

European issues

n°304

4th March 2014

Women's Europe for parity in the newly elected institutions of the European Union in 2014

Pascale JOANNIN

Abstract :

On the occasion of Women's Day on 8th March the Robert Schuman Foundation has published a text by Pascale Joannin entitled "Women's Europe: for parity in the newly elected institutions of the European Union in 2014". 2014 is a decisive year for Europe because all of the institutions will be elected anew (Parliament, Commission, High Representative for Foreign Affairs, President of the European Council). It is an opportunity for the European Union to implement the measures set out in the treaties which provide for equality between men and women: two women out of the four as the head of the institutions and 14 commissioners out of the 28.

In December 2013 Angela Merkel was re-elected Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. After this third four year mandate she will have beaten the longevity record of former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher (1979-1990) as the head of one of the most important States in Europe. These two examples show that it is possible for a woman to lead a State but it is still an exceptional situation.

There are few female heads of government. In Europe, apart from Ms Merkel there are three: Helle Thorning-Schmidt in Denmark, Alenka Bratusek in Slovenia and since January, Laimdota Straujuma in Latvia (i.e. 14.2%). If we add Dalia Grybauskaite, President of the Republic of Lithuania we reach a total of five women leaders in the European Union. If we take Europe as a whole there are seven, with the Prime Minister of Norway and the President of Kosovo. Decidedly there are still too few.

However if we look at Europe from an international point of view we can see that it is still the continent in which women enjoy a better status and that they are model for many women around the world. If Europe is to set an example why doesn't it really strike hard in 2014 since the nearly all of the community institutions will be renewed?

**FOR REAL PARITY IN THE EUROPEAN
INSTITUTIONS*****Two women in four to lead the institutions to be
renewed in 2014***

The laws established to support parity over the last

few years have enabled a certain rise in the number of women representatives, notably in the European Parliament (36.03%). They chair 8 committees out of 22 (36.36%), including economic and monetary affairs, industry, research and energy. This is quite encouraging but it should not mask the fact that the European Parliament has only been presided over by a woman twice since 1979: 2 in 14 legislatures – 14.2%. This is the same as the percentage of women in the Council. Will the next Parliament be presided over again by a woman? As it will be the first of the European institutions to be renewed in 2014, if the European Parliament chooses a woman to lead it, we would prevent the grotesque situation of 2009 when all of the presidencies (Parliament, Commission and European Council) were granted to men. This ridiculous situation forced the Heads of State and government to appoint a woman for the last post, that of the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and the Security Policy. We might even hope that of the four key posts available in the Union this year that two might be given to women.

14 women out of 28 in the Commission

Since 2013 the 28 Member States all have at least one female MEP. This is progress in comparison with the past. It remains to be hoped that during the next renewal, women will not be fewer in number. The same concern has to be expressed about the composition of the next European Commission: for the first time since 1992 the European Union comprises an even number of States. It will be easier to implement exemplary, perfect parity than with 15, 25 or 27 members. At last

there is an excellent opportunity to apply the principle of male/female equality as it stands in the treaties. This equality would mean appointing 14 women for the 28 posts available. But the heads of State and government must not forget to put the names of one or two women in the list they hand over to the future President of the Commission. Future President (male) because for the time being the European political parties which still have to appoint the candidates they wish to see as President of the Commission, if one of them wins the election on 22nd and 25th May next – have all named men, with one exception. This is all the more reason why we should demand parity within the Commission with 14 women Commissioners. This cannot be guaranteed. We should remember that in 2009 José Manuel Barroso had to remind the heads of State and government of diversity otherwise there would have been fewer women in Commission II (9 women, i.e. 33.3%) than in Commission I (which comprised 10 women at one time but finally ended up with 8). We should therefore be particularly vigilant so that history does not repeat itself this year.

THE SLOW FEMINISATION OF POLITICAL LIFE

The law is still masculine

Women's presence in the European Parliament is much higher than that of women in the national parliaments of the 28 Member States (27.21% on average in the EU), except in 7 States (Sweden, Finland, Belgium, Spain, Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany). This European average is increasing gradually but the count is still low. Political life is, except for in the Scandinavian countries, men's business – an extremely male environment. This is simply because political parties are still mainly run by men. Except if there is a law that forces them to apply parity, they promote their male colleagues. And even if a law obliges parity in the composition of a list (an exclusive condition for admissibility) it is rare for a woman to be appointed as leader and therefore for her to take the chair. On a European level 9 States have a female leader of one chamber of parliament (Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Portugal, the UK; the Netherlands which has a female leader of both chambers of Parliament).

