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[Women and Authority in the European Union](#)

The proportion of women in the political world is rising steadily, and those sectors of political life traditionally reserved for women are gaining in importance. This assessment is taken from a report by the European Commission that was analysed before International Women's Day by those who took part in the "[Women and Authority in the European Union](#)" conference, organised as part of the "Women for Europe" project.

The debate was focussed on the "More women in senior positions – key to economic stability and growth" report by the European Commission, which reports a positive trend regarding equal representation of men and women in politics. The Citizens' Initiative, still relatively unknown in Poland, and the 100th year of International Women's Day were also discussed.

The number of women in the European Parliament has doubled in the last quarter of century, from 17% in 1984 to 35% in 2009. Krzysztof Iszkowski drew attention to the fact that this figure is still far from total equality, and that « the proportion of women in national parliaments is even less, standing at 24% on average. She also noted however, that "the trend is positive".

The participants also spoke of the masculine domination present in the finance sector. This is particularly striking if one looks at the employment structure. Banks and insurance companies employ many women, but generally in an assistance capacity: secretaries, human resources, public relations. In contrast, there are few women in managerial positions.

The speakers also emphasised that the analysis of the CAC 40's companies produced by the European Commission's report shows that the market value of those companies where women were better represented in managerial positions had suffered less during the last crisis in comparison with companies where there were fewer women in such positions. Krzysztof Iszkowski pointed out that « BNP Paribas Bank, where 39% of director positions are held by women, only lost 20% of its market value, whilst Credit Agricole, where only 16% of directors are women, lost half its value".

The report also shows that in the EU, the proportion of women on the supervisory boards of public companies never exceeds 25%. In this area, Poland is below the European average, with around 10%. Amongst the member states, the countries with the greatest number of women on supervisory boards are Sweden and Finland, with more than 20%. Anna Radwan made the point that Norway, which is not a member of the EU, has even enforced equal representation, but in practice women still only make up 40% of positions in such fields.

The Commission's report also understands that recommendations must lead towards an increase in female representation amongst company directors. The writers of the report draw attention to the necessity of equal representation in the structure of the recruitment offices that allocate jobs in companies.