EU HEADLINES

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES OF EUROPEAN DEBATES

Parity polarity

As we near the deadline for von der Leyen to submit her profiles for approval to the European Parliament, the candidates are disastrously and overwhelmingly male – running in striking contrast to one of the central tenets of her presidency. We feature reporting from the Netherlands, Spain, the Czech Republic, and Portugal.

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Practice what you preach

"The new European Commission must reflect the European population and half of it is women." Sounds pretty straightforward, right? Apparently not, as written in Dutch outlet *NOS*. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has vowed to fight for gender equality and, repeating the process from her first term, asked all Member States to submit a male and a female candidate for Commissioner to ensure gender parity – the problem is, very few followed the rule this time. The article emphasises that policy proposals strongly benefit from diverse teams with different perspectives and life experiences, and further, that it weakens the credibility of the European Union – long an example of progress for the rest of the world. For now, von der Leyen is working to persuade Member States to diversify their offerings by suggesting better portfolios for those countries that comply. Regardless, it will come down to the European Parliament to approve candidates, and MEPs will have a chance to flex its power and react by rejecting some candidates. As of now, there are only nine female nominees, and von der Leyen has until next Wednesday to present her team and their portfolios – stay tuned.

Read the full article



Who (should) run the world

The refusal of many EU governments to help Commission President Ursula von der Leyen form a gender-balanced team is a symptom of the long road to equality that remains to be travelled in much of Europe, writes Spanish newspaper *El País*. And the issue does not only apply to von der Leyen's headache Commission composition. Despite significant steps in terms of equality in the last mandate, such as the directive on gender balance on company boards of directors, the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and the first major law against gender-based violence, the European Parliament has also suffered for the first time since 1979 a reduction in the number of female MEPs compared to the previous legislature. And these tendencies are unfortunately not looking to disappear anytime soon. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) publishes an index every year, which gives a score from 1 to 100, where 100 means that the country has achieved full parity between men and women. None of the 27 Member States achieves this figure. Alarm bells should be ringing well beyond the Brussels bubble.

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Take the lead Leyen

When Ursula von der Leyen addressed the European Parliament ahead of her vote for another Commission President term, gender equality was high on her wish list, writes Czech news outlet *iDNES*. Apparently, you do indeed not always get what you want. Despite this, von der Leyen could have a few tricks up her sleeve in an effort to improve the situation. German public media *Deutsche Welle* points to the fact that von der Leyen could appoint women to the highly sought after stronger portfolios in the Commission. That could mean good news for Bulgaria, Belgium, Estonia, Finland, Croatia, Germany, Portugal, Romania, Spain and Sweden, who all sent female nominees to the Commission President. On the other hand, The European Women's Lobby described the current situation as "embarrassing", urging von der Leyen to insist on better efforts from Member States to achieve a gender-balanced Commission and hold them accountable if they fail to do so. Lina Gálvez, chair of the European Parliament's FEMM committee, said the figures indicated a clear lack of "political will" by Member States.

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One step back, one step to the right

According to the Portuguese news outlet *Expresso*, the expected lack of gender parity in the new von der Leyen Commission is a "setback" and, as put by Portuguese Environment Minister and former MEP Graça Carvalho, a "step backwards". While Portugal would like to have an economic portfolio, it seems that these have already been taken. The Economic Affairs portfolio, for example, is likely to go to the right-wing Raffaele Fitto of the ECR group - what a great and unexpected choice, Ursula. The Fisheries and Maritime Economy portfolio would also be worthwhile for Portugal, as would anything related to water and resource management, but it's possible that that could fall under the purview of the environmental portfolio. On the issue of gender parity, Carvalho blames national leaders for the lack of parity in the selection of candidates and for ignoring von der Leyen's request to choose a male candidate. While this is true, Member States are not obliged to do so. In the end, the best way to ensure that Member States put forward two candidates would be to legally force them to do so by amending the EU treaties.

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