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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION  
TO THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT  
AND THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE**

**ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION 96/694 OF  
2<sup>ND</sup> DECEMBER 1996 ON THE BALANCED PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND  
MEN IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In order to redress the under representation of women which amounts to a democratic deficit in addition to being an under utilisation of human resources the Council on 2 December 1996 adopted a Recommendation on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making processes through:

- an integrated strategy to promote a balanced participation of women and men,
- including awareness raising campaigns
- the collection of data,
- encouraging examples of good practice and
- the promotion of a gender balance at all levels of governmental bodies and committees.

The Recommendation calls on the Commission to report on its implementation to the European Parliament, the Council and the Economic and Social Committee, for the first time three years after the adoption. The present reports fulfils this obligation.

It reveals that in spite of a host of different measures adopted by Member States the under representation of women in governments and Parliaments, and committees preparing decisions as well as in the higher levels of the labour market has not changed considerably.

The average percentage of women in the governments of all Member States and EEA countries is 24.5% and 22.5% in the national parliaments, varying from 6.3% in Greece to 43.6% in Sweden. The number of women in committees preparing decisions is even lower. Even in those countries (Belgium and Germany) where data on the composition of committees is collected systematically and where laws provide for an equal or a minimum of a one third participation of the underrepresented sex in decision-making bodies, the percentage of women is only 18.68 % and 12.2% respectively. A considerable number of committees do not have even one woman (28.7% in Germany ).

Efforts and results vary considerably in the Member States of the European Union and the European institutions. As the Recommendation does not define the term "balanced participation" Member States have a choice which percentage of women in decision-making bodies they consider as being balanced. Whereas the Scandinavian countries and the United Kingdom target a 50% participation, most countries consider a participation rate of at least 30% to constitute the critical mass above which women or men can exercise any real influence.

Substantive progress in women's participation has been shown in countries with longstanding traditions of equal opportunities policies such as Sweden and Finland with a participation of 52.6% and 44.4% of women in the governments respectively. 68% of Finnish public sector committees have a female participation of 44%.

The balanced participation of women and men in decision-making is increasingly recognised as a requirement for democracy, as well as having a positive outcome for society, in that different ideas and values will be fed into the decision-making process, leading to results which take into account the interests and needs of the whole population. What is needed to

promote gender balance is a policy mix including – as the most important factor – long term political commitment, sound statistics, regular monitoring, appropriate structures – depending on the culture of the Member States – anchored in legislation and the provision of financial resources.

There is growing awareness for the need to recruit and promote qualified women in most European institutions and many of them have adopted positive action policies to redress the staff balance. Less has been done on the gender balance in committees.

While legislative measures have some impact on the public sector, the private sector needs particular attention and possibly a different approach. Austria, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Finland and the United Kingdom are promoting projects aimed at making employers aware of the economic benefits of employing women. More progress also needs to be made regarding women in senior positions in the civil service and public sector bodies.

The report has revealed a certain lack of comparable data submitted to the Commission which has not facilitated the systematic evaluation of developments. Discussion should be encouraged in the Council with a view to improving the collection of data and an eventual decision on new action.

## **INTRODUCTION**

With the aim of increasing the number of women in the decision - making process, and thereby altering the content of decisions, the Council adopted the Recommendation on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process on 2 December 1996. The Recommendation calls on the Commission to submit a report on its implementation to the European Parliament, the Council and the Economic and Social Committee, for the first time three years after adoption.

Following this obligation the Commission has prepared the present report. It is based on the information provided by Member States, the EEA<sup>1</sup> States and the Community institutions in response to a questionnaire sent to them by the Commission<sup>2</sup>. It should be noted that some Member States and some institutions replied in much more detail than others, and this is reflected in the report. The high lighting of good examples in the text does, therefore not exclude the existence of good practice in other Member States or European institutions. The number of legal and policy initiatives varies hugely across the Member States. These two factors explain why there is more detail on some Member States than on others.

The overall objective of the Recommendation was to encourage Member States to promote a more balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process, and to adopt specific measures to achieve this goal<sup>3</sup>. Priority for intervention is given to three directions: how to change attitudes and behaviour (para 2), how to improve knowledge (para 3) and how to facilitate women's participation in politics and in the public and private sectors (para 4). The Recommendation followed the Council Resolution of 27 March 1995 on the balanced participation of women and men in decision-making<sup>4</sup>, which in turn was the response to the

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<sup>1</sup> The Recommendation applies to the EEA states by virtue of the EEA Joint Committee decision 35/97 of 29.5.97, OJ L270, 2.10.1997, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Annex II.

<sup>3</sup> Annex I.

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 168/3, 4.7.1995.

European Parliament's resolution of 11 February 1994 on women in decision-making bodies, in which it called on the Member States to take specific action in this area.

The balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process is a key element in the achievement of real equality between the sexes. The Community has been one of the prime promoters of changing the status of women in society and guaranteeing their right to equality. The legal principle of equal pay for equal work has been included in the Treaty of Rome, and is now a fundamental principle of Community law. The Amsterdam Treaty takes the Community beyond the guarantee of formal equality, towards a more proactive approach of aiming to eliminate inequality and promote equality between women and men<sup>5</sup> in all Community policies. It also allows the Member States to adopt measures of positive action to ensure full equality in practice between women and men in working life<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Article 3(2).

<sup>6</sup> Article 141(4).

## **1. THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY ACTION IN PROMOTING GENDER BALANCE IN DECISION-MAKING**

In the 1990s considerable progress was made towards gender balance in political decision-making in the European Union, although there is still a long way to go. From 1991 to 1999 the number of women in the European Parliament increased from 19% to 30%, in the European Commission from 10% to 25% and in the Member States Governments from 11% to 23%. This progress was the result of a systematic and continuing effort of the Community. Specific European institutions such as the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council played a crucial role, as did individual women in NGOs and in key decision-making posts.

The Council Recommendation on the balanced participation of women and men in decision-making is the result of a longer process started in 1984 with the Council Recommendation on the promotion of positive action<sup>7</sup>. Its adoption in December 1996 coincided with the completion of the first phase of Community action initiated five years before within the framework of the Third Action Programme on Equal Opportunities (1991-1995). This programme was the first Community instrument to introduce the question of decision-making as a major area where progress was needed to reinforce equality in the labour market. Political decision-making was specifically identified as an area requiring attention.

Under the Third Action Programme, the Commission initiated a wide range of activities including research and the raising of visibility and awareness. Major events such as the European Conferences in Athens (1992) and Rome (1996) produced important political declarations, - the Athens Declaration and the Charter of Rome-, which were signed by women in high political posts. The European campaign "Vote for a Gender Balance in the European Parliament" contributed to a substantial increase of women in the Parliament in 1994, and was underpinned by the development of political, social and economic arguments. The gathering of data from across the EU revealed the extent of the problem and made political leaders aware of the importance of reducing the gender gap in this area. The constant and systematic work of the experts network "Women in Decision-Making", set up by the Commission within the framework of this programme, co-ordinated national action and facilitated change through the creation of a new favourable context at national and European level<sup>8</sup>.

