



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
LOBBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

European Women's Voice

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) is the largest umbrella organisation of women's associations in the European Union (EU), working to promote women's rights and equality between women and men. EWL membership extends to organisations in all 27 EU member states and three of the candidate countries, as well as to 20 European-wide bodies, representing a total of more than 2000 organisations.

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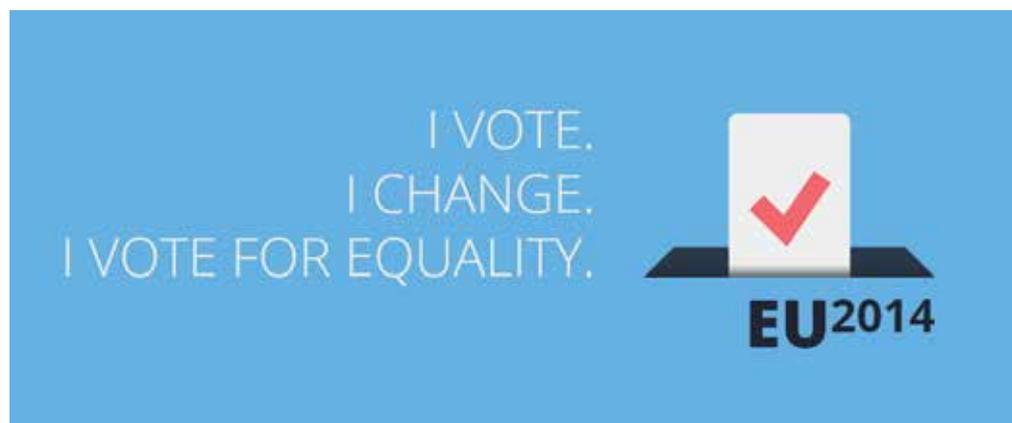
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Women in Decision-Making – Talent at the Top



Editorial

Women make up more than half of the population and electorate in the European Union (EU), yet they continue to be underrepresented in all economic and political decision making bodies at all levels. The average representation of women in national parliaments is 24% and in national governments 23%. The number of women presidents of Europe's largest companies has fallen from 4% to 3% since 2004. For the European Women's Lobby (EWL) and its members, this underrepresentation of women constitutes a serious democratic deficit, which undermines the legitimacy of the contemporary democratic ideal.

Ahead of the European parliamentary elections of May 2014, this edition of the European Women's Voice is dedicated to women in decision making. Women from different backgrounds, managers, researchers and politicians, give their view on the means to encourage women's empowerment and participation in decision making. The EWL is very grateful to these women for their valuable contribution to this edition.

Parity works, let's implement it!

The recent EWL's Women's Watch 2012-2013, a feminist overview of women's rights and gender equality in Europe, judged by the yardstick of the EWL's ideals, concluded on the theme of women in decision making that women are increasingly visible in elected office. However, when it comes to real positions of decision making power, such as heads of political parties, senior ministries and positions on corporate Boards, women disappear. The non-legislative approach to participation in decision-making without binding measures has been effective in some countries, but this has taken decades and there is no more time to waste: parity works, let's implement it!

'No modern European democracy without gender equality!'

Actions to address the gender imbalance in participation in the European Parliament elections, and in political decision-making generally, have not been strong enough despite existing

political commitments. There is no binding provision for the equal representation of women and men in the EU and no uniform system to ensure parity for the European Parliament, where national electoral laws apply. At the national level, five EU Member States have legal quotas and in about 16 EU countries some political parties have voluntary quotas.

In the crucial phase before the European elections in May 2014, the EWL hence conducts its European-wide cross-party 50/50 Campaign which aims at putting pressure on political parties and decision-makers to make sure that women are equally represented in the new European Parliament and Commission, as well as in all European top political posts. Within the 50/50 Campaign's framework, the EWL also launched its European Political Mentoring Network which focuses on the empowerment of women from ethnic minorities ahead of the May 2014 European elections and, ideally,

increasing their representation in the European Parliament.

Women on Boards

The EWL welcomed the recent European Parliament's adoption of the draft European Directive on "improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures" (20.11.2013), which can be seen as a signal for first cracks in the glass ceiling making it hard for all the competent women to being represented in the upper echelon of all areas of economic decision-making in the EU. This first step towards real meritocracy and more equality on non-Executive Boards will hopefully be accepted by all Member States following the example of the several European countries, which already have quota legislation and pave the way for more women in all Boards of European companies.

This European Women's Voice issue aims to contribute to a better insight in a gender-equal and sustainable model for society in which equal sharing of political and economic power is a fundamental principle, translated into tangible policies and actions. The countries in focus are Croatia, Ireland and Italy. It intends to provide a stimulus for discussion on how women's organisations can advocate for parity legislation and foster women's participation on Boards. EWL is very grateful to all the women who contributed an article or interview in this issue of the European Women's Voice, and more particularly to Ms Cécile Kashetu Kyenge, Italian Minister for Integration and Youth Policy. On the eve of elections' year 2014 and while austerity measures are hitting women's economic independence very hard, the European Union is in a better position to continue to take a leadership role on issues of gender equality that are crucial for the wellbeing of all.



Claire Godding

Diversity Manager at BNP Paribas Fortis

Quotas for Boards : Just a Matter of Business Logic and of Better Advertising

Most arguments heard about quotas in Boards have to do with gender equality.

I do not hear arguments about business itself often enough. It's as simple as that.

Let's go back to the primary role of a Board of Directors: it is about ensuring that the company does not take overly large risks and about challenging management on the decisions they take.

Where the controlling group is composed, like the management group, of relatively homogeneous profiles, there is a serious risk that they see things in exactly the same

way: in other words, if an investment seems logical for the managers, it is very likely that the Board will share this logic and approve the investment without too many objections. This swift and comfortable cooperation may seem ideal, but in fact, it isn't.

For the long term development and even for the survival of the company, it is crucial that the management-heavy tasks of the Board be performed in such a way that optimal standards can be achieved. Having different profiles around the table will clearly reinforce the power to be challenging and self-critical. Implementing Board rules includes the right to question procedures or

decisions at all moments and on all topics. To optimise the mix of profiles in the Board, a simple rule of thumb is to obtain an appropriate gender mix: although you could also end up with some "clones", that is both men and women with similar profiles, the overall likelihood of having different profiles is far higher in a gender-mixed group, especially when the "minority" around the table consists of a number larger than one or two individuals, but can be as high as 30%...

