Women and business leadership

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The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality adopted the own-initiative report by Rodi KRATSA-TSAGAROPOULOU (EPP, EL) on women and business leadership. Members welcome the Commission's intention to **propose European legislation in 2012 if companies do not manage to achieve through voluntary measures the targets of 30% women on company boards by 2015 and 40% by 2020**.

Noting the clear progress on women's representation in Norway since the adoption in 2003 of legislation requiring a minimum of 40% of both women and men on boards of listed companies with a workforce of more than 500 and making provision for effective sanctions for non-compliance, Members call on the Member States to respect the threshold of 30% of women in decision-making bodies by 2015 and stress the need to fully respect equality of treatment and opportunities between men and women in the work context.

Welcoming the initiatives of Member States (France, the Netherlands and Spain) in setting thresholds, which companies have to achieve, for women's representation on management bodies, Members note that demonstrating **political will is the only way** of speeding up the process of getting binding measures adopted to help ensure the balanced representation women and men in corporate management bodies.

Members insist that recruitment to positions in corporate management bodies must be based on the competence required in the form of skills, qualifications and experience and that the principles of transparency, objectiveness, inclusiveness, effectiveness, non-discrimination and gender equality must be observed in corporate recruitment policies. They stress that **public enterprises listed on stock exchanges** should set an example in implementing balanced representation of women and men on their boards and in management positions at all levels. They take the view that consideration should be given to introducing effective rules to prevent people from holding multiple positions on boards of directors, both in order to free up posts for women.

Members also call on the Member States and the Commission to implement new policies to enable more women to become involved in managing companies:

- initiating a dialogue, **not limited to the issue of quotas**, with the boards of large companies and with the social partners about ways of increasing female representation, which could take place annually;
- supporting initiatives to assess and promote male-female equality on recruitment committees and in other areas, e.g. with regard to wage differentials, job classification, training and career patterns;
- promoting corporate social responsibility for European companies, with a commitment to ensuring managerial responsibility for women and family-friendly services;
- supporting cultural measures to orient young women more towards scientific and technological studies;

introducing specific measures and arrangements for the provision of high-quality and affordable services, for example childcare and other dependent persons;

- developing training on gender equality and non-discrimination;
- **promoting precise and quantifiable commitments on the part of companies**;
- encouraging all stakeholders to set up initiatives to change the way women are perceived and women's self-perception in the work field;

- the development of a positive image of female leadership positively in the European media;
- identifying ways to increase the representation of women from particularly under-represented groups, such as those from an immigrant or ethnic-minority background.

The issue of salaries: once again, Members return to the issue of disparities in salaries within companies, and most particularly, the differences in salaries of women in management positions and those received by their male counterparts. In this context, the Member States and the Commission are urged to take measures to **tackle the lingering pay inequality connected with traditional stereotypes**.

They also encourage companies to adopt and implement corporate governance codes as a means of promoting gender equality on company boards, utilising peer pressure to influence organisations from within and implementing the 'comply or explain' rule, obliging companies to clarify why there is not at least one woman on the board.

Work-life balance: Members also call on the Member States and the Commission to set up initiatives designed to address the fairer sharing of family care responsibilities not only within the family, but also between the family and society. Measures should be taken to:

- address problems in accessing childcare facilities, which should be affordable, accountable and local;
- introduce flexible work practices to enhance organisational capacity and maximise women's contribution;
- encourage senior corporate managers to raise their staffs' awareness of the career patterns of men and women and to become personally involved in career monitoring and support programmes for female executives in their companies.

Lastly, the Commission is called upon to:

- present, as soon as possible, **comprehensive current data on female representation within all types of companies in the EU** and on the compulsory and non-compulsory measures taken by the business sector as well as those recently adopted by the Member States with a view to increasing such representation ;
- following this exercise, and if the steps taken by companies and the Member States are found to be inadequate, to **propose legislation, including quotas**, by 2012 to increase female representation in corporate management bodies to 30% by 2015 and to 40% by 2020, while taking account of the Member States' responsibilities and of their economic, structural (i.e. company-size related), legal and regional specificities;
- present a road map setting out specific, measurable and attainable targets for the achievement of balanced representation in enterprises of all sizes;
- set up a website dedicated to good practice in this area to inform the public and the social partners effectively on this issue.