

Resolution 303 (2010)¹

Achieving sustainable gender equality in local and regional political life

1. All Council of Europe member states guarantee legal equality between women and men, including the right to stand for election, to vote and to be elected. In practice, however, there are considerable restrictions on these rights.
2. In European local and regional political life, elected representatives do not always represent the diversity of the whole population.
3. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe considers equality between men and women as an integral part of human rights and as a fundamental criterion for democracy. This presupposes the visibility, empowerment and equal participation of both sexes in all the fields of private and public life. Thanks to their proximity to the population, local and regional authorities can take the decisions which promote gender equality and influence citizens' everyday lives.
4. They can act in sectors of activity relating to local and regional governance, particularly in their political role and their role as employers, in the field of public procurement, service provision, sustainable development and town planning, access to municipal amenities and international co-operation.
5. In accordance with the Committee of Ministers' decisions,² the Congress undertakes to respect the principle of equality between women and men within its own institution. In this connection, it welcomes the fact that since its 15th session in May 2008, in pursuance of its Charter,³ the delegations of all member states have comprised a minimum of 30% women, taking full and substitute members together. Being resolved to continue along this same road, the Congress:
 - a. invites national delegations henceforth to apply this minimum level both to full members and to substitute members, and as far as possible to attain a level of 40% in compliance with 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;
 - b. as part of the implementation of this resolution, decides to regularly monitor the gender distribution within the Congress and to publish the data (covering full and substitute members, chairs of committees, political and working groups and rapporteurs) at each session.
6. Furthermore, the Congress decides to:
 - a. ask its bodies, observers and partners, to provide for gender mainstreaming in all their activities;
 - b. include the gender dimension in the founding texts of any body set up at the initiative of the Congress and ensure that this dimension is taken into account in such body's activities;
 - c. to alert its Secretariat to gender equality and provide staff training with a view to taking account of this issue in all Congress activities.
7. Furthermore, the Congress recalls its Resolution 176 (2004) on gender mainstreaming at local and regional level: a strategy to promote equality between women and men in cities and regions, and considers that this strategy must be backed up with practical action.
8. The Congress accordingly invites local and regional authorities to give active impetus and political support by:
 - a. encouraging women to stand for elections and fulfil their mandates in order to make councils and assemblies more representative of populations (diversity of generations, origins and experiences encountered in the community) by:
 - i. ensuring the renewal of persons having political mandates;
 - ii. inducing elected representatives to encourage and attract women to stand for election;
 - iii. ensuring that no one has to use their own private funds because they have to campaign for or hold office;
 - b. building or developing their capacity to deliver measures and services taking account of gender differences by:

- i. gathering information on who uses and benefits from their services and the nature of these services. broken down by gender and by other relevant categories;
- ii. designing and adopting action plans on promoting equality, involving women's organisations: setting clear goals, drawing up a timetable and establishing a monitoring system, while ensuring that the elected representatives are kept informed and that managers are held to account for the requisite progress;
- iii. providing the individuals working for local and regional authorities with the tools and support to discharge their duties effectively and equitably;
- iv. training the elected representatives and administrative staff in the equality issue and in such tools as gender budgeting;
- v. helping reconcile private and working life (adapting meeting timetables, supporting child care, etc.);
- vi. helping women accede to higher-level administrative posts;
- vii. alerting and involving trade unions for local and regional officials;
- c. show care with their internal and external communication and that of their elected representatives by:
 - i. combating gender stereotypes;
 - ii. rejecting sexist behaviour in political life, which would be unacceptable in any other context, and prohibiting discriminatory attitudes;
 - iii. providing a positive image of both female and male elected representatives, and making their action more visible by means of information campaigns on the role of such representatives;
 - d. facilitating access by women, especially those standing for election or elected representatives, to the local media.

9. The Congress proposes a new approach for political parties whose involvement is vital if women are to be able to stand for election, including:

- a. in selecting candidates, prioritise an ability to represent the concerns and experiences of the communities rather than long experience as elected representatives;
- b. conduct positive action in order to increase the number of women selected and to publicly show their support for female candidates;
- c. have a gender balance in the selection of executive roles rather than relying on seniority alone;
- d. encourage the setting up of women's networks.

10. Lastly, the Congress recommends that European local and regional authorities formalise their commitment to greater equality for all by signing the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life initiated by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)⁴ and by implementing this charter in their respective areas on the basis of the tools (guides and indicators) proposed for evaluating progress.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 19 March 2010, 3rd Sitting (see Document CG(18)10, explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: B.-M. Lövgren (Sweden, L, ILDG).

2. 1040th meeting, 5 November 2008.

3. Charter of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (2 May 2007), Article 2, paragraph 2.d.

4. See www.ccre.org.