



**European Committee
of the Regions**

Brussels, 9 October 2023

221st MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- 9 OCTOBER 2023 -

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ITEM 9

**TAKING FORWARD THE MAY 2023 GENDER
EQUALITY ACTION PLAN**

Submitted by the secretary-general

FOR DECISION

SUMMARY

Bureau meeting: 221

Date: 9/10/2023

**Item 9
Taking forward the May 2023 Gender
Equality Action Plan**

Type:

- Document for information/debate
- Document for decision
- Recommendation to the Assembly

Short description:

On the basis of the assessment of the 2019 *Strategy for a gender balance in members' participation in the CoR* and the CoR's own calls for action in response to the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, this document intends to adopt concrete measures, in the short, medium and long term, towards the goal of achieving gender equality in the CoR.

The Bureau approved the following proposal to take forward the Action Plan towards the goal of achieving gender equality in the CoR on 9 October 2023

Remarks:

N/A

Introduction

Taking into account:

- Article 2.2 of the Rules of Procedure (RoP) of the CoR, which entered into force on 31/12/2021, and the on-going revision of the Rules of Procedure;
- the concrete measures, in the short, medium and long term of the document "[Towards Gender Equality in the Committee of the Regions](#)", adopted at the meeting of the Bureau of the European Committee of the Regions on 23 May 2023;
- the assessment of the 2019 Strategy for a gender balance in members' participation in the CoR, presented at the meeting of the Bureau of the European Committee of the Regions on 4 July 2023 and its update, presented in Appendix I; and
- the contributions by National Delegations, a summary of which is presented in Appendix II

the Bureau is asked to debate and approve the new concrete measures proposed under this action plan towards the goal of achieving gender equality in the CoR.

In accordance with Article 2.2 of the RoP, which entered into force on 31/12/2021, this gender action plan shall be **annually monitored**¹ and **reviewed at least every five years**. The monitoring will be developed on the basis of the actions set in this document, discussed with political groups, and presented to the Bureau by the Secretary-General, for discussion.

1. **Actions to implement the different points of the 2023 Strategy approved by the Bureau**

This section summarises some of the actions already undertaken in the sequence of the approval of the 2023 Strategy and the proposals to implement the remaining points under the Strategy approved by the Bureau on 23 May 2023.

Actions already undertaken

Point 3.2.1 – Contributions by National Delegations

- See Appendix II.

Point 3.2.2 - "In view of a possible wider mandate, ask the ad hoc commission on the revision of the Rules of Procedure, approved by the Bureau Decision of 29 November 2022, to examine necessary changes to the relevant rules to achieve gender equality at the CoR and its constituent bodies."

- As a follow-up, a letter from the president of the CoR was sent on 26.05.2023 to the chair of the ad hoc commission for the revision of the Rules of Procedure. Moreover, the July plenary session when extending the mandate of the ad hoc commission, included, among others, an amendment to insert into Rule 31 (Bureau composition) the explicit goal of increasing the gender balance in the composition of the Bureau.

¹ Annual assessment of the implemented actions to feed into the Activity Report (see below).

Point 3.3.1., 2nd paragraph – "Address the Secretary-General of the Council with a view to informing the 27 Member States of the need to present gender-balanced delegations (full and alternate members)";

- A paragraph drawing attention to the CoR Gender Balance Strategy is included in each of the numerous letters sent by the Secretary-General of the Committee to the Secretary-General of the Council informing of a vacancy to be filled, and asking to initiate the corresponding decision-making procedure (see Annex III).

Point 3.4.1 - Continue to target gender equality in speakers participation in statutory meetings of the CoR as well as panels at conferences and all events held by the CoR or on its premises;

- If and every time there is an all-male/all-female panel at a conference or event, an administrative exception report will be prepared.
- Gender balance was achieved in the 2023 YEP intake, and will be respected in the years to come.

Point 3.4.2 - Foster a strategic collaboration with the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council in mainstreaming gender equality in all relevant EU policies;

- Work is ongoing to ensure CoR participation in the EP European Gender Equality Week 23-26 October 2023.

Future actions

Point 3.3.1 - Develop an information and outreach campaign targeted at the Council, Member States and national associations of LRAs underlining the crucial importance of achieving gender-equal delegations.