Within this context, the European Parliament produced a report<sup>9</sup> and the Council of Ministers adopted a Resolution<sup>10</sup> on the balanced participation of women and men in decision-making posts. This Resolution called for the presentation of a proposal for a Council Recommendation. The adoption of the Beijing Platform of Action in summer 1995 facilitated the Member States' commitment to this objective.

The second phase of Community action started after the Recommendation in the framework of the Fourth Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities (1996-2000). Gender balance in decision-making was a major priority; its qualitative aspects as well as the development of indicators were innovative elements of the programme. Most of the activities

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<sup>7</sup> 84/635/EEC.

<sup>8</sup> Panorama of Activities CE-05-97-575- EUR-OP.

<sup>9</sup> EP 205.666 of 27.1.1994.

<sup>10</sup> OJ C 168 of 4.7.1995 p. 3.

carried out by the programme supported Member States in the implementation of the Council Recommendation. A large number of projects were developed to further the different goals set out in the Recommendation.

The systematic collection of data on women's participation in European, national, and regional governments, assemblies and elections was ensured by Frauen Computer Zentrum in Berlin and is available on the Internet. Networks of Women's or Equality Committees of National Parliaments and of Women elected at regional and local level have reinforced links between women politicians. The programme also co-funded projects dealing with the theoretical concepts relating to women's participation in the public sphere and the organisation of transnational events at the occasion of different elections. All these projects contributed directly or indirectly to the implementation of the Council Recommendation.

Specific technical assistance to Member States for the development of integrated national strategies enhancing women's participation in decision-making was offered by the Commission, which brought together key people and organisations active in the field at national level and provided a forum for exchange and dissemination of good practice already under way in many countries. The publication of the guide "How to create a gender balance in political decision-making" in 1997 in all Community languages served as a tool for the political parties and NGOs active in this field.

In April 1999, following in the footsteps of the Athens and Rome European Conferences, a high level conference jointly convened by the Commission and the French Government brought together Ministers from all the Member States. Under the title "Women and Men in Power: A caring society, a dynamic economy, a vision for Europe" all the major questions on concepts, methods and mechanisms for advancing gender balance in decision-making were debated at the conference. The Paris Declaration was signed by the participating Ministers in charge of equal opportunities who committed their governments to speeding up efforts in this field.

Following the Council Conclusions of 2 December 1998 the Council on 22 October 1999 took note of the report of the Finnish Presidency on the review of the implementation by the Member States and the European institutions of the Beijing Platform for action<sup>11</sup> and the nine indicators developed for measuring progress in the field of decision-making

1. The proportion of women in the single/lower houses of the national/federal Parliaments of the Member States and in the European Parliament;
2. The proportion of women in the regional Parliaments of the Member States, where appropriate;
3. The proportion of women in the local assemblies of the Member States;
4. Policies to promote a balanced participation in political elections;
5. The proportion of women in the national/federal Governments and the proportion of women members of the European Commission;

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<sup>11</sup> SI (1999) 873.

5. The number of women and men senior/junior ministers in the different fields of action (portfolios/ministries) of the national/federal governments of the Member States;
7. Proportion of the highest ranking civil servants who are women;
8. The distribution of the highest ranking women civil servants in different fields of action;
9. The proportion of women judges in the Supreme Courts of the Member States and the proportion of women judges in the European Court of Justice and the Court of First Instance.

The report concluded that - whatever the sector – women are underrepresented, that an interim goal should be to have a minimum of 30% of women at all levels of power and decision-making, that a lack of common concepts and problems of data were found in the area of officially appointed committees and in government appointed delegations to international organisations and relating to candidates in public elections , that more investigation is needed before data collection principles can be laid down in these areas. These were the fields pointed out as tentative indicators for future consideration.

The Commission, in order to promote a more gender balanced approach in the field of research policy, committed itself in the implementation of the Fifth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development in 1999, to appoint women to make up 40% of the members of consultative assemblies, expert advisory groups and assessment and monitoring panels in the field of research<sup>12</sup>, an initiative welcomed by the Council, which adopted a resolution of its own in May 1999 on "Women in Science", confirming its own commitment to promoting equality in this area. The Commission is currently examining ways and mechanisms to improve the gender balance in all advisory committees established by itself and in its expert groups.

In the light of the Council Recommendation other European institutions have initiated action. The European Parliament in its report on the Recommendation<sup>13</sup> stressed its importance and called for integrated action to reach a higher share of women. The Committee of the Regions in its Resolution<sup>14</sup> encouraged Member States to appoint a higher proportion of women among their quota of national representatives in the Committee.

All the above actions have been systematically reported in specific chapters in the 1996, 1997 and 1998 Annual Reports on Equal Opportunities between Women and Men<sup>15</sup>.

## **2. SITUATION IN THE MEMBER STATES**

This report examines the situation in the Member States in respect of the four priorities laid down in the Recommendation:

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<sup>12</sup> COM(1999)76 final.

<sup>13</sup> EP 214.950, 1996.

<sup>14</sup> Resolution 237/97.

<sup>15</sup> CE-98-96-566, CE-13-98-823, CE-18-98-493.

- Adoption of a comprehensive, integrated strategy designed to promote balanced participation in the decision-making process;
- Mobilising all the actors in economic and social life to achieve equal opportunities;
- Promotion of the collection and publication of statistics to provide a clearer picture of how women and men are represented in decision-making, and the identification of good practice;
- Promotion of a gender balance in committees at all levels.

It is based on the answers of the Member States to the questionnaire prepared by the Commission. The degree of detail in the answers varied considerably, so that the information in this report and in particular the examples of good practice do not mean that Member States whose policies are not highlighted have not introduced good practice.

## **2.1. Comprehensive integrated strategies and mechanisms to promote a gender balance**

### *2.1.1. Definition*

The Recommendation does not give a definition of the term “balanced participation”. Yet a consensus appears to emerge from the country reports that if the number of women or men in the decision-making processes is under the threshold of 30 %, no real influence of either group can be exercised.

In Austria, Finland and Ireland women are regarded as under-represented in the public sector if their numbers are less than 40%. In Belgium, Denmark, France and Germany balanced participation means a maximum of two thirds of representatives are of one sex.

In the Netherlands women must make up 50% of new advisory bodies. Greece does not define balanced participation, but is aiming to double the present figure of 6-7% of women's participation in political decision-making.

The sensitivity of this question is demonstrated by the fact that draft legislation in Portugal and Luxembourg on balanced participation in party electoral lists was rejected by their Parliaments.