Most arguments are discussed in the media, in political and economic circles, but more often than not, they fail to involve women themselves...

or over twenty years more than 50% of new graduates in law and economics in Europe are women, with the figure slightly lower for engineers.

The difficulty in finding them is clearly not linked to low education level or poor business experience. It has to do with the fact that women themselves do not seek to serve as Board members. They are not adequately informed about such opportunities, nor are they about the consequence or meaning of these. Their networking circles, contrary to male networks, don't help them progress and often don't include any Board members.

At BNP Paribas Fortis we have a "MixCity" network, open for both women and men, and already consisting of 1000 members out of a total workforce of 17,000. The objective of this network is to reinforce women's visibility in the company and to improve the gender mix at all levels.

We recently organised an event for about one hundred members, on "the roles and responsibilities for Board Members", to help them realise what added-value this could provide, what it really means to sit on a Board, what is expected from Board members, what the risks can be and which mutual benefits can be expected. The conference,

where six female Board members came to share their experience, was a real success: for most participants it was a real eye-opener!

This means we should find a way of comprehensively informing women in management positions, well established in their careers, in their forties, of the opportunity to become Board members.

In summary, here are my two recommendations: consider Board gender quota issues from a business perspective; and advertise Board membership to experienced and talented women.



Prof. Dr. Ute Klammer

Professor of Social Policy and Vice-rector at the University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany; Chair of the German Government's Expert Commission for the First Report on Gender Equality

Why Quotas can Promote Equal Chances

"The best person should get the job"; "quality and ability should be the decisive criteria for the selection of personnel" – everybody engaged in the debate on (gender) quotas already knows these arguments, repeatedly brought forward by those who argue against quotas. The arguments are based on the implicit assertion that quotas lead to a suboptimal selection, that they might contribute to a decrease in performance and that therefore they are to the detriment of a company, if not the whole economy. In addition they are believed to be unfair, because they privilege persons at the costs of others: in particular, in the case of gender quotas, women are placed at an advantage at the cost of men. Anyone who argues in favour of quotas has to deal with these assumptions, that to them seem so self-evident. Moreover, he or she has to make clear why quotas might not only be a useful and necessary instrument to promote equal chances for men and women, but could also be beneficial - both for companies and the broader economy.

To illustrate, let us take a look at the situation in Germany. In spite of a voluntary commitment from private sector companies in Germany in 2001 to actively promote family-friendliness and gender equality, the share of women in leading positions has barely increased in the years since. Although the share of women in leadership positions at lower levels has slightly increased, the situation in top positions remains almost unchanged. In 2011, a decade after the voluntary agreement, women still held just 11, 7% of the positions in the advisory councils of the top-200 companies and occupied barely more than 6, 1% of the places in the Executive Boards of the respective companies.¹ Despite their best efforts many women still experience the so-called "glass ceiling" at a certain point in their career.

The underlying mechanisms have been repeatedly scrutinized and analysed, e.g. in the "First German report on gender equality" published in 2011. Missing opportunities to reconcile work with private life,

in particular care obligations, remain an obstacle on many women's career paths. Long working hours, expectations of presence at the workplace until late in the evening and a "round the clock – availability" culture through e-mail and other media are regarded the norm for employees in leading positions. However, these trends do not match up to the vision and actual life of many women, irrespective of their education and ability to lead. As empirical research has shown, women's chances to forge a career are improved exponentially the more they behave like men. However, even this is no guarantee, since stereotypes about men and women still play a major role when it comes to superiors' attitudes and behaviour: "leadership" is highly associated with "male" characteristics, and even highly career-oriented women without care obligations might experience discrimination, because they are of the wrong sex. We also have to acknowledge that people tend to select persons who are similar to themselves for a position in their team because they

prefer to work with people whose thoughts and behaviour they believe to understand. This principle, called “homosocial cooptation”, not only diminishes the chances of persons of the other sex being selected, but also disadvantages persons of different nationality, race or class. Networks also play a role: as long as women are not present in these networks, as long as they are not part of the “epistemic communities” in power, their chance to be promoted or to be selected for a leading position is low. To sum up: obviously the hiring and promotion processes are not in any way “fair” when it comes to gender equality. But while many officials reject gender quotas, explicit or implicit quotas are commonly applied without discussion, for example when an executive board is composed in a way that different

branches of the company are reflected, or the ministers of the government are selected according to the proportion of the different parties in power.

In a recent case in the US (Abigail Fisher vs. University of Texas at Austin), the U.S. Supreme Court has once again stated that affirmative action measures in favour of underrepresented groups are permitted if equality of chances and representation cannot be achieved by other means.

In order to have a positive effect, quotas should be feasible. This implies that branch-specific quotas make sense when women's representation in different branches differs a lot. In any case controls and sanctions are inevitable.

It is unclear, whether women in leadership would always behave differently, and we have to be careful not to replace one cliché with another. Given the variety of men with different ideas and practices of leadership, it can be assumed that there will also be a variety of female leadership strategies. However, it is clear that only when women reach a “critical mass” in boards or advisory councils of big and important companies, there will be the chance to establish these different cultures. As research has shown, more diversity usually also benefits the company, because the integration of different perspectives leads to better results.

1 Women on Board Index from 15/09/2013, to find on: <http://www.fidar.de/wob-index.html>



Cinzia Sechi

Advisor at the European Trade Unions Confederation (ETUC)

Interview by Karima Zahi and Anna Fotowicz, from the EWL Secretariat. July 2013

What is the ETUC's campaign ahead of the European elections of 2014?

We have adopted various policy documents, we have a ETUC Manifesto on the European Parliament Elections, a Social Compact for Europe that was adopted last year, and we recently launched our EU-wide Campaign A new Path for Europe: a plan based on investments in sustainable growth and quality jobs. All these initiatives include a gender dimension.

The ETUC Manifesto on the European Parliament Elections calls for another European policy, for a social Europe and it is addressed to the future candidates. Our members will be using this document to lobby at the national level in order to elect MEPs who, in the next term, will fight for equality, solidarity and democracy.

Does the ETUC collect data on women in decision making?

Yes. Since 2007 we have an annual survey, called the 8th of March Survey that we send to all our members, so 85 confederations in 36 countries. We usually send this survey in December, because we want to collect data on membership by the 8th of March each year.

