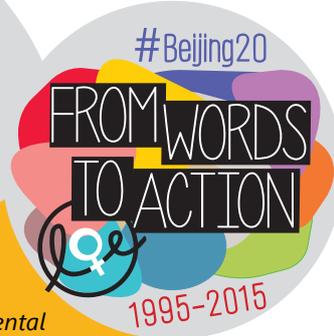




WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING



The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life. Empowering women to take leadership position is crucial for sustainable economies and democratic and just societies. Studies from different countries demonstrate that companies with a higher share of women at top levels financially perform better. Diversity among employees and board members produces creativity and innovation through complementary knowledge and skills.

Today's picture however shows that women are still under-represented in political and corporate decision-making at local, national and EU level, due to persisting stereotypes, patriarchal attitudes and perceptions of women's competences and roles. Achieving parity is crucial for democracy, rights and justice.

*"Women's political participation is fundamental to democracy and essential to the achievement of sustainable development and peace."
United Nations and UN Women, 2011*

BEIJING '95 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.
- Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

FACTS & FIGURES IN EUROPE

Across the EU, women are underrepresented in positions of responsibility in all domains. Particularly at the highest levels, women are still largely outnumbered by men in leadership positions in politics and business, as well as in other fields.

In June 2014, only 27% of national parliamentarians in the EU were female with very little progress over the last five years. The European Parliament performs slightly better with almost 37% of MEPs being women: an increase of just 1,75% in comparison to the European elections in 2009.

The situation is worse in business with, on average, one in six women members of boards in Europe's largest publicly quoted companies and only 4% of board chairpersons. In other fields such as Research and Innovation, women are still greatly under-represented, in particular at the top level of academic careers; only 20% of top level academics are women and only one out of ten universities in the European Union has a female Rector. In many European countries men outnumber women by at least two to one in the top two tiers of the civil service.



ACTIONS

- The EWL reactivated its **50/50 campaign** in advance of the 2014 European elections in order to promote the active participation of women as voters and candidates in European Parliament and the equal representation of women and men in all European institutions. Several tools (publications, videos, lobbying kit) were instrumental to raise awareness at European and national level. A unique cross-party alliance of all democratic parties in the European Parliament supported the campaign.
- **EWL European Political Mentoring Network (2013-2014)**: a unique programme promoting and supporting women from ethnic minority or migrant backgrounds to run for the European Parliamentary elections.
- The **EWL Manifesto "Act now for her future, commit to gender equality!"** comprises the main demands of the EWL towards the candidates to the European Parliament 2014 elections and was supported by 4 of the Top Candidates to the EP Presidency.
- EWL Project **"Young women leaders are voices for girls & women"**: from September 2014, the EWL will develop training modules on leadership and women's rights for the young women newly elected to the European Parliament in Brussels
- EWL publication **"Women on Boards - From a Snail's Pace to a Giant Leap?" (2013)**: a comprehensive overview of the measures adopted in the recent years at national level to increase the representation of women in the boardrooms.

WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING IN THE EUROPEAN UNION



Gender equality in decision-making is mentioned as one of the priorities in the European Strategy for Equality between Women and Men (2010-2015) as well as in the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020). However, parity in decision-making positions still remains a significant challenge for all EU Member States, and the EU has not yet adopted legally-binding instruments providing a comprehensive framework to address the under-representation of women in politics.

A first important step was made by the European Commission in 2012 by proposing a directive with the aim of attaining a 40% objective of the under-represented sex in non-executive board-

member positions in listed companies in the EU. However, the Council of Ministers has not been able yet to find a consensus on this draft directive, which is therefore still a draft proposal. If the Council endorses the directive it will represent a clear commitment and leadership by the EU and its Member States to gender equality, justice and democracy.

As a result of the Member States negotiations on the composition of the new Commission in the summer 2014, only 9 women were proposed, out of 28 Commissioners: a step back compared to the 2009 Commission (9 women out of 27 Commissioners).



GOOD PRACTICE

- In Northern Ireland, the “women in local council programme” aims at increasing the number of women in local councils through a gender action plan and gender champions.
- The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) publishes every year, for International Women’s Day, an internal assessment of gender equality with regards to ETUC membership and decision-making positions. ETUC’s resolution “from membership to leadership” fosters action through gender audits, mentoring programmes and quotas.

CHALLENGES

- The progress in women’s participation in decision-making and leadership positions is still very slow. Under the current rate of progress, it will take almost 40 years to achieve parity in national parliaments.
- More gender-inclusive measures and laws, as well as education and action against stereotypes, are needed to include more women in decision-making and leadership positions and allow them to hold down their positions. Indeed, preconceptions of women’s roles and abilities is the most important obstacle women face, closely followed by a lack of suitable female role models, barriers to access opportunities to further deepen their management experience, family commitments, and a lack of mentoring opportunities.
- The highest level of European monetary decision-making is still 100% male. Parity democracy is also about breaking stereotypes about sectors considered ‘female’ or ‘male’: we want women in power in all spheres of society and on all issues, from finance to health.
- The media contribute to the misrepresentation of women in leadership positions, through the use of gender stereotypes and other degrading coverage. Women in politics face sexism, cyber hate and harassment.
- The talents of women remain still unemployed in science, research and development.
- European and national authorities, local governments, media and business-related bodies continue to invite more men than women as experts. We need them to change attitudes and invite women as experts, including without being swayed by gender-stereotypical perceptions regarding the assignment’s subject matter; women in minority groups must also be heard as experts.



OUR DEMANDS **Parity at all levels of political and economic decision-making.**

- **Endorse the proposed directive on Women on Boards as a first step to continue to adopt efficient binding EU-level legislation to reach parity on company boards.**
- **Introduce a system whereby each Member State nominates a woman and a man as candidate Commissioners, and adopt a binding rule ensuring that women and men are equally represented in the European Commission.**
- **Adopt binding texts to ensure parity at all levels within the European institutions and agencies.**
- **Develop and support mentoring programmes as well as confidence building, leadership and media relations training for women within the European institutions and agencies, and support similar projects at national level.**
- **All political parties: be inclusive of women and aim at achieving parity in elections at all levels.**
- **All political groups: ensure gender parity and non-gender biased portfolios when nominating and appointing MEPs for decision-making positions in national and European institutions.**

