

EVALUATION

of

“Parity in decision-making: Women in the heart of Europe”

by

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Preface

The preparation of the project "Parity in decision-making: Women in the heart of Europe" started long before the official programme was launched by the opening conference in Athens on December 3rd 2003. The evaluation focuses on the work done in the project period from late 2003 to early 2005.

The Northern Feminist University (Norway) has been responsible for the evaluation and have also been a partner in the project together with Arcidonna (Italy), MONA (Hungary), Shevolution (United Kingdom) and KETHI (Greece) who also was the project promoter. All have been most cooperative and provided information to an evaluator situated on a long distance from the activities in her daily work.

Lise Østby did the evaluation on behalf of The Northern Feminist University.

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Summary

The project "Parity in decision-making: Women in the heart of Europe" is based on a desire to balance the gender representation in decision-making in Europe and in particular in the European Parliament. The European Commission identifies the fact that there is a great imbalance in gender representation in decision-making as a democratic problem and recourses are invested in improving the situation.

This project was a cooperation between organisations in several countries across Europe. KETHI (Greece) was the project promoter and Arcidonna (Italy), MONA (Hungary), Shevolution (United Kingdom) and The Northern Feminist University (Norway) were partner organisations. The focus was to increase the women representation in the national parliament in Greece, the Greek, Italian and Hungarian delegations in the European Parliament and consequently balance the gender composition in decision-making bodies in these countries. Shevolution contributed with training for women to become decision-makers and produced a training manual for this purpose. The Northern Feminist University evaluated the project. All organisations participated throughout the process and attended the transnational meetings.

The women representation increased both in the Greek national election in March 2004, and in the Greek, Italian and Hungarian¹ delegations to the European Parliament after the June 2004 election. The total women representation in the European Parliament decreased slightly after this election. We interpret this as a sign that the activities in this project had a positive effect. The gender representation in the European Parliament were not equalised and the changes are not necessarily permanent, however, it was a step in the right direction. If the democratic deficit in the under-representation of women in decision-making bodies is still considered a problem, projects working for change must continue and be developed and more resources must be invested. It is similar mechanisms keeping women back across Europe, therefore international cooperation within this field is valuable and proved productive through this project.

¹ Comparing to figures from the last Hungarian national election since this was their first election to the European Parliament.

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1. Introduction

There are a number of factors in combination that lay behind the wish of equalising the gender representation in the European Parliament as well as in other decision-making bodies in the European countries. Women constitute more than half of the European population. A composition of representative bodies with less than one third women can therefore hardly be called representative and mark a democratic deficit in the system. In the European Parliament the under-representation of women has been recognised as a problem, and there is will to change the current situation. On this background “Parity in Decision-Making: Women in the Heart of Europe” was funded by the EU programme connected to the Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (80%) and the General Secretariat for Gender Equality in Greece (20%), to carry out this project for change. The practical work was done by a network of organisations in Greece, Italy, Hungary, United Kingdom and Norway, and aimed at improving the unbalanced situation in Greece, Italy and Hungary, countries that were at the bottom of the ranking of equal gender representation before the election for the European Parliament in June 2004. The Northern Feminist University in Norway was assigned the duty of evaluating the project.

In recent years there has been increased public focus across Europe on the necessity of increasing the number of women in decision-making. By signing the UN Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, the European countries committed themselves to fulfil a number of obligations. In the convention it is established that women’s right to equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life, including the right to vote and the right to stand for election, should be ensured by the countries who have accepted the convention (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Article 7). In order for a parliament to be representative there is a need for balanced representation of both women and men to be fair. Other arguments for balancing the gender representation concerns that society lose potential knowledge, experience and competence by not including women in decision-making. Changing the unbalanced situation will be a positive development for women and men as well as society as a whole. Signing conventions is not enough to create change. Specific and well-founded activities are needed, such as the methods tried out through this project.

There are democratic deficits in decision-making regarding other issues than gender. In this project focus was on the gender aspect, other factors like ethnicity, class or geography etc. were not considered.

1.1 Method of evaluation

This evaluation will start with describing the background for the project, present the target for change, the project's aims and goals and the motivation for this. The organisation of the project will be presented as well as the involved partners and their different activities relating to the project. We will present the methods for change and analyse their effect according to the goals. The evaluation will end with a discussion of the results, and on measures that can be employed to reach gender balance in decision-making institutions in Europe.

Being a partner organisation makes The Northern Feminist University an insider in the project and unable to do a complete outsider analysis. However, this brings us closer to the project, and being aware of the insider position diminishes the risk of letting the involvement in the project influence the interpretation and evaluation of it.

We will not go into detail in describing the partners' activities in the evaluation, since the reports of their activities, the interim reports from the project etc. will be available from KETHI.

2. Background

2.1 General point of departure

The starting point for the project "Parity in Decision-Making: Women in the Heart of Europe" was a wish to balance the gender representation in the national parliament in Greece and the European Parliament representation from Greece, Italy and Hungary. The democratic deficit in the unbalanced gender representation is recognised by the European Commission. In this project focus was on some of the countries with the lowest equal representation figure, namely Greece, Italy and Hungary.

To achieve gender parity in the European Parliament, the methods used have a double target: First to raise awareness among parties to place women on electable positions on their ballot lists

and among electorate for the need to vote for women, and secondly to enhance women candidates' communication and political techniques skills.

Country	Representatives	Women	%
Finland	16	7	43.8
France	87	37	42.5
Sweden	22	9	40.9
Belgium	25	10	40
Germany	99	38	38.4
Austria	21	8	38.1
Denmark	16	6	37.5
Netherlands	31	11	35.5
Ireland	15	5	33.3
Luxembourg	6	2	33.3
Spain	64	20	31.3
United Kingdom	87	21	24.1
Portugal	25	6	24
Greece	25	4	16
Italy	87	10	11.5
Total	626	194	31

Source: www.elections-europeennes.org/test/pdf/fepe2004.pdf

Despite concrete steps taken at the European Union level concerning the adoption of an integrated strategy to promote balanced participation of men and women in the decision-making process (Council recommendation 96/694/EC), the Commission's report on the implementation of the above Council's recommendation (COMM (2000)) concluded that the overall outcome of the policies applied since 1996 was positive, but did not match the expectations, thus requiring further action. The persistent under-representation of women in all areas of decision-making marks a fundamental democratic deficit, which requires community level action for the structural change needed in order to achieve gender equality. To this end, the Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2001-2005) sets as one of its operational objectives the promotions of equal participation and representation, with an aim of improving the gender

balance in decision-making. The project “Parity in decision-making: Women in the heart of Europe” focuses on improving the gender balance in political decision-making. Women across Europe face multiple forms of discrimination every day, both direct and indirect. Fighting against such discrimination means political involvement and a better participation and representation of women in the decision-making processes. Gender parity democracy has yet to be achieved, although it is a key element in the achievement of real equality between the sexes and has a positive outcome for society as a whole.

