

Working towards better gender balance on the boards of EU agencies

EU agencies are an important part of the European Union that work on a variety of matters affecting the daily lives of both women and men — such as food safety, transport, gender equality and many more.

Each agency is governed by a management board, responsible for ensuring that the agency fulfils its mandate. Board members are usually representatives of the Member States, European Commission and European Parliament, or other agencies.

Despite the EU's commitment to gender equality in decision-making, the management boards of EU agencies are seriously lacking in gender balance. Only one in three boards are chaired by a woman, and when it comes to members, the ratio of women to men is even lower.

Members of management boards are nominated primarily by Member States, followed by the European Commission and the European Parliament.

In 2015, out of the management board members nominated by the Member States, only 30 % were women. The European Commission and the European Parliament nominated 26 % and 40 % women, respectively.

Gender Equality Glossary and Thesaurus

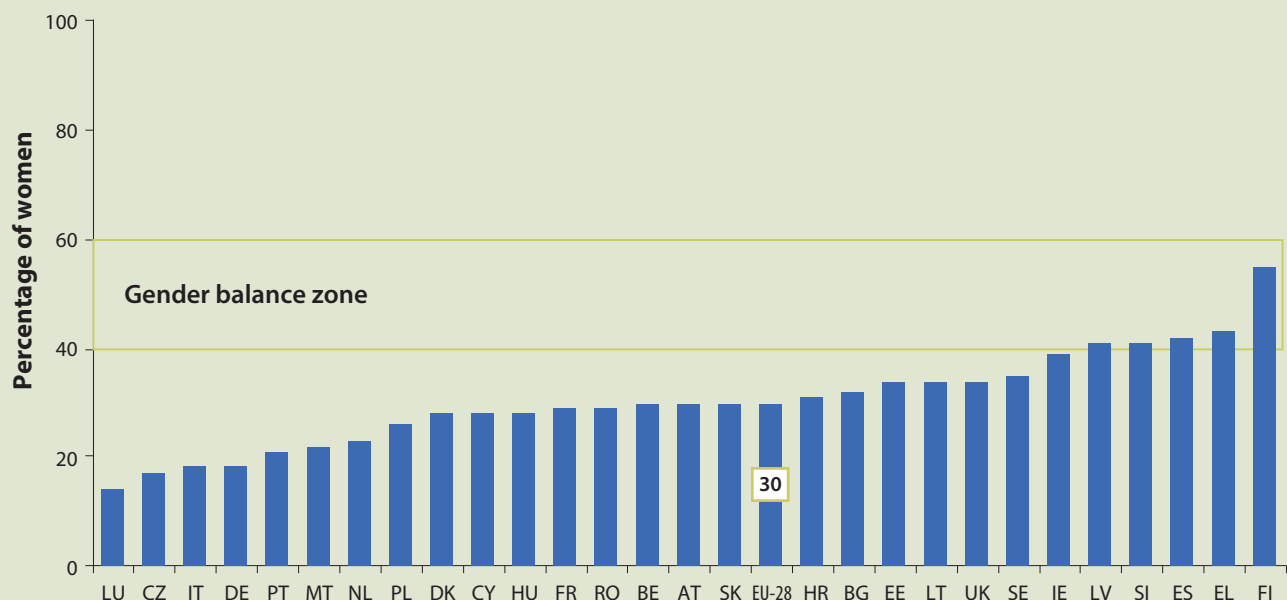
Parity threshold

In achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men, a 50/50 participation rate is generally considered as the parity objective. A minimum participation rate of 40 % for both women and men is considered by the Council of Europe as the parity threshold.

<http://eige.europa.eu/rdc/thesaurus>



Figure 1 – Women nominated/appointed to boards by Member States



Declining number of women executives in EU agencies

In contrast to the fluctuating, yet general increase in women's share of presidency roles on management boards, women holding executive head positions in EU agencies was on an upward trend from 2003—2009, reaching 29 % (6 out of 21) in 2009. However, this trend started to reverse and eventually declined to 16 % in 2014¹.