The ETUC represents almost 60 million workers in Europe and around 45% of them are women. In unions the highest political position is either the President, (this is the case for the Nordic or Belgian unions) or the Secretary General (this is the case for the French or Spanish unions for instance). The 8th of March survey tracks the composition of the membership but also the percentage of women and men holding the highest political positions in the trade unions. We also try to monitor how our members distribute political responsibilities between women and men in their secretariats. Who deals with finance, economy –dossiers that are

considered more ‘masculine’ – and who deals with education and training, social protection, etc. – dossiers that are more perceived as the domain of women. Here we see that there is a great diversity not only at country level but also among unions of the same country.

We should not forget gender balance at the level of ETUC itself. We have a secretariat composed of 7 people, all elected, and for the first time our Secretary General is a woman. We finally have political commitment engaging our members not only to monitor and gender disaggregate their membership but also to improve the gender balance in their structures.

What is done with the data? Does it help shape policy?

Yes, during the last few years, it has helped to shape policy and raise awareness. Before

2007 we had no commitment to ensure a minimum standard for gender balance. Ideally, leadership structure should reflect membership structure. As I said our membership is approximately 45% female. In some countries, like in the UK, female membership of trade unions has exceeded male membership. There are various reasons for this (more women in the labour market, more women are unionised, etc.). This is not a general trend – it is the case of the UK, Ireland, Nordic and Baltic countries, but we see that slowly the membership of women is rising in a number of confederations.

And have you noticed a drop in trade union membership with the crisis?

In some countries yes. There is a stronger drop especially among males and in sectors that have been strongly affected by the crisis (mostly masculine such as construction). And as women are mostly employed in the public sector, the membership has not been heavily affected. However we know that austerity measures have strongly impacted the public sector too, so this may have a negative impact on female unionisation in the medium term.

You said that data helps shape policy, which particular policies include women in decision making?

We have policy recommendations that our members have voted and engaged to follow at national level. Two years ago we implemented a EU project "From membership to leadership: advancing women in trade unions". We collected good practices from our members, as well as examples of statutes, where you can find rules determining gender balance as well as strong commitments towards gender equality.

Could you give us examples of best practices?

One good example is CGIL in Italy, a union which elected a woman as Secretary General for the first time. CGIL has a membership of over 5 million workers, approximately 50% of whom are women. The confederation has put in place a number of policies to improve gender balance in the union's decision-making bodies and to ensure that a gender perspective is mainstreamed into union policies and collective bargaining. Specific measures have been introduced to encourage and train women union members

to take decision-making roles, training for male and female negotiators on gender questions, and the production of guidelines for collective bargaining on gender issues. In 1996 changes to the CGIL Statutes laid the foundations for the confederation to address a broad range of equality issues, including, as part of the anti-discrimination provision in the union's Statute (Article 6), a 40/60 representation of women and men. The provision allows for a method of 'slipping down the list', with a voting provision that the men who get the least votes are replaced by women. In 2009 the CGIL Mid-term Conference agreed on a Resolution on 'Organisation for the Promotion and Empowerment of Women in Management', which aims to renew the organisation by ensuring "the entry and permanency of women at every level in the organisation". As a result of these measures CGIL has been successful in improving the gender balance in decision making bodies, from 33% in 1996 to 40% in 2010. The union is now working towards gender parity.

The Trade Union Congress (TUC) is also a very good example. The TUC carries out a bi-annual equality audit on progress on bargaining for equality at work. The audits have been important to revealing the work carried out by TUC affiliates in the area of equality. The audit covers twelve equality areas and details how unions have integrated equality into collective bargaining, with examples of some of the most important collective agreements that have been reached on equality.

So, are you aware of any particular challenges that some of your members have encountered in promoting women in leadership?

First you need the leadership to be committed to gender equality – this is a main challenge. You can have strong political commitment but you reach results only if you have the leadership committed, supporting gender equality, then it is more likely you will have space for women to take up their place in the union.

The work organisation of the union itself is like every other employer, so how unions organise their working methods (working time, family leave, facilities, etc.) can impact on gender equality at work place level. Most unions have made progress and started to take into account work life balance issues,

for instance, when dealing with work organisation. Others however still have to change and improve not only their work organisation, but also their working culture.

Are there any measures to encourage men's role in the reconciliation of work and private lives, for the benefit of both men and women within the ETUC?

This is one of the ETUC's political demands. We are one of the EU social partners which negotiated the parental leave agreement that has been transposed as Directive 2010/18/EU and proposed that one month of the leave should be not transferrable. This should promote the take up of fathers.

So, how do you deal with challenges?

We focus a lot on training – we promote courses to raise awareness and good practices on work-life balance for our members, both male and female. And our members themselves also put in place courses for their members at national level. Most of unions also have a gender equality department. These focus on gender equality and they mainstream gender in their policies. So training is one of the main approaches. Another tool is about changing the image of trade unions and showing that the face of union members is not any more "male, pale and stale" but that there is a lot of diversity among them that should be made more visible.

With regards to the ETUC's external work with employers – what strategies have you developed to convince them of the necessity to address the lack of women in leadership positions in their companies?

I think the most important outcome with respect to the issue of decision-making positions is the Framework of Actions on Gender Equality that we negotiated in 2007. That was a sort of road map for our members, on four priorities in order to achieve gender equality:

- Combating gender stereotypes
- Tacking the gender pay gap
- Promoting women in decision-making
- Fostering a work-life balance

These priorities are interconnected and on the same level. For instance, if a company puts in place measures to eliminate gender

stereotypes, then this will probably have an impact on company reconciliation policies too. I consider the framework of action a relevant achievement in the context of the EU social dialogue. Through concrete and good practices we were able to define policy recommendations together with the employers that members were requested to follow-up. However, since it is a framework of actions and not a framework agreement, it is a sort of open method of coordination, and therefore quite a soft measure. Every year our members had to report on how they were trying to follow-up the four priorities. That was until 2009. Now with the employers, we are looking at this piece of joint work again, and we are developing a "Toolkit on gender equality in practice". We are gathering good practices from companies where one of these priorities has been tackled since 2009 and we will design together a website where this information is made available. So it is a lot about sharing good practices.

Are priorities specific to each Member State?

No, they are not. They are valid for all EU Member States, but of course, depending on specific challenges faced in a given country, unions or social partners may want to focus on one or two in particular.

When will the toolkit be ready?

By June 2014. At the moment we are still gathering the information from our respective members. The toolkit for instance will contain examples of collective agreements with provisions to facilitate work life balance in a company or promoting women in decision making positions.

