



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 30.05.1996  
COM(96) 252 final

95/0308 (CNS)

Amended proposal for a

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION

**on the balanced participation of  
women and men in decision-making**

(presented by the Commission pursuant to Article 189 a(2)  
of the EC Treaty)



## EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

1. The initial proposal for a Council Recommendation was adopted by the Commission on 29 November 1995 (COM(95) 593 final). Its aim is to encourage the Member States to examine the question of the balance between women and men in all areas of decision-making (economic, political, social and cultural), and to adopt a comprehensive and integrated strategy to achieve such a balance.
2. The Economic and Social Committee delivered favourable opinion on this initial proposal (24 April 1996)
3. At its plenary of May 24th, the European Parliament voted 36 amendments, of which 8 are acceptable by the Commission in toto and 1 in part (2, 8, 10, 14, 19, 25, 26, 31, 35). The accepted amendments strengthen and broaden the scope of the initial proposal in terms of:
  - the importance of reconciling professional and family life,
  - the close links between the decision-making process and women's participation in the labour market as well as mainstreaming.
  - the need for public campaigns
  - the monitoring and evaluation of targets
  - the promotion of entrepreneurship of women
4. The amendments which are not accepted can be separated into **three** groups:

Those which:

- propose changes to the meaning of the text that do not appear to add anything useful (1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 30, 32)
- propose completely new concepts which are not yet developed sufficiently either by the Commission or the Member States (5, 9, 13, 28, 29, 33).
- refer to areas where Commission has the right of initiative (36) or propose activities for the Commission which fall outside its present competences (34).

The amended proposal takes into account those amendments which have been accepted by the Commission.

COM (95) 593 final

PROPOSAL FOR

A COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON  
THE BALANCED PARTICIPATION OF  
WOMEN AND MEN IN DECISION-  
MAKING

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN  
UNION,

having regard to the Treaty establishing the  
European Community, and in particular  
Article 235 thereof,

having regard to the Commission's proposal,

having regard to the opinion of the  
European Parliament,

having regard to the opinion of the  
Economic and Social Committee,

having regard to the opinion of the  
Committee of the Regions,

Whereas the Council has adopted a series  
of legislative instruments and political  
commitments in the field of equal treatment  
and opportunities for men and women;

Whereas the Heads of State and  
Government, meeting within the European  
Council in Essen and Cannes, stressed that  
equal opportunities for women and men and  
the fight against unemployment were  
paramount tasks of the European Union and  
its Member States;

**AMENDED PROPOSAL FOR**

A COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON  
THE BALANCED PARTICIPATION OF  
WOMEN AND MEN IN DECISION-  
MAKING

Whereas attention was focused on women's access to decision-making in the Council Recommendation of 13 December 1984 on the promotion of positive action for women, in the Council Resolution of 24 July 1986 on the promotion of equal opportunities for women and in the Council Resolution of 21 May 1991 on the Third Medium-Term Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1991-1995);

Whereas the Council Resolution of 27 March 1995 on the balanced participation of women and men in decision-making called on the Member States to "promote the balanced participation of men and women in decision-making as a priority objective in the context of their respective practices regarding equal opportunities for women and men and to adopt this objective as such in their government's programmes" and, moreover, called upon the Commission "to draw up a draft recommendation to be submitted to the Council aimed at promoting the balanced participation of women and men in decision-making";

Whereas the European Parliament in its Resolution of 11 February 1994 "on women in decision-making bodies" asked the Commission "to step up implementation of the equal opportunities policy ... to combat individual obstacles which hinder women from taking part in decision-making" and to define "measures and actions to promote greater participation of women in the decision-making process";

Whereas the European Commission's Fourth Medium-Term Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1996 to 2000), which has been submitted to the Council for decision, included promotion of the balanced participation of women and men in decision-making as one of its six main objectives;

Whereas the Declaration and the Action Platform of the Fourth World Conference on Women stressed the need to ensure that responsibilities, powers and rights are shared equally, and that the Member States are fully involved in the implementation of the platform for action;

Whereas the underrepresentation of women in decision-making bodies is largely a result of the delay in women's attaining equal rights and of obstacles to their gaining economic independence;

Whereas the underrepresentation of women in decision-making bodies is largely a result of the delay in women's attaining equal rights and of obstacles to their gaining economic independence; as well as of the difficulty of combining the pursuit of a career with family life;

Whereas women are still underrepresented in such bodies – be they public or private, political, administrative, economic, social or cultural;

Whereas women account for over half the population and balanced participation of women and men in representation and administration of nations is a requirement for democracy;

Whereas the underrepresentation of women in decision-making posts constitutes a loss for society as a whole and does not allow the interests and needs of the whole population to be catered for in full;

(new)

Whereas the aim of improving women's participation in the decision-making process cannot be divorced from employment policy given the disadvantage to women of continuing segregation in the labour market and the increasing casualization of female labour;

(new)

Whereas measures aimed at achieving equal participation of women and men in the decision-making process in all sectors must go hand in hand with the goal of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all Community policies;

Whereas a balanced participation of men and women in decision-making is likely to give rise to different ideas, values and behaviour which will result in more justice and equality in the world for both men and women;

