



Dear Mr TAJANI,
Dear Mr TUSK,
Dear Ms DANCILA,
Dear Mr JUNCKER,

The Women's European Council (WEUCO) brings together MEPs, Commissioners and representatives of the Presidency of the Council of the EU with the purpose of framing the European agenda from a gender perspective and undertaking tangible actions to tackle inequalities between women and men.

We, female Vice-Presidents and Members of the European Parliament, Members of National Parliaments and representatives of the Council, together with European Women Alliance (EWA) have adopted the following conclusions at the third WEUCO meeting and, hereby, we submit them to you with a view to setting equality between women and men as a high priority on the EU political agenda.

In view of the European Council on 21 and 22 March 2019 and the forthcoming European elections, we wish to underline that equality between women and men is a fundamental principle of the European Union, enshrined in the Treaties, and one of the objectives of the Union. Furthermore, mainstreaming the principle of a gender perspective in all Union activities is a specific mission of the EU.

WOMEN LEADING THE EUROPEAN UNION

Women are under-represented in the decision-making processes of the EU institutions. The lack of women in the top positions of the Union undermines EU fundamental principles and rights and prevents the Union from effectively implementing equal opportunities between women and men.

WEUCO:

- calls on the political parties to ensure a gender-balanced representation of candidates for the European Parliament elections,
- calls for the designation of at least three candidates of both genders who could be considered by the President of the Commission for constituting his or her Commission in order to ensure gender balance in the College of the Commissioners.
- calls on all EU institutions and bodies to ensure gender balance in the appointment and renewal of institutional posts, with a view to increasing nominations of women to top positions in the EU institutions;
- calls on the political groups to consider proposing both a woman and a man for the position of Chair in committees and groups;



WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Women are underrepresented in the labour market and in management, and are remunerated less well than men for comparable work (16.1%). This undervaluing of women's work is one of the causes of the gender pay gap, which, in turn, contributes to the gender pension gap. Unequal sharing of care responsibilities and household tasks between women and men can perpetuate these problems.

Women's economic empowerment is essential. Policies supporting work-life balance and enhancing access to care facilities can lead to increased economic independence and empowerment of women and reduce gender segregation in education, training and in the labour market.

WEUCO calls on Member States to:

- step up efforts to mainstream the gender perspective into their national education and labour market policies by including targeted measures in national action plans within the framework of the European Semester;
- tackle effectively the specific disadvantages faced by women in the labour market with a life-long approach;
- ensure that the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value is applied, in line with Article 157 TFEU, and address the causes behind the gender gaps in pay, earnings and pensions;
- address precarious working conditions, such as low pay, involuntary part-time work and low job security;
- promote quality jobs and equip women and men with the competences required to take up these jobs, including in the area of digital technology;
- combat and prevent gender discrimination in the labour market, especially in relation to access and working conditions; tackle discrimination on multiple grounds, while taking into account the specific situation of certain groups of women, particularly those in vulnerable situations, including victims of gender-based violence;
- ensure equal opportunities in employment, namely in career development and advancement, as well as in salaries or promotions, by providing support to women and men with caring responsibilities;
- provide support to women and men in long-term unemployment.

WOMEN ON COMPANY BOARDS

The under-use of women's skills constitutes a loss of economic growth potential. Fully mobilising all available human resources is key to addressing the EU's demographic challenges and to competing in a globalised economy. Moreover, gender imbalance on the boards of listed companies is a missed opportunity in terms of both corporate governance and economic performance. The reluctance to appoint female candidates to company boards is often rooted in gender stereotypes in recruitment and promotion, a male-dominated business culture and lack of transparency in access to board appointment processes.



The persistent under-representation of women on boards is the main feature of a broader lack of diversity on company boards in general, which entails negative consequences. Transparent selection criteria for candidates should be set and when there is a choice between two equally qualified applicants, the underrepresented sex should be favoured.

WEUCO calls on the Council and the European Parliament to:

- unblock the proposal for a directive on improving gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures with the objective of increasing the number of women on corporate boards throughout the EU;
- within this directive, set a minimum objective of 40% representation of women among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges, require companies with a lower share of the underrepresented sex among the non-executive directors to introduce pre-established, clear, neutrally formulated and unambiguous criteria in selection procedures for those positions in order to attain this objective.

A GENDER EQUALITY COUNCIL CONFIGURATION

Gender quotas in political and/or economic decision-making may significantly improve the ratio of women at top positions. However, quotas alone cannot sufficiently remedy gender imbalance. We have to encourage and adopt gender mainstreaming mechanisms in order to achieve gender equality by reorganising, improving, developing and evaluating policy processes so that the gender equality perspective is incorporated into policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, and at all levels and stages by the actors involved in policy making.

Gender mainstreaming provides key tools for the systematic consideration of the differences between the conditions, situations and needs of all women in policies and actions, and promotes the advancement of equal rights and a gender-balanced representation at different administrative, political, social and economic levels and in decision-making. The coordination of policies to advance women's rights and their implementation at EU and national level needs to be increased through more transparency and accountability.

For this, a greater inter-institutional cooperation between the Parliament, the Council and Commission is needed in order to ensure that the gender perspective is introduced in the Union's budget, policies, programmes and initiatives, where relevant, with a view to an effective implementation of national and EU gender equality perspectives.

WEUCO calls on the Members States to:

- support the establishment of a Gender Equality Council configuration with a view to upholding women's rights and effectively streamlining gender equality policies and measures at EU and national level;
- request the creation of a specific gender equality portfolio within the European Commission.

Yours,

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EUROPEAN WOMEN ALLIANCE
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