EIGE's Gender Statistics Database is a useful tool that can be used to monitor progress of gender balance in decision-making in EU agencies. Relevant data can be found by searching under the entry point 'women and men in decision-making'.

Gender provisions work

In 2015, just over a quarter of EU agencies (10 out of 39) had gender-balance provisions in their founding regulations or introduced them in later versions. The EIGE's finding shows that agencies with a gender balance provision have, on average, a higher share of women on the board. Thirty percent of agencies with such provisions have achieved gender balance on their boards, compared to only 18 % without such provisions.

Agencies with gender balance on their boards

- Eurofound, ETF, FRA (with gender balance provisions)
- CPVO, ECDC, ECHA, OHIM, CdT (without gender provisions)

The growth in the number of EU agencies from 24 to 37 between 2011 and 2012 marks the point at which women began to lose ground in executive decision-making, with new posts going mainly to men.

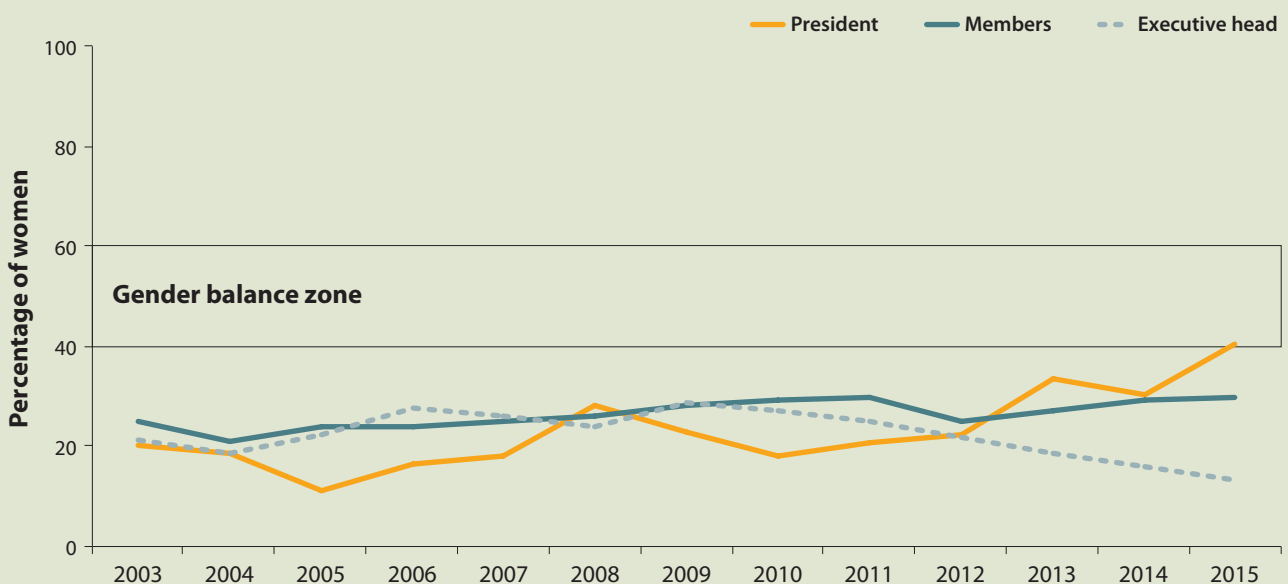
Where to find more information from EIGE

Gender Statistics Database has the latest data related to power and decision-making on national level and in across the EU. Data is comparable across Member States.

¹ 6 out of 38 agencies were headed by a woman in 2014:

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA), European Defence Agency (EDA), European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA), European Training Foundation (ETF), Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union (CdT).

Figure 2 – Percentage of women in highest decision-making positions of EU agencies by year



Gender balance provisions in the agencies' legal documents can be an effective measure for improved gender balance of the management boards. This is particularly true for the agencies working in sectors with significant gender imbalances, due to gender segregation (e.g. banking, transport and defence).

A success story

The European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA) did not contain any gender balance provisions in its founding regulation and there were no women members on the management board at the time of establishment. However, such provisions were later included in the amendments of the founding text, and between 2003 and 2014 the proportion of women members increased by 12 percentage points.