- Agree on a clear definition of "gender equality" in the Rules of Procedure (Article 2);
- President to write to the national authorities, through the permanent representations, requesting the nomination of gender-balanced delegations;
- President to write to the national associations of LRAs that have a responsibility in the Member States in the nomination procedure for members of the CoR, requesting the nomination of gender-balanced delegations;
- Ahead of each plenary session, the One-Stop Shop will inform the heads of the national delegations and national delegations' coordinators, from delegations that had recent changes, with the latest figures regarding gender balance. The figures would present the situation for members, for alternates and for both categories combined, as well as in the Bureau composition;
- Develop further communication activities emphasising "The role of Women in Local and Regional Government", ensuring that it is also directed to the local and regional levels throughout the EU;
- Continue to update the "For more women in politics" CoR website, to include:
 - Bureau-adopted strategies;
 - Latest events (International Women's Day);
 - Relevant debates in commissions;

- Relevant publications;
- Social media activity.
- To continue gender mainstreaming aspects in the work of the CoR Commissions and Committee flagship initiatives, such as the State of the Regions and Cities report or the European Summit of Cities and Regions.

Point 3.3.1., 2nd paragraph – "Address the Secretary-General of the Council with a view to informing the 27 Member States of the need to present gender-balanced delegations (full and alternate members)";

- In order to prepare the next term of office of the CoR, specific actions will also be implemented, by the President and the Secretary-General, addressed to the Secretary-General of the Council and the permanent representations to duly take into consideration Article 2 and gender balance in the composition of the CoR.

Point 3.3.2 "Invite the political groups to engage in a broad dialogue with their political counterparts in the appointing authorities at the national and subnational level (associations of regional governments and parliaments, associations of local authorities, leaders of national political parties etc.) in order to stress that gender equality should be met when new CoR members and alternates are to be appointed; encourage political groups to engage in dialogue with their political counterparts – for example in the European Parliament – with the aim of becoming aware of their current practices, rules, perspectives and strategies on gender equality";

- When political groups are asked for any nomination for a particular body/working group in which there is gender imbalance in the overall full/alternate member composition, they should strive to nominate a member in such way that it helps address that imbalance.

Point 3.3.3 - "Task the Registry with maintaining an ongoing state of play in terms of gender equality, per delegation and the CoR in general, and informing the national delegations prior to the appointment of new members";

- One-Stop Shop to develop a monitoring tool, easily accessible and constantly updated. Figures could be posted on the CoR website, including infographics that demonstrate the evolution over time;
- To include, when relevant, in the President's briefing for the Bureau and Plenary numerical references to improvement/non-improvement;
- To display, when relevant, at Bureau and plenary meetings, visuals showing the state of play of gender equality.

Point 3.3.4 - Invite national delegations with more than one member on the Bureau to ensure both genders are part of their representation.

- Letter by the President to the heads of those delegations

Point 3.4.1 - Continue to target gender equality in speakers' participation in statutory meetings of the CoR as well as panels at conferences and all events held by the CoR or on its premises;

- Administrative exception reports every time there is an all-male/all-female panel at a conference or event

Point 3.4.2 - Foster a strategic collaboration with the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council in mainstreaming gender equality in all relevant EU policies;

- Involve the European Parliament and European Commission in CoR gender equality activities (e.g. International Women's Day, Gender Equality Week)

Point 3.4.3 - Exchange best practices with the European Parliament, and in particular the FEMM Committee, as well as with national and regional parliaments about strategies in parliamentary structures to increase gender equality;

- Yearly joint activity with this focus to be developed

Point 3.4.4 - Develop one specific chapter on the achievement of the targets of the strategy as part of the CoR's annual activity report.

- Annual Activity Report to include a chapter on the achievements of the Strategy for Gender Equality at the CoR; recommendation to strive for the same for the annual impact report under Rule 59;
- Objectives and targets to be included in the annual operational working plan (which forms the basis for the reporting later on in the annual activity report)
- ***On a proposal by the President, the Bureau will appoint among its members a rapporteur on the implementation of the Gender Equality Action Plan.***

PROPOSAL:

The Bureau approved the proposals to take the Action Plan forward towards the goal of achieving gender equality at the CoR on 9 October 2023

Updated assessment of the 2019 strategy presented to the Bureau in July 2023

Point 3.1.1. of the Strategy adopted at the 219th meeting of the Bureau of the European Committee of the Regions of 23 May 2023 "*[m]andate[d] the Secretary-General to present to the Bureau, by 4 July 2023, a detailed assessment of the implementation of the measures included in the 2019 Strategy and the progress made and, where relevant, advise on measures that should be further improved.*"

The Secretary-General presented a table with information about the implementation status of the 2019 Strategy at the 220th meeting of the Bureau of the European Committee of the Regions on 4 July 2023, and was invited to further complement the information by the next Bureau meeting.

Overall, the 2019 strategy for a gender balance in Members' participation in the CoR was an important means to make progress towards gender parity. Although the strategy did not fully deliver the expected results, progress and improvements can be witnessed in the implementation of the majority of the recommendations. The strategy represented a key stepping stone in the process of working towards gender balance, and in some aspects gender parity, affirming the political commitment and engagement of the CoR towards these objectives.