### *2.1.2. Strategies*

As the Recommendation outlines different measures which, taken together, that will have an impact on a more balanced participation by women, most Member States have adopted a host of different measures to enhance equality between the sexes rather than a specific strategy on increasing balanced participation in decision-making. Measures taken include legislation on gender balance in decision-making bodies from the Parliamentary level down to regional committees, positive action to increase the number of women in higher positions, enforcement mechanisms such as equal treatment offices, information campaigns and training, and Member States have allocated financial resources to promote their policies.

In Austria, in the public sector, the 1993 Federal Equal Treatment Act allows the preferential treatment of women in certain areas where they are under-represented (i.e. less than 40%) provided that they are no less qualified for the post than the most suitable male competitor.

Equivalent legislation exists in all but one of the *Länder*. A legally binding promotion programme for women in the college/university sector was adopted in 1995 .

Belgium has civil servants in charge of equal opportunities in all sections of the public sector. They have to implement positive action plans for staff. Belgium has also stressed the importance of the empowerment of women in foreign policy, thereby not only mainstreaming the gender issue but also exporting the ideas practised inside the country. The National Action Plan for Equality in Greece was revised in 1999 with a view to prioritising gender balance in decision- making. The Greek Parliament has unanimously accepted a revision of the Constitution allowing positive action.

In Germany balanced participation of men and women in decision-making processes is part of the national strategy to implement the Platform for Action of the 4<sup>th</sup> World Women Conference, including actions aimed at securing the equal access of women to decision-making positions at all levels of society. The German constitution obliges the State to promote equality of women and men in practice and ensure that disadvantages are removed. Laws at federal and at *Länder* level have applied this constitutional obligation to take positive action for the preferential recruitment and promotion of women in fields where they are underrepresented.

Public authorities in Spain have a duty under the Constitution to remove obstacles that prevent groups from playing a full part in society. This includes taking positive action to encourage women to participate fully in decision-making in the public sphere. The Spanish Institute for Women's Affairs is an independent body attached to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, with responsibility for taking forward equal opportunities policies. The Spanish autonomous regions each have a body responsible for promoting equal opportunities between women and men.

The overall result of these policies does, however, not correspond to the expectations of the Council when adopting the Recommendation. There is not one strategy singled out that could be recommended as the best, rather a comprehensive approach is necessary.

### 2.1.3. *Enforcement mechanisms*

All Member States have created enforcement structures. Most of them have earmarked funds for specific projects, such as awareness raising for the people and organisations involved, as well as the public, and all of them have committed themselves to reporting on the outcome of their policies.

In Austria, the Equal Treatment Commission is responsible for ensuring compliance with equal treatment legislation. Ministries draw up positive action plans, under which any under-representation of women (under 40%) must be resolved within 2 or 6 year plans.

In Belgium, the department of equal opportunities within the Federal Ministry of Employment and Labour has the task of assisting the Minister of equal opportunities in the development, the follow-up and the evaluation of policies for the promotion of women. The federal legislative bodies each have a consultative committee on women's affairs. In Germany, at federal level, equal treatment is administered by the Federal Minister for Women. In most of the *Länder* there are women's ministries or positions occupied by a state secretary for Women Issues. The Conference of Equality and Women's Ministers and Senators of the *Länder* (GFMK) takes place every year under a rotating presidency, at which the *Bund* is a regular

guest. It discusses all questions related to equal opportunities including the participation of women in decision- making positions.

In Ireland the Gender Equality Monitoring Commission was established to oversee the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Employment Equality Agency is the body responsible for working towards the elimination of discrimination in employment, but it also supports and encourages measures to increase the participation of women in decision-making.

In 1996 Italy created a new Ministry for Equal Opportunities which is responsible, amongst other things, for ensuring that government appointments respect equal opportunities. Luxembourg has an inter-ministerial Committee on Equality between women and men, and funds the co-ordinator of the National Women's Council. Portugal created a general Commission for Equality and the Rights of Women, a specific Commission for Equality at Work and in Employment, and, since 1997, a High Commissioner for Equality and the Family.

The Equal Opportunities Commission in the UK has a statutory duty to work towards the elimination of discrimination. The post of Minister for Women, the Women's Unit in the Cabinet Office and the Parliamentary all party group on sex equality have been created since 1999.

## **2.2. Mobilising the Most Important Actors**

### *2.2.1. Tackling Gender Stereotypes through education*

The Recommendation stresses the importance of tackling gender stereotypes in education. Most Member States are reviewing their teaching materials and training modules for teachers to include the needs of young girls. They are also addressing the important influence of the press to change gender stereotypes.

Actions at all levels from school to university have been taken in Austria where particular focus was laid on the training of teachers. Greece stresses the need for close co-operation between the Ministry of Education and the General Secretariat for Equality. It initiated research that revealed that stereotyping concerns the whole of society as well as teachers and that the teachers' trade unions, in spite of a high percentage of women, were strongly unbalanced in their decision- making. The General Secretariat for Equality supports women's organisations, and is encouraging social partners' organisations to promote the balanced participation of women. It supported the initiatives of the Women's Political Association and the Network of Elected Women in Local Authorities, two organisations working specifically for gender balance in political life.

In Belgium, specific projects for awareness raising for women in political decision- making were sponsored within the framework of the fiftieth anniversary of women's right to vote in 1998.

In Denmark a local authority drew up a discussion paper for all municipal employees to encourage them to talk about the gender composition of the work place and its effect on the working environment, their approach to work and services for the citizen. A folder to be used for interviews was produced to provide recruitment committees with advice on job advertising and the interview situation. The purpose of the folder is to make both parties aware that women and men often are treated differently and react differently.

Finland supports women's organisations which co-operate with the Ministry of education. The Ministry has formed a working group to promote critical attitudes toward the media and supported a project "screening gender" which links 5 European television stations in order to include the gender perspective in television. Teaching materials are designed to discover hidden references to gender. Schools examine their curricula to see whether they take young girls' needs into account and technical universities try to attract young women .

Several Member States (Austria, Belgium, France and Germany) stress the importance of the European network on women in decision-making and the network of national equal opportunities commissions, which influenced the political debate in Belgium to change the Constitution in order to increase women's participation, and stress the benefit of Community initiatives from 1991 to the present. These are seen as having contributed to an increase in awareness of the problem and may lead to increased participation by women in decision - making bodies, especially if supported by projects. The Paris Conference on Women and Men in Power of April 1999 was also mentioned as a significant achievement at Community level.

### 2.2.2. *Awareness-Raising in the Private Sector*

Although the number of women in influential positions in the public sector is gradually increasing, women's participation in higher management in the private sector remains low, with repercussions on the pay gap which stands at 27.4 % in the Union.