Gender segregation persists

The share of women is higher on the boards of agencies with a socio-cultural remit (45 %), compared to the average of 29 %. In sectors where occupational segregation is common, such as infrastructure, banking/finance and security/defence, achieving gender-balanced nominations is particularly challenging.

Dominance of men on the boards of the European agencies, such as the European Supervisory Authorities, European Regulators Authorities, plus CFSP agencies clearly reflects such segregation as board membership is automatically assigned to officials holding specific posts at national or EU level.

The gender segregation seen in EU agencies is similar to that found in national ministries, where men dominate portfolios relating to basic state functions such as defence, justice and foreign policy, whereas women are concentrated in ministries with socio-cultural functions, such as education, health and culture.

In 2014 only 6 out of 38 EU agencies were headed by a woman.



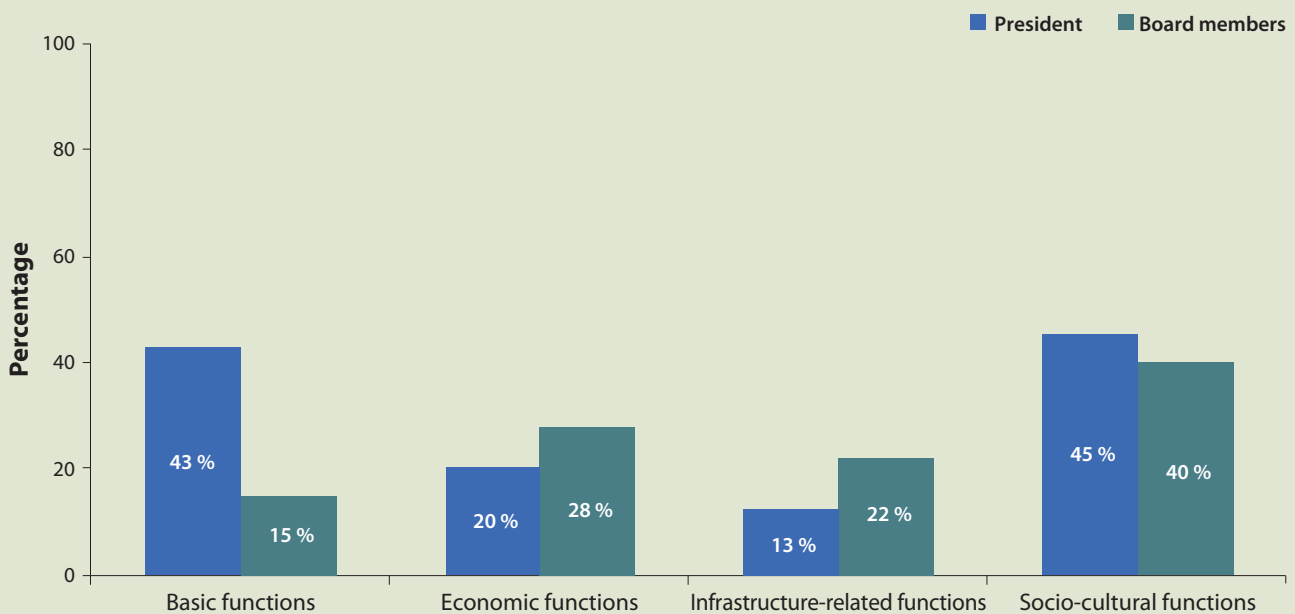
A commitment to gender equality

The **European Commission's** Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019 reaffirms its commitment to promote equality between women and men in decision-making.

The Commission has also declared to improve internal gender balance, by setting a target of 40 % of members of one sex in committees and expert groups established by the Commission.

The European Parliament has repeatedly called upon Member States to increase representation of women in decision-making bodies and has invited the Commission to propose legislation, including quotas, to increase female representation in corporate management bodies to 40 % by 2020.

Figure 3 – Women on boards of EU agencies by BEIS typology, 2015



European Institute for Gender Equality

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is the EU knowledge centre on gender equality. EIGE supports policy makers and all relevant institutions in their efforts to make equality between women and men a reality for all Europeans by providing them with specific expertise and comparable and reliable data on gender equality in Europe.

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