

*The work of the Congress of the Council of Europe
on women's rights
and equality between men and women*

Strasbourg, 24 July 2023

The Congress
of Local and Regional Authorities



Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Council of Europe, F-67075 Strasbourg cedex, congress.current-affairs@coe.int, website: <http://www.coe.int/t/congress>

THE CONGRESS

1. APPLIES QUOTAS:

Introduced in 2008, in accordance with the Congress Charter, the participation of a minimum of 30% of women (the under-represented sex) in national delegations has been ensured since 2011 as a precondition for the approval of the credentials of a national delegation.

- In 1994, 84% of the representatives were men while 12% were women.^[1]
- Between 1994 and 2014, 73% (132) of the posts of President and Vice-President were held by men and 27% (49) were held by elected women.
- In 2011, 65% of the representatives were men while 31% were women, compared with 59% men and 41% women in 2023.
- For the first time in 2010, the Vice-presidents of the Congress were in equal numbers. Today (mandate 2021-2026), women constitute 50% (8 out of 16 members) of the executive of the Congress (Bureau).
- And for the first time in 2016, a woman was elected President of the Congress.

2. ADOPTED RESOLUTIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS ON GENDER EQUALITY:

- **[Resolution 487](#) "Reception of women and children refugees in Europe's cities and regions" (2022)** – Rapporteurs Annika VAIKLA (Estonia, ILDG) and Bernd VÖHRINGER (Germany, EPP/CCE)
 - calls on local authorities to take into account the specific vulnerabilities of women refugees and to develop, together with central governments, the necessary legal framework, funding and capacities to address them
 - asks local authorities to work with their national associations, international networks and civil society to share good practices and develop gender-sensitive reception policies
 - encourages local authorities to take specific action to protect women refugees through adapted accommodation, gender-sensitive health services and through actions to combat exploitation and trafficking (helplines, screening mechanisms to identify victims)
- **[Resolution 459](#) "Fighting sexist violence against women in politics at local and regional level" (2020)**– Rapporteur Jelena Drenjanin (Sweden, EPP/CCE)
 - invites local authorities to introduce legislation to combat sexist violence (codes of conduct, complaint and sanction mechanisms)
 - asks local authorities to raise awareness about violence against women in politics and to be particularly vigilant during elections
 - encourages local authorities to collect data regularly and to cooperate with civil society organizations, academia and the private sector to come up with innovative solutions
- **[Resolution 404](#) "Women's participation in public life at local and regional levels: good practices in member States and Congress action" (2016)** - Rapporteur: Inger Linge (Sweden, PPE/CD).

^[1] The percentages are calculated based on the total number of seats of which some are vacant at any given time.

- invites local authorities put into practice the Committee of Ministers Recommendation (2003)³ on balanced participation, to ensure that the representation of either women or men in any decision-making body in political or public life should not fall below 40%;
- invites local authorities to evaluate progress in achieving balanced participation by developing gender-disaggregated statistics and tools for gender monitoring of nominations and elections analysing their evolution.
- **Resolution 405 “Gender budgeting” (2016)** – Rapporteur: Cathy Bennett (Ireland, NI).
 - recommends that local and regional authorities introduce gender budgeting methods in their annual budgets and exchange experience and good practice with those cities and regions which already practice this approach;
 - encourages the national associations of local and regional authorities to encourage and support local and regional authorities to develop pilot projects to introduce gender budgeting.
- **Resolution 391 “Fighting the increasing poverty of women: the responsibility of local and regional authorities” (2015)** – Rapporteur : Jean-Louis TESTUD, France (L, EPP/CCE)
 - invites local and regional authorities to adopt policies and take measures that will prevent the victims of austerity policies from falling into ‘chronic’ poverty;
 - invites local and regional authorities to establish statistical tools to measure women’s income poverty.

The Committee of Ministers replied to our recommendation positively on 15 April 2016 and invited member States to “redress the potential detrimental effects on gender equality when making decisions on economic and employment policies as well as social spending”, with particular attention to establishing sex and age-disaggregated statistical tools to measure women’s income in relation to poverty thresholds.

- **Resolution 393 and Recommendation 383 on conditions of office for elected representatives (2015)** - Rapporteur Frida Johansson Metso, (Sweden, ILDG) and Tracey Simpson-Laing, (United Kingdom, SOC)
 - urge local and regional authorities to recognise the duties of elected representatives in monetary terms and to provide them with the necessary support and resources;
 - invite local media and municipal offices to promote a positive image of the diversity of a city council and of a wide range of profiles for elected representatives in order to encourage participation from all citizens in local and regional elections;
 - encourage equal access of elected representatives to positions in local and regional spheres, both those in full time employment and those with family duties;
 - prevent citizens being disadvantaged from seeking local and regional elected office by reason of their family and career duties, or those submitted to financial and material constraints; encourage prevention of

harassment towards elected representatives and draw up guidelines on how to deal with such cases.

- **[Resolution 303](#) on “Achieving sustainable gender equality in local and regional political life” (2010)** – Rapporteur: Britt-Marie Lövgren (Sweden, GILD)
 - encourages women to run for office and stand for election;
 - calls for adequate training to elected officials and their staff;
 - proposes to political parties a new approach to selecting candidates.
- Recommendation
- **[Resolution 176](#) on “Gender mainstreaming at local and regional level: a strategy to promote equality between women and men in cities and regions” (2004)** – Rapporteur: Britt-Marie Lövgren (Sweden, NI)
 - invites local authorities to adopt a strategy in order to promote equality between women and men in cities and regions.
- **[Recommendation 128](#) (2003) on the revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life** - rapporteur Mrs B. Fäldt
 - proposes identification and implementation of measures to eradicate inequalities between men and women and promotes the equal opportunities for all;
 - invites local and regional authorities to support a gender equality policy in professional field by guaranteeing the equal access of women and men to positions of responsibility in public and political spheres, respecting a quota of places reserved for women;
 - promotes gender equality in field of education, providing young women with adequate professional qualifications and give them an access to professions, traditionally filled by men;
 - proposes to introduce financial support for social services involved in women’s issues.

3. CONTRIBUTED TO ACTIONS FIGHTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:

- During 2006-2008, the Congress was actively involved in the “Stop domestic violence against women” campaign, launched a poster campaign in streets and subways of many European cities with the slogan “Cities and regions take a stand” (Spain, Italy, Iceland, Malta, Serbia, Portugal, Ukraine); organised round tables, created a website; published a book.
- In co-operation with the PACE, the Congress organised a photo exhibition entitled “Break the silence on domestic violence”, inaugurated in 2008 and conducted in several cities.
- In 2009, the Congress adopted **[Resolution 279](#) and [Recommendation 260](#) on combatting domestic violence against women** and called for the development of strategies and measures at local level, to prevent and combat violence against women – Rapporteur: Sandra Barnes (UK, EPP/CD).

- In 2020, the Congress produced a [guide](#) on “Preventing and Combatting Sexism at local level in Ukraine”. The aim is to enhance women’s political participation and representation at local and regional levels. It presents concrete and practical measures to combat sexism. It is intended for use by local authorities but also by potential targets of sexist violence and gender-based discrimination.

CONGRESS THEMATIC SPOKESPERSON ON GENDER EQUALITY

Eirini DOUROU (SOC/G/PD, Greece)
