

CODE OF CONDUCT

Gender equality as a guiding principle in the works of the Group of the Party of European Socialists in the European Committee of the Regions

The Group of the Party of European Socialists (PES) in the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) is committed to ensuring that gender equality is consistently and continuously reflected in the exercise of its activities and the elaboration of its policies. This is driven by the firm belief that gender equality is a non-negotiable prerequisite for all truly progressive political forces because it ultimately determines the legitimacy and integrity of their responses to the needs and aspirations of European citizens. The PES Group remains of course vigilant about other forms of discrimination (racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation), which it condemns vehemently.

Ensuring gender parity within the Group's internal democratic structures as well as external representation requires determined efforts by all members of the Group; such parity can only **enhance** the Group's collective skills and competences, and therefore, its overall effectiveness and impact. Some steps have already been taken. The current Group's Rules of Procedure stipulate that for the election of the Group's 1st Vice-Chair, candidatures are restricted to members of the sex opposite to that of the Chair. This gender code of conduct therefore clearly defines clear clusters where gender parity should be reached and ensure that the overall underrepresented gender is not put at a disadvantaged position in the application of the gender code of conduct.

The PES Group will continue to strive to combat any form of discrimination in the recruitment policy of the staff of its secretariat. It applies an equal opportunities policy and considers applications without any discrimination.

However, more resolute action must be taken from now on.

I. The key challenge for gender equality: impacting upon CoR membership

Gender equality cannot be applied in strictly numerical terms by the PES Group alone if there is no critical mass of overall CoR female membership. The biggest challenge lies in the composition of national delegations within the CoR, but all positions on which the PES Group decides alone, a full gender equality should be ensured.

To address this thorny issue, envisaged action should be threefold:

a) Individual members of the PES Group, in particular those being heads of their national delegation, shall exert both internal and, where appropriate, public pressure in their national contexts in order to influence their respective countries' internal procedures for appointing a gender-balanced delegation of CoR members. Even if in some member states, the way members are selected does not offer a lot of flexibility (e.g. in Spain, the Presidents of the Autonomous Communities are in principle automatically designated as CoR members), there are positive examples that this does not contradict the aim of achieving a gender balanced approach;

The same pressure for a better gender balance representation should be put to the Council in their communication towards the member's states.

b) A broader political discussion shall be envisaged at political level within the CoR to advance gender equality beyond the PES Group. The PES Group shall strive to initiate a meaningful

dialogue between the CoR and national delegations in order to raise awareness about the importance of gender balanced representation within the Committee;

c) While leading by example, the PES Group must exert pressure upon the CoR administration to promote gender parity in the way the CoR work is organised and carried out. By the same token, the PES Group must engage in the promotion of competent women and highlight the need for such promotion also at CoR level.

II. Recommendations

The PES Group's margin of manoeuvre in the implementation of gender equality measures within its internal structures and beyond is determined by the overall representation of women and men as reflected in the CoR membership, and therefore, in the PES Group membership. Nomination of CoR members is the prerogative of individual Member States (often, however, based on proposals by national associations of local and regional authorities) and it is not necessarily linked to any gender equality criteria. At the same time, the PES Group firmly believes that gender equality can be made possible. What is more, there is no contradiction between gender parity and a competence-based approach when designating PES Group members.

Therefore, the PES Group shall apply a gender equality policy in those of its **internal structures** on which it has full control of membership. The application of gender equality criteria should be organised in the following clusters¹:

- > Cluster 1: Candidate for CoR President and PES Group President
- > Cluster 2: PES Group Executive (Vice-Presidents and Treasurer)
- > Cluster 3: PES Group Coordinators in CoR commissions.
- > Cluster 4: PES Chairs of CoR commissions
- > Cluster 5: PES Vice-Chairs of CoR commissions
- > Cluster 6: PES Chairs / Vice-Chairs in other bodies (such as CFAA, Rules of Procedure, BRASS-G), JCCs and WGs, other future bodies (not established so far)
- > Cluster 7: PES Members/Alternates for other bodies (such as CFAA, Rules of Procedure), JCCs and WGs, other future bodies (not established so far)
- > Cluster 8: Speaking slots for PES Group members, who speak on behalf of the PES Group in Plenary
- > Cluster 9: Speaking slots for PES Group representatives in events/conferences (CoR members and non CoR members, such as Young Elected Politicians (YEPs) or external speakers nominated by the PES Group)
- > Cluster 10: PES Rapporteurships within the CoR commissions

¹ The exact explanation of the different clusters can be found in Annex I of this document.

