



**The Greens | European Free Alliance**  
in the European Parliament

José Manuel Barroso  
President  
European Commission

Viviane Reding  
Vice-President  
Justice, Fundamental Rights and  
Citizenship  
European Commission

Brussels, 18 September 2012

Dear President Barroso,  
Dear Vice-President Reding,

A draft proposal by the Commission for a directive on improving the gender balance in business leadership appeared in the international media recently. We commend the Commission for preparing legislative action that will address the appallingly low percentage of women on boards of large European companies. Binding measures are needed to significantly speed up the slow progress that has been made over the last decade.

60 % of university qualifications awarded in the EU in 2010 went to women. Women outnumber men in business, management and law faculties. However, the share of women in the highest decision making bodies in the largest publicly listed companies is only 14%.

Some Member States were quick to make their opposition to the draft proposal known. It is regrettable that despite the failed attempts of self-regulation, some Member States shun the debate on the need for a quota for women on boards and for sanctions in case of non-compliance. Unfortunately, this is not the first time that the Council has played a very uncooperative role with regard to advancing gender equality in the European Union. For example, despite a clear position by the European Parliament in favour of improving maternity leave provisions, the Council obstructed and delayed the revision of the pregnant workers directive.

We urge the Commission to be the driving force in achieving gender equality in Europe regardless of the reluctance of some Member States. We therefore expect you to put forward your proposal swiftly.

Europe has always been at the forefront promoting gender equality; now is the chance for a big leap ahead. Quotas for the under-represented gender are not only a matter of justice; they are also the smart thing to do from an economic perspective. We need all the talents available among women to remain competitive in a global market. Companies with gender balanced boards have proved to be more successful.

On 6 July 2011, the European Parliament called on the Commission to propose legislation, including quotas, by 2012, to increase female representation in corporate management bodies to 30% by 2015 and to 40% by 2020, while taking account of the Member States' responsibilities and of their economic, structural (i.e. company-size related), legal and regional specificities.

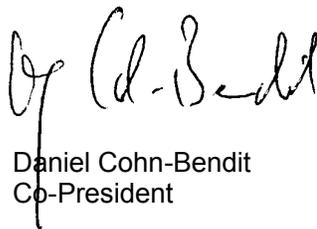
We urge you to put forward a strong directive with binding measures that will ensure the achievement of our common aim of gender balance in business leadership.

Yours sincerely,



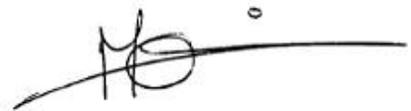
Rebecca Harms  
Co-President

Greens/EFA Group  
in the European Parliament



Daniel Cohn-Bendit  
Co-President

Greens/EFA Group  
in the European Parliament



Marije Cornelissen  
Coordinator for Women's  
Rights and Gender Equality

Greens/EFA Group  
in the European Parliament