



Group of the Progressive Alliance of  
**Socialists & Democrats**  
in the European Parliament

**renew europe.**



To Mr Charles Michel  
President of the European Council

To Dr. Angela Merkel  
Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany  
Presidency of the Council of the EU

To Mr Michael Roth  
Minister of State for Europe at the Federal Foreign Office

Brussels, 8 October 2020

Dear President Michel,

Dear Chancellor Merkel,

Dear Minister Roth,

We are writing to you as the Presidents of five political groups, and the relevant Members of the European Parliament in charge of the ‘Women on Boards’ file.

The time for more women on company boards is now.

Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen in her ‘Political Guidelines’ from July 2019 as well as Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli in the EU ‘Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025’ published in March 2020, already have promised to do their utmost to make headway on this important file and this has again been clearly defended in the Chamber on 5 October when both EU Commissioner Helena Dalli and German Minister of State for Europe, Michael Roth have acknowledged the broad political consensus for the ‘Proposal for a Directive on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on EU stock exchanges and related measure’, the so-called ‘Women on Boards’ Directive.

The ‘Women on Boards’ proposal establishes the objective of at least 40 per cent of non-executive members of the under-represented sex on listed company boards. The Directive would contribute to the realisation of the principle of equal treatment between men and women by setting a framework for listed

companies to consider the wide existing talent pool of both female and male candidates to positions of non-executive director in listed companies without interfering with companies' concrete choices of individual directors. The Directive would therefore not only have additional positive ripple effects for gender diversity throughout the career ladder but would also increase transparency in appointment procedures in general.

Having been put forward by Commissioner Reding already in 2012, and having been supported by a substantial cross-party majority in the Parliament in November 2013, the proposal is unfortunately still awaiting the Council's first-reading position.

Meanwhile, the most recent figures from the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) show that women still make up less than 30% of board members and only 8% of CEOs of the largest listed companies in the EU (October 2019). Figures also show that the impact of legislative action is striking: since 2010, countries that have taken legislative action have seen a rise of 27.2 percentage points, resulting in 36.5 % women on boards. Countries that have implemented non-regulatory measures have seen half that progress since 2010, with a rise of 14.3 percentage points, resulting in 28.1 % women on boards. Countries that have taken no action have seen almost no progress. Consequently, voluntary measures are so far not as powerful as binding commitments to bring equality and diversity to EU businesses. This persisting gender inequality in economic decision-making is not only at odds with the principle of equality between women and men as enshrined in the Treaties, but it is a lost opportunity in terms of human resources and potential.

Today, a week ahead of an EPSCO ministerial meeting and after this week's debate in the European Parliament that showed again a broad consensus supporting the existing proposal, we call on the German Presidency of the Council to assume its political and institutional responsibility, to bring the Directive to the Council agenda and to do its utmost to reach a general approach and a subsequent negotiating mandate.

We in the European Parliament believe that the resumption of negotiations on this important Directive, which has been blocked for over 7 years, will be for the ultimate benefit of women and men in all business and society sectors across the EU, while leaving a large margin for individual transposition by Member States.

Yours sincerely

Manfred Weber, President EPP Group

Iratxe García Pérez, President S&D Group

Dacian Cioloș, President Renew Europe Group

Philippe Lamberts and Ska Keller, Co-Presidents Green/ALE Group

Manon Aubry and Martin Schirdewan, Co-Presidents GUE/NGL Group

Evelyn Regner, FEMM Committee Chair and Co-Rapporteur for Women on Boards

Lara Wolters, Co-Rapporteur for Women on Boards in the JURI Committee

Axel Voss, EPP Coordinator in the JURI Committee

Tiemo Wölken, S&D Group Coordinator in the JURI Committee

Karen Melchior, Renew Group Coordinator and shadow rapporteur in the JURI Committee

Marie Toussaint, Greens/ALE Group Coordinator in the JURI Committee

Manon Aubry, GUE/NGL Group Coordinator in the JURI Committee

Frances Fitzgerald, EPP Coordinator in the FEMM Committee

Maria Noichl, S&D Group Coordinator in the FEMM Committee

Samira Rafaela, Renew Group Coordinator and shadow rapporteur in the FEMM Committee

Alice Kuhnke, Greens/ALE Group Coordinator in the FEMM Committee

Angelika Niebler, EPP Shadow Rapporteur in JURI Committee

Maria da Graça Carvalho, EPP Shadow Rapporteur in FEMM Committee

Elena Kountoura, GUE/NGL Shadow rapporteur in the FEMM Committee