Whereas the Member States, the social partners, political parties and organisations, NGOs and the media have a key role to play in creating a society where public and private, economic, political and domestic responsibilities are shared equally by women and men;

Whereas, in conformity with the principle of subsidiarity and proportionality as set out in Article 3B of the Treaty establishing the European Community, the aim of the present Recommendation -the balanced participation of women and men in decision-making- can be pursued more effectively by the exchange of information and examples of good practice within a common framework for all Member States; it is therefore appropriate to propose, at Community level, guidelines to promote a balanced representation of women and men in decision-making bodies; whereas the present recommendation is limited to the minimum necessary to obtain this objective and does not exceed what is necessary;

Whereas, in conformity with the principle of subsidiarity and proportionality as set out in Article 3B of the Treaty establishing the European Community, the aim of the present Recommendation -the balanced participation of women and men in decision-making- can be pursued more effectively by the exchange of information and examples of good practice within a common framework for all Member States; it is therefore appropriate to propose, at Community level, guidelines to promote balanced participation by women and men in decision-making bodies with a view to achieving equality between women and men; whereas the present recommendation is limited to the minimum necessary to obtain this objective and does not exceed what is necessary;

Whereas the Treaty does not confer, for the purpose of the adoption of this Recommendation, any other powers that those set out in article 235,

**RECOMMENDS THAT THE MEMBER STATES:**

1. Adopt a comprehensive and integrated strategy designed to promote balanced representation of women and men in places of power, influence and decision, and develop or introduce suitable legislative or regulatory measures or incentives to achieve this.
2.
  - a) Highlight in school textbooks and curricula and in education and training at all levels the role and the contribution of women in society and stress the importance of sharing both public and private responsibilities between women and men,

- b) Take suitable steps so that the image of women and men in the media and advertising neither reinforces nor consolidates unjustified stereotyping of men's and women's responsibilities,
  - c) Devise, encourage and propagate public campaigns to alert public opinion to the usefulness and advantages for society as a whole of balanced participation by women and men in decision-making,
  - c) Devise, encourage and propagate public campaigns targeted at men and women to raise awareness of the usefulness and advantages for society as a whole of balanced participation by women and men in decision-making, including among others campaigns run in conjunction with elections. Ensure proper evaluation of these campaigns to guarantee their effectiveness;
  - d) Alert the social partners, political parties and groups, associations and NGOs and the media to the importance of a balance between women and men in decision-making bodies, and encourage them to develop equal opportunities plans with measures to ease access to decision-making for women.
- 3.
- a) Develop or promote the production and publication of statistics illustrating how men and women are represented in decision-making circles in general and in political and administrative domains, public councils and committees, administrative and management boards at national, regional and local level and in the economy and social and cultural life in particular,

b) Support, develop and encourage quantitative and qualitative studies on women and men in decision-making and especially on the legal, social or cultural obstacles to decision-making for persons of either sex, on ideas and concepts which are likely to enhance the concept of a democratic partnership between women and men and on strategies to bring about equality in decision-making,

c) Support and encourage initiatives creating examples of good practice in the various areas of decision-making and develop programmes for the dissemination and exchange of experience with a view to propagating such practice.

4.

a) Promote a better balance between women and men at all levels of government,

b) Introduce or pursue active measures, such as mentorship activities and target figures, to promote a balance between women and men in political representation at national, regional and local level, including advisory bodies which contribute to public decision-making. Particular attention should be paid to the promotion of a balanced composition in committees, commissions and working groups at national as well as European level.

b) Introduce or pursue active measures, such as mentorship activities and target figures with timetables and effective monitoring of these targets, to promote women's access to political representation with a view to achieving equal representation of women and men at national, regional and local level, including advisory bodies which contribute to public decision-making, and ensure that all such measures are monitored, documented and evaluated. Particular attention should be paid to the promotion of a balanced composition in committees, commissions and working groups at national as well as European level.

4b(a)(new)

Review the differential impact of electoral systems on the political representation of women in elected bodies and consider, where appropriate, the adjustment or reform of these systems.

- c) Implement or develop equal opportunities plans for the **public sector** incorporating the concept of balanced participation in decision-making, and ensure, when recruitment competitions take place, that women and men are, as far as possible, represented equally in the committees responsible for preparing competitions and in the selection boards,
- d) Encourage the **private sector** to increase the presence of women at all levels of decision-making, notably by the adoption, or within the framework, of equality plans or positive action programmes,

4d(a)(new)

Provide for programmes and measures to promote female entrepreneurship and give women greater access to the professions.

- e) Encourage **press, radio and television** organisations to adopt measures to promote balanced participation by women and men in production, management and decision-making bodies,

AND THEREFORE CALLS ON THE COMMISSION:

1. to step up its efforts to provide information, alert public opinion, encourage research and promote pilot activities to achieve balanced participation by women and men in decision-making,
  2. to encourage and organise, in conjunction with the Member States, systematic pooling of experience and assessment of policies implemented to achieve a balance between women and men in decision-making,
  3. to submit a report to the Council, within three years of adoption of this Recommendation, on progress achieved in implementing it on the basis of information provided by the Member States.
3. to submit a report to the European Parliament and the Council, within three years of adoption of this Recommendation, on progress achieved in implementing it on the basis of information provided by the Member States.



# DOCUMENTS

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