



Opinion on
**EU Network of Women in Economic and
Political Decision-Making Positions**



Advisory Committee
on
Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

The opinion of the Advisory Committee does not necessarily reflect the positions of the Member States and does not bind the Member States.



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Introduction

The Commission attaches a high importance to reducing the inequalities between women and men in decision-making, which is one of the priorities of the Roadmap for equality between women and men (2006-2010). One of the key actions foreseen in the Roadmap is the establishment in 2007 of an EU network of women in economic and political decision-making positions. The Commission invited the advisory committee on equal opportunities between women and men to prepare an opinion on the new network.

The mandate for the working group was to present concrete ideas on the role and composition of this new EU network of women in economic and political decision-making positions network, and to suggest possible actions to be carried out.

The working group has consisted of members from the following States: Latvia, Austria, Poland, Italy, and Bulgaria and of the European Women's Lobby. The working group has been chaired by Latvia, as appointed by the Commission.

The Advisory Committee is pleased to bring this opinion forward for consideration by the Commission¹.

1. The Role of the Network

The new European network on women in decision-making should have clear objectives, its mandate should include:

- Taking an active role in promoting the equal representation and distribution of power and responsibility between men and women in economic and political decision-making and in policies related to gender equality at European/regional/national/local level;
- Providing a high level platform of exchange of information and good practices;

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- Giving visibility to the necessary equal representation of women and men in economic and political decision-making.

The Advisory Committee calls for the establishment of the network.

2. The composition of the network and background and level of members

In order to be effective and action oriented, the network should be composed of committed women and men. All members of the network should be able and asked to demonstrate a proven commitment to achieving equality between women and men through their work.

The network should consist of:

1. Women and men politicians from the local, national and European levels who actively belong to effective women sections of political parties and/or are active in the area of gender equality;
2. Representative Women's and gender equality NGOs/networks/representatives of existing networks;
3. Social and economic domain: gender-sensitive female and male managers: who are in high decision-making in public or private sector;
4. Representatives of social partners from national and/or European level.

They should also represent diversity of the European Union but the representation of the different types of expertise is more important than a strict representation of all EU countries.

3. Tasks and actions

Its tasks should include²:

1. Use different experiences and build pressure at European level to improve gender balance at national and local level by promoting measures aimed at



guaranteeing the equal representation of women in the leading economic and political positions of society.

2. A strong focus should be on aiming to highlight policies to achieve parity in the European Parliament and in the European Commission in 2009. This would involve notably looking at measures and best practices and mechanisms in member states, in political parties and at European level to achieve gender balance.

The Network should be supported by the European Commission in its work. It is recommended that regular annual meetings are held in close collaboration with the Presidency and the chair of the Network is elected among its members.

Existing tools should be used - the website on women and men in decision-making which gives an insight in the diversion of women and men participating in the decision-making process and taking up leadership positions in European Institutions, the EU Member States, the EEA countries and the applicant countries.

The Network should work closely with the relevant Commission working groups and committees and to co-operate in a co-ordinated manner with all Community agencies and national initiatives in particular those acting in related area. The tasks and activities should be coordinated with the ones for European Institute for Gender Equality. The tasks of the Network should not overlap the competences of the above mentioned institutions.

² Based on the results of the survey and comments from Latvia, Spain, Malta, Cyprus, European Women's Lobby, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Sweden and COPA (Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations in the EU).



Annex: Existing networks or forums of women in decision-making positions which are good models

International level

The Council of Women World Leaders strives to promote good governance and enhance the experience of democracy globally by increasing the number, effectiveness, and visibility of women who lead at the highest levels in their countries.

<http://www.womenworldleaders.org/>

The Council of Women World Leaders is a network of current and former women heads of state and heads of government established in 1996.

The Council of Women World Leaders:

- Provides a network of exchange among leaders to develop recommendations for and practical solutions to problems confronting national women leaders
- Convenes meetings of women at the highest levels of government, including women ministers within and across disciplines in partnership with the International Assembly of Women Ministers
- Raises the visibility of women leaders in the public sector
- Works collaboratively with other high-level councils and international organizations to promote good governance both nationally and internationally
- Works closely with faculty and students at academic institutions to advance and expand the understanding of leadership

EWMD, the European Women's Management Development Network (<http://www.ewmd.org>), founded in 1984, is an international network of individual and corporate members, drawn from professional organizations and all areas of business, education and politics. The EWMD primary tasks are:

- identifying and promoting best practices for work-life-balance management (in companies, communities or through governmental involvement).
- promoting women in management - bench-marking in all fields.
- identifying barriers to women's professional development and innovative approaches to overcoming them.