Austria, Belgium and Germany consider awareness raising to be the most important instrument for the private sector. The employment/enterprise group of the equal opportunities service in Belgium developed a policy to convince private employers of the benefits of an equal opportunities policy by proposing a label for "total equality management". The same approach is followed by Germany and Austria with the " Total Equality" Scheme and a European project that promotes mentoring of women in private enterprise. Another German, Swedish, Finnish project sponsored by the Fourth Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men is examining the benefits for large companies and local administrations of adapting working time to the needs of women and men to care for their families.

Austria encourages private enterprises to set up positive action plans for women in co-operation with works councils. This is an improvement compared to the former plans which foresaw equal treatment only.

In its public procurement procedures and in compliance with the 1979 Equal Treatment Act, Ministries will give preference to companies that practise positive action for women. 4% of the evaluation of each offer is devoted to social aspects (2% for the employment of trainees, 2% for the employment of women). The "Woman in Economy" project encourages women entrepreneurs to stand as candidates for the Austrian Chamber of Commerce

In Denmark, the government decided to reorganise its equality policy by establishing an Equality Information Centre. The Equality Act in Finland applies to both the public and private sectors.

Women account for 40% of new business start-ups in Ireland and 20% of Irish companies are owned and managed by women, mainly in the areas of publishing, training services and software

The Italian government started an information campaign on women entrepreneurs with the title "for women who want to start a company/enter society". The campaign aims to promote

traditional and also very innovative female skills and to channel them into productive and creative ends. In the Netherlands the government and the private sector have collaborated on a scheme to increase the number of women in senior decision-making positions in industry.

In addition to the major contribution of the specific NOW initiative the mainstream European Social Fund (ESF) programmes have contributed to improving gender balance and awareness raising. Through ESF operations, which very often take place in the private sector, it is possible to promote gender balance and to raise the awareness of the employers. The ESF has also been used widely to increase business start-ups, owned and managed by women.

Spain refers to the benefits of the OPTIMA programme developed under the Community Employment-NOW initiative, which aims to persuade employers to commit themselves to equal opportunities. Subsidies and social security exemptions are also considered as a way to increase women's employment in the public sector.

A project running since 1991 in the United Kingdom – Opportunity 2000 - works to raise the public profile of the issues blocking women's progress in employment and provides employers with a vehicle to share best practice. Opportunity 2000 goals are to achieve measurable improvements in the quality and extent of women's employment in all sectors and all levels of employment. The number of companies which have joined this programme has grown and there has been commensurate increase in the proportion of women in management, particularly at senior levels, in those companies.

### **2.3. Improvement of Knowledge**

All Member States acknowledge the importance of initiatives at European level since 1991 in placing the issue of gender balance on the political agenda, and in the co-ordination of initiatives, the harmonisation of data research, and in providing for the exchange of experiences and knowledge through conferences and transnational projects. In addition all Member States collect statistics on the presence of women in decision-making bodies and monitor developments.

In Austria annual reports (on the implementation of equal treatment legislation) and five yearly reports (on the state and development of equal treatment) are published by the responsible ministers; and the Federal Government reports to the Nationalrat every two years on the state of equal treatment and female promotion in the federal administration. In Belgium, several studies of quantitative as well as qualitative character were launched. Among these was one carried out in 1996 on the presence of women in decision-making bodies at all levels of the administrative hierarchy and in Parliamentary commissions; a second on gaps in existing statistics relating to the presence of women in particular in socio-economic institutions, and a third on the influence of the electoral system, on the representation of women in Parliament. In 1999 the Flemish Community created a databank of women qualified to take part in consultative committees in Flemish public organisations.

The Danish Equal Status Council is responsible for an annual report on the proportion of men and women in Parliament, local councils, in committees and local authority boards. It also publishes annually statistics on women on the management board of the country's 50 largest companies.

In Finland bi-annual statistics are published on women and men, including information on women in decision-making. In 1997 "Women and Men in Social Decision-Making in Finnish Society" was published. The Equality Ombudsman monitors compliance with the quota

provisions in the Equality Act. In Germany, regular statistics provide information about the numbers of women in political, social or economic leadership positions. The German Federal Government presents the Bundestag with an annual report concerning the situation of women in the Federal Administration and the Bund authorities.

Germany suggests a potential reason for the limited interest of women themselves in participating in decision-making: a lack of information on political issues. It stresses the importance of information and is planning a three day conference on this question.

In Greece a data base is being developed at the Analysis Unit of the Research Centre for Gender Equality. The Netherlands have monitored the proportion of women in decision-making positions annually since 1993. In Ireland statistics are kept on the position of women in the civil service, the judiciary, trade unions, political parties and members of the legislature, as well as the percentage of women nominated to State boards (34%) and those actually appointed (28%).

The Italian national equality Commission monitors the participation of women in the main political parties, in committees and in decision-making bodies at regional and provincial level. In 1998 the National Advisory Body on Economy and Employment presented its research report on "The presence of women in decision-making positions" in companies and the civil service. In 1999 the Government has put forward a draft law on compiling gender statistics.

The Government of Luxembourg intends to produce a statistical summary of women in decision-making in 2000. Statistics on the position of women in governmental bodies and local councils already exist. While there is no specific monitoring of women in decision-making in Portugal, this subject is part of the overall evaluation of equality policies. Spain has statistics on women in political parties, trade unions, central government and the parliaments and governments of the autonomous communities, the senior civil service and the judiciary.

The Swedish Parliament receives an annual report on the proportion of women employed in central and regional government authorities.

In the UK there is no specific monitoring of women in decision-making, but statistics exist on women in central and local government, the civil service, trade unions and the judiciary.

## **2.4. Balanced Participation in Parliaments, Governments and Committees**

Policy decisions depend to a large extent on the individual policy makers. This is why the composition of government, Parliaments and committees is an essential factor for women's participation in decision-making. Whereas data is available on the numbers of women and men in all European parliaments and most governments, not all countries have handed in conclusive statistics on the participation of women in other decision-making bodies. This is probably due to the large number of committees at all levels of government. However, all the Member States stress the need to increase women's participation in decision-making. The results of the enacted policies vary among those Member States who have submitted statistics.

### *2.4.1. Women in Parliaments and Governments*

On average, only one in five members of national parliaments is a woman. This figure ignores the considerable differences between some Member States, with 42% of Swedish parliamentarians being women, compared to 6% in Greece. In terms of participation of women in government, 50% of ministerial posts in Sweden are held by women, as against 5%

in Greece<sup>16</sup>. Even in those countries where women make up a significant number of the members of the government, they are still concentrated in the traditionally "female" ministries such as family policy, social affairs and health, rather than the political heavy weights such as finance, justice or foreign affairs.