The toolkit will be focused on the employers?

On the social partners - so, on both employers' and employees' good practices. But it will also show practices that are promoted unilaterally too (i.e. only by employers or by unions). However our main focus will be to promote joint practices because we see that where unions and employers are able to convey the same message the results are much more effective. For us what is important is the message that we are able to discuss and find shared solutions. If measures are only upheld by employers, then how long can they last? To what extent are they made for

marketing purposes? To what degree would workers feel part of it?

You mentioned having examples of how decision-making was integrated into collective agreements. Could you share some of these examples?

Most good examples are based on innovative measures of working time. Others involve the creation of childcare facilities within the company on-site or allowance for workers having children. Other examples promoting women's decision-making involve using gender neutral language when there is a vacancy within the company. Other good examples are those promoting part-time workers – normally women – in terms of career progression. You make sure that part-timers are treated on an equal footing with full time workers – that they enjoy the same quality of training, salary increase and career progression, for instance.

Do you have examples relating to part-time work? Do you have any policies to promote or encourage part-time work among men?

First, you need to combat gender segregation at work if you want to promote part-time work among men as well. You also need to make sure that part-time work is not too short and that it is well paid. Otherwise it is less attractive, especially for men.

How do you go about identifying best practices? Is it a discussion between the Northern and the Southern countries? How does it work?

We first need to agree, with our members, that an exchange of good practices on a given topic would be useful. They need to feel committed and interested in knowing what happens in other EU countries. The best practices are selected by our members themselves; it is always a bottom-up approach – never top down. We define the EU framework and the policies that we have agreed to put forward together. Then our members contribute with their knowledge and experience and of course with their political views too. Then the practices collected are discussed in EU seminars and once there is a common agreement they are finally disseminated through our own publications.

Apart from the economic benefits, do you see any other benefits for women's participation in decision-making?

We believe that women's participation in decision-making is a key democratic principle with positive economic side-effects. The principle of gender equality should be kept separate from that of diversity: women are neither a group nor a minority, but one of the two forms of human being and more than half of the world's population, not to mention 45% of the European workforce. Therefore, the balanced participation of women and men in decision making bodies is not only merely a question of diversity, but an essential imperative of the fundamental principles of democracy and human rights, as enshrined in the EU Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Women's talents are currently being underutilised at decision-making levels, in particular at top level. Change is necessary in many instances, and especially in the corporate world to strengthen Europe's competitiveness, combat the current economic crisis and create a sustainable future in which all talents are used to the full and all voices are heard in decisions shaping Europe's future.

Do you think there is a danger in creating a two-tiered system where you have on the one hand Supervisory Boards to meet the demands of gender balance and on the other hand Executive Boards that consist mainly of men? You know how there is a tendency for Advisory Boards to have more gender balance, to be more conscious of requirements, whereas Executive Boards tend to be more male-dominated.

ETUC has an official position with regard to the issue of gender equality in company boards. We support the commission's proposal and we are in favour of a quota of 40%. Nevertheless, we believe that attention should be given to the different national legal systems differentiating between one- and two-tier bodies of companies. As board members' terms might differ from country to country a sufficient transition period should be foreseen and the target should be reached by 2020. Non-compliance with quota requirements should be accompanied by a monitoring system and by sanctions that are consistent with national company law.



Minister Cécile Kashetu Kyenge

Italian Minister for Integration and Youth Policy

Telephone interview by Michelle Terry and Irene Rosales, from the EWL Secretariat. September 2013

As far as my own political career path goes, it all began in 2004 when I decided to embark on a political career fully aware of my status as a woman, of migrant origin and particularly as a person of sub-Saharan ethnicity. Basically, I was black, with – how can I put this – a skin colour that causes much controversy in Italy. Women with my sort of complexion and migrants face many difficulties. Thus, after many years observing the difficulties women were experiencing, I nevertheless went ahead with launching a political career, because I felt that at least then I could be a protagonist in the phenomenon: I could try to be a spokesperson for women, the voice of those who are voiceless at institutional level.

There have been central tenets grounding my decision to go into politics... obviously, that I am a woman, a professional, a mother: basically, all those aspects combined. Time management is also a big issue. You have to try to dedicate some time to family, and some to your work. On top of that, you have to leave some time for yourself. This is often easier said than done. You have to know how to multiply yourself, essentially. It is a difficulty many women encounter because there are several career paths – such as in the political world - that don't allow you to compartmentalise your time, i.e. set time for women and set time for them to devote to their families. That's the motive I think many women struggle to reconcile themselves with when considering a political career.

I was also helped moving forward in politics, by my political party especially. The Democratic Party had already included women's participation in its statutes. This year, for the first time, we had to have 50% men and 50% women going into the elections. Hence, there were internal procedures helping women to get involved and become

protagonists in politics. Also, on the other hand, there's the fact that women often trust women. This holds true especially for migrant women: they feel more represented by fellow migrants. By default we become spokespeople for a large proportion of migrant women who feel better represented by someone who understands their journey and all the problems associated with being a migrant. I think the role of women is particularly important since it allows us to embrace and take the lead on a community and its challenges applying a slightly different lens. What I mean here is that women can consider migrants' issues using a caring, maternal approach, in which you take care of an entire community.

The main added value when it comes to women being represented is the ability to speak about issues within family life, then to externalise and make public and relevant these same challenges that by definition present themselves internally within a set structure, such as a family unit. Secondly, we are also able to speak of women's problems and difficulties, because we are all women and there is universality to our journeys and the hurdles we face. In terms of decision making, it's also about the opportunity to be able to take stock of precisely what I described earlier - that is the issue of gender and specifically of equality between people, first and foremost between men and women. I believe there are many instances in which women need to be present and engaged, in order to remind people and insist upon this point.

First of all, a starting point can be my experience within the Italian Democratic Party regarding participation and key role of women within the party. I believe this is good practice that can be scaled up to the national and European political levels, it being necessary to be able to include

women – particularly in decision making posts and mainstreaming gender concerns. The objective here is to foster a mindset, or culture, of considering gender within all topics. A very important point at the root of the (Istanbul) Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence is that the presence of women adds value to the debate on women's rights. Only with women there at every level will the discussion on gender issues, equality and crucially equity for all women - and not just some women - be afforded credibility. It can't just be one portion of women, and one section of politics that follow a particular procedure without taking into account the time, and the timetabling that women need to schedule in for their families and for society and how women can manage their time.

