

CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE

Resolution 134 (2002)¹ on women's individual voting rights: a democratic requirement

The Congress,

1. 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;

2. 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 Europe and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in recent years, which have highlighted the practice of family voting in some fifteen European countries;

3. 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 political citizens;

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

5. Calls on local and regional authorities:

a. to encourage twinning and partnerships between local and regional authorities in member states as, *inter alia*, a means of supporting best democratic electoral practices;

b. to support and facilitate activities of non-governmental organisations which aim to promote women's education and the exercise of their fundamental rights, including individual voting rights;

c. to raise awareness of women's equal political and civil rights and promote best voting practices through print and

broadcast media, seminars or public campaigns. These programmes are designed to tackle sexist attitudes and language and are modelled on the media awareness campaigns developed by the Stability Pact Gender Task Force;

6. Calls on the Bureau of the Congress:

a. to encourage follow-up to this activity, in particular the holding of seminars during pre-election awareness-raising campaigns, which would provide an opportunity for discussion with representatives of electoral commissions, democracy-building organisations and women's non-governmental organisations;

b. to give particular attention to the practice of family voting during election observation missions and to emphasise the inappropriateness of such practices in a democracy;

c. to update its *Election Observation Handbook* and to give particular attention to the practice of family voting during election observation missions;

7. Calls on non-governmental organisations:

a. to develop their activities as pressure groups working for equality in the political process, with special emphasis on women's equal right to vote;

b. to promote information, especially among men's organisations, on the importance of women's participation in public life and elections;

c. to initiate and/or develop activities and training programmes aimed at informing women about their civil and political rights – such as the programme for developing women's active citizenship of the Stability Pact Gender Task Force, which could serve as a model;

d. to monitor elections in their localities in order to assess the extent of women's participation in voting and submit a report to the electoral commission regarding the pattern of women's participation and the extent to which women were free to cast their ballot in secret.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 6 June 2002, 3rd Sitting (see Doc. CG (9) 7, draft resolution, presented by Mrs D. Bunyan, rapporteur).