The percentage of women in regional governments and parliaments is even lower than their percentage in national governments and parliaments, with the exception of France, Belgium and Sweden. Because of the stagnation observed there, the Netherlands concentrates on women in local politics.

All of the main political parties in Austria and Germany have committed themselves to increasing the numbers of women on party lists and in public positions, partly through quotas, partly through targets.

The same approach was taken by Italy in 1993, introducing binding quotas for the electoral lists, but this was declared contrary to the Constitution by the Constitutional Court in 1995. In 1997, the Italian Prime Minister adopted a policy entitled "Actions aimed at promoting the attribution of powers and responsibilities to women", which aims to empower women by guaranteeing a significant female presence in government bodies and in positions of responsibility in the civil service. In Portugal, the Parliament rejected a bill introduced by the government in 1998 which would have required political parties to ensure that at least 25% of candidates on their electoral lists for national and European elections were of each sex. However, the revised Portuguese Constitution now declares that the active participation of women and men in political life is a fundamental condition of democracy. An attempt to amend the Constitution in Luxembourg, so as to allow the adoption of laws to achieve, in practice, equality between men and women was rejected by the Luxembourg Council of State.

Within the framework of a national action plan on equal opportunities in 2000 France plans a revision of the Constitution that would provide that the law should promote equal access of women and men to political positions and elected posts.

It is only in Belgium that legally binding obligations require political parties to have gender balanced lists of candidates, so that all parties must give one third of their list positions to women. In Greece there have been ad hoc actions mainly linked to elections and electoral events and almost all political parties have revised their rules to include quotas within the electoral system. Other Member States favour an approach based on encouragement by giving funding for promoting women's participation in political activity (Ireland). While quotas do not exist for nominations for elections in Finland, they do exist for the bodies of the political parties.

#### 2.4.2. *Women in Committees*

Although countries with longstanding traditions of equal opportunities policies have a high presence of women in central bodies, others fail to reach the target of one third female representation in spite of legislative provisions.

In Sweden 44% percent of the staff of central government authorities are women, in Finland in 68% of all public committees the percentage of women members is 42%, while Belgium and Germany, which both have legislative requirements for a 33% participation of women in

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<sup>16</sup> FrauenComputerZentrumBerlin.

public committees, only have a percentage of 18.63% and 12.2% respectively. The number of committees without any women in Germany decreased from 53.2% to 28.7% in 8 years from 1992-1999.

Federal bodies in Germany and in Sweden are required to nominate for each position on committees a woman and a man. Social partner organisations are required to ensure that the aim of equal participation is respected when selecting candidates. The Swedish Equal Opportunities Unit must approve the composition of committees.

In Austria specific balanced participation measures include the representation of male and female workers on works committee in proportion to their numbers in the workforce, and nominations for election to the full assembly of the Chamber of Labour must give special consideration to a balanced representation of individual male and female employees.

The Danish Act No 427 of 13 June 1990 provides that there must be a balance between men and women in executive positions in public administration. The same is foreseen for committees set up by Ministers under Act No 157 of 24 April 1995.

Belgium adopted a law on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1990 according to which nominations for the participation in consultative committees should be gender balanced. As this law failed to reach the desired results, Belgium, at the federal level, reinforced it by a law adopted on 17 July 1997, which provides that consultative committees may have a maximum of only two thirds of its members belonging to one sex. If nominations for candidates of the under-represented sex are insufficient, the nominating organisation has to justify why it cannot fulfil its legal obligation. Any exception has to be granted by the Council of Ministers after consultation with the equal opportunities Ministry.

In Flanders committees will be banned from giving an opinion if their composition does not respect the minimum participation of members of each sex after a transitional period until 31.12.1999.

The Finnish Act of 1987 concerning Equality between Women and Men was amended in 1995 to provide for a 40% quota of women in government committees and advisory boards. The Finnish government's Equality Programme for 1997-1999 pays particular attention to the proportion of women in decision-making, and involves an assessment of the system towards achieving a 40% quota for women in government committees, advisory boards and municipal bodies, excluding directly elected municipal councils.

In France a 1983 circular on men and women in the public sector contains provisions on the balanced participation of women and men in decision-making, specifically that selection boards must be gender-balanced. A "Parity Observatory" was created in 1995.

The Irish Government adopted a policy of appointing a minimum of 40% representation of each sex for State Boards in 1993. Prior to 1996 the Greek General Secretariat for Equality policy supported women's NGOs involved in increasing the balanced participation of women.

In spite of the Constitutional Court's 1995 ruling on the incompatibility of fixed quotas for electoral lists other legislative provisions in Italy were unaffected, with the result that local and provincial administrations must promote the presence of both sexes in councils and collegiate organisations. Public administrations must also ensure that a third of the members of all examining boards are women.

In the Netherlands, the Government adopted a Position on Women in Politics and Public Administration in 1992. Although it is contrary to the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 of the United Kingdom to set specific quotas, which are seen as contrary to the principle of non-discrimination, targets or goal-setting are allowed. The UK Government has committed itself to the principle of 50/50 representation of women in public appointments. The Women's National Commission (a non-ministerial public body) has published "Stepping out in Public – a Woman's Guide to Public Appointments".

The Portuguese Parliament unanimously adopted a Recommendation in 1993 subscribing to the "Declaration of Athens" on the participation of women in public and political life. In the following year the Parliament held a two day seminar to discuss political participation in terms of democratic requirements. The Spanish Third Equal Opportunities Plan (1991-2000) covers "power and decision-making".

In Norway, the Gender Equality Act was amended in 1988 to provide for a 40% representation of both sexes on all public boards, councils and committees. In the 1970s the political parties started using targets or unofficial quotas to increase the number of women on electoral lists. Unofficial quotas have also been applied to Cabinet posts since 1986. Whilst the emphasis is on the mainstreaming of gender equality, special measures are seen as necessary to reach the goal of increasing gender balance in decision-making bodies.

The Icelandic Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men provides that, wherever possible men and women should be appointed in equal numbers to government and local government committees and boards. A 1993 Parliamentary Resolution on measures to promote gender equality set a 30% target for women in Ministerial committees.

In Liechtenstein a Government Resolution in 1997<sup>17</sup> called for committees, working groups and delegations for which the Government is responsible to have a maximum of two-thirds members of one sex. Local authorities have been called upon to make similar arrangements. A conference in 1999 to mark 15 years of women's enfranchisement will have as its theme "one third representation for women in the 2001 Parliament".

### **3. SITUATION IN COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS, AGENCIES AND BODIES**

#### **3.1. General Remarks**

The Recommendation calls on the Community institutions, agencies and bodies to design a strategy for a balanced participation. Most - in particular larger or more established - institutions have adopted specific measures to implement the Recommendation or have detailed equal opportunities policies regarding recruitment and personnel policy. The focus is stronger on recruitment and promotion of women than on the composition of committees advising them.