The quota mechanism has to be part of a wider spectrum of policies there to reinforce democracy. As with all processes that become systematic, there are steps to the full integration of those processes into a broader social mindset and common mentality: first up, such policies need reinforcements in other related sectors, such as judicial, legal. Patience needs to be exercised to allow for widespread participation: a "live and let live" approach that does not segregate or exclude people, but rather incorporates "affirmative action", sometimes known as positive action - as it does in some ways directly enforce democracy. People who oppose these concepts tend to claim there is no discrimination in the first place... at the point in which decision-making becomes a component of any job, women are always in the minority. Hence, I believe that before women and men truly become equal in decision making in a natural, organic way that this needs to be reinforced by targeted rules and procedures - such as quotas.

I feel that each and every measure that strengthens participation, key role and women's presence at any level is very significant because it contributes to a vision of women that is not ascribed to them by others. In other words, women have a role, a vision and an approach: this may indeed be

a typically gendered approach that needs to take certain specificities into account – elements and challenges experienced mostly by women, and that therefore require representing in decision making by women politicians. Perhaps in fifty years' time we will no longer need to incrementally strengthen

directives, as these considerations will be implicitly implemented. But at this point in time, I think we need to proactively ensure we have women on board at each and every level of decision-making processes.



Siusi Casaccia

**Board Member European Women's Lobby
President LEF Italia**

The Italian Road to Gender Equality is Long and Rocky

The quota system, which by law provides for a minimum percentage of women or the lesser represented gender on political, company or institutional boards, has recently been given impulse by the many EU norms forcing national governments to adopt more gender sensitive policy. It has not, however, been accepted without difficulty and is fervently opposed by the economic and political system which is naturally oriented to self-preservation of the power frames consolidated over time, rejecting any attempt at change through external regulation.

Some important steps have been taken though.

On 12 July 2011, a large convergence of opposing political parties approved law 120 concerning the parity of access to governance bodies in listed and public companies. In brief, this law aims to ensure a balanced condition by establishing that at least one third of the board be represented by the lesser represented gender. This mechanism makes provision for listed companies to change their statutes so as to ensure a rebalanced board composition at the moment of appointments or internal board elections. Moreover, non-compliance can be sanctioned twice by the provision: following an unheeded reprimand the stock exchange control body can issue a fine, and should the noncompliant Board composition continue

to be maintained in spite of the reprimand, then the irregular boards can be invalidated.

The law came into vigour and therefore could be enforced one year from the date of its approval, with the first board renewals, while the participation percentage to be guaranteed was reduced to 20% for the initial application. Thus in reality, companies only really began to face these new obligations from autumn 2012.

There is unfortunately little data available to verify the effects of the law.

The 2012 Consob Report (Stock Exchange control body) indicated a need for more transparency in company prospectuses to ensure better evaluation, and included among the sensitive information issues, is that of board composition, as heterogeneous composition in terms of professionalism, nationality and gender ameliorated board capacity and effectiveness.

Data available illustrates that at the end of 2012, 11,6% of board membership in listed companies was held by women and about 67% of companies had both sexes represented on their boards. Female participation increased by 4% from 2011 to 2012, while the percentage of companies in which at least one woman is board member increased by 15%, due to law.120/11. While there is improvement, it is clear that this trend is far

from optimal and that there is still a long way to go.

The same percentages regarding obligatory board composition are applied to public companies (a rather large category given that it includes all companies with a local government share or interest); the lesser represented gender must account for at least one third of the members (reduced to a fifth at initial enforcement).

Verifying compliance in this sector seems, however, more difficult to do. Application was only approved by government in November 2012, and the law was thus only applicable to public companies from the first board renewal after February 2013. Furthermore there is no special controlling body. The Ministry of Equality is in charge of ensuring compliance, with companies obliged to communicate information about their board membership upon renewal to said to facilitate the elaboration of a general data base. While the Ministry does have the power to sanction these companies directly, rather than imposing fines it can only invalidate the irregular board.

It is still too early to evaluate to what extent the law has been enforced and it is not simple, as we do not have accurate data on the number of companies concerned. Furthermore there is no provision for sanctions in the event that the company fails to

communicate the relative data. Irregular boards can be sanctioned, but a failure to report cannot. Thus, the future ministry database is likely to be inaccurate and based on insufficient information.

Another aspect under criticism is the fact that provisions regarding balancing gender membership are temporary. Obligation is imposed for a mere three consecutive mandates, instead of permanently. There is thus a net contradiction between the temporary measure and the fact that equality is a basic principle of our legal system and Constitution. One cannot simply renounce this principle should the time frame provided be insufficient to develop an automatic mechanism for balanced gender appointments.

Regarding political participation in Italy, the situation is still less clearly defined.

With law n.215/2012, aimed at promoting a rebalance in gender membership in local government, some changes in the electoral system for municipalities with more than 5.000 inhabitants have been introduced. Lists cannot be constituted with more than 2/3 of the candidates belonging to the same sex, or the list will be invalid and double preference can only be expressed for candidates of different genders. In addition, mayors must appoint town councils respecting the equal opportunities principle between men and women, to assure mixed gender participation.

These rules have resulted in a notable change in the composition of local administrations, with a large female representation following the local elections of 2013. However, a system of resistance has made it impossible for the political parties to reach agreement on regulations regarding the

general political elections. Many proposals have been presented by the different parties over various legislatures, but no consensus has been reached. Thus there is only the provision for a reduction (not a very large one) in the public contribution to parties having lists with more than 2/3 of the candidates belonging to the same sex. Furthermore this provision only applies to European and regional elections, clearly demonstrating fervent opposition to any real change.

It is therefore imperative that we continue our previous campaign to awaken people to the importance of parity in electoral participation; to revitalise it with the aim of obtaining true change and a fair model for society in economic, social and political terms for both women and men.



Fiona Buckley

Professor at University College Cork, Ireland

Planning for the Effective Implementation of Gender Quotas in Ireland

In July 2012 the *Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act* was passed by the Oireachtas. As part of the Government's political reform agenda, the law provides for a *legal candidate gender quota* for future general elections in Ireland. The new law obliges parties to run at least 30% women candidates in the next general election or lose half of the State funding they receive annually under the Electoral Act 1997. The threshold will rise to 40% seven years thereafter. Given that tight restrictions on corporate donations were also introduced by the Act, the gender quota provisions are a significant financial incentive 'to encourage political parties to apply a more equal gender balance in the selection of candidates' (Minister Phil Hogan, 2012).

