

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 176 (2004)¹ on gender mainstreaming at local and regional level: a strategy to promote equality between women and men in cities and regions

The Congress,

1. Recalling that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the ideals and principles which are their common heritage;
2. Recalling that achieving effective equality between women and men is an integral part of these ideals and principles and that equality between women and men is a fundamental dimension of the protection and promotion of human rights and constitutes a strong indication of the quality of democracy;
3. Having regard to the Declaration of equality of women and men, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 16 November 1988;
4. Having regard to the Declaration on equality between women and men as a fundamental criterion of democracy, adopted by the 4th European Ministerial Conference on Equality between women and men (Istanbul, November 1997);
5. Recalling Recommendation No. R (98) 14 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to the member states on gender mainstreaming and Recommendation Rec(2003)3 on the balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making;
6. Recalling its work in promoting women's participation in local and regional authorities, in particular the report by Patrizia Dini, Resolution 85 (1999) and Recommendation 68 (1999) on women's participation in political life in the regions of Europe;
7. Having regard to the findings of the reports on election observation missions conducted by the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and the OSCE in recent years, which have highlighted the practice of family voting in some fifteen European countries;
8. Recalling that twinning and partnerships between local and regional authorities of Europe can also help to bring women from different communities closer together, to enable them to share experiences of the electoral process and engage in an informal process of raising awareness of women's rights as citizens;

9. Emphasising the role of local and regional authorities in supporting local initiatives to encourage women's participation in politics and public life;

10. Convinced that one of the main strategies to achieve effective equality between women and men is gender mainstreaming;

11. Welcoming the report on gender mainstreaming, produced by the Steering Committee on Equality between Women and Men (CDEG) setting out the conceptual framework for gender mainstreaming and a methodology for its implementation, accompanied by examples of good practice;

12. Convinced that the implementation of the strategy of gender mainstreaming will not only promote effective equality between women and men and respond more effectively to the wants and needs of different categories of citizens, but also result in a better use of human and financial resources, improve decision-making and enhance the functioning of democracy;

13. Believing that the most important prerequisite for gender mainstreaming to be effective is political will;

14. Welcoming the initiative of the European Network of Training Organisations (ENTO) to devote part of its 2004 Annual Seminar to be held in Coimbra (Portugal) to the issue of gender mainstreaming,

15. Calls on local and regional authorities to:

a. make a public commitment to gender equality, respond more effectively to the wants and needs of different categories of citizens, to adopt a policy of gender mainstreaming to promote effective equality between men and women, to allocate human and financial resources more effectively, to improve decision-making and to enhance democracy;

b. evaluate the current situation of men and women – including by collecting statistics (gender disaggregated statistics) in order to assess the impact that gender has on who benefits, or who does not, from particular policies;

c. use this information, as well as good practices in the field of gender mainstreaming, to convince politicians and citizens of the need to adopt a gender mainstreaming policy;

d. provide training for politicians so that they can understand the importance of this approach and also how it works;

e. adopt a gender equality policy and develop local and regional action plans to implement equality between women and men and to promote gender mainstreaming as a strategy, in the framework of the definition, implementation and evaluation of the policies and actions carried out by municipalities and regions;

f. adopt the recommendations and specific measures outlined in Recommendation Rec(2003)3 of the Committee of Ministers on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making to increase the

participation of women and men in all decisions that affect them;

g. adopt specific consultation methods to discover the views, wants and needs of women and men about the policies and services they are responsible for in order to improve the participation of women and men in decision-making that concern them;

h. assess new and existing policies for their impact on women and men and change them if necessary to ensure fairness;

i. monitor policies to see if the results of changes are having the required impact;

j. establish or strengthen the structures and machinery, ensuring that they have the necessary financial and human resources to carry out the necessary actions;

k. consider using existing performance-management processes to establish targets to implement gender mainstreaming;

l. adopt a variety of measures to raise the awareness of civil servants at municipal and regional level about the impact their procedures and practices have on the beneficiary women and men and to encourage and embed change;

m. introduce effective and on-going training programmes for civil servants at local and regional level so that they can collect and interpret gender equality indicators, take them spontaneously into account in their field of action and carry out effective consultation exercises, carry out gender impact assessments when defining, implementing and evaluating policies and action and establish effective monitoring and evaluation to assess progress;

n. disseminate to citizens, local and regional actors, elected members and civil servants at local and regional level the information on changes brought about by implementing gender mainstreaming as a way of building support;

o. contribute to a collection of good practices in the area of gender mainstreaming;

p. work with and support the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) Women's Committee,

NGOs and others with expertise in the field to build on and improve existing information and practice on gender mainstreaming;

q. promote the practice of gender mainstreaming through procurement policies and with other organisations that run public services;

r. promote awareness-raising of the importance and effectiveness of gender mainstreaming as a tool to help deliver equality between women and men in the media and through education at all levels;

16. Invites European training organisations:

a. to include gender mainstreaming as a means of ensuring better provisions of public services at local and regional level in trainings for elected representatives and civil servants;

b. to propose specific training sessions on this issue to their members;

c. to disseminate examples of good practice and take advantage of good practices developed in other European training organisations;

17. Calls on the Bureau of the Congress:

a. to encourage the Statutory Committees of the Congress to bear in mind the gender mainstreaming dimension when encouraging local and regional authorities;

b. to support and contribute actively to the organisation of the 17th ENTO Annual Seminar;

c. to consider the preparation and publication of a manual of good practice on gender mainstreaming at local and regional level;

d. to bear in mind the principles laid down in the present resolution in any future revision of the Charter of the Congress with a view to ensure a balanced participation of women and men in Congress work.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 27 May 2004, 3rd Sitting (see Document CG (11) 10, draft resolution presented by Britt-Marie Lövgren (Sweden, L, NR), rapporteur).