The institutions were all aware of the need to try and achieve a gender balance in their staff and decision-making structures, and some operate a systematic favouring of women candidates to try to redress present imbalances. A number of them have also put into place mechanisms to monitor the gender balance of staff, and of juries or selection boards. Some institutions, agencies or bodies were either unaware of the Recommendation, or have done nothing specific to implement its provisions. Some of these bodies are newly established, e.g.,

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<sup>17</sup> RA 97/1833-0101, 0208.

the European Central Bank, or work in extremely specialised fields, and/or have a very small number of staff, making it difficult for them to establish detailed plans to implement its provisions (for example the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, the Office for the Harmonisation of the Internal Market, the Community Plant Varieties Office).

### **3.2. Comprehensive Strategies for achieving balanced participation by women and men in the decision-making process by the European institutions**

The participation of women in decision-making has been dealt with within the human resources development departments in the larger institutions. Many of them (European Commission, Council; European Court of Justice, European Investment Bank, Economic and Social Committee) have created Joint Committees for Equal opportunities, COPEC, which as a parity body of staff and management is responsible for making recommendations to promote equal opportunities. The Committee of Regions intends to create a COPEC. A number of institutions monitor the gender balance of their staff, but few monitor gender balance in decision-making bodies.

The President of the European Commission, Mr. Prodi, in his speech to the European Council<sup>18</sup> emphasised the need for appropriate gender balance within the Commission services and within the cabinets of the Commissioners; for the first time women now make up nearly 40% of the staff of the cabinets.

The Commission considers the promotion of equal opportunities as an important element of its ongoing programme to modernise its administration and decision-making processes. Work efficiency and organisation are addressed as a means, inter-alia, to improve the reconciliation of work and family commitments, thereby removing obstacles to women being promoted to higher decision-making levels.

A Third Programme for equal opportunities for Women and Men (1997- 2000) aims to develop a gender - sensitive work culture which takes account of female and male values, of difference in priorities as well as gender specific needs. It includes the issue of equal opportunities within the overall framework of personnel policy through measures taken at all stages in the professional career of a civil servant: recruitment, training, promotion. The Commission provides specific management training for female civil servants as well as training for all personnel in mainstreaming equal opportunities policies in general in order to transfer the policies proposed to the Member States to its own ranks. A unit for equal opportunities and non discrimination is responsible for the application of equal opportunities legislation and policy within the Commission. 22 directorates and offices are now involved in creating new structures, action plans and follow-up. Staff development is monitored twice a year.

A quarter of the number of Commissioners are women. The number of women directors has increased from 3 in 1994 to 20 in 1998, and the representation of women in A grade positions as a whole has increased between 1994 and 1998 from 13% to 18%. The targets set for 1999 cover 5 senior management posts at director level, 25% of middle management posts (Heads of Unit), and a maximum of women as principle administrators, administrators and assistant administrators.

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<sup>18</sup> Intervention of Prof Prodi in European Council 3. June 1999.

In the follow-up to the Recommendation, the Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs produced a gender report<sup>19</sup> in which it committed itself to a balanced participation of women and men in the 'A' category and to strive towards raising the representation of women in middle and top management posts. For C category posts, a balanced participation will mean an increase in the proportion of men, and for B and D categories an increase in women will be required.

In its organisation of the COM/A8-9/98 entrance competition, which included a specific statistical option, EUROSTAT organised conferences in the Member States and published a leaflet (also used in other recruitment exercises), one aim of which was to attract female applicants.

The Vice President of the European Parliament, responsible for equal opportunities will, from 1999 onwards, report annually on progress achieved towards the targets adopted. The Equal Opportunities Unit in the Parliament's Personnel Directorate General monitors equal opportunities policies, and COPEC monitors the applications of the measures it proposes to enhance equal opportunities among staff. The Parliament considers this three layer monitoring structure reflects the importance it attaches to its obligation to serve as role model in the field.

The European Parliament has found it difficult to promote more women to higher posts because of the insufficient number of women in the intermediate A-grades. The institution has therefore looked to further the promotion prospects of existing female staff through more systematic training, and has set targets for the appointment of more women to senior grades. The Parliamentary debates on the Recommendation influenced the institution's discussions on equal opportunities in staff policy.

The Council regulation of 1998<sup>20</sup> integrated equality clauses into the recruitment procedures and regulations of officials. In addition, annual targets for the recruitment and appointment of women in A category posts have been set since 1995. In the follow-up of the last enlargement of the Union, the Council has one woman out of 15 Director Generals, three out of 28 A2 grades and five out of 34 A3 grades. Women constitute one fifth of all A-grade civil servants.

The Economic and Social Committee gives preference to female candidates if they are equally qualified as male candidates. Since 1998, the number of women nominated to head of division posts has increased from one to four. Its equal opportunities working group regularly informs the personnel committee of the gender balance of staff.

The Committee of the Regions has adopted a strategy of encouraging the Member States to consider the importance of gender balance when making their nominations to it and has published a number of documents, including a "Resolution to Member States with regard to proposals for future appointments in terms of equal opportunities". The number of women members has increased from 10% under its first mandate (1994-1997) to 15% in the second (1998-2001).

The Committee established an equal opportunities working group in 1997, made up of a representative of each national delegation, which meets regularly throughout the year, focusing on three main issues: promoting gender balance in decision-making in the

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<sup>19</sup> Adopted on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1999.

<sup>20</sup> 781/98 of 7.4.1998, OJ L 113 of 15.4.1998 p. 4.

institution, integrating equal opportunities in its personnel policy and mainstreaming equal opportunities into all opinions issued by the institution.

The Court of Justice has not adopted a specific strategy to implement the Recommendation, but seeks to ensure the balanced participation of women and men on joint committees and interview panels and monitors the gender balance of its staff regularly. The balanced participation of women and men in decision-making posts within the institution remains a long-term objective. There are two women judges at the Court of First Instance, and one at the Court of Justice.

The body responsible for appointments at the Court of Auditors (AIPN) has systematically favoured appointing women who pass the entrance competition. It ensures that those who sit on interview panels as well as the heads of units and of the administrative services are aware of the importance of increasing the participation of women in the institution. However, the Court notes that the profession of auditor is still very male dominated, which results in fewer women than men having the necessary professional qualification and experience.

One third of the members and substitutes of the Administrative Board of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work are women. In the last renewal of the term of office of the members, three more women were appointed instead of three men. The chairperson of the Board during 1998 was a woman.

The European Investment Bank created a Joint Committee on the Promotion of Equal Opportunities in 1994, as well as an action programme to increase the number of women in senior posts. To achieve concrete improvements in the gender balance of the Bank's staff, targets were approved by the Management Committee in 1996. The Bank appointed its first woman Vice-President in 1994, by 1997 there were two women Directors and a woman Director-General was appointed in 1999. The percentage of women occupying management and professional posts has increased.