Progress is therefore slow. If we assess parity in a country like France for example, which modified its Constitution in 2000 we see that there are only 151 female MPs out of 577 (26.17%) and no female as president, 78 female senators out of 347 and no female as president, 48% of regional councillors but only 3 female regional leaders out of 26 (11.53%), 13.8% of general councillors and 6 female "department" leaders out of 100, which has led to a reform of the local election in 2015 with male/female duos, 35% of female town councillors but 13.8% female mayors and only 6 of the 38 communes with over 100,000 inhabitants have female mayors (15.78%). The election method has therefore been modified for the local elections in March 2014 in order to introduce the law on parity in communities with less than 3,500 inhabitants.

This example shows that involving women is still difficult, and that it has even ground to a standstill – in spite of a legislative arsenal, parity is far from being a reality.

"Grey" governments

This is the trend we find in the way governments are made up. Apart from Sweden, which has a government with more women than men (54.17%), and six States where women represent more than 40% of the ministers (France, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany), governments tend to be mainly single colour or single sex: there are still five Member States where there is only one women minister (Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania and Slovakia) and five States where there are only 2 (Estonia, Ireland, Malta, Poland and Slovenia). 10 of the 28 – that is more than 35% and there are too many of them.

We also have to look at the ministerial portfolios that are given to women. Too often they end up in sectors deemed to be "female" like healthcare, social affairs, culture, too rarely are they attributed a so-called "regalian power" sector like finance, diplomacy, defence. One woman only is Finance Minister (Portugal), two women are Foreign Ministers (Italy, Croatia), and four women are Defence Ministers (the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany and Italy).

We should also note that the Norwegian government

is strictly equal with 9 women out of 18 ministers including the Defence Minister and the Finance Minister, who are both women.

THE FEMINISATION OF BUSINESS GATHERS PACE

For a long time Norway was a leading country in terms of women's participation in economic life, notably in business. Having introduced quotas ten years ago so that women could take their place on company boards the country has a number of female business administrators that were the envy of many other countries for a long time to the point that most have now emulated the Norwegians.

The influence of quotas to push the boundaries back

We have to be honest – it is not a question of liking or not liking quotas. We have to admit that without them women in business would not have made such prodigious progress over the last three years.

Let's take a look: the share of women on the British FTSE 100 company boards has risen from 12.5% to 19% in three years, and those on the French CAC 40 from 10% to 24% in three years. The 20% threshold of women on the board set by the Copé-Zimmerman bill on January 1st 2014 has therefore been respected.

The recent development in the feminisation of company boards would not have taken place spontaneously. Destiny had to be given a helping hand. The countries which helped this development along can only be pleased with the positive results achieved, the others are moving slowly towards it. Hence in Germany the present "grand coalition" agreement includes the introduction of a 30% quota of women on the supervisory boards of German businesses.

Because only 17.6% of non-executive boards of the biggest European companies are women the European Commission, by way of its Vice-President Viviane Reding, has mooted a draft directive whereby companies on the stock exchange in the EU are obliged to

implement transparent procedures so that by 2020 at least 40% of their non-executive administrators will be women. This project was adopted by the European Parliament on 20th November last. The ball is now in the Council's court.

The future is feminine

Europe is a forerunner in this area. Sweden and Finland lead with 27% of women on their company boards, France comes third, followed by the UK, Denmark and the Netherlands, all with more than 17%. In comparison with the USA, of which a great deal has been said, with the recent appointment of Mary Barra as head of General Motors, the situation is not bad since the percentage of American women on company boards is 16.6%. In Belgium, Dominique Leroy (a woman) has just been appointed as head of Belgacom. In the UK, the Lloyd's is for the very first time since its creation... 325 years ago managed by a woman, Inga Beale.

This trend should gather pace. The UK is planning for 25% of women board members in 2015 and France 40% by 2017. The pressure is on and quota or no quota, the direction has now been set for the feminisation of decision-making bodies to gather pace in the future even if it might prove slightly more difficult in practice.