While progress on the headline indicator of gender balance in the CoR membership was only residual, with the share of women in the total CoR membership shifting from 21% in 2019 to 26%² in 2023, and there still being four delegations with no women full members, there has been a significant reduction in the number of men-only delegations at the CoR, with now only one delegation having no women members, down from two.

The nomination procedure of CoR members is managed at national level, and the Council adopts the list of members and alternate members drawn up in accordance with the proposals made by each Member State³. This results in a wide range of criteria which differ from one Member State to another. The CoR will keep on raising awareness, encouraging, and promoting gender balance, as it has been doing for years, whilst recognising that nominating authorities and national delegations play a key role in this procedure.

A new impetus was given with the adoption of a revised strategy in May 2023, with new concrete actions detailed in this document, which complies with the action plan referred to in Rule 2 of the Rules of Procedure.

Recommendations concerning those involved in nomination of new CoR Members

The two recommendations of the Strategy referring to the bodies and institutions involved in the nomination of new CoR members were implemented through an official exchange of letters with the Council. In the note sent to the delegations of the Member States, the Council included a sentence making reference to "greater gender balance".

² Updated on 7 September 2023 – female full members are 25%, and alternate members are 27%.

³ Art. 305, Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

As for the changes to the Rules of Procedure, they were communicated once adopted (publication in the Official Journal, to CoR members, etc.).

Recommendations for action within the CoR

The CoR implemented various actions aiming at improving gender balance in its composition.

The Rules of Procedure, as amended on 12 October 2021, in art. 2 state that "*the gender diversity of the European Committee of the Regions should be reflected as much as possible in the composition of its constituent bodies*"⁴. It implemented the recommendation referring to provisions on gender balance, and this led to the fact that the then recently achieved gender balance among commission chairs has been maintained.

The Code of Conduct for members recommended by the strategy was adopted on 5 December 2019, but it was not annexed to the Rules of Procedure. It envisages, as recommended, provisions on dignity and respect for diversity, from offensive or discriminatory language or behaviour to harassment (psychological or sexual). It also includes enforcement measures.

In both actions, revision of the Rules of Procedure and Code of Conduct, the National Delegations were invited to contribute to improve the situation by the CoR Secretary-General and President respectively. Four delegations provided contributions to the Rules of Procedure, two to the Code of Conduct.

The recommended gender parity in the list of vice-presidents has not been fully reached yet. The strategy asked for a political commitment to reach gender parity in this current mandate (2020-2025), but there has only been little progress: although the number of female vice-presidents has doubled, from 2 to 4, a total of 15% of the vice-presidents. This is far from gender parity, and does not reflect the current percentage of female members at the CoR (26% in September 2023).

While gender parity among the CoR commission chairs has been maintained⁵, it has not been reached in the composition of the Bureau, where female members represent 15%⁶ of the Bureau membership.

As for the recommended gender parity for rapporteurs, there has been progress from below 21% in 2019 up to 30% in the current mandate.

The recommendation on the positive engagement of CoR members on International Women's Day each year has been implemented with a dedicated event, the creation of the webpage [For more women in politics](#) and a special session on "Democracy in action: Women in local politics" at the Summit in Marseille in 2022.

A gender-balance criterion has been applied for panels at conferences. In case of non-compliance, a report can be issued in the same way as done for financial errors⁷. The approach is to target all-male panels, since it is not realistic to have a perfect gender balance at every event.

⁴ 1. The gender diversity of the European Committee of the Regions should be reflected as much as possible in the composition of its constituent bodies; 2. The Bureau shall adopt a gender action plan aimed at incorporating a gender perspective in all the Committee's activities. The gender action plan shall be annually monitored and reviewed at least every five years.

⁵ It was achieved before the adoption of the 2019 Strategy.

⁶ Nine out of 58 – updated 7 September 2023.

⁷ Two reports in 2022.

1. Detailed Facts and figures on commission membership and rapporteurships

The following data compares the circumstances from the end of 2019 with the current situation (2023):

	Number of members in CIVEX		CIVEX rapporteurs	
	2019	2023	2015-2019	2020-2023
Female	21 (19%)	24 (23%)	4 (9%)	6 (27%)
Male	87 (81%)	80 (77%)	39 (91%)	16 (73%)
Total	108	104	43	22

	Number of members in COTER		COTER rapporteurs	
	2019	2023	2019	2023
Female	19 (17%)	24 (22%)	11 (20%)	9 (29%)
Male	90 (83%)	84 (78%)	45 (80%)	22 (71%)
Total	109	108	56	31

