**Heidi Hautala,** *author***.** – Mr President, this is a very important moment: it is time to conclude that there is no reason whatsoever not to adopt the directive of 2012 which would make it an obligation for listed companies to reach the minimum 40% share of persons of either sex among their non‑executive board members.

I’m very surprised that some Member States should still be referring to subsidiarity. How can they do that? We have European companies that operate not only in Europe but also beyond it, so this should definitely be an issue for European Union competence. Secondly, we know very well that diversity in all its dimensions – and gender is an important dimension of diversity – expands companies’ views and perspectives in terms of understanding what’s going on in the world and reacting to it in their business strategies. Thirdly, there’s no reason whatsoever to say that there are no competent women. That is an excuse for a male‑dominated corporate culture in which women are not visible because, perhaps, they do not always share this male‑dominated corporate culture and its behaviour patterns. However, it is certain that the competence of women to respond to today’s challenges is at least the same as that of men.

There has been ample time for Member States to proceed, in voluntary ways, with measures for diversity and for women on company boards, but still we were in a situation where, in 2017 and 2018, women accounted only for 26.3% of board members in the largest publicly listed companies registered in the EU. There is a huge discrepancy – from 7.4% to 43% – and this discrepancy shows that we need measures at European level to advance towards harmonisation of this important aspect.

I would like to thank the Spanish Government for finally taking a second look at this question. And maybe, with the Romanian Presidency of the Council, we can now finally conclude this matter and can declare, before the European elections, that the European Union is actively promoting a modern cooperate culture which includes contributions from both women and men. There’s no reason to say that there are no competent women.