in some of the functions within the diplomatic system. Furthermore, there were great variations between countries and over time concerning the participation of women and men at different levels of the diplomatic service. Of the diplomatic functions included in the study, the number of minister counsellors (lowest rank examined) had on average the highest number of women diplomats (just under a third). Also, the gender balance among envoys and ministers plenipotentiary (second lowest rank) was relatively positive (about a quarter). For all four functions considered, the most populated group of countries was the one scoring below 20% of women. The overall low proportion of women ambassadors (13%) was among the least gender balanced in the 2016 monitoring round, together with mayors and heads of state and government. These data clearly demonstrate the persistence of a glass ceiling in the diplomatic sector.

### *Council of Europe*

#### *Council of Europe – summary table*

		Countries reaching the minimum 40% target in 2016	Average % women in 2016	Evolution 2005-2016
Parliamentary Assembly		21 (45.7%)	35.7%	+
Chamber of Local Authorities	Members	22 (46.8%)	43%	+
	Substitutes	21 (55.3%)		
Chamber of Regions	Members	22 (58%)	44.8%	+
	Substitutes	24 (52.2%)		
European Court of Human Rights			34.8%	+

The results regarding gender balance in the Council of Europe bodies analysed showed positive developments. Both the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions of the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities reached the minimum recommended target of 40% women in 2016 (43% and 44.8% respectively). Both bodies also showed major improvements compared to 2005.

The average percentage of women in the Parliamentary Assembly, on the other hand, remained below the 40% target (36%). Almost half of the country delegations reached the 40% minimum target in 2016.

The European Court of Human Rights saw a small improvement in 2016 compared to 2005, but with women making up on average only 35% of the judges, the Court has yet to achieve the targeted gender balance.



### *Recommendations*

Based on the findings of this monitoring exercise, the following seven recommendations are put forward:

1. Maintain and give further impetus to the commitment towards achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making bodies.
2. Adopt strategies, policy and legislative measures to implement paragraph VI of the Recommendation and meet the 40% minimum target. This could be done through a double approach: a 'problem-driven focus' for the most problematic areas; and an 'opportunity-driven focus' for those areas where progress has been made and where only an 'extra mile' is needed to reach the 40% minimum target.
3. For both strategies, gender quota laws or parity systems as well as political party quotas can be considered. Where gender quota laws already exist, member states should consider making existing gender quota laws stricter (for instance by increasing the quota percentage, imposing rank order rules, and introducing or strengthening sanctions). These countries should also consider the introduction of political party quotas.
4. Consider the advantages of proportional representation vis-à-vis majoritarian systems.
5. Support initiatives to include gender equality principles in legal frameworks for political parties and in laws on public funding of political parties and ensure that such provisions are supported by an active commitment to bring more women into political parties.
6. Reflect on and address the existence of gender biases in the functioning, recruitment and selection practices within political parties.
7. Provide training not only for women candidates, but also for all party leaders, executives and for bodies responsible for selecting candidates for elections (selectorates).

Finally, specific measures to achieve a gender balance in political and public decision-making should be part of a larger strategy to promote equality between women and men in all areas. A gender balance in decision making cannot be reached if other areas of public and private life remain fundamentally unbalanced.