	Number of members in ECON		ECON rapporteurs	
	2019	2023	2019	2023
Female	23 (24%)	24 (23%)	12 (24%)	10 (33%)
Male	74 (76%)	82 (77%)	38 (76%)	20 (67%)
Total	97	106	50	30

	Number of members in ENVE		ENVE rapporteurs	
	2019	2023	2015-2019	2020-2023
Female	24 (23%)	24 (23%)	11 (27%)	10 (26%)
Male	81 (77%)	80 (77%)	30 (73%)	29 (74%)
Total	105	104	41	39

	Number of members in NAT		NAT rapporteurs	
	2019	2023	2015-2019	2020-2023
Female	16 (16%)	23 (23%)	5 (13%)	11 (32%)
Male	82 (84%)	77 (77%)	33 (87%)	23 (68%)
Total	98	100	38	34

	Number of members in SEDEC		SEDEC rapporteurs	
	2019	2023	2019	2023
Female	26 (26%)	32 (32%)	16 (29%)	13 (33%)
Male	73 (74%)	69 (68%)	39 (71%)	27 (67%)
Total	99	102	55	40

Summary of the contributions by National Delegations

In accordance with Point 3.2.1 of the Strategy adopted at the Bureau meeting held on May 23, 2023, National Delegations were requested to submit further ideas for promoting gender equality within their respective compositions for the upcoming CoR mandate. The deadline for these submissions was set for June 9, in preparation for the Bureau meeting scheduled for July 4, 2023. This initiative aligns with the objectives outlined in the 2020 CoR opinion on the EU Gender Equality Strategy, specifically in the context of the revision of the Rules of Procedure and the development of a CoR Code of Conduct.

Eight National Delegations have actively contributed to this endeavour: Ireland, Austria, Romania, Slovakia, Cyprus, Finland, France, and Germany.

The contributions received predominantly focus on the following key aspects:

recognising gender balance as more than just a numerical concern but as a matter of upholding human rights, reflecting the realities in our communities and across Europe;

acknowledging the pivotal role that women play in various critical areas of CoR's core policies, such as ecological transition, economic development, access to services, and European territorial social cohesion. It is imperative to engage and represent women fully to ensure the effectiveness of policy choices;

emphasising the importance of mainstreaming gender equality beyond political representation, encompassing professional equality, equal pay, and the prevention of violence against women, among other aspects.

In relation to Member States, the contributions revolved around:

the persistent gender imbalance and underrepresentation of women in national politics at all levels and its consequences for the composition of national delegations to the CoR;

the need to address the root causes and enabling factors affecting women's representation in politics at all levels;

highlighting instances of progress, including cases where full gender parity has been achieved in National Delegations due to targeted legislation, policies, and campaigns at the national level;

the necessity to address the national organizations and institutions involved in the nomination process for CoR members and national delegations;

the nomination procedures from other organisations that have successfully ensured gender balance in their compositions.

In the context of the CoR itself, discussions have encompassed:

the imperative of enhancing the current gender balance within the CoR, ranging from the composition of its leadership to the political organisation of commission work;

the roles played by political groups and national delegations in shaping the CoR's constituent bodies;

the need for the CoR to increase its focus on awareness-raising and communication activities. This could involve improving the visibility of women's achievements in regional and local policy, organising regular events, conferences, and training sessions, and facilitating the exchange of best practices among regional and local authorities to enhance women's participation;

the importance of promoting and supporting gender balance at all staff levels within the CoR and during all statutory meetings of the CoR.

Template of the letter sent by the Secretary-General of the Committee to the Secretary-General of the Council



**Comité européen
des régions**

Le Secrétaire général

Bruxelles, *date de l'enregistrement officiel*
SGCAB/TH/dr - D/ (2023)

Mme Thérèse Blanchet
Secrétaire générale
du Conseil de l'Union européenne
Rue de la Loi 170
B - 1048 Bruxelles

Madame la Secrétaire générale,

J'ai l'honneur de porter à votre connaissance que nous avons été informés de la démission/perte de mandat de **Mme/M.**, **membre titulaire/suppléant**, à partir du date à laquelle elle/il a cessé ses fonctions au sein du Comité européen des régions.

Je vous serais reconnaissant de bien vouloir diligenter auprès de vos services la procédure en vue de pourvoir à la vacance du siège.

J'attire aimablement votre attention à ce titre sur la préoccupation du Comité européen des Régions⁸, de veiller à un équilibre des genres dans sa composition, ce qui implique dès lors de nommer davantage de femmes.

Je vous prie d'agréer, Madame la Secrétaire générale, l'expression de ma haute considération.

Petr BLÍŽKOVSKÝ

⁸ Réunion du Bureau du 23/05/2023, "[Vers l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes au sein du CdR](#)".