Candidate gender quotas *can be* a successful contributor to increasing women's political representation. The phrase 'can be' is important. International experience indicates that the effectiveness of quotas is dependent on an interplay of *significant quota obligations and penalties, strong political will*, and fit with institutional structures (Franceschet et al, 2012).

A comparative review of gender quota laws elsewhere indicates that the proposed gender quota law in Ireland will operate one of the most acute and robust sanctions for non-compliance. However, traditional party cultures, a strong decentralised candidate selection system, and ironically, the Government's own political reform agenda create

a testing environment for the effective implementation of gender quotas in Ireland. If voters decide in favour of Seanad abolition in October's referendum, this, coupled with the decrease in the number of Dáil seats from 166 to 158, is likely to lead to increased competition at candidate selection conventions at the next general election. When asked how local selection conventions will handle the legal gender quota at the *How to Elect More Women* conference held in Dublin Castle in January 2012, Tom Curran, general secretary of Fine Gael, predicted "there's going to be blood on the floor"! It's a telling comment. While the passage of the 'quota' law through the Oireachtas was relatively smooth, receiving support from all parties, one would be naive to assume that the implementation

process will be as trouble-free. Opposition to gender quotas remains in all parties. It will take strong political leadership to overcome the negative voices.

So what can be done to ensure the effective implementation of gender quotas?

Although the legislative gender quota does not extend to **local government**, encouragingly, all parties have indicated that they will use the 2014 local elections to recruit, train, promote and run women candidates with a view to having these women 'election-ready' come the next general election. This is sensible. Given the personalism inherent in Irish politics, local government service and experience is particularly critical to one's chances of selection for general elections as it allows an individual to develop the political base and experience necessary to be viewed as a credible candidate for Dáil elections. It is an especially essential attribute for women, as research shows that when women enter the political pipeline through involvement in local government service, they are statistically more likely than men to win a Dáil seat (Buckley *et al*, 2012). However, opportunities for women to gain local experience will be more limited in future following the announcement of local government reforms which will see the number of council positions reduced by 42%. Again, the Government's own political reform agenda may contribute to creating a more challenging environment for the implementation of gender quotas.

Party expenditure on the promotion of women in party politics could be increased, thus providing more funding and training supports for women members. The four main parties received funding totalling €5,456,097 under the Electoral Act in 2012. Parties are expected to "include provision in respect of expenditure... in relation to the promotion of participation by women" (SIPO, 2013). However, no percentage spend is specified and a review of the 2012 party expenditure reveals comparatively low levels of spending - Fianna Fáil: €7000, Fine Gael: €384, Labour: €60,063 and Sinn Féin: €0 (SF have subsequently explained its party spending on women was categorised under the party leaders allowance). Thus, of the €5,456,097 received by parties under the Electoral Act in 2012, only 1.12% was used to promote the participation of women. Campaigners of gender quotas may yet rue a missed opportunity in the Electoral

(Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012 to specify a certain percentage expenditure on activities to promote women in party parties.

Internal party leadership - Women currently account for 42% of the membership of Fine Gael, 37% of Labour, 34% of Fianna Fáil and 25% of Sinn Féin. However, the rate of female membership exceeds the presence of women on party tickets. Galligan (2010) argues that a lack of women in influential constituency and branch positions poses obstacles to achieving gender balance in electoral politics. Table 1 shows that across the parties, women account for a much higher percentage of those in supportive roles (i.e. secretaries and treasurers) than in leadership positions (i.e. chairs and vice-chairs).

Table 1: Women Constituency Officeholders in FG, Labour and FF (2013)

	Fine Gael(%)	Labour (%)	Fianna Fáil (%)
Chair	9.3	13.3	7.0
Vice-Chair	18.6	32.0	6.0
Secretary	18.6	35.0	46.0
Treasurer	32.5	23.0	25.0

Source: Buckley, F. (2013) 'Women and Politics in the Republic of Ireland: The Road to Sex Quotas', *Irish Political Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 3 Sinn Féin data unavailable.

Two positive effects might emerge from an increase in the number of females in local leadership roles. Firstly, women will be more visible to the organisation and could be seen as more 'viable' candidates. Secondly, considering the important role chairs and vice-chairs play in targeting new candidates, women in these positions might be more inclined to use their own networks to find and encourage other women to run.

Institutional 'fit' - Legal gender quotas are more frequently used in PR-List (Proportional Representation) electoral systems where the district magnitude is higher, and the number of party candidates per party in each constituency is larger. Ireland will be the first country worldwide to introduce gender quotas in a PR-Single Transferable Vote electoral system. The alphabetical listing of candidates on the Irish ballot paper also precludes the imposition of placement mandates which are used in PR-List systems to specify the location of women candidates on the ballot paper. In a discussion paper presented to political parties, Claire

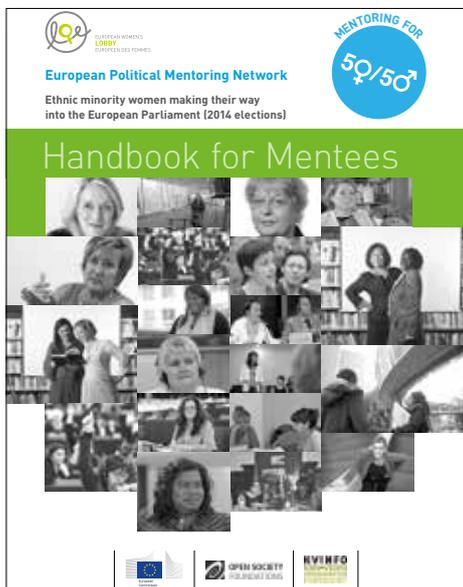
McGing (NUIM) and I outline a number of recommendations to facilitate an institutional fit between STV and gender quotas. We suggest:

- **A gender directive for add-on candidates:** the logic of geographical selection directives could be used to promote more women candidates. In 2011, political parties added a total of 27 candidates to party tickets following the completion of local selection conventions. This was rarely done to achieve a better gender balance of candidates, with geographical considerations being the main reason for additional selections. Of the 27 candidates added after selection conventions, only five (19%) were women.¹ Party HQs could decide that at least 50% of add-on candidates nationally are female. Of the 18 additions Fine Gael made to its tickets in 15 constituencies for the 2011 general election, just two were women (11%). Had a parity rule been applied to these selections, Fine Gael would have seen their percentage of female candidates increase from 15% to 24%.
- **Twinning or multiple lists:** Irish political parties could look to the experiences of the Labour Party in the Scottish Parliament elections. To resolve the problem of combining quotas with single-member districts, the Labour Party 'twinned' two constituencies for selection convention purposes, which taken together would nominate at least one woman. Such a mechanism could be used in Ireland whereby parties cluster two or three constituencies together for candidate selection purposes and specify that at least one woman must be selected.
- **Minimum candidate lists:** parties could take it upon themselves to implement a minimum candidate gender rule. If they run two or more candidates in a given constituency, they should aim to have at least one female and one male candidate.
- **Open constituencies:** parties could aim to run women candidates in a majority of constituencies where they currently have no Dáil representation or where the incumbent TD is retiring.



