

Wir haben im EWSDGE Projekt gezeigt, wie das gehen kann. Mit ganz einfachen Mitteln – wir stellten Fragen zu Frauen in Führungspositionen in Hauptversammlungen – haben wir viel Aufmerksamkeit auf uns und unser Anliegen gezogen. Ich selbst habe das in den Hauptversammlungen von Daimler und der Telekom erfahren.

Als Ministerin wurde ich vom Vorstand und Aufsichtsrat zuvorkommend behandelt. Ich weiß aber auch, dass von Aktionären nach meinem Auftritt gefragt wurde, was das denn solle, diese vermeintliche Vermischung von Amt und privatem Anliegen und ob ich denn Urlaub genommen hätte. Solche Äußerungen verkennen jedoch, dass ich in meiner politischen Funktion für die Realisierung des Grundrechts der Gleichstellung von Frauen und Männern zuständig bin. Das ist übrigens auch eine unserer EWSDGE Empfehlungen. Das ist nun wahrlich kein privates Anliegen.

Damit es weitergehen kann, habe ich gegenüber unserer Bundesregierung – dem Bundesjustizministerium mit Sitz im Programmausschuss und dem inhaltlich federführenden Bundesfrauenministerium – deutlich gemacht, dass das Thema Frauen in Führungspositionen im Arbeitsprogramm 2016 des Unionsbürgerrechteprogramms aus aktuellem Anlass noch aufgenommen werden müsste. Dies wurde vorgetragen und die Kommission reagierte wohlwollend. Das Arbeitsprogramm 2016 ist nicht abgeändert worden. Das Thema Frauen in Führungspositionen könnte frühestens Eingang in das Arbeitsprogramm 2017 finden. Aber das ist ein positives Signal! Vielen Dank an Frau *Jourová*.

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren, das EWSDGE Projekt und die Vertretung des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt bei der EU verbindet viel. Ich erinnere mich gut an das erste Projekttreffen im Juli 2014 als wir uns alle kennen lernten und uns vorsichtig mit dem EWSDGE Konzept vertraut machten. Wir hatten so viele (Nach-)Fragen. Im Januar 2015 bei unserem

zweiten Projekttreffen waren wir schon weiter, aber die Hauptversammlungsbesuche – das Herzstück des EWSDGE Projektes – lagen noch vor uns. Als wir uns im Juli 2015 zum Debriefing und im September 2015 zum Frühstück mit EP-Abgeordneten trafen, hatten wir es geschafft und waren begeistert von dem, was wir ausrichten konnten. Einen krönenden Abschluss bildet die heutige EWSDGE Abschlusskonferenz. Zwei intensive Jahre liegen hinter uns.

Von daher ist es an der Zeit, Danke zu sagen.

Dr. Henrike *Franz*, die Leiterin der Landesvertretung, und ihr Team haben bei den EWSDGE Projekttreffen aber gerade bei der heutigen EWSDGE Abschlusskonferenz eine großartige Leistung vollbracht. Ich darf *Martina Lehnart*, die aus meinem Haus an die Landesvertretung abgeordnet wurde, und die Praktikantin *Sarah Schüler*, die als Studentin der Hochschule Magdeburg Stendal an der Evaluation des EWSDGE Projektes mitgearbeitet hat, besonderes hervorheben. Aber natürlich sind da auch Frau *Bergner*, Frau *Grosse* und Frau *Johannsen*, ohne deren große Erfahrung alles viel, viel schwieriger oder gar unmöglich gewesen wäre.

Ein besonderes Herzensanliegen ist es mir, *Miruna Werkmeister* und *Linda Walczak*, die unermüdlich im EWSDGE Büro in Berlin tätig sind, zu danken. Es ist einfach klasse, mit welcher langem Atem diese beiden jungen Frauen durchgehalten haben! Ich habe den Eindruck gewinnen dürfen, dass ihnen das EWSDGE Projekt Spaß macht trotz all der Mühen und der großen Arbeitsbelastung. Vielen Dank für die großartige Unterstützung!

Danken ist wichtig. Aber wir wollen heute auch arbeiten. Deshalb freue ich mich auf das EWSDGE Forum heute Nachmittag, an dem ich aktiv teilnehmen werde.

Ich wünsche uns allen eine erfolgreiche EWSDGE Abschlusskonferenz mit anregenden Diskussionen und weiterführendem Austausch.

Es ist noch nicht zu Ende!

Vielen Dank für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit.

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Key Note Speech

Věra Jourová

Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, European Commission, Brussels

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am glad to be here today. It is a good opportunity to check on progress we have made towards gender equality in business leadership. Today's meeting is also for me an opportunity to introduce the Commission's plan for coming years how to promote gender equality. Equality between men and women is a fundamental value of the European Union. We can be proud of our achievements over the last few decades in many areas. Gender gaps in employment narrowed in recent years and there

is progress in adhering workplace rights as well as in closing slowly the gender pay and pension gap.