2.1.1 European Parliament election system

The European Parliament is elected every fifth year. It is the only directly elected institution of the European Union and one of the principal decision-making bodies. The Parliament is elected by direct universal suffrage. There does not exist one unified election system in the European Union, but the election is built on some common electoral principles to give the election a “European” character. The Amsterdam Treaty introduced the idea of “common principles” used for the member states in the elections, instead of trying to establish a “uniform electoral procedure”. Finding it hard to get all the member states to agree on a common system, the idea of following common principles was adapted, and all states use some sort of proportional representation (www.elections2004.eu.int/ep-election/sites/en).

The Parliament, by virtue of its representative nature, is an essential mean of promoting equality and social justice in the European Union. The European Parliament should reflect the composition of the European population – between regions, ethnic groups and in particular in a balanced representation of women and men. Such representation has up to the present not been evident.

In the 2004 election 348 824 000 persons were entitled to vote (Cox 2004: p.2), of which a slight majority are women (www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/gees/ee.htm). The fact that women constitute more than half of the population in Europe has been evident neither in the ballot lists nor in the decision-making institutions in the union. After the 1999 European Parliament election 31% of the parliament representatives in total were women. In the Greek delegation 16% were women and in the Italian delegation 11.5% were women (Table 1). Hungary did at this point not have a European Union representation, however 9.8% of the national parliament in Hungary was women. These numbers confirm the considerable

unbalance in the representation of women and men in decision-making positions, and form the fundament for the desired change through the “Parity in decision-making: Women in the heart of Europe” project.

2.2 Country specific point of departure

2.2.1 Greece

The under-representation of women in decision-making bodies in Greece has been manifested. In 2001 the Greek parliament established a legislative regulation, demanding a gender representation of 1/3 of the candidates for the Prefectoral and Municipal elections. At the first election where the regulation was used, the percentage of elected women was increased. In the Prefectures the numbers were 17.4% women in 2002 compared to 10.8% in 1998, and in Municipalities the numbers were 21.2% in 2002 compared to 17.3% in 1998. The matter of quota regulation was however controversial, and claimed unconstitutional by some regional courts. Greece was among the countries with the lowest share of women representatives in the European Parliament before 2004, and kept its place in the lower part of the gender-equality scale also after the expansion of the union. In the beginning of 2004, women comprised 8.7% of the seats in the Greek parliament, and 16% of Greece delegation of 25 representatives in the European Parliament were held by women.

In 1945 equal civil and political rights for both sexes were for the first time recognised in a temporary constitutional document, and in 1952 the women in Greece gained full suffrage.

The Constitution of 1975 incorporates principles on Equality and state that "all Greeks, men and women, are equal before the Law and have equal rights and obligations". In 1982, a position of a Special Adviser to the Prime Minister on Equality was established for the first time. A nine-member Council for Gender Equality was established (an advisory body that was directly under the Prime Minister and functioned as an independent unit of the Ministry of the Head of Government). Act 1558/88 upgraded this Council into a General Secretariat for Equality, which is now under the Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralisation.

Since the end of the 1980s, the major parties in Greece have formally established quota or proportional representation systems, but there are no public positive actions to support women to stand as candidates. These systems are not implemented in practice, because women are not

seen to be available to stand as candidates. The institution of preference cross indication is a factor deterring women from standing as candidates and preventing their election, since it makes the election campaign of an individual extremely costly and competitive, especially for the “parties of power”. Thus, those eventually elected will be those who have more money or other financial support and secure better publicity through the mass media (www.db-decision.de/CoRe/Greece.htm).

2.2.2 Italy

Research carried out in Italy by the Observatory of Pavia on radio and television, report that in this country there is a serious inequality of space and attention given to women in political and electoral occasions: a tribute to the correction of this kind of inequality is an objective of great social and democratic importance. Moreover, the composition of the European Parliament at the starting point of the “Parity in decision-making: Women in the heart of Europe” project showed Italy in the last position concerning gender-representation. Women held 11.5% of Italy’s 87 seats in the European Parliament at the 1999 election.

The issue concerning women’s right to vote was brought to light by the early associations of the feminist movements right after the constitution of the unified Italian State. Women’s suffrage in Italy was finally introduced in 1945, and was achieved by women participating in the struggle for liberation from fascism.

The fundamental principles for equality can be found in Art.3 of the Italian Constitution, where the equality and non-discrimination principles are asserted: “All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal in front of the law, regardless of differences of sex, race, language, religion, political opinions”. In spite of such principles, women’s representation in institutional positions in politics has remained limited in Italy. Thus a number of articles were introduced to inspire a readjustment of the numbers of men and women present in elective committees at different levels in the mid-90s. These laws, though with different provisions, asserted that both sexes had to be present in the electoral lists at not less than a 30% rate.

In 1996 a minister for equal opportunities was appointed for the first time in Italy. Such an appointment was the result of the need to constantly monitor the gender difference issue in all

of the government's policies, in the hope to realizing equal opportunities (against any type of discriminations) and increasing the weight of women in national politics.

Recently, policies of the Italian government have reflected a more specific attention to the issue of women's presences in decision-making contexts. In March 1997, the Prime Minister issued a directive intended for all government members, aimed at "promoting the empowerment of women, acknowledging and guaranteeing freedom of choice and social equality to men and women". Another indication proving the changed orientations in the government's strategies is the law for public financing to political parties. This law (art.3) envisages promoting the active participation of women in politics so that every party is allotted a quota equal to at least 5% of electoral reimbursements received for initiatives oriented to such an objective (www.db-decision.de/CoRe/Italy.htm).

2.2.3 Hungary

The 2004 election was the first election for the European Parliament for the Hungarian population to take part in since they became member of the union 1st of May 2004. The fact that only 38% of the Hungarian public used their right to vote in this election indicates that it did not appear as very significant to the population.