European Political Mentoring Network

Mentoring for Change ahead of the 2014 European elections



The EWL European Political Mentoring Network aims to empower women from ethnic minorities ahead of the May 2014 European elections and, ideally, to increase their representation in the European Parliament (EP). The Network addresses the lack of gender parity and ethnic diversity in political decision-making at European level. It was officially launched on 09 April 2013 at the EP in Brussels. The mentoring network is the first of its kind at European level and it is inspired by a political mentoring programme developed by our project partner KVINFO in Denmark.

From January 2013 to the European elections in May 2014, the EPMN will connect 9 women MEPs (the mentors) with 9 women from a migrant or ethnic minority background and different political parties, who are interested in running for the 2014 European elections (the mentees). The purpose is to better prepare the mentees to compete for the next European elections, by sharing skills, advice and experiences during one-to-one meetings.

The EWL Mentoring Project was developed within the framework of the EWL 50/50 Campaign, which aims to improve the representation of women in the EU institutions and put issues related to women's rights and gender equality high on the EU agenda.

Look out for news on the mentoring network. During the Programme, mentees and mentors will be invited to share their experience on a blog, in social media, in the EWL Newsletter, at conferences (e.g. EWL 50/50 Campaign for Parity Democracy events and a hearing at the European Parliament) and in a Web documentary.

www.womenlobby.org/notre-travail/european-political-mentoring/?lang=en

Contact:

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- *Incentivise parties at constituency level to run women candidates:* If gender quotas are to work, they need the backing of the party at the local level. After all, this is where candidate selection takes place. Each party could introduce internal financial mechanisms to incentivise the party at the constituency level to select women candidates, whereby those constituencies who select women candidates receive an increased funding allocation from Party HQ.

1 Political parties should note that the implementation of the 30% gender quota is very attainable. During the 2011 general election, just one extra woman party candidate in 38 of the then 43 constituencies would have seen the quota met. Strong political leadership will be required if parties are to meet their obligations under the *Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding Act)*. It remains to be seen if this is forthcoming.



Zorica Siročić and Leda Sutlović

Center for Women's Studies, Zagreb

Between 'Deficient' and 'Austerity Measures': a Stagnation of Female Participation in Croatian Politics

From 2000 to the present day the percentage of women in the Croatian Parliament has stagnated at 20%, a number that fits into the "average" group of European countries.¹ Compared to the transition period when the number of women in parliament was around 5%, and the turnover elections in 2000 following which the representation of women in Parliament leapt up to 25%, a similarly significant jump to parity has yet to take place. By 2004 Croatia had adopted all gender equality mechanisms², and the proportion of highly educated women had also increased, fulfilling one of the main social preconditions to greater female political participation. What are then the reasons for this "decade of stagnation"? To answer this question it is necessary to examine how established mechanisms function, but also to pay attention to material conditions too.

The significant leap from 5% to 22% of women in the parliament in 2000 was possible due to "the window of opportunity" presented by regime change, but this advantage was not taken to its full extent³. Although the changes of government as well as the processes of EU accession have catalysed

the institutionalisation of gender equality, the effectiveness of policy measures envisaged for fostering further female political participation suffers from significant deficiencies. The unclear provision of conditions for application of the sanctions for political parties that do not obey quota requirement i.e. place 40% of women on candidacy lists, has prevented any real effectiveness of the aforementioned affirmative measure. Additionally, the measures are weak due to the absence of stronger punitive actions towards violators, the lack of zipper system or other mechanism which might reinforce quotas on party lists. The unclear and complex division of responsibility for implementation, evaluation and monitoring of policy mechanisms combine to raise the question of their overall efficiency.

Nonetheless, it is interesting to see how citizens perceive female politicians. Prior to the parliamentary elections in 2003, 2007 and 2011, Centre for Women's Studies has conducted three cycles of research⁴ which have overall shown that both women and men in Croatia predominately think that women should be more engaged in politics

(2003 and 2011, 83,8%, 2007, 90%) and that their current participation is insufficient (2003, 60,8%; 2007, 72,5%; 2011, 68,1%). Continuing to the debatable theoretical question of female political interest, the respondents have listed out 'equal pay for equal work', 'unpaid housework' and 'violence against women' as priority political issues for women. Hence, the respondents have recognized either the issues that the media shows as a female problem, such as violence against women, or those occurring or have their roots in the private sphere, namely the division of household labour to the detriment of women. The answers of Croatian citizens once again confirm that the personal is political, but also economical.

The listed responses identifying female political interest indicate the inefficiency of dealing with any gender related issues, including political participation, without taking into account their economic (pre) conditions. Women in Croatia predominantly bear the burden of social reproduction i.e. house and care work. From 2008 the situation deteriorated when already high unemployment was exacerbated by the

economic crisis to which a miss macroeconomic policies preceded. The unemployment rate in Croatia currently is 18,1% as one of the highest in the EU. Additionally, high unemployment worsens the working conditions of employed women, because they are facing pay cuts, overtime hours or double shifts. Moreover, as economic crisis is followed by austerity measures and cuts in care services, this labour shifts back to the private sphere burdening women with additional work in order to cover for the cuts. Returning to the issue of women in politics, only those women who can afford to pay for the care and housework services, will be able to do politics⁵. In conclusion, besides the well-functioning institutional mechanisms, without changes in economic policies it is unlikely to expect significant rise of number of women in decision making.

