



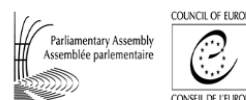
141st IPU Assembly

Belgrade (Serbia)
13-17 October 2019



Parity debate

#NotInMyParliament: National and regional strategies



Wednesday, 16 October 2019, 9–10.30 a.m.
Amphitheatre (ground floor), Building B, Sava Centre

Concept note

Regarded as the heart of democracy, parliaments are also a place of work. As such, they should embody the highest standards expected of a workplace in the twenty-first century.

Yet two studies – one global carried out by the IPU and one European carried out jointly by the IPU and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) – have shown that sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians are extremely widespread, existing to different degrees in every region of the world.¹ Globally, **82 per cent** of women members of parliament taking part in the study indicated that they had been subjected to psychological violence during their term in office. Meanwhile, **65 per cent** of the women said they had been subjected to sexist remarks, in most cases made on parliamentary premises by male colleagues – from both opposing and their own political parties. In addition, **25 per cent** of the participants said they had been subjected to physical violence, and **20 per cent** that they had been sexually harassed.

This troubling reality has been confirmed by the Europe-wide study. According to this study, **85 per cent** of the women parliamentarians taking part said that they had suffered psychological violence in the course of their term of office, and **25 per cent**, sexual harassment. In **75 per cent** of those cases, the perpetrators of sexual harassment had been male parliamentary colleagues, and in **34 per cent**, the harassment had taken place on parliamentary premises.

The European study also reported troubling findings about the sexual harassment suffered by female parliamentary staff in Europe. Of those participating, **40 per cent** said they had been sexually harassed in the course of their work. The perpetrators had been male members of parliament in **69 per cent** of the cases.

Both studies also revealed the weakness of mechanisms in parliament to deal with acts of sexism, harassment and violence against women and a lack of support for those affected.

¹ IPU (2016). *Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians*. www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2016-10/sexism-harassment-and-violence-against-women-parliamentarians
IPU-PACE (2018). *Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe*. www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2018-10/sexism-harassment-and-violence-against-women-in-parliaments-in-europe

The time has come to declare out loud "Not in my parliament" and to put words into action!

Seven years after the IPU's adoption of the Plan of Action for Gender-Sensitive Parliaments, which called on parliaments to take steps towards "fostering work culture free of discrimination and harassment", and in the light of the 2019 ILO Convention Concerning the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work,² which sets new international standards, including in addressing gender-based violence and harassment against women at work, this parity debate will review the policies and practices that have been implemented in parliaments to call attention to the prohibited nature of sexism, sexual harassment and violence and to prevent or stop and sanction these acts. The debate will also examine the challenges facing parliament in this task and explore the most effective strategies at regional and national levels.

The debate will begin with a presentation of the main recommendations from the forthcoming IPU *Guidelines for the elimination of sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments*, which draw on initiatives developed in parliaments around the world. It will also comprise a presentation on the work of the PACE, including its initiative [#NotInMyParliament](#) to mobilize parliaments to take immediate action to stamp out sexism and violence, and its resolution 2274 (2019), *Promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment*.

The discussion will then move on to highlight cases of parliaments that have strengthened their codes of conduct and behavioural guidelines on sexism, sexual harassment and violence and provided support mechanisms for those affected; preventive measures to inform and raise awareness; and fair and confidential systems for reporting and investigating complaints.

Participants – including men and women members of delegations attending the 141st Assembly, secretaries general and staff of parliaments, and representatives of regional parliamentary assemblies – will be invited to discuss the following key questions:

- What steps has your parliament taken to prevent and address sexism, sexual harassment and violence in its own setting?
- What are the challenges faced given the political nature of parliaments?
- How can all those working in parliament be protected despite the diversity of contractual statuses?
- How can regional parliamentary assemblies contribute to developing comprehensive national and global strategies to tackle sexism, sexual harassment and violence in parliaments?

Format

Free debate. There will be no formal list of speakers; participants can express their wish to speak by raising their hand. To ensure an interactive debate, prepared speeches are strongly discouraged. In line with the principle of a parity debate, the composition of the panel will be gender-balanced, as will be the order of speakers invited to intervene from the floor.

The overall aim of a parity debate is to promote dialogue between women and men at the IPU and to encourage them to debate issues of common interest together. Since an equal number of men and women will speak in the debate, the different but complementary views and experiences of both genders will emerge clearly, thus ensuring that gender equality concerns are mainstreamed into the discussion. Delegations are therefore invited to be represented in this debate by male and female participants.

² www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO:12100:P12100_INSTRUMENT_ID:3999810:NO