Numbers from the last national election in Hungary in 2002 show that women hold 9.8% of the seats in the Hungarian parliament. Hungary has gone through great social and political changes in the last fifteen years. However, women's representation in decision-making positions has not increased. The share of women in legislative and governmental bodies has rather decreased in the 90s. In 1994 women held 11.1% of the seats in the Hungarian Parliament and in the last election women's share of the seats were down at 9.8%.

Women in Hungary have had full suffrage since 1953.

In 1994 the first public actions towards gender equality were made and the first institution for the promotion of equal status of women were created in Hungary. After the Beijing conference in 1995 it started to work effectively. The institution has since been reorganised several times, its faith has been depending on political will, and has not been prioritised to a great extent. In 2003 a minister of equal opportunities were appointed, with not only

responsibility for gender equality issues, but also discrimination concerning ethnicity and disabilities as well (www.karat.org/documents/hungary_mechanisms.shtml).

2.3 Actors in project

The “Parity in decision-making: Women in the heart of Europe” is a transnational project which is promoted and coordinated by the Research Centre for Gender Equality (KETHI) in Greece. KETHI was founded in 1994 and is a legal entity under private law, supervised and funded by the General Secretariat for Gender Equality of the Ministry of Interior, Public Administration and Decentralisation. The basic aims of KETHI’s activities are to conduct social research on gender equality issues and to improve women’s status and enable their advancement in all areas of political, economic and social life. KETHI’s activities entail publication of studies and research, consultation services to women, seminars to professionals, conferences, co-operation with NGOs and other agencies for gender mainstreaming.

The partners in the project are:

- MONA –Foundation for the women of Hungary (Hungary)

MONA is a non-profit women’s organization. It has ten-years experience in conducting nationwide events regarding women in decision-making. Its previous activities in this field, such as national and international conferences, seminars, workshops, academic research projects, training courses, have developed close working relationships with the target groups of the project in Hungary (women politicians, government authorities, local governments, civil society, business life, legal experts).

- Arcidonna Onlus (Italy)

Arcidonna is a national association, started in Palermo in 1986. Its main goal is to promote freedom and equal opportunities for women, by combating gender discriminations and supporting women’s inclusion in social and professional life. Research, training, women employment and entrepreneurship promotion are its main areas of interest. In recent years, Arcidonna has been carrying out a lot of initiatives promoted in the framework of the most important Community Programmes (NOW, ADAPT, INTEGRA, Leonardo, IV and V Action Programmes for Equal Opportunities between men and women).

- Shevolution/ Eyecatcher (UK)

Shevolution is a British non-governmental organisation. Among other activities they work with training future women leaders in different parts of the world such as the former Soviet Union,

Iraq and also several other developing countries. They organise conferences to increase the number of women in the world's parliaments and advise international agencies in Gender proofing development programmes.

- The Northern Feminist University (Norway)

The Northern Feminist University (NFU) is a private foundation established in 1991 as a resource centre on gender equality. It has since then been working on collecting, documenting, developing, visualising and disseminating women's knowledge and experience, being a meeting place between theoretical and practical, formal and informal knowledge. They arrange studies and courses from secondary school to university level, both formal and informal. Some of the activities are: development work within the gender field especially on social planning and democracy, networking on national and international levels, projects within combating violence against women, resource management, rural development, entrepreneurship, all in a gender perspective. The aim is also to develop networks, studies and working methods.

The Greek part of the project included cooperation with national partners. These were:

- Centre for Action Research on Peace (KEDE)

KEDE is a non-governmental organisation. Their main goals are: promotion of equality status between genders, promotion of peace and protection of human rights, of life and of the environment. Activities of KEDE are proceeding in the national-international level. KEDE has a long-standing experience of bringing together women leaders to discuss various international crises and of promoting women's participation in international decision-making positions. KEDE is considered an expert in the issues of women in decision-making positions, in conflict resolution, and peacekeeping operations. Members of KEDE include former women politicians, women in positions of authority within the government, scientists, journalists, and others.

- Political Association For Women

Political Association for Women is an all-party non-governmental organisation. They work with promotion of the modern role of women in order to support women's participation in and election to political decision-making positions. They organise events in support of women candidates for the elections of national and European parliament, campaigns for gender parity in the European Parliament elections and the national elections, in cooperation with the women's departments of all political parties.

2.4 Organisation of project

The partners in the project had different roles and different duties. The focus was to change the gender unbalance in the ballot lists and the parliament delegations from Greece, Italy and Hungary. Even if there is far from gender equal political representation in United Kingdom as well as in Norway, the focus in this project was not directly on changing the situation in these countries, and the partner organisations from these countries were given outsider roles in the project. Shevolution contributed with training and courses on political communication for female candidates and The Northern Feminist University evaluated the whole project. Both Shevolution and The Northern Feminist University were involved in the project throughout the whole process. They actively participated in the transnational meetings and in developing methods for change. KETHI in Greece was the project-promoter and the main responsible for the project and most of the activities were initiated from there. KETHI was responsible towards the European Union, and functioned as the spider in the project web. The practical work with promotion and activities towards female candidates, parties and society was to a great extent carried out by the partner organisations in the respective countries.

3. Objectives

3.1 Aims of the project

The main objective of “Parity in decision-making: Women in the heart of Europe” was to increase the number of women in elective positions on the ballot lists for the European Parliament elections of 2004, and further on increase the percentage of women representatives in the elected parliament. Equal representation of women in the European Parliament will help to bring about a change in the political culture, creating a fairer and stronger Union that is closer to the concerns of its citizens, both male and female. Reaching the goal of gender-balance in decision-making demands a change of people’s conceptions of what men and women are suited to do. There is a need for a change of attitudes towards women as public agents and potential decision-makers and consequently a change of voting behaviour.

Implementing the “Parity in decision-making: Women in the heart of Europe” project is based on a widespread public-awareness campaign to alert public opinion to the usefulness and advantages for society as a whole of balanced participation of women and men in decision-making.

It was also an objective to develop the capacity of relevant groups to promote gender equality effectively, in particular through support for the exchange of information, good practice and networking. Apart from parity in the European Parliament, the project had the objective of contributing towards achieving a gender balance in the national parliaments as well. The process of this project's implementation aimed at raising public awareness of the need for gender balance and parity democracy in national parliaments, and the project will be utilized for upcoming national elections. The transnational partnership established through the project can be an important element for achieving this objective.