To this effect, awareness should be systematically raised in the calls for expression of interest, addressed to the members of the PES Group.

Likewise, the PES Group must lead by example in terms of gender balance when presenting candidates to positions in **CoR configurations**. This is the case for PES Group Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the CoR commissions. PES Group membership in Joint Consultative Committees (JCCs), Working Groups (WGs), platforms, networks or other CoR-driven configurations should also respect gender equality. The same shall apply, as far as possible, to PES rapporteurships in CoR commissions.

Concerning its representation **beyond the CoR**, the PES Group shall strive for overall gender balance representation within the instances, thematic configurations and sectoral organisations of the Party of European Socialists (PES). The PES already applies a strict gender balanced policy for its members' delegations with voting rights at the level of the Council and the Congress. The PES Group shall strive to extend this policy also for its delegates without voting rights.

Last but not least, the PES Group shall lead by example in terms of gender parity in **discussion panels or debates** within the framework of organised events. Likewise, it must be an ardent supporter of this principle when PES members participate in events organised by others. Refusal to participate in all male or all female panel discussions shall be considered an option. Moreover, to set a good example, the PES Group should ensure zippered speaking slots during its internal debates.

In a nutshell, **our shared goal shall be to attain 50%-50% parity in terms of gender representation** for PES members in all bodies/positions. In view of the above, the Secretariat of the PES Group must constantly assess **the implementation of the gender equality principle** to adjust calls for the expression of interests accordingly.

In Annex I, you find a detailed explanation of all clusters, defined in this gender code of conduct.

ANNEX I

Explanation of clusters

Cluster 1: Candidate for CoR President /PES Group President

Explanation:

- As the PES Group usually designates the candidate to be the CoR President and will continue to do so in the future, a step further towards gender parity will be found by adding the PES Group President in this cluster. As the rules of procedure of the PES Group already foresee the gender balance between the President and the 1st Vice-President of the Group, there are two options:

→ Option A: PES candidate for CoR President male, PES Group President female, PES Group 1st Vice-President male
→ Option B: PES candidate for CoR President / 1st Vice-President female, PES Group President male, PES Group 1st Vice-President female)

Cluster 2: PES Group Executive (Vice Presidents / Treasurer)

Explanation:

- Gender parity between 3 Vice Presidents and 1 Treasurer must be ensured.

Cluster 3: PES Group Coordinators in CoR Commissions

Explanation:

- Parity among the PES Group Coordinators of CoR Commissions must be ensured.

Cluster 4: PES Chairs of CoR Commissions

Explanation:

- Parity among PES Chairs of CoR commissions must be ensured. In case of uneven numbers, parity should be balanced in the second half of the term of office.

Cluster 5: PES Vice-Chairs of CoR Commissions

Explanation:

- Overall parity among PES Vice-Chairs in CoR Commissions must be ensured.

Cluster 6: PES Chairs / Vice-Chairs in other bodies (CFAA, Rules of Procedure, BRASS-G), JCCs and WGs, other future bodies (not established so far)

Explanation:

Overall parity should be reached among all Chairs (or separately for Vice-Chairs (if applicable) in case of CFAA and Rules of Procedure) in other bodies

→ Chairs of ARLEM, CORLEAP, Green Deal WG should not be considered as they are assigned on the basis of their function (same counts for CoR President; commission Chairs, etc.).

Cluster 7: PES Members/Alternates in other bodies (CFAA, Rules of Procedure), JCCs and WGs, other future bodies (not established so far)

Explanation:

- Overall parity should be ensured within Members/Alternates (and in case of uneven numbers balanced with Alternates) in other bodies.

Cluster 8: Speaking slots for PES Group members, who speak on behalf of the PES Group in Plenary

Explanation:

- Gender parity for speakers on behalf of the PES Group in plenary should be ensured.

Cluster 9: Speaking slots for PES Group representatives in events/conferences (CoR members and non CoR members, such as Young Elected Politicians (YEPs) or external speakers nominated by the PES Group)

Explanation:

- Gender parity for PES representatives must be ensured when they speak at events/conferences.

Cluster 10: PES Rapporteurships within the CoR Commissions

Explanation:

- Overall parity among all CoR Commissions for PES Rapporteurs must be ensured. The assessment should be done half-mandate.