FEMANET, EUROCADRES launched a European network for women in managerial positions called FEMANET, in the beginning of 2000. It has now approximately 110 members from all over Europe. The members are primarily female managers and trade union officers working with related issues in their unions.

FEMANET has been working on issues concerning the glass ceiling, work-life balance for women professionals, company culture and negotiations and has published a folder on 'Promoting Gender Balance for Europe's Professional Women' and the FEMANET Kit for Successful Women. More information can be found at:

http://www.eurocadres.org/en/areas_of_action/gender_equality

Regional level

Established in 1999, Gender Task Force, <http://www.gtf.hr/>

The Gender Task Force (GTF) is a South East European regional initiative born out of a 1999 Appeal to the participants of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe Summit in Sarajevo, July 1999.

CEE Network for Gender Issues,

http://www.europeanforum.net/gender_network.php

An international network, working as a part of the European Forum, called "Central and Eastern Network for Gender Issues", with an office in Budapest, Hungary. The Network endeavours to assist social democratic, socialist, labor and other parties, their women's organizations and progressive women's NGO in formulating policies and election platforms on the most acute political, economic and social problems that women are facing in the processes of transition, etc.

"Preparing Women to lead Programme": a mentoring programme on women in decision-making, that was led from 1998-2002 and is still working (cross cutting work for economic and political decision-making. The organizers are the EAF in Berlin.

More information:

<http://www.tu-berlin.de/presse/pi/2002/pi233.htm>

<http://eaf.vcat.de/content/0/392/479/> or www.eaf-berlin.de



National level

In **Austria**, Women in political decision making: Club Alpha (<http://www.alphafrauen.org/>) Austrian Mentoring Points eg for Cross mentoring in the Federal Government, for the economy (<http://www.frauenmentoring.net>;

<http://www.bmgf.gv.at/cms/site/detail.htm?thema=CH0242&doc=CMS1158656923816>)

Since January 2004 the Federal Ministry for Health and Women is carrying out mentoring programs throughout Austria. Mentoring for Women is offered and practised amongst others in the economy, in federal civil service and in universities. The aims of these programs are

- The improvement of the vocational situation of women, especially in technical working spaces
- The advancement of equal participation of women in all professional levels
- The establishment and support of women in leading and decisive functions
- The establishment of women's networks for the professional advancement of women
- A contribution to close the income gap between women and men

In **Bulgaria**, Bulgarian Platform of the European Women's Lobby and the Women's Alliance for Development and others are working in this field by creating horizontal networks - linking women's groups and projects within the country and creating vertical networks - linking grassroots with the international level.

In **Italy**, the Ministry for Rights and Equal Opportunities has been promoting a four-year training project entitled "Women, Politics and Institutions" (<http://www.mpo.hoplo.it/percorsiformativi/>) since 2004. The project aims at providing women with adequate and effective training which enables them to further participate in politics and decision-making positions at the national and local levels. Courses have been organised within several Italian universities, and in particular they have covered six thematic fields: women in political decision processes, EU institutions, organisation and running of parliamentary and governmental institutions, local autonomy, Italian party system, and dynamics and techniques of public communication.

In **Latvia** Resource Centre for Women "Marta", the national coordination for the European Women's Lobby and Women's NGOs Network in Latvia (www.marta.lv) conducted



campaigns on women in decision-making ("Vote for Woman") and ran a 3-year project supported by Ministry of Welfare of Latvia and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). In the frames of the project AISMA was established, a network of female politicians, which worked on education meetings with women NGOs and women in the Parliament, government, councils to support them in male dominating environment. In 2006, the Women's NGOs Network established a Gender Equality prize to the politicians.

In **Lithuania**, there is a similar network called MILDA run by the Kaunas Employment Centre. The campaign organized improved the gender balance situation in municipality elections. <http://www.muic.lt/mlenko.htm>

In **Poland**, it has been recently launched huge programme <http://www.akademiakobiet.pl> addressed to women from rural area from each of 16 voievodships of Poland to make them a role model and local leaders as an example to follow.

Also it has been registered Partia Kobiet (Women's Party) <http://www.polskajestkobieta.pl> (polandisawoman.pl) recently to increase participation of women in parliament. According to recent opinion pools, it can get up to 5 % of support in next parliamentary election in 2009.