Summarised in points, the aims of the project were:

- To inform and sensitise the public opinion about the importance and the advantages of women's participation in political, economic and social decision-making
- To ensure parity representation of women on the ballot lists for the European Parliament election, in the elected European Parliament and consequently in national elections in Greece, Italy and Hungary
- To empower women in order to demand their participation in the ballot lists of the political parties
- To train women candidates enabling them to run successfully in elections

4. Methods

The methods for fulfilling the objective of parity in decision-making consisted of a variety of well-founded and frequently used activities. The strategy was based on reaching change through a combination of the methods presented below.

The election for the Greek national parliament came first, and was a test of some of the methods used in the project. Elements tried out in the Greek national election in March 2004 were, with some modifications, later used for the European elections in Italy and Hungary as well as in Greece.

4.1 Public campaigns

Campaigns were held to alert public opinion of the usefulness and advantages for society as a whole of balanced participation of women and men in decision-making. Women politicians' campaigns on these issues were promoted. Focus of the campaigns was the added value that

women bring to politics, in addition to the democratic deficit in the overrepresentation of men. KETHI and the two national implementing partners in Greece, the Political Association of Women and the Centre for Research and Action on Peace, initially performed the campaigns before the national election in Greece. Subsequently similar campaigns were carried out before the European Parliament election in Greece by KETHI as well as in Hungary by MONA and in Italy by Arcidonna.

The campaigns consisted of a wide range of activities with the common message to vote for women. Adverts were placed in newspapers and magazines, brochures and posters were distributed through women politicians and separate stands. TV and radio spots were encouraging people to vote women. There were organised public meetings with information on gender equality. There were also organised training courses for women on communicational skills and acting in public.

4.1.1 Campaigns in Greece

In Greece the advocacy campaign were two-fold, or carried out in two stages, before the national election in March and later for the European election in June. A TV spot with a message encouraging people to vote women, was produced, and was showed as a social message on the public and private TV stations. An additional TV spot was produced in the end of the project period to underpin the general campaign in Greece. A radio spot was produced and broadcasted at local and national radio stations. Several leaflets and brochures were produced and distributed throughout the country through political parties, women politicians, mail, meetings and political parties' kiosks. KETHI used all available channels to distribute their message to the public.

4.1.2 Campaigns in Italy

In Italy a message to vote women was published in newspapers as well as through radio and TV. People in Italy had the opportunity to use three preferences at the election, and Arcidonna encouraged the population to use it actively for voting for women. They shaped and spread recognisable material and merchandise of various kinds such as leaflets, posters, postcards, stickers, fans etc. All of the material carried the message that people should vote women in the European Parliament election. The material was distributed throughout the whole country through different channels. Meetings, discussions and press conferences were held in the

major cities and “Let’s vote women day” was arranged on the 5th of June. Celebrities were included in the campaign in order to create publicity.

4.1.3 Campaigns in Hungary

The project in Hungary focused on a media campaign in two phases. MONA’s goal in the campaign was to enhance women’s potential of self-representation by means of their increased participation in public life. 10% fewer women than men used their voting rights in the last national election in Hungary, so encouraging women to actually use their democratic rights was also part of the project. They encouraged the population to vote consciously and chose parties with a clear equal opportunities strategy and with more women on their election lists.

MONA produced radio spots, messages in printed press and distributed leaflets. They introduced the campaign through a press conference in Budapest.

The second phase of the campaign is raising awareness among women, of the Member of the European Parliament’s obligation to represent them, including putting equal opportunities on the agenda. They will also encourage women to make contact with their MEPs in order to make them work on gender equality issues in the European Parliament.

4.2 Communication techniques and political marketing seminars

One specific issue for the project is to train women in communication techniques and acting in public such as giving speeches or interviews, political presentation etc. A goal is also to assist in developing a fundament in women that will help them overcome some of the hindrances for acting in the public sphere. One factor that contributes to keeping women from acting on the political scene is the use of suppression techniques through media. Women politicians are for example presented in other ways than men; they are asked different questions and “used” differently. Being aware of this can help diminish the effect of the suppression. Women have in many traditions through their upbringing not been encouraged to speak in public or act as public persons, which means that they might need a different sort of training than men, in order to have success as vigorous political actors.

The first of the seminars in Greece took place in Athens in late April 2004. It aimed at developing the communication skills of the participants, who were female executives from various political parties as well as representatives for the partner organisations in the project.

Lesley Abdela from Shevolution was responsible for two-day workshops in Athens and Thessalonica, which aimed at assisting women active in Greek politics to develop their communication skills. The workshops consisted of some general background information and seminars and training on how to do public speeches as well as radio and TV interviews. The training was a mixture of lectures and practical training. It is valuable for women to become aware of that there is a systematic difference in how men and women are treated, and to realise that there is nothing wrong with you as a person when you as a female politician experience to be treated with less respect than your male counterparts. It is part of a system that stereotype both men and women and categorise women by nature, as being less capable than men as decision-makers.

We observed the workshops and it was clear that the participating women politicians were happy with the content and they expressed positive views of the outcome. They identified it as a problem that women are underrepresented to the extent they are in Greece, and they were positive towards the effects of arrangements like this for increasing female representation. Several women at the workshops had similar experiences from their everyday life as politicians or activists. Maria, a young Greek politician expressed it like this: *“Even though women get more space within the parties, men are still in the top positions within the party and on the electable positions of the ballot lists. The parties are willing to include women, but not to the same extent or in the same positions as men.”* Another common experience was the notion of not being good enough. Christina, a journalist and activist expressed that: *“They say that women are not suited for political positions. Either they are too old to take the position, or they are too young and running the risk of getting pregnant soon, or if they have children they should rather stayed home, taking care of them. There is never the right time for women to be in power positions. Men are never getting this kind of criticism, and their age is never an issue.”* This type of activity was clearly perceived to be useful by the participating activists. They appreciated sharing their experiences and realised the unfair way they felt treated was part of a system, not actions aimed at them as individuals. They also appreciated the practical training on preparing and doing interviews and speeches.

4.2.1 Training manual

The training activities made evident a need for some sort of training manual that could be used by others in the future. Lesley Abdela was responsible for drafting a training manual in order to continue this training process among women in the target countries. Such a manual will help to spread the project further in the future by enabling more people in local communities to train more women to become potential decision-makers. The manual was constructed in a general way, which opens for universal use. The manual can be a helpful tool wherever women need training to overcome the hindrances towards becoming political actors.

The first part of the manual consists of a general part with background on gender balance in decision-making and the second part consists of workshop modules and guidelines for trainers.