The European Centre for Development, Education and Training, CEDEFOP, follows the EU policy of promoting equal treatment and has integrated this concern into its more general "Staff Policy Guidelines" decided by the Management Board. The Staff Policy Guidelines of CEDEFOP provide that the profiles of future vocational training experts should, amongst other matters, take into consideration the establishment of a good gender balance and give priority to recruiting women (currently 21 A category posts are filled by men and 13 by women).

The need to have a gender balance in selection boards on recruitment and promotion is recognised by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. It seeks to involve all relevant actors through discussion and consultation. A proactive management development and training programme has been established and the foundation has adopted a strategy to achieve a balanced representation on all committees and boards.

## CONCLUSIONS

The impact of Council Recommendation 96/694/EC in the Member States of the European Union, the European Economic Area and the Community institutions has to be seen in connection with the Beijing Platform for Action and its commitment to raising the number of

women in decision – making. Both had an impact on Member States policies but failed to achieve the result of a gender balance in decision-making positions.

Whereas the priority given to the subject of the balanced participation of women and men in decision -making varies within the Member States and among the institutions, the general need to promote women in decision-making is increasingly recognised as a necessary next step towards gender equality and democracy. The question is no longer as to why women should be in decision – making positions but as to how to achieve this goal.

The problem of under-representation of women in decision-making posts is structural and multifaceted. It has to be tackled at the same time in all its aspects both in terms of political and social mechanisms and in terms of awareness raising and change of attitudes and behaviours. The multiplicity of activities and measures taken by different Member States suggests the importance of the adoption of a comprehensive, integrated strategy to the objective of the balanced participation as stated in the Recommendation.

Establishing a gender balance takes time. Substantive progress in women's participation is possible in the longer term as is shown in countries with longstanding traditions of gender equality policies such as Sweden, Finland and Norway. These states have developed specific systems to ensure and/or promote the participation of women in decision-making at an early stage.

A policy mix including long term political commitment, sound statistics, regular monitoring, appropriate structures anchored in legislation depending on the political culture of the Member State and financial resources is necessary to promote women's participation.

The regular monitoring of the implementation of the Beijing platform for Action accompanied by indicators as was done by the Council in October 1999 could be a valuable tool to assess progress and give impetus for action to promote women in decision-making.

The collection of comparable data, indicators and benchmarking need to be developed further.

The exchange of experiences between states, organisations and political institutions has increased awareness and in some cases led to changes in legislation. This reinforces the importance of the Recommendation as a long term monitoring instrument which foresees a regular, yearly, reporting so that change is encouraged in states with more recent tradition in this area.

Particular attention needs to be given to the private sector for which a policy approach has to be designed which shows employers that gender equality is a productive factor in business.

As far as Community Institutions are concerned, action appears to be ongoing in terms of recruitment of balanced numbers of women and men. Less progress has been made in the area of balanced participation in decision-making bodies, i.e. in increasing the number of women in management boards, staff committees and selection boards.

Gender balance in committees needs to be tackled by concrete measures. The Commission should serve as an example by promoting a gender balance in its staff at all levels and in its own committees and expert groups set up to advise it in the promotion of the various Community policies.

## ANNEX

### **COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 2 December 1996 on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process (96/694/EC)**

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 proposals from the Commission,

Having regard to the opinion of the European Parliament <sup>(1)</sup>,

Having regard to the opinion of the Economic and Social Committee <sup>(2)</sup>,

- (1) Whereas the Council has adopted a series of legislative instruments and a number of political commitments in the field of equal treatment and equal opportunities for men and women <sup>(3) (4) (5) (6)</sup>;
- (2) Whereas the Heads of State and Government, meeting within the European Council in Essen, Cannes and Madrid, stressed that the fight against unemployment and equal opportunities for women and men were paramount tasks of the European Union and its Member States;
- (3) Whereas attention was focused on women's access to decision-making in Council Recommendation 84/635/EEC of 13 December 1984 on the promotion of positive action for women <sup>(7)</sup>, in the second Council Resolution of 24 July 1986 on the promotion of equal opportunities for women <sup>(8)</sup>, 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) <sup>(9)</sup>, in the Council Resolution of 27 March 1995 on the balanced participation of women and men in decision-making<sup>(10)</sup> and in Council Decision 95/593/EC of 22 December 1995 on a medium-term Community action programme on equal opportunities for men and women (1996-2000) <sup>(11)</sup>;
- (4) Whereas the European Parliament in its Resolution of 11 February 1994 on women in decision-making bodies (12) asked the Commission to 'step up implementation of the equal opportunities policy set out in the third Community action programme, 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`;
- (5) Whereas the Declaration and the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 4 to 15 September 1995) stressed the need to ensure that responsibilities, powers and rights are shared equally; whereas the Member States are committed to implementing the Platform for Action;
- (6) Whereas participation in the decision-making process depends on representation on decision-making bodies at all levels of political, economic, social and cultural life and requires, in particular, presence in posts of responsibility and decision-taking positions;

- (7) Whereas women are still under-represented in decision-making bodies, in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres;
- (8) Whereas the under-representation of women in decision-making bodies is partly a result of the delay in women attaining equal civic and civil rights, of obstacles to their gaining economic independence and of difficulties in reconciling their working and family life;
- (9) Whereas balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process is a requirement for democracy;
- (10) Whereas the under-representation of women in decision-making posts constitutes a loss for society as a whole and may prevent the interests and needs of the entire population from being catered for in full;
- (11) Whereas measures aimed at bringing about a balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process in all sectors should go together with the integration of the dimension of equality of opportunity for women and men in all policies and actions;
- (12) Whereas balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process 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;
- (13) Whereas the Member States, the social partners, political parties and organisations, non-governmental organisations and the media play a key role in creating a society where there is a gender balance in the exercise of responsibilities in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres;
- (14) Whereas it is appropriate to adopt guidelines to promote balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process with the aim of bringing about equality of opportunity for women and men and whereas it is appropriate, within the framework of the medium-term Community action programme on equal opportunities for men and women (1996-2000), to make those guidelines more effective through the exchange of information on good practice;
- (15) Whereas the provisions of this Recommendation apply solely within the limits of Community competence; whereas equal treatment for male and female workers constitutes one of the objectives of the Community, insofar as the harmonisation of living and working conditions while maintaining their improvement are, inter alia, to be furthered;
- (16) Whereas the Treaty does not confer, for the adoption of this Recommendation, any other powers than those referred to in Article 235,

#### I. RECOMMENDS THAT THE MEMBER STATES:

1. adopt a comprehensive, integrated strategy designed to promote balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process and develop or introduce the appropriate measures to achieve this, such as, where necessary, legislative and/or regulatory measures and/or incentives;
2. (a) alert those involved in education and training at all levels, including those responsible for teaching materials, to the importance of:

