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PACE Recommendation 1899(2010) “Increasing Women's Representation in Politics through the Electoral System”

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW
(VENICE COMMISSION)

PACE RECOMMENDATION 1899(2010)
“INCREASING WOMEN’S REPRESENTATION IN POLITICS
THROUGH THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM”

VENICE COMMISSION COMMENTS
IN VIEW OF THE REPLY OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

Adopted by the Council for Democratic Elections
at its 32nd meeting
(Venice, 11 March 2010)
and by the Venice Commission
at its 82nd plenary session
(Venice, 12-13 March 2010)

1. This document is a response by the Venice Commission to the request made by the Committee of Ministers at its 1077th meeting (24 February 2010), regarding Parliamentary Assembly [Recommendation 1899\(2010\)](#), entitled “Increasing women’s representation in politics through the electoral system”.
2. This document was adopted by the Council for Democratic Elections at its 32nd meeting (Venice, 11 March 2010) and by the Commission at its 82nd plenary session (Venice, 12-13 March 2010).
3. The Venice Commission has drafted several documents relating to women’s participation in elections. Reference should first of all be made to point I.2.5 of the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters (CDL-AD(2002)023rev) and the Declaration on Women’s Participation in Elections (CDL-AD(2006)020), which state that “Legal rules requiring a minimum percentage of persons of each gender among candidates should not be considered as contrary to the principle of equal suffrage if they have a constitutional basis”.
4. The Commission further draws attention to the report on “The impact of electoral systems on women’s representation in politics” (CDL-AD(2009)029), drafted at the request of the Parliamentary Assembly’s Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.
5. The Parliamentary Assembly recommends a reform of electoral systems to one which, theoretically, is the most favourable to women’s representation (cf. CDL-AD(2009)029, paragraph 121).
6. Having said that, it is essential to bear in mind that there is a wide variety of socio-economic, cultural and political factors that can hamper or facilitate women’s access to parliament; moreover, the electoral system, apart from favouring women’s representation, can also pursue other political aims, including enabling the formation of stable governing majorities and ensuring a close voter-representative relationship. Since some of the objectives are antagonistic, no electoral system fulfils all requirements completely. Consequently, the appropriateness of an electoral system is dependent on the political aims which are given priority in a particular socio-cultural and political context (CDL-AD(2009)029, paragraph 126).