

International Women's Day 2019: "Have faith and believe in yourself"



An Interparliamentary Committee Meeting on "Women's Power in Politics" celebrating International Women's Day 2019, took place on 7 March in the European Parliament in Brussels. The meeting brought together 22 Parliamentarians from 16 Member States, 1 Parliamentarian from Norway and 15 MEPs.

Ms Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, President of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality chaired the meeting. In his opening words EP President Antonio Tajani, called for the need for more women in power in politics, but also in businesses. It is a battle for dignity and respect that must be fought by all of us."

Mr Dimitrios Papadimoulis, the EP Vice-President and Chair of the High-level Group on Gender Equality and Diversity added "most of the key positions in the European institutions are still filled by men, If we continue according to the rhythms we are following now, we will achieve gender equality in 182 years!" He hoped the coming EU elections would help to have women in key posts.

The first-ever female President of the Republic of Croatia, Ms Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, issued the keynote speech calling women's rights one of her primary responsibilities. She told the audience she had to break countless glass ceilings often at personal cost. She considered the so-called cultural arguments as an excuse for not giving women rights unacceptable. Her conclusion was a message to all girls and women, saying, "Have faith and believe in yourself; in your values your strength, your knowledge and capabilities. Your determination will make all remaining obstacles fall."

Věra Jourová, European Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, followed with a welcome speech calling political parties to nominate as many women as possible on their candidate lists and encouraging women to consider a political career.

Virginija Langbakk, Director of the European Institute for Gender Equality continued about the upcoming elections saying she hoped more women would vote for women in the upcoming elections but that support from men is equally needed.

The following two panels “Real power of women in politics and how to boost it” and “Young women in politics” gave the opportunity to Parliamentarians to share their best national practices, experiences and problems. Although quotas can be a valuable tool to achieve more equality in politics, they were considered not being enough. People’s mindset needs to be changed, acknowledging that the work-life balance is also about men, participants said.

The closing remarks were held by Ms Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs who talked about the current backlash in reaching equality and that men have to help to achieve it. She further called for an equal compulsory parental leave for women and men.

The event was co-organized by the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality and the Legislative Dialogue Unit of the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments. It is now a fixed point in the calendar for the interparliamentary activities with national Parliaments.