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Work-life balance for gender equal career development of professionals & managers

The global economic situation together with increased and different new social demands have changed the role of female professionals and managers (P&Ms) all around the world. Working female professionals are expected to develop a career and, at the same time, keep an active engagement in their personal life. Increasing private life responsibilities combined with technological tools make it difficult to separate work from private life and creates constraints at both personal and professional level in this knowledge age.

As a consequence of male over-representation, on both labour markets in general and boards of directors in particular, many female professionals give up because the possibilities of developing a successful career are too low. This results in the depletion and loss of potential talent pools. In addition, absence of women on boards of directors leads to poorer decisions being made. If women continue to be ignored and under-represented on male-dominated boards of directors and put at a disadvantage in the labour market, it will have a direct impact on European financial performance and global economic competitiveness, as half of the population is not being taken into account on equal terms as the other half.

At the same time, one of the reasons why female professionals have fewer prospects becoming managers or CEOs, is that it is still thought that women will inevitably have to take on caring responsibilities for children and elderly relatives at home. To try to overcome this stereotype, many female P&Ms therefore give up on maternity and family life.

The pressure this all adds is taking its toll on working female P&Ms. They find themselves having to choose between the pursuit of a good career or settling down to have a family. European female P&Ms are constantly juggling obligations towards their families and companies' expectations. This pressure does not only impact on the individual level affecting well-being, health and overall quality of life, but also has a strong impact on a societal level. That the gender employment gap, as well as the unbalanced responsibility for unpaid family work, strongly contributes to the gender pay gap and pension gap is clear. Improved access to affordable quality public services, such as child-care and elderly care, is therefore essential to help tackle the challenges in society as a whole.

Eurocadres is fully committed to improving the ways to manage work-life balance and calls for urgent action to be taken so that governments, employer organisations and trade unions, as well as any other labour market institutions, act together on work-life balance policies. This to develop labour rights for equal treatment that allow for non-discriminatory job creation and equal career development, including education, training, re-skilling and up-skilling for equal employability. The cross-sectoral European Social Dialogue Committee is one important forum for this policy work where Eurocadres promotes work on psychosocial health including work-life balance. Female P&Ms should not need to suffer from ill-practices at work but instead enjoy career development on equal terms as their male counterparts.

Within the framework of the European pillar of social rights the Commission has launched a package of social measures including the [initiative to support work life balance for working parents and carers](#), aimed at balancing gross differences among European countries, including a proposal for strengthening and increasing the rights related to parental leave, and more specifically, paternity leave – as that is a good way to even out the unbalanced gender division of home responsibilities.

Eurocadres strongly supports this initiative – including the setting out to recognise the right to request flexible working arrangements, especially relating to working hours, with the objective of helping citizens find a better work life balance. We will carefully evaluate the developments of this initiative and act to find best possible ways to further strengthen this important development.

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