



## Resolution 1898 (2012)<sup>1</sup>

# Political parties and women's political representation

Parliamentary Assembly

1. In Council of Europe member States, women represent approximately 51% of the population and yet only approximately 23% of members of national parliaments are women. This average figure hides a huge gap between a handful of countries in which women's representation in parliament exceeds 40% (Andorra, Finland, Netherlands, Sweden) and many more countries in which it is under 20% (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Estonia, Lithuania, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Romania, San Marino, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Turkey), or in some cases even under 10% (Georgia, Hungary, Malta, Russian Federation, Ukraine).
2. Although it is widely acknowledged that the low proportion of women in parliament affects its representativeness, introducing and implementing effective measures to redress this imbalance has proved to be a major challenge.
3. Thirteen member States have tried to tackle it by introducing in their electoral legislation the obligation for electoral lists to include a minimum proportion of women (legislated quotas), a measure that has been repeatedly supported by the Parliamentary Assembly in numerous texts, including [Resolution 1706 \(2010\)](#) on increasing women's representation in politics through the electoral system.
4. In addition, many political parties from approximately 30 member States have voluntarily introduced gender quotas in order to promote women's chances of being elected, or other equivalent tools such as "all-women lists". Political parties have also resorted to a wealth of other measures to ensure women's active participation in their internal structures, place them in positions of visibility and responsibility and support their development.
5. The Assembly believes that, as key protagonists in pluralist democracies, political parties have a decisive role to play in enhancing women's political representation: in addition to ensuring strict compliance with electoral legislation, including on legislated quotas, and introducing voluntary measures, they are well placed to promote a change of culture conducive to gender equality in politics and in society at large.
6. On the basis of the positive experience of some of them, the Assembly recommends the following good practices to political parties in Council of Europe member and observer States, as well as partners for democracy:
  - 6.1. introducing a formal commitment to gender equality and gender mainstreaming in their statute;
  - 6.2. organising campaigns and activities to attract women's membership;
  - 6.3. setting up women-only structures and allocating them with adequate funding, and giving them control over how to spend it;
  - 6.4. ensuring that party structures which select candidates to stand for election are fully representative of society, and therefore include a proportional presence of women;
  - 6.5. ensuring maximum transparency in the procedure for the selection of candidates to stand for election;

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1. Assembly debate on 2 October 2012 (31st Sitting) (see [Doc. 13022](#), report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Stavrositu). Text adopted by the Assembly on 3 October 2012 (32nd Sitting).

- 6.6. introducing a minimum quota of 40% of the under-represented sex in their executive decision-making bodies at all levels;
  - 6.7. in the case of proportional electoral systems, introducing a minimum quota of 40% of the under-represented sex in the electoral lists, accompanied by special gender safeguards as regards the ranking order and the positions at the top of the list, preferably through a zipper-system;
  - 6.8. in the case of majoritarian electoral systems, encouraging the shortlisting of candidates of the under-represented gender, if appropriate through “all-women shortlists” or priority lists with an equal number of people of either sex;
  - 6.9. setting up mentoring and training programmes to enhance the capacity of talented women to take up positions of political responsibility;
  - 6.10. setting up training programmes to strengthen women’s media skills and ensure that women members are given a fair chance to speak on behalf of the party on a broad range of issues;
  - 6.11. ensuring that, during electoral campaigns, the broadcasting time allocated to the party is proportionally shared by women and men candidates;
  - 6.12. setting up measures to enable members to reconcile political engagement and family commitments, for instance by providing free childcare during important party events or during electoral campaigns, and avoiding in so far as possible that party meetings take place at unsociable hours;
  - 6.13. setting up systems to regularly assess and discuss gender distribution in political party structures and party mandates, for instance by foreseeing that the party leader reports on this matter on an annual basis;
  - 6.14. trying to reach cross-party agreement on the need and ways to enhance women’s participation and representation in politics.
7. Furthermore, the Assembly calls on member States to:
- 7.1. introduce legislation which makes it possible for parties to resort to positive action in support of the under-represented sex, also in the electoral field;
  - 7.2. set up special financial allocations for political parties which take positive action to promote women’s representation or participation, such as the introduction of gender quotas;
  - 7.3. introduce and consistently implement an effective system of sanctions against political parties which do not comply with gender-related legal obligations;
  - 7.4. conduct an audit to assess to what extent the electoral system is geared towards achieving gender equality;
  - 7.5. widely publicise the “Guidelines on political party regulations”, published in 2010 by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR) and the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), which include examples of good practice while reviewing the main human rights instruments relevant for the issue of women’s political representation.
8. Recalling that women represent only 31% of its members and that they are under-represented in all the main positions of responsibility in the Assembly and its structures, the Assembly calls on its political groups to:
- 8.1. take into account gender distribution in the context of the negotiations for the allocation of seats in committees’ bureaux and the appointment of candidates to be put forward by the groups, so as to ensure that the overall gender breakdown of committees’ bureaux includes 40% of the under-represented sex, both among committee chairs and vice-chairs;
  - 8.2. pay increased attention to gender distribution in relation to all appointments/elections which take place within the groups, for group, Assembly and committee positions, with a view to achieving equal representation between women and men in all key positions of responsibility;
  - 8.3. ensure that the gender dimension is taken into account in all group discussions (gender mainstreaming);
  - 8.4. if they have not already done so, consider setting up an all-women structure;

8.5. hold regular discussions on how to improve women's participation and representation in the work of the Assembly and its structures.

9. Finally, recalling its [Resolution 1781 \(2010\)](#) on a minimum of 30% of representatives of the under-represented sex in Assembly national delegations, in which it decided "to strengthen its dialogue with national parliaments on this question" and considered that "awareness-raising activities targeted at certain national delegations could also serve a useful purpose", the Assembly proposes to organise seminars on women's political representation for the parliaments of member States in which women's representation is below 10%.