None of the partners in the project had come across a document like this before. The unique training manual was presented in draft form on 3rd transnational meeting in Budapest, and finalised to the closing conference of the project.

4.3 Other seminars

Early December 2004, MONA organised a seminar with training in gender mainstreaming for the female Hungarian members of the European Parliament and their assistants, together with relevant NGOs. The seminar was meant to build a fundament for preparing policy decisions with an increased respect of gender aspects. The MEPs initiated partnerships by asking for proposals regarding policy issues they are responsible for, and the seminar also led to a dialogue on how to lobby for issues that are important to Hungarian women.

4.4 Website

There was created a special page on “Parity in decision-making: Women in the heart of Europe” within the KETHI website (www.kethi.gr), linked with websites of the partner organisations and other relevant websites, for dissemination of information and project activities. There were published texts arguing for parity in decision-making. In the Greek section women candidates from all parties were offered to present themselves through a personal profile. The website will be used for fully presenting the content of the “Parity in decision-making: Women in the heart of Europe” project. The results of the project in addition to various material produced will be accessible through the website.

4.5 Transnational mechanism

One side effect of the project is the creation of a lasting international cooperation, a transnational mechanism. It encompasses a dual role, in the project period it did on one hand exercise pressure on political parties to increase the number of women candidates, and on the other hand it supported exchange of information, practices and assistance between women candidates at the European level. Representatives of the project's implementing partners comprise the transnational mechanism.

In this project the focus is not only the countable increase of women in parliament at this point of time, but also a mental change of people's conception of women as decision-makers. The goal is that women is seen as individual political agents, just as well as men, whether you are born as a boy or a girl should not be categories to decide whether you can be a political representative or not. The transnational mechanism is meant to function as a network that can continue to work for the necessary further changes in society to achieve real gender parity.

4.6 Transnational meetings

The international cooperation were organised through several transnational meetings. The first meeting was held in Athens on December 6th 2003. Here the project was started, and a steering group was established consisting of one representative from each partner organisation. The steering group is a part of the transnational mechanism created by the project. The purpose of the transnational meetings were to discuss and agree upon the material, information, activities, and evaluation system, to exchange experience, prepare campaigns and tools, to assess the process at all stages and to evaluate. The idea is that the partners can draw lessons from each other and develop the project using each other's experiences. The second meeting was held in Rome on July 19th 2004, the third was held in Budapest on October 29th 2004 and the fourth was held on February 6th 2005 in Athens. Representatives from all partner organisations participated in these meetings.

4.7 European conference

The project was ended by a final conference held in Athens on February 3rd to 5th 2005. It was titled "From theory to practice: women and men in equal partnership in politics". High-ranking Greek and European officials were keynote speakers and Greek women politicians from all over the country participated as well as representatives for the partner organisations in this project.

The programme of the conference consisted of various views of and presentations of women in politics in Greece and Europe, roundtable discussions, workshops and a presentation of “Women in decision-making: Women in the heart of Europe”.

5. Outcome

5.1 Non-measurable changes

Parts of the outcome of this project are changes that are in short terms non-measurable or changes that are difficult to measure. Changes in attitudes towards women as political actors or in voting behaviour are factors that will be evident through time, and at the moment we can only see indications of that this kind of changes will actually take place.

I interpret the fact that the election results in the target countries show that women representation has increased, as a sign of beginning changes in attitudes. Even though the changes of gender representation are not immense, it is a start and an indication of raised awareness of women as potential decision-makers.

5.2 Greek national election

The first indicator of how the project worked was the Greek national election held on March 7th 2004. The numbers from the election shows no big changes but indicates a positive development in Greece.

The portion of women representatives increased from 8.7% to 12.7% in the national parliament. However, the proportion of women in the government decreased from 8.2% to 4.2%². A woman (Anna Psarouda Benaki) was elected president of the national parliament for the first time.

5.3 European Parliament election

The low percentage of people using their voting rights in the election for the European Parliament indicates a low interest in the general public for this institution. Only 45.5% of the European Unions inhabitants voted in the election (www.elections2004.eu.int/ep-

² There was a political shift of the government from socialist to conservative, socialist parties tend to have more women in positions, which can be a contributing factor for the decrease of women in the government.

[election/sites/en](#)). This continues the trend of the European Parliament election losing interest among the population. This institution shares this faith with a number of other democratically elected institutions. Still the European Parliament is an institution with power, and the need for parity of gender representation is evident.

5.3.1 Women representatives in parliament

Before the 2004 election, there were indications that women representation in the parliament would be increasing in the member countries. However, on the 1st of May 2004 ten new countries were included in the union. Most of these countries have lower women representation in decision-making positions than the old member states. Subsequently, after the 2004 election with the new countries included, the gender representation was not increased³. The results from the 2004 election show that the women representation decreased in the parliament in total⁴. However, the percentage of women elected increased in all three target countries. In Greece women representation ended on 29.1%, in Italy the number is 19.2% and in Hungary the number is 33.3%. Total figure of women representation in the parliament is 30.3% (Table 2). The new member states Malta and Cyprus possess the not honorary places at the bottom of the ranking with no women in their delegations to the parliament. The 2004 election was a step backward for the European Union when it comes to parity in decision-making as it meant a decrease of women representation from 31% in the previous parliament. The increase in the target countries indicates that the “Parity in decision-making: Women in the heart of Europe” project has had a positive effect.

Compared to earlier elections in the target countries, there is an evident positive development in the women representation. In Italy’s delegation 15 out of 78 representatives are women after the 2004 election, while 10 out of 87 representatives were women after the 1999 election. In Greece’ delegation 7 of 24 representatives are women, compared to 4 of 25 at the last election. 8 out of 24 representatives are women in the Hungarian delegation. 2004 was the first time Hungary elected representatives to the European Parliament, but comparing to

³ We could have compared with the development of women representation in the EU 15 countries, however, since the target countries are both old and new members we chose to use the figures for the whole union.

⁴ The numbers of women representation vary in different sources, among other things depending on if it is measured at the time of the election or later in the period. We use the numbers presented by the European Council on their web pages.

earlier national numbers there is an increase in women representation⁵. In the Hungarian Parliament of 2002 women comprised 9.8% of the seats, while they hold 33.3% of the seats in the newly elected European Parliament.