The European Commission has been at the forefront of these developments. It is only fair for women to enjoy the same opportunities as men. "It's 2016" as Canadian Prime Minister recalled when questioned why his government is made up of 50 per cent women. Women today are highly qualified and even surpass men in educational attainment. Sixty percent of new university graduates in the EU are women.

Yet in business, women have long come up against a glass ceiling that stops them from reaching the top jobs. Even today, a large majority of almost 80 per cent [79 per cent] of board members in the largest publicly listed companies in the EU are men. And

at the very top, the situation is even worse. The proportion of women amongst board chairs is only 7 per cent and just 3.6 per cent of the largest listed companies in the EU have a female Chief Executive Officer. It is foolish not to capitalise on our wealth of human talent and skills – irrespective of people's gender.

Studies show that diversity drives economic growth. Recent study of Peterson Institute for International Economics showed that having at least 30 per cent of women in leadership positions, or the “C-suite,” adds 6 per cent to net profit margin. EU calls for more women in leadership positions and encourages Member States to do so. But despite some voluntary initiatives at national and European level, the progress is very slow and composition of corporate boards has not changed much in recent years.

Proposal for a Directive on gender balance among non-executive directors of listed companies

That is why in 2012 the Commission put forward a proposal to speed up progress towards a more balanced representation of women and men on the boards of listed companies. The proposal is intended to push decision makers – not to set quotas – contrary to a myth that some stakeholders still seem to believe. Rather than imposing a particular outcome, we aim to get a process rolling in the Member States that brings better gender balance and ensures that qualification, competence and professional performance are the key criteria in the selection of board members.

Unfortunately, as a result of the opposition of ten Member States we have not been able to achieve agreement in the Council yet. We have addressed subsidiarity concerns through a flexibility clause that enables countries to maintain equally effective national measures. I will not hide my disappointment with the lack of progress on this file, despite our best efforts. I have been clear that I will not water down this important proposal. It is a priority, it is in the Commission Work Programme in 2016 and I will do my utmost to have it adopted.

Progress in the Member States

The political and regulatory pressure helps. Since the Commission first announced its intention of legislating in 2010, the number of women on boards in the EU has nearly doubled from 11 per cent to 21 per cent. Most of that progress occurred in countries such as Italy, France, Belgium and Germany, countries that have taken legally binding measures. In others, the situation is at a standstill or even deteriorating. I am convinced that binding legislation at EU level is a systemic step which will effectively trigger change for gender equality on boards.

Other EU supporting measures

To facilitate the change into more equality in decision making, Commission also supports 23 projects to back up Member States and stakeholders in their efforts to improve the gender balance in economic leadership positions at all management levels. The “European Women Shareholders demand Gender Equality” project is an excellent example of an inspiring project. Your initiative to visit the annual general meetings of listed

companies to ask questions about the representation of women on their boards and in senior positions is a very concrete and innovative approach. I congratulate all those involved on their commitment and achievements.

The 2014 EU Directive on the disclosure of non-financial and diversity information by large companies is another example of Commission action to improve gender equality in leadership. The information on diversity should include gender specific information. A public consultation on whether there is a need for any additional guidance on this matter is currently ongoing. I encourage you to participate.

We also announced in the Commission Work Programme for 2016 an initiative called “A new start to address the challenges of work-life balance faced by working families”. We want to address the low participation of women in the labour market and adjust working patterns to current changed realities. We intend to use a mix of instruments: legislative and non-legislative tackling the conditions for leave, flexible working arrangements and care facilities accessibility.

A thorough consultation process has been launched including a dedicated consultation of the Social Partners: again, I encourage you to contribute and share your views.

Strategic engagement for gender equality

Ladies and gentlemen,

These are just few examples of specific actions Commission is taking to promoting equal opportunities between men and women. The others are listed in the document called Strategic Engagement for gender equality for the period 2016-2019.

The Strategic Engagement that we published in December is the follow-up and continuation of the previous strategy for gender equality. We will focus on five priority areas: increasing female labour market participation and equal economic independence; reducing the gender pay, earnings and pension gaps and thus fighting poverty among women; promoting equality between women and men in decision-making; combating gender-based violence and protecting and supporting victims; promoting gender equality and women's rights across the world. It also confirms the integration of gender equality consideration – so called gender mainstreaming – into every aspect of EU interventions. We have identified more than 30 concrete actions covering all of these five areas.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We share the same goals. Our proposal for more women on the boards of listed companies is proof that we are serious about improving gender equality in the business world.

However, additional efforts to increase the numbers of women in middle management are crucial. Middle management is the talent pool for senior and top leadership. I encourage business to make an extra effort to develop the major resource that middle management is. Investors and shareholders are important partners to monitor a company's boardroom policy on gender diversity. It is time for shareholders to push and campaign for more balanced boards. And as your initiative shows, the work of shareholders demanding gender equality yields results.

Thank you.