



Progress in gender balanced teams recognized, opportunities for improvements remain

The GEMA consortium from Slovenia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia and the UK is detecting progress in awareness of the significance of gender-balanced business leadership, but they also find that still many more steps are necessary for effective realisation of good practices. The level of gender-balanced representation and also the measures concerning this issue differ from one country to another.

Research data from the project (“GEMA: Gender Equal Management Approach”) confirmed that gender diversity on boards and top management teams can lead to better results for the team and the enterprise, better management, and better inclusion of stakeholders, so a great emphasis in the GEMA project was put on presentations and raising awareness of all stakeholders in the economy.

GEMA results were presented in more than **140 companies** and among the **social partners** in 4 countries. The consortium organised **public events, symposia** and **conferences**, and raised awareness with the project **newsletters** that were received by more than 30,000 companies.



“With a thoughtfully prepared awareness programme we enhanced the knowledge and the awareness about the advantages of gender balanced top management teams in all the participating countries. We firmly believe that in the future, more attention will be paid to gender balance on boards of large corporations, as we succeeded in igniting a constructive public debate about the issue,” stated the partner organisations’ representatives unanimously, gathered some days ago at the final assembly and added: *“Now our efforts should be shifted towards the programmes for emancipation of women and continuation of best practices examples presentations.”*



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With the financial support from the European Union, the PROGRESS Programme.

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Adjusting the gender-balanced presentation in the EU

In the **Gender balance in business leadership** communication, the EU Commission reports that *'The last decades have witnessed significant progress in women's educational attainment, labour market participation, and position in European society as a whole. Today, more women than men graduate from universities: 60% of university graduates are women. Today, more women work in Europe than ever before. Despite representing around 45% of people employed in the EU and 56% of people in tertiary education, women only represent 13.7% of board members in the major publicly listed companies in the EU.'*

The reasons for this situation might be explained by traditional gender roles, division of labour, educational decisions made by women and men, high concentration of women in a small number of professional sectors and organisational barriers. **The EU Commission objective** is to reach a **40% share** of the under-presented sex among non-executive directors on boards of listed companies by 2020, and of listed companies that are public undertakings by 2018. If not, binding quotas might be introduced at EU level.



These have already been adopted by some European countries (Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Spain), but according to **Prof. Silke Machold of University of Wolverhampton Business School**: *'The effect depends on the sanctions for non-compliance with the quota laws. Countries approached this in different ways. In Spain, for example, there is no direct penalty for non-compliance, in France the penalty falls on existing directors of non-complying companies (they do not receive fees), whereas in Norway compliance is a listing requirement. Both at EU level and in the Member States there is much debate about what sanctions are appropriate and whom should they burden - the enterprise or the legal representative. In practice we can see that in the absence of sanctions,, no substantial positive effects can be detected.'*

Prof. Silke Machold also maintains that one's identity does not only consist of gender, but also other elements which influence one another (e.g. age, race, religion, disabilities, or sexual orientation). This 'intersectionality' can influence who gets into leadership positions. Focus should also be placed on the upcoming generations; children should be raised in the spirit of equality, presented with female and male role models, and gendered stereotypes should be avoided. *'It is diversity that generates creativity and consequently strengthens social development.'*