Country	Representatives	Women	% 04	% 99
Sweden	19	11	57.9	40.9
Luxembourg	6	3	50	33.3
Netherlands	27	12	44.4	35.5
France	78	34	43.5	42.5
Slovenia	7	3	42.8	
Austria	18	7	38.8	38.1
Ireland	16	5	38.4	33.3
Lithuania	13	5	38.4	
Finland	14	5	35.7	43.8
Denmark	14	5	35.7	37.5
Slovakia	14	5	35.7	
Hungary	24	8	33.3	
Estonia	6	2	33.3	
Spain	54	18	33.3	31.3
Germany	99	31	31.3	38.4
Greece	24	7	29.1	16
Belgium	24	7	29.1	40
Portugal	24	6	25	24
United Kingdom	78	19	24.3	24.1
Latvia	9	2	22.2	
Check Republic	24	5	20.8	
Italy	78	15	19.2	11.5
Poland	54	7	12.9	
Cyprus	6	0	0	

⁵ Women representation in national elections and European Parliament elections cannot be directly compared, however, we use the comparison as an indicator of development of women representation in Hungary.

Malta	5	0	0	
Total	732	222	30.3	31
Total EU 15	573	185	32.3	

Source: www.elections2004.eu.int/ep-election/sites/en/results1306/women/index.html

5.3.2 Women representation on ballot lists⁶

We have focused on the ballot lists of the parties who got representatives elected. In Greece there were 16.8% women candidates on the ballot lists in the national election in 2004. The portion of women on these lists had increased slightly from 14.7% in 2000. In the ballot lists for the European Parliament election in 2004 women held 29.2% of the positions in Greece. In Hungary 26.6% of the representatives on the ballot lists that got candidates elected for the European Parliament were women. In Italy 33.1% of the candidates on the ballot lists were women in 2004 (Figures from correspondence with KETHI, Arcidonna and MONA).

6. Discussion

6.1 Practical arrangements

The project suffered from a shortage of time at certain stages. The initial plan was to start the project in the early fall 2003. However, the start was postponed, and the work did not start until December. In Greece, the national election was proclaimed two months earlier than the initial notice, which gave even shorter time for preparations. The national election in Greece led to a change of Government, which then led to a change of board in KETHI, the promoter of “Parity in decision-making: Women in the heart of Europe”. The effect of not having a board at KETHI in a period of the project created administrative problems. It affected the time schedule and caused practical difficulties related to the implementation of the program. This especially related to approval of expenses and reimbursements for partner organisation.

The project manager at KETHI was replaced in October/ November 2004. There is always a risk of losing the totality of a project when changing project manager towards the end of a project period. The change in this case was due to external causes, by the change of

⁶ We have found limited information on gender representation on ballot lists of earlier elections, consequently we cannot establish development in the parity here. However, it is interesting to analyse the unparity between the gender-balance of the ballot lists and the gender-balance in the elected delegations.

Government after the Greek national election in 2004. Occurrences like this cannot be controlled by a project and when this happens the consequences must be dealt with and suitable solutions must be found.

Cooperating across borders with physical long distances between the partners is challenging. In order to produce common results and tie the project's different activities together, open communication and conscious flow of information is necessary. It seems as "Parity in decision-making: Women in the heart of Europe" would have benefited from being more attentive on this issue and have a more free and frequent flow of information between the partners and the promoter.

The final conference was organised by the Greek promoter. This turned out to become more of a national Greek political event than a European event to close the project. The project's activities and results got too little attention in the program, and the conference did not to the expected extent reflect the earlier discussions between the partner organisations on the shape of the closing conference. This do not seem to have affected the results of the project "Parity in decision-making: women in the heart of Europe" in a negative way. However, it could to a greater extent have contributed to the dissemination of the results on the European level. The conference was probably most useful for promoting gender equality work in Greek politics, and inspiring for Greek women politicians. Having included partner organisations better in the planning of the conference would probably have linked it closer to the project.

People involved in election campaigning are very busy in the period before the election, and it is comprehensible that they will prioritise activities directly connected to gaining votes rather than long-term strategic planning for gender equalisation. In this specific case it led to some of the seminars and training activities being postponed and held after the election. Having had more time before the election had meant that more activities could have been carried out, and one might have seen bigger changes in the number of women represented in the European Union and Greek parliament. The main reason for this was related to the fact that the date of the Greek parliament election was changed, which of course cannot be blamed on KETHI or on the project. The activities were still carried out, and have probably contributed to future changes in gender representation.

6.2 Election systems

Election systems are meant to attend to goals that might be in opposition to each other. The system is often a result of political negotiations and the kind of electoral system employed can play an important role in determining who is elected. This includes influence on the gender balance among the elected. In systems with single member constituencies it has proved hard to ensure gender balance, while countries with a proportional or mixed system usually have a higher percentage of women in decision-making. In making a choice of election system it is important to be aware of this connection and avoid seeing the system as a neutral instrument. Being aware of this can enable authorities to use the election system as an active tool for equalising for example the gender representation.

High costs are connected with standing as a candidate for a position and can work as a hindrance towards gender balance. The unbalance of economic resources between women and men influence their access to political positions and power. Women still earn less than men and possess less fortune. This in itself decreases women's scope on this arena. In some countries regulations exist on how much one can legally spend on election campaigns. Regulations like these should also be considered when it comes to nomination campaigns where access to capital can mean a lot for the achieved results.

In Greece and Hungary the election for the European Parliament was done by a closed list system, which means that the candidates are elected according to their position on the ballot list. Voters cannot use preferences, and if the party has put only men on the top-positions on the list, voters can do nothing to influence the gender composition (except choosing to vote for another party with women in electable positions). In order to get more female representatives it is therefore necessary to influence the parties to put women on secure places on the ballot lists. Parity in gender representation would be close to secured in a closed list system, if all parties used a "zipper system" on their ballot lists with alternate woman-man, and the top candidate in half of the parties were women.

