

European network set to boost women in power

Female decision-makers from around Europe will today meet for the launch of a new EU-level network of women in power. The group aims to promote women in decision-making positions in politics and the economy across Europe. The inaugural meeting will be opened by Equal Opportunities Commissioner Vladimír Špidla and by Zita Gurmai, Vice-Chairwoman of the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality. Commission Vice-President Margot Wallström and Budget Commissioner Dalia Grybauskaitė will join the network for a discussion over lunch.

"It is time to re-double our efforts to achieve equal participation of women and men in power," said Commissioner Špidla. "But political will is not enough. We must also put the right strategies into practice and learn from one another's experience. I am confident that our new network will help accelerate progress on this issue."

The 'Network of women in decision-making in politics and the economy' aims to provide a platform at EU level for successful strategies to improve gender balance in decision-making positions. Concretely, it will allow for exchange of ideas, information and experience, mutual learning and sharing of good practice. By facilitating partnerships and synergies between existing networks at European level, the group will provide a clear EU added value. The members' experience and reputation will also help give greater visibility to the issue of gender balance.

The network will present its first results in 2009, highlighting examples of best practice and summarising the exchanges and debates between the members of the network. The group currently consists of 15 existing networks, such as professional organisations, and can be joined by additional European networks. It is one of the key actions foreseen in the Commission's current Roadmap for gender equality.

At present, women account for only 24% of members of national parliaments and governments in Europe. And in the private sector, men still represent 9 out of 10 board members in European blue-chip companies. The discrepancy is widest at the very top: only 3% of these companies have a woman presiding over the highest decision-making body.

List of members of the European Network of Women in Decision-making in Politics and the Economy

Jocelyne **Bougeard**, President, Committee of Women Elected Representatives of Local and Regional Authorities (Council of European Municipalities and Regions)

Gabriella **Canonica**, Regional Coordinator, BPW Europe, Business and Professional Women – Europe

Helena **de Felipe Lehtonen**, President, Association of Organisations of Mediterranean Businesswomen

Sophia **Economacos**, President, Eurochambres Women's Network

Adelheid **Ehmke**, President, European Platform of Women Scientists

Gisèle **Gautier**, Representative of the Network of Parliamentary Committees for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in the European Union

Marianne **Karlberg**, Co-ordinator, European Network to Promote Women's Entrepreneurship

Kirsti **Kolthoff**, President, European Women's Lobby

Leena **Linnainmaa**, President, European Women's Lawyers Association

Sonja **Lokar**, Coordinator for the South East Europe Office, CEE Network for Gender Issues

Bola **Olabisi**, Director, European Women Inventors and Innovators Network

Tina **Reisenbichler**, President, European Women's Management Development International Network

Slavica **Uzelac**, Project Coordinator, Femanet - Eurocadres

Mirella **Visser**, President, European Professional Women's Network

Aude **Zieseniss de Thuin**, President, Women's Forum for the Economy and the Society

Further information:

Report "Women and men in decision-making 2007 – analysis of the situation and trends":

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/publications/2008/ke8108186_en.pdf

Database on women in decision-making:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/women_men_stats/index_en.htm

Commission's Roadmap for Equality between women and men (2006-2010)

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/gender_equality/gender_mainstreaming/road_map_en.html