- a realistic and complete image of the roles and abilities of women and men in society, free of prejudice and discriminatory stereotypes,
- a more balanced sharing of professional, domestic and social responsibilities between women and men, and
- balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process at all levels;

(b) at all levels of education and training, encourage girls and women to take part and express themselves in education and training activities as actively and fully as boys and men, so as to prepare them for an active role in society, including political, economic, social and cultural life, and in particular in decision-making processes;

(c) make public opinion aware of the importance of disseminating an image of women and men that neither reinforces nor consolidates discriminatory stereotyping of women's and men's responsibilities;

(d) without encroaching on their autonomy, encourage and support efforts of associations and organisations in all areas of society to promote women's access to the decision-making process and balanced participation by women and men in decision-making bodies;

(e) without prejudice to their autonomy, encourage and support the efforts of the social partners to promote balanced participation of women and men in their activities and highlight the social partners' responsibility for promoting and proposing women candidates for nomination to various assignments on public commissions and committees in the Member States and at Community level;

(f) devise, launch and promote 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;

3. (a) promote or improve the collection and publication of statistics to provide a clearer picture of how women and men are represented at all levels of the decision-making process in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres;

(b) support, develop and encourage quantitative and qualitative studies on the participation of women and men in the decision-making process, and especially:

- on the legal, social or cultural obstacles impeding access to and participation in the decision-making process for persons of either sex,
- on strategies for overcoming such obstacles, and
- on the utility and advantages for society and for the operation of democracy of a better balance between the sexes in the decision-making process;

(c) promote, support and encourage initiatives creating examples of good practice in the various areas of the decision-making process and develop programmes for the dissemination and exchange of experience with a view to propagating activities;

4. (a) promote balanced participation by women and men at all levels in governmental bodies and committees;

(b) raise the awareness of those involved of the importance of taking initiatives to achieve balanced participation of women and men in public positions at all levels, paying particular attention to the promotion of a balanced composition in committees, commissions and working parties at national as well as Community level;

(c) provide for, implement or develop a coherent set of measures encouraging equal opportunities in the public sector and respecting the concept of balanced participation in the decision-making process, 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 of, or within the framework of, equality plans and positive action programmes;

## II. CALLS ON THE INSTITUTIONS, SUBSIDIARY BODIES AND DECENTRALIZED BODIES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES TO:

design a strategy for achieving balanced participation by women and men in the decision-making process in each institution, subsidiary body and decentralised body of the European Communities;

## III. CALLS ON THE COMMISSION TO:

1. encourage and organise, within the framework of Council Decision 95/593/EC of 22 December 1995 on a medium-term Community action programme on equal opportunities for men and women (1996-2000), systematic pooling of information and experience between Member States on good practice and the assessment of the impact of measures taken to achieve a better balance between women and men in the decision-making process;
2. to this end, and within that framework, step up its efforts to provide information, alert public opinion, encourage research and promote schemes aimed at achieving balanced participation by women and men in the decision-making process;
3. submit a report to the European Parliament, the Council and the Economic and Social Committee, for the first time three years after adoption of this Recommendation and thereafter annually, on its implementation, on the basis of the information provided by the Member States and the institutions, subsidiary bodies and decentralised bodies of the European Communities.

Done at Brussels, 2 December 1996.

For the Council

The President

E. FITZGERALD

(1) OJ C 166, 10.6.1996, p. 276.

(2) OJ C 204, 15.7.1996, p. 21.

(3) Council Directive 75/117/EEC of 10 February 1975 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women (OJ L 45, 19.2.1975, p. 19).

Council Directive 76/207/EEC of 9 February 1976 on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions (OJ L 39, 14.2.1976, p. 40).

Council Directive 79/7/EEC of 19 December 1978 on the progressive implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security (OJ L 6, 10.1.1979, p. 24).

Council Directive 86/378/EEC of 24 July 1986 on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in occupational social security schemes (OJ L 225, 12.8.1986, p. 40).

Council Directive 86/613/EEC of 11 December 1986 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity, including agriculture, in a self-employed capacity, and on the protection of self-employed women during pregnancy and motherhood (OJ L 359, 19.12.1986, p. 56).

Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding (OJ L 348, 28.11.1992, p. 1).

(4) Council Decision 95/593/EC of 22 December 1995 on a medium-term Community action programme on equal opportunities for men and women (1996-2000) (OJ L 335, 30.12.1995, p. 37).

(5) Council recommendation 84/635/EEC of 13 December 1984 on the promotion of positive action for women (OJ L 331, 19.12.1984, p. 34).

Council recommendation 92/241/EEC of 31 March 1992 on child care (OJ L 123, 8.5.1992, p. 16).

(6) Council resolution of 12 July 1982 on the promotion of equal opportunities for women (OJ C 186, 21.7.1982, p. 3).

Council resolution of 7 June 1984 on action to combat unemployment amongst women (OJ C 161, 21.6.1984, p. 4).

Resolution of the Council and the Ministers for Education, meeting within the Council, of 3 June 1985 containing an action programme on equal opportunities for girls and boys in education (OJ C 166, 5.7.1985, p. 1).

Second Council resolution of 24 July 1986 on the promotion of equal opportunities for women (OJ C 203, 12.8.1986, p. 2).

Council resolution of 16 December 1988 on the reintegration and late integration of women into working life (OJ C 333, 28.12.1988, p. 1).

Council resolution of 29 May 1990 on the protection of the dignity of women and men at work (OJ C 157, 27.6.1990, p. 3).

Council resolution of 21 May 1991 on the third medium-term Community action programme on equal opportunities for women and men (1991-1995) (OJ C 142, 31.5.1991, p. 1).

Council resolution of 22 June 1994 on the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men through action by the European Structural Funds (OJ C 231, 20.8.1994, p. 1).

Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 6 December 1994 on equal participation by women in an employment-intensive economic growth strategy within the European Union (OJ C 368, 23.12.1994, p. 3).

Council resolution of 27 March 1995 on the balanced participation of women and men in decision-making (OJ C 168, 4.7.1995, p. 3).

Resolution of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, of 5 October 1995 on the image of women and men portrayed in advertising and the media (OJ C 296, 10.11.1995, p. 15).

<sup>(7)</sup> OJ L 331, 19.12.1984, p. 34.

<sup>(8)</sup> OJ C 203, 12.8.1986, p. 2.

<sup>(9)</sup> OJ C 142, 31.5.1991, p. 1.

<sup>(10)</sup> OJ C 168, 4.7.1995, p. 3.

<sup>(11)</sup> OJ L 335, 30.12.1995, p. 37.

<sup>(12)</sup> OJ C 61, 28.2.1994, p. 248.