In Hungary most parties had finalised their ballot lists shortly after MONA got involved in the "Parity in decision-making: Women in the heart of Europe" project. This meant that they had little influence on the gender balance on the lists, and since the Hungarian election was done through a closed list system there were no point in encouraging the public to cumulate women. MONA choose rather to focus on the activities mentioned in 4.1.3

Italy is the only of the three project countries that use an election system with possibilities of cumulating candidates at the European Parliament election. Here voters had the possibility of using three preferences. An election system with possibilities for preference voting will not automatically lead to gender balance. The population must already be convinced of women's qualifications as decision-makers in order to give them extra votes. In Sweden the election system gives possibilities for preference voting. In the 2004 European Parliament election 3 women got enough personal votes to get seats instead of candidates placed higher than them on the ballot lists (Dagens Nyheter 17.06.04). However, possibilities of preference voting may not necessarily lead to more women in parliament. Numbers found through research done in Norway on local elections, show that the women representation in this case actually decreased through the preferences. The percentage of women on the original ballot lists was higher than the percentage elected women when preference voting was used (Hellevik & Bjørklund 1995: p 20). Changes of attitudes towards women as decision-makers must already have occurred before we can expect that preference voting will have positive effects on gender balance. The election results from Italy show that the percentage of women on the ballot lists was higher than the percentage of elected women. Even if Italians had a higher portion of women to choose between, they voted for a smaller percentage of women than the other countries. The Italian voters did not use their preferences to increase the women representation in the European Parliament.

6.3 Election results

The percentage of women in the Parliament of the European Union decreased slightly in the 2004 election. As I touched upon earlier in this report, this is probably connected to the inclusion of new member states in the union. The women representation in decision-making positions in the new member states was lower than in the old member states. This can explain the decrease in the portion of women representatives in the union seen together. The results in the target countries in this project clearly show an increase in women representation. In Greece the women representation increased by 13.1% from 16% to 29.1%. In Italy the women representation increased by 7.7% from 11.5% to 19.2%, and in Hungary the women representation was 9.8% at the last national election and 33.3% in the European Parliament election. These are considerable changes even though it does not lead to a gender equal decision-making system. However, the changes can be interpreted as a sign of the activities

carried out in the “Parity in decision-making: Women in the heart of Europe” project have had some effect, and are leading way in the right direction.

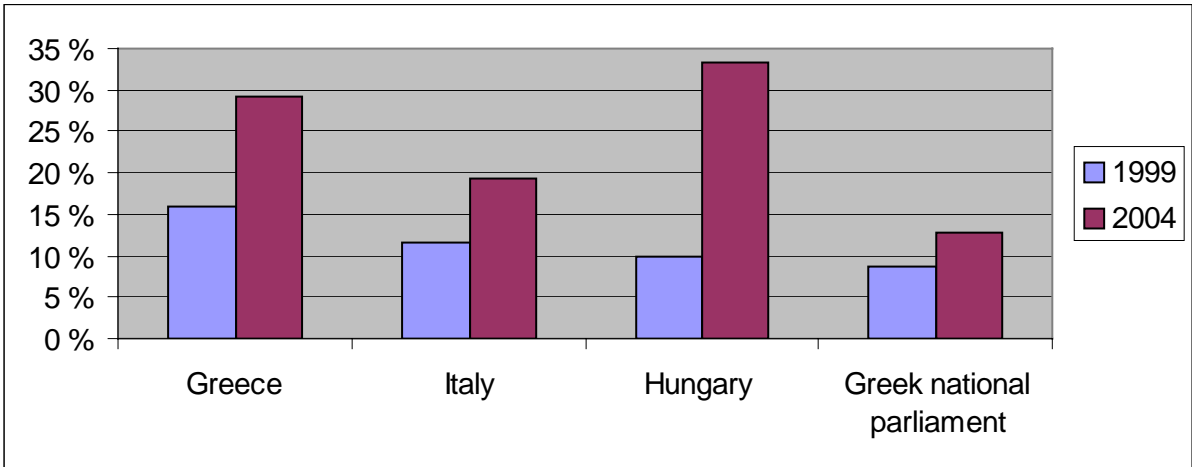


Fig.1 Development of women representation in the target countries. The Hungarian 1999 axis has numbers from the 2002 national election. The Greek national parliament 1999 axis has numbers from the 2000 election.

6.4 Ballot lists

When using women representation on ballot lists as an indicator of gender equality, it is important not just to count numbers, but also to consider the composition of the lists. In order to achieve actual changes in the parliament, women must be placed in electable positions on the lists, for the effort to make parties nominate women to have the intended effect. It is not enough to include women on the lists, they must be given electable positions on equal terms as men, for example through a “zipper system” in order to achieve the goal of gender balance in the elected parliament. Comparing the gender-balance on the ballot list and the delegations in the elected parliament shows different results in the target countries. In the European Parliament election for Greece the women quota on the election results were close to mirroring the women quota on the ballot lists. In the national election in Greece the women quota in the parliament was smaller than on the ballot lists. This was also the result in Italy, where we find a negative difference of 14% between ballot list and election result. In Italy there is a law on the election of Members of the European Parliament that specifies that on any political party constituency list there must be at least one third women and at least one third men and no more than two thirds of either sex. Any movement or party who presents a list that does not respect this gender balance will be fined a portion of their state subsidised election funds. The election results show that the Italian parties have composed ballot lists according to the regulation, however, even though women are present on the lists, they are not

given electable positions. In Italy 20 different parties got representatives elected for the European Parliament. This meant that many parties only got their top candidate elected. The tendency of topping the lists with male candidates is another factor contributing to keeping the unbalance of gender representation. In Hungary the situation seems to have been the opposite, there the women quota were bigger in the elected parliament delegation than in the ballot lists, which mean that the women must have been in high positions on the lists.

Country	Women quota on ballot lists	Women quota in elected delegation
Greece	29.2%	29.1%
Italy	33.1%	19.2%
Hungary	26.6%	33.3%
Greek national election	16.8%	12.7%

6.5 Non-measurable changes

There are certain aspects of this project that are non- or difficult measurable. In order to reach the aim of gender-balance in decision-making it is necessary to change attitudes towards women as decision-makers, to make people see women as political agents, able to, and in the right to fill the same positions as men in the democratic system. The project wanted to change peoples voting behaviour according to this in order to create the base for gender-balanced decision-making in the future. It is hard to measure such changes quantitatively, and to establish a causal relationship. To do this would have needed a completely different evaluation programme, however, the increase of women representation in the target countries indicate that such changes of attitudes may be taking place.

Changes in the political field can have side effects on gender parity in society in total. Visible women actors in decision-making institutions can influence gender parity in other parts of society too. Simply by being apparent on the public scene, female politicians are contributing to normalise women as public actors and potential decision-makers.

A change of people’s attitudes as mentioned above takes time and is an ongoing process that will take years to implement. That changes have occurred should not be taken as an argument for the desired change to happen without further attention on the issue. If the conscious work

for change does not continue, there is a risk of a backlash and that the positive results will be lost in the next election.