This feminisation can be seen in all sectors, including banking. For the first time the American Federal Reserve is chaired by a woman, Janet Yellen. The Senate gave its green light on 6th January and she took office on February 1st 2014.

After causing much criticism in the recent past because its board is exclusively male, the European Central Bank took on since January 27th last a woman Sabine Lautenschläger, a German, in replacement of Jörg Asmussen, former German member of the board, who has now been appointed to government. Likewise a woman, Danièle Nouy, was appointed for a five year term on 1st January as head of the supervision of the banks in the euro zone.

Women are slowly breaking the glass ceiling. Mentalities are starting to move forward, men are becoming aware of the importance of women's inclusion in the

Women's Europe for parity in the newly elected institutions of the European Union in 2014

decision making process and in responsibility sharing. All of this is very encouraging. The future of Europe is becoming more and more feminine.

The situation is improving but there is still a great deal to do. Of course if we make a world comparison Europe is still the leader in this area. 27.2% of MPs are women whilst worldwide the average is 21.8%. America comes second with 24.2%, the rest of Europe comes third with 23%, Africa is rising and totals 22.1%, Asia and the Arab States as well as the Pacific remain below 20% with 19.1%, 17.8% and 13.1% respectively. The trend is moving upwards in terms of women's involvement in political or economic affairs across the entire globe, as for example the designation of Catherine Samba-Panza as president of Centrafrica on January 20th. The complexity of the challenges to be overcome are both the responsibility of men and women and we can see that

progressively decision makers are becoming aware and are changing behaviour and habits. Women have also decided to take hold of their destiny by organising and putting together networks to gather momentum so that declarations of intention and regulations are followed up by real acts and effective implementation. We have to overcome all kinds of reticence and resistance which still impede full access by women to positions of responsibility. *Chi va piano, va sano e va lontano*, so the proverb goes. But this does not stop us being courageous and ambitious so that in 2014 Europe will show the rest of the world that it is still a woman's continent.

Pascale JOANNIN

General Manager of the Robert Schuman Foundation

You can read all of our publications on our site:
www.robert-schuman.eu

Publishing Director: Pascale JOANNIN

THE FONDATION ROBERT SCHUMAN, created in 1991 and acknowledged by State decree in 1992, is the main French research centre on Europe. It develops research on the European Union and its policies and promotes the content of these in France, Europe and abroad. It encourages, enriches and stimulates European debate thanks to its research, publications and the organisation of conferences. The Foundation is presided over by Mr. Jean-Dominique Giuliani.

ANNEXE :

Women in the European Parliament

05

Rank	Member State	Number of MEPs	No of Women	%
1	Finland	13	8	61.54
2	Estonia	6	3	50.00
	Slovenia	8	4	50.00
	Croatia	12	6	50.00
	Malta	6	3	50.00
6	Denmark	13	6	46.15
	Netherlands	26	12	46.15
8	France	74	34	45.95
9	Sweden	20	9	45.00
10	Ireland	12	5	41.67
11	Portugal	22	9	40.91
12	Germany	99	39	39.39
13	Spain	54	21	38.89
	Bulgaria	18	7	38.89
15	Slovakia	13	5	38.46
16	Hungary	22	8	36.36
	Romania	33	12	36.36
18	Latvia	9	3	33.33
	Cyprus	6	2	33.33
	Lithuania	12	4	33.33
21	Belgium	22	7	31.82
	Greece	22	7	31.82
23	Austria	19	6	31.58
24	Uk	73	23	31.51
25	Italy	73	17	23.29
26	Poland	51	11	21.57
27	Czech Republic	22	4	18.18
28	Luxembourg	6	1	16.67
	TOTAL	766	276	36.03

average %
36.03

Source : Robert Schuman Foundation ©

Women in the 28 National Parliament (lower or single chambers)

