



Jean-Claude JUNCKER
President of the European Commission

Rue de la Loi, 200
B-1049 Brussels
Tel. +32 2 295 50 33
jean-claude.juncker@ec.europa.eu

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Ares (2018) 5329913

Dear Ms Centioni,

Thank you for your e-mail of 17 October 2018 transmitting the conclusions of the Women's European Council, adopted on 10 October 2018.

In the conclusions, the Women's European Council reminds us of the value of equality as a fundamental principle enshrined in the Treaties, and calls for greater inclusion of women in European decision-making, in particular in the context of the upcoming elections to the European Parliament.

The Commission continues its efforts to remove obstacles to women's labour market participation. The matter is monitored within the European Semester framework and, where necessary, recommendations are issued to Member States highlighting areas where further action is needed. Furthermore, our initiative on work-life balance for working parents and carers, one of the key deliverables under the European Pillar for Social Rights, responds to the need to balance private and professional responsibilities. Negotiations between the co-legislators are underway.

Tackling pay discrimination has been, for a very long time, an important objective for the Commission and we have reaffirmed our commitment towards addressing its root causes by adopting, in November 2017, the Action Plan on tackling the gender pay gap. It is currently being implemented in cooperation with relevant stakeholders.

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Ms Alessia CENTIONI
President
European Women Alliance (EWA)

E-mail: ewa@europeanwomenalliance.eu

To address the digital gender gap, various measures have been put in place, such as the launch of the European Network for Women in Digital, aiming to promote greater participation of girls and women in digital careers. In addition, we will soon publish the Women in Digital Index, monitoring the Member States across 13 relevant indicators on internet use, digital skills and employment.

In spite of the fact that progress has been made, women still only account, on average, for 29.8 % of members of national parliaments, 36.5 % of Members of the European Parliament and 26.2 % of board members in the largest publicly listed companies. In 2012, we issued a legislative proposal to improve transparency in the selection of board members in the largest publicly listed companies. Although, despite widespread support from the Member States, the proposed directive is still blocked at the Council, we continue to pursue a compromise. The adoption of the proposal would underpin the best use by the European economy of its talents.

Public administrations need to be in tune with the people they serve. That is why this Commission has set the target of ensuring that by the end of its mandate, at least 40 % of its middle and senior managers are women. We expect to reach this target and are continuing our efforts to better identify and support female talent.

The upcoming electoral year will be an opportunity for the Member States and political parties to demonstrate their commitment to a gender-balanced representation in the European Parliament and in top positions of the European institutions.

The preparation of electoral lists for the European elections falls within national competence, and the nomination of candidates for high-level political positions in the Union's institutions reflects the results of the national vote. I will, however, encourage Member States and political parties to make every effort to increase the number of women candidates in the European elections, and to ensure equal representation of women and men in the top positions of the institutions.

I count on the support of the Women's European Council and European Women Alliance in promoting gender equality in decision-making positions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'A' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.