6.6 Invested resources vs. expected results

Imparity in decision-making is a huge field to work with, and changing the current situation is not done in a wink. Specific changes can be measured in numbers at elections, but changes in voting behaviour, mental changes of attitudes and views on women as potential decision-makers are a long-term project, difficult to measure. The imparity is identified as a democratic problem and something desired to change. In order to achieve this change there is a need for investing more resources than what has been done so far through this project. The expected results do not always correspond with the invested resources, and more effort is needed to reach the goals behind this project.

As commented in section 2.1, the European Commission report on the Councils recommendations from 2000 concluded that the overall outcome of the policies applied from 1996 was positive but did not match the expectations. This indicates that even though the problem is identified, not enough resources are invested in the work for changing the situation. This can be a serious hindrance towards reaching gender equality. If the decision-makers believe the work is in progress while it is actually not, much due to lack of sufficient resources, the imparity may continue and may even increase while the responsible think the situation is changing for the better.

Still it is evident that the modest effort carried out through the project “Parity in decision-making: Women in the heart of Europe” has brought some positive results.

6.7 Quota

Quota regulations have been employed to achieve different political goals throughout history. It is used to ensure representation for underrepresented groups, and has shown to be an instrument that is a useful tool in the work towards changing unbalances in representation. However, when used for securing equal representation of women and men it is often met with protests. The word in itself seems to be provocative and have negative connotation for its opponents. In Norway for example, a common misinterpretation is that quotas is a mechanism that gives less qualified women the positions of more qualified men. According to Norwegian activist and professor of social psychology, Berit Ås, the protests against quotas is not against

the instrument as such, but against giving women privileges in fields where men have been dominant (Ås 1976: 19).

In Norway most parties have an internal quota system, which have clearly contributed to decrease the gender unbalance in Norwegian decision-making institutions. However, the gender balance would have been secured if the quota was institutionalised within the system and officially imposed.

Having identified a democratic deficit in European decision-making, and wanting to change the unbalance, demand specific actions for change. This can for example be a system of gender quota. In a body with unbalanced gender representation one can simply demand that both men and women should have no less than 40% of the seats. Enforcing this demand will directly lead to gender equal representation.

It is important to keep an eye on political institutions with quota mechanism, so that the women representatives do not become only symbols and tools for powerful men.

6.8 European Council recommendations

In the European Union there are no binding laws that force the member countries to consider gender equality in decision-making bodies. However, work has been done within the field and there exists several documents with recommendations on how the member states should work for achieving parity in decision-making, recommendation of good practices etc.

(www.coe.int/T/E/Human_Rights/Equality/03. Women_and_decision-making/). Documents with advices and recommendations like these are useful, however, they will only have limited effect without binding legislations or specific incitements for change. The step from talking about a desired change and actually making the change would go faster if it was supported by legislation.

6.9 European added value

The objects of this project are transnational and have potential for affecting more European countries than the directly involved partners. The analyses developed and methods used can be translated to other European countries and used for diminishing the gender unbalance in these countries as well. The mechanisms working for keeping the gender imbalance are similar in different countries, consequently cooperating across borders on issues like these is

fruitful. It is not necessary to invent the wheel over and over again, lessons learned in one country can successfully be translated into others. The training manual developed through this project is general in its form and can be used in other countries as well, both within and outside the European Union.

6.10 Next step

We draw the conclusion that this project has actually made a difference to the gender unbalance in the target countries, and that the activities within the project has contributed to decrease the gender gap in decision-making in the European Union. The increase of women representation in the target countries was between 8 and 23%, which represent a considerable step forward. However, a parliament composed by 30% of one sex and 70% of the other is not a gender-balanced institution. Even though “Parity in decision-making: Women in the heart of Europe” has made change and contributed to a positive development, the job is not finished. The European Union run the risk of losing the achieved results if the conscious work on these issues is not continued. The work on balancing the gender representation must actively be continued through well-founded actions in order to reach real gender-balance in decision-making. Further changes will not automatically follow from the level reached in 2004. If the focus on necessary actions towards change is not continued, the situation in the next European election might be a further decrease in women representation. If the problem of gender-unbalance is still taken seriously, the European Union needs to continue investing in projects towards change.

For achieving successful and lasting change, programs to promote gender equality and mechanisms to ensure this should be created in all countries, including specific demands of gender balance in decision-making bodies in the legislations. This can mean a great step towards gender equal representation. Transnational cooperation on these matters has proved valuable through this project.

In order to achieve gender balance in the European Parliament efforts should be made in all member countries, not only the ones within this project.

Suggestions for successful further changes:

- Establishing national mechanisms in all countries to promote gender equality

- Introduction of legislation on gender balance, e.g. demands for representation of each gender by no less than 40% in all decision-making bodies
- Continuation of the work started in the “Parity in Decision-making: Women in the Heart of Europe” project. Preferably with expansion to the other countries in the Union that still lacks gender balance

7. Conclusion

There are few text-book-solutions on how to change the imparity of gender in decision-making. Different and complementary strategies must be used depending on the structure within which the change is desired. However, there are some general principles that should be observed: the understanding of the need for change has to be present as well as the will to change the situation. The reasons behind the imparity should be mapped and analysed. Sufficient recourses should be allocated for the purpose.

Increasing the number of women on the ballot lists for the European election and increasing the women representation in the European Parliament will have wider effects than just the change in numbers. Changing the unbalance on these arenas can also contribute to general changes in society as a whole. Recognising women as actors in these settings contributes to changing the stereotyped views of women as suited only for the private sphere. It is necessary to acknowledge women and men as equal agents and participants on the public scene in order to reach parity in decision-making. Parity in decision-making is a prerequisite for a democratic society. If the thoughts behind the wish to reach gender parity in decision-making are serious and based on more than a wish to change the not-good-looking numbers, there must be made room for wider and deeper analyses followed by actions.

European authorities have manifested the imparity as something worth working for changing, the work has started and is in progress, however, the road to gender equality seems to be long and there is still a lot of work to be done. One part of this work has been done through the project “Parity in decision-making: Women in the heart of Europe”. While the total women representation in the European Union Parliament slightly decreased in the 2004 election, the women representation in the target countries increased. Through the project a number of successful methods and specific actions for initiating change has been identified and some have been tried out. To reach the goal of democratising the European Union, and overcome

the imparity in decision-making, these issues should be developed and brought forward through continuing efforts and actions.

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