Rank	Member State	Parliament	Election Date	Total Seat	No of women	%
1	SWEDEN	Riksdag	2010	349	152	43.55
2	FINLAND	Eduskunta	2011	200	85	42.50
3	BELGIUM	La Chambre	2010	150	60	40.00
4	SPAIN	Congreso	2011	350	139	39.71
	DENMARK	Folketinget	2011	179	70	39.11
6	NETHERLANDS	Tweede kamer	2012	150	55	36.67
7	GERMANY	Bundestag	2013	631	230	36.45
8	SLOVENIA	Zbor	2011	90	31	34.44
9	AUSTRIA	Nationalrat	2013	183	61	33.33
10	ITALY	Camera dei deputati	2013	630	197	31.27
11	PORTUGAL	Assembleia da Republica	2011	230	66	28.70
12	LUXEMBOURG	Chambre des députés	2013	60	16	26.67
13	FRANCE	Assemblée Nationale	2012	577	151	26.17
14	LATVIA	Saeima	2011	100	25	25.00
15	BULGARIA	Narodno Sabranie	2013	240	59	24.58
16	LITHUANIA	Seimas	2012	141	34	24.11
17	POLAND	Sejm	2011	460	110	23.91
18	CROATIA	Hrvatski Sabor	2011	151	36	23.84
19	UK	House of Commons	2010	650	147	22.62
20	ESTONIA	Riigikogu	2011	101	22	21.78
21	CZECH REPUBLIC	Poslanecka Snemovna	2013	200	39	19.50
22	GREECE	Vouli	2012	300	56	18.67
	SLOVAKIA	Narodna Rada	2012	150	28	18.67
24	MALTA	kamra Tad deputati	2013	69	10	14.49
25	IRELAND	dáil Éireann	2011	166	24	14.46
26	ROMANIA	Camera deputaților	2012	407	55	13.51
27	CYPRUS	House of Representatives	2011	56	7	12.50
28	HUNGARY	Az Ország Haza	2010	384	36	9.38
	TOTAL			7354	2001	27.21

Average
(%)
27,21

Source : Robert Schuman Foundation ©

Women in the 28 governments*

Rank	Member State	Election Date	Ministers members of government*	No of women	%
1	SWEDEN	2010	24	13	54.17
2	FRANCE	2012	21	10	47.62
3	FINLAND	2011	19	9	47.37
4	ITALY	2013	17	8	47.06
5	NETHERLANDS	2012	15	7	46.67
6	DENMARK	2011	22	10	45.45
7	GERMANY	2013	15	6	40.00
8	BULGARIA	2013	18	7	38.89
9	BELGIUM	2011	13	5	38.46
10	LATVIA	2010	14	5	35.71
11	AUSTRIA	2013	14	4	28.57
	SPAIN	2011	14	4	28.57
13	LUXEMBOURG	2013	15	4	26.67
14	SLOVENIA	2011	14	3	21.43
15	PORTUGAL	2011	15	3	20.00
16	CROATIA	2011	21	4	19.05
17	UK	2010	22	4	18.18
18	CZECH REPUBLIC	2013	17	3	17.65
19	ESTONIA	2011	13	2	15.38
20	IRELAND	2011	15	2	13.33
	MALTA	2013	15	2	13.33
22	POLAND	2011	19	2	10.53
23	HUNGARY	2010	10	1	10.00
24	CYPRUS	2013	12	1	8.33
	ROMANIA	2012	12	1	8.33
26	LITHUANIA	2012	15	1	6.67
	SLOVAKIA	2012	15	1	6.67
28	GREECE	2012	21	1	4.76
	TOTAL		455	121	26.59

average (%) 26.59

Source : Robert Schuman Foundation ©

* N.B.: The Prime Minister is counted but not the delegate ministers or the Secretaries of State.

Women in Businesses in the EU

		Commission May 13 %	Catalyst Dec 2013 %
1	FINLAND	29	26.8
	LATVIA	29	
3	FRANCE	27	18.3
4	SWEDEN	26	27
5	NETHERLANDS	24	17
6	DENMARK	21	17.2
7	GERMANY	20	14.1
	SLOVENIA	20	
	SLOVAKIA	20	
10	UNITED KINGDOM	18	17.8
	CZECH REPUBLIC	18	
12	LITHUANIA	16	
13	BULGARIA	15	
14	BELGIUM	14	9.2
	SPAIN	14	9.5
16	CROATIA	13	
	ITALY	13	8.2
18	AUSTRIA	12	11.3
	HUNGARY	12	
20	IRELAND	11	8.7
21	LUXEMBOURG	10	
	POLAND	10	13.6
23	CYPRUS	9	
	ROMANIA	9	
25	ESTONIA	8	
26	GREECE	7	7
	PORTUGAL	7	3.7
28	MALTA	3	
	TOTAL EU	17	

