

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2019

Women's Power in Politics

NOTE FROM THE CHAIR



Dear Readers,

On 7 March 2019, FEMM, in collaboration with the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments, organised an Inter-parliamentary Committee Meeting on "Women's Power in Politics". The topic chosen this year is at the heart of women's rights because it defines women's capacity to participate and decide on the collective governing of our societies. Equality between women and men is one of the objectives of the European Union. Over time, legislation, case law and changes to the Treaties have helped shore up this principle and its implementation in the EU.

The European Parliament (EP) has always been a fervent defender of gender equality and this event strived to highlight the importance of women presence in politics particularly in the relation to the upcoming European elections.

The meeting brought together 22 Parliamentarians from 16 Member States, 1 Parliamentarian from Norway and 15 MEPs. We listened to truly interesting speeches, presentations and debates. I want to thank all the speakers and the Members of National Parliaments for their active participation in the event.

You can find all the information about the event [here](#).

#womenspowerinpolitics



Interparliamentary Committee meeting celebrating
International Women's Day 2019

7 March 2019
9:00 - 12:30, European Parliament
József Antall building, room 402, Rue Wiertz, Brussels
Chaired by: Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Chair of the Committee
on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM)
Organised with the support of the Directorate
for Relations with National Parliaments

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OPENING

The opening of the event included speeches by the EP President Antonio Tajani; the EP Vice-President Dimitrios Papadimoulis; the President of the Republic of Croatia Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović; the Commissioner of Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality Věra Jourová; and the Director of the European Institute for Gender Equality Virginija Langbakk.

Furthermore, the event was moderated by Vilija Blinkevičiūtė (S&D, Lithuania), Chair of the FEMM Committee. The President of the Parliament, Antonio Tajani, stressed the idea that gender equality still represents a problem on a global level and stated “we must keep working to have more women in politics, but also in businesses. It is a battle for dignity and respect that must be fought by all of us”.



The European Parliament Vice-President and Chair of the High-level group on Gender Equality, Dimitrios Papadimoulis, added that even though women’s participation in politics was on the rise, “most of the important positions are still filled by men, and this has to change. If we continue according to the rhythms we are following now, we will achieve gender equality in 182 years!”

The first-ever female President of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, delivered a keynote speech in which she recalled how she had to fight for her place, both in life and in politics, and to break countless glass ceilings. “The starting point is a change in mind-set: we need to build a political culture which leads to women’s equal participation”. In conclusion, her message to women and girls: “Have faith and believe in yourselves, in your values, your strength and your capabilities. Your determination will make all remaining obstacles fall.”

Commissioner Jourová called on the political parties to nominate as many women as possible for the European elections. She mentioned that, according to the European laws, women need to be respected, not abused. However, domestic violence happens on a daily basis, being seen as inevitable and even normal in some areas of the continent. She reinforced the Croatian President’s idea regarding the need of changing the mentalities and opposed the excuses hidden under the cultural arguments.

Finally, Virginija Langbakk, Director of the European Institute for Gender Equality, stated that we are still waiting to have that perfect proportion of 50% of women and 50% of men in the political and decision-making area, but in order to reach this goal, we need to continue to strengthen all the efforts achieved thus far.

PANEL 1 - REAL POWER OF WOMEN IN POLITICS AND HOW TO BOOST IT



The discussion was moderated by Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz (EPP, Poland).

The first speaker of the panel was Henryka Bochniarz, President of Polish Confederation Lewiatan, Vice-President of BusinessEurope, and Founder of the Congress of Women. She devoted her intervention to underline the need for women to cooperate among themselves. In this regard, she highlighted that for women, networking is even more important than for men.

The second speaker, Meryl Kenny, Senior Lecturer in Gender and Politics, University of Edinburgh, stated that women continue to be underrepresented at all political levels in the United Kingdom and beyond. Ms Kenny underlined the importance of quotas, saying that, if necessary, parties can find women to run for different positions, as “increases in demand can lead to increases in supply”.

After the debate with members of national parliament, Angelika Mlinar (ALDE, Austria) closed the panel reminding everyone that women are coming from a long history of patriarchy and have only had the right to vote for a few years. She continued by saying that the EU must keep fighting to progress on improving women’s power in politics.

PANEL 2 - YOUNG WOMEN IN POLITICS

Iratxe García Pérez (S&D, Spain) was the moderator of the second panel.

Inês Zuber, former vice-chair of the FEMM Committee, opened the discussion emphasising her convictions that most of the difficulties that women face are related to financial issues. She positioned herself against job insecurity, work exploitation and income differentiation and urged women and men to fight together.

The next speaker was Karima Zahi, the Campaign Manager of equal.brussels. During her speech, Ms Zahi admitted that the under-representation of women in politics is not caused by women themselves, but by society. She presented some programs created to boost the confidence of young women to get involved in politics, to improve their representation in the European institutions and to help them understand the importance of creating networks for women who engage in politics.

Karima Delli (Greens-EFA, France) was in charge of closing the second panel. Her intervention focused on showing the audience that any girl or woman can be young, dynamic and a politician as well. She reinforced the main ideas displayed during the panel, adding that women must believe in themselves to get involved in politics and to create equality between men and women.



CLOSING



The closing part of the event was moderated by João Pimenta Lopes (GUE/NGL, Portugal), Vice-Chair of the FEMM Committee. He presented Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the Commission. Ms Mogherini underlined the importance of having women in conflict resolution, which tend to achieve a quicker result for a longer duration/more sustainable for both sides. She also advocated for more women in decision-making, pleaded for men to be involved in the fight for gender equality and to break the glass ceilings in terms of mind-sets in order to achieve gender equality.



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