

**Question for oral answer O-000123/2018  
to the Council**

Rule 128

**Iratxe García Pérez, Sylvia-Yvonne Kaufmann, Evelyn Regner, Anna Hedh**  
on behalf of the S&D Group

Subject: Women on Boards directive proposal

In November 2012, the Commission published a proposal for a directive on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges, commonly known as the 'Women on Boards' proposal. This was the result of a longstanding demand from the European Parliament calling on the Commission to take action. The proposal set the aim of a minimum of 40 % of non-executive members of the under-represented sex on company boards, to be achieved by 2020 in the private sector and by 2018 in the public sector (the so-called 'procedural quota').

We believe that this directive is a very important tools for achieving a greater gender balance in economic decision-making at the highest level and, as demonstrated by various studies, for improving companies' competitiveness by tapping into all social talent.

Parliament adopted its position at first reading, with a view to adoption of the directive, by a substantial cross-party majority in November 2013. In its position, Parliament adopted very few changes in order to signal to the Council that it could reach agreement on the proposal. Owing to the reservations of several Member States, however, no agreement has yet been reached and the proposal has since been blocked in the Council.

In recent years, the equality agenda has gained renewed vigour and strength in many Member States, and the composition of Member States' governments which previously had misgivings has changed. For instance, the Spanish Government recently announced to the Austrian Presidency that it will withdraw its reservations on the proposal and has offered to work actively with its EU partners to reach a sufficient majority towards an agreement.

Has the Austrian Presidency taken up the suggestion of the Spanish Government to bring the 'Women on Boards' file on the agenda for the December Council in order to break the deadlock on the directive before the end of Parliament's current mandate and put gender equality back at the centre of EU debate? If not, why not? What is the most recent position of the Member States regarding this file?

Tabled: 20.11.2018

Forwarded: 21.11.2018

Deadline for reply: 12.12.2018