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- 1 At the local level these numbers are even lower, counting 7% of women majors and county majors and 20,69% female members of municipal councils.
- 2 The Committee for Gender Equality (GE) of the Croatian Parliament (2001), Ombudsperson for GE (2003), Act on GE (2003; 2008), Government's Office for GE (2004).
- 3 Additional information on efficiency and improvement recommendations, see in Monitoring of Croatian Anti-Discrimination Policies with regards to the Balanced Political Participation of Women and Men.
- 4 According to 2011 research, 61,2% women and 36,7% of men have affirmatively answered the question Are the Women in Croatia discriminated?.
- 5 See more: Siročić i Sutlović, ed. 2013. Extending the Scope of the Political: New Perspectives on Political Participation of Women.



Maria Angeli

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Media (re)Produce Gender Inequality in Politics

Understanding women's and men's representations and portrayals in modern society media is critically important as nowadays we rely almost solely on media to draw information

about current affairs in the political arena. Scholarship has broken the myth that the media simply mirrors reality and real politics by arguing that the media also plays a role in

constructing 'reality'. This article attempts to explore and present the ways in which the media maintains as well as reinforces the unequal representation of women in politics.

The issue of women in political decision making is not merely an issue of media representation. Statistics on the participation of women in the public sphere demonstrate a serious democratic deficit, as women are underrepresented in politics on a global level. This underrepresentation is a reality even within the European Union: only 24% of our national parliaments in the EU are women and women are less than 25% of senior ministers in the EU.

For decades now feminist scholars and activists have been pointing towards the role of the media in (re)producing gender inequalities in society and in politics. To resist and challenge the power of the media it is important to understand the ways that power is exercised. The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) has shown that media around the world follow the same methods/tendencies when (re)producing gender inequalities.

Firstly, gender inequality in politics is reinforced by the general absence of women politicians in media. According to the GMMP (2009-2010), only 10% of European politicians in the news are women. Research conducted by the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS) in Cyprus has shown that, during the 2009 elections for the European Parliament, the representation of women political candidates in the print media was just 17%. This blatant underrepresentation of women in the media can be interpreted quite clearly as a silencing of women voices and "a deep denial of voice (is) a deep form of oppression" (Coudry, 2010).

Secondly and equally important, is the reinforcement of gender stereotypes through the media (GMMP 2009-2010) which exacerbates existing inequalities (Connell, 1995). For example, women are disproportionately identified in media by their family status rather than their professional status (GMMP 2009-2010). This overwhelming emphasis on the family status of women politicians renders invisible the participation of women in the public sphere as autonomous and active agents. Also, there is a blindingly exaggerated emphasis on the appearance of women politicians in media – what they wear, how they look. The GMMP has shown that this is a global tendency.

The underrepresentation of women in politics is also (re)produced in the media by the lack of a critical approach to the issue. News articles covering politics rarely incorporate a gender dimension. This is not surprising when in the UK, for example, only 23.1% of the parliamentary lobby journalists for national daily newspapers are female and none of the political editors are women.¹ The media usually celebrates the low percentages of women in politics by presenting women as 'winners' simply because they do not challenge the existing status quo (Baider 2010).

Critical to challenging gender inequality in the media is the monitoring, mapping, and analysis of women's and men's representation and portrayal, particularly during election periods. However, feminist analysis should go beyond text-oriented criticism and explore the relationship between the media and the audience. The audience does not passively accept media portrayals of women and men but creatively 'negotiates' them (Hall 1982). This relationship between media and audience can be an important

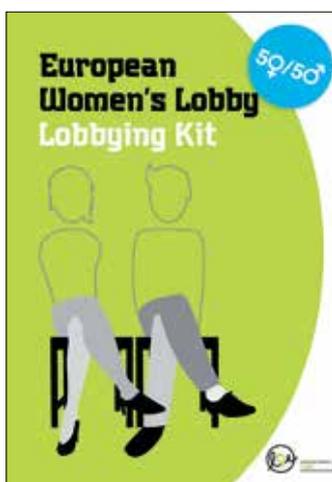
tool for feminist activists and scholars to work against the (re)production of gender inequalities in the media.

'Audience advocacy' is key to challenging the negative portrayal of women in the media. Introducing the public to easy monitoring tools such as the counting of political news articles covering women and men is one simple step towards public advocacy that will shed light on the unequal ways in which the media represent women and men.

The advocacy of journalists and media editors is equally important. The International Federation of Journalists supports the equal representation of women in media and works for gender sensitive journalism. However, portrayals of women and men politicians are still based on traditional gender stereotypes. Thus, there is a need for systematic training of journalists on gender-sensitive reporting.

There are important but sporadic works on gender, media and politics. Usually gender and media activists and researchers conduct media monitoring on a project basis which results in lack of follow-up and sustainability (Gallagher 2004). Feminists and media activists and scholars should work together so as to give continuity and effectiveness in their advocacy work. Only through a deeper understanding of media's power in shaping what is presented as 'the mirroring of real politics' we will be able to resist this power and work more consistently towards the equal representation of women and men in politics.

1 www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2013/jan/09/david-cameron-female-political-journalists-question





Support the European Women's Lobby !



Hello, I am Sanchia Alasia and I am one of the mentees on the European Political Mentoring Network, run by the EWL, that aims to empower ethnic minority women and women of foreign origin who involved in politics across Europe in preparation for the European elections in 2014.

I was confirmed on the UK Labour Party list for the European elections as a candidate for the London region on the day the Political Mentoring Network launched on April 9 this year. The capacity and skills training that I have received and the opportunity to shadow an MEP in the European parliament so far, have given me a real insight into what MEP's do and the difference they can make. This network will be of great support to me and a very important part of my preparations for the European elections next year.

The EWL demonstrates clearly with this Political Mentoring Network that practical steps can be taken, networks be built and above all awareness can be raised to show the lack of gender parity and ethnic diversity in political decision-making at European level. This unique Political Mentoring Network gives me along with 10 other women, fantastic support to learn the "unwritten rules" of being an MEP from our female MEP mentors who are supporting us until the election in 2014.

How can you support the Political Mentoring Network? The Network still needs further funding to be successful (Funded by the Open Society Foundations and the European Commission). It is an amazing network – as is the rest of the work of the EWL! Big or small I would really appreciate your support for the EWL and for the precious advocacy work for an equal and diverse Europe!

Thank you very much in advance for donating to the EWL!

Warmest regards, Sanchia Alasia - Mentee of the EWL European Political Mentoring Network (Please find our account on the right side of this page.)



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