

Introduction

By Annalisa Gigante, Mirella Visser

Building a base

EuropeanPWN has been focused on building data and information on top women and boards of the major European companies since its foundation in 2003. In 2005, our first book on the topic was published under the title 'Women on boards: Moving beyond tokenism', by Véronique Bourez and the EuropeanPWN BoardWomen Monitor Team. A wealth of experiences and knowledge following this book has led to this publication. It brings together our collective knowledge and experience gathered over the last five years on the subject of women on boards, and on how board diversity (both gender and international diversity) adds significant value to corporations. This edition of *Women@Work* hopes to inspire individuals and corporations to get informed and involved, to widen their selection and nomination sources, and to work on building a pipeline of 'board-ready' senior women. This book also aims to be thought-provoking in areas regarding diversity and access to power, presenting arguments for and against different possible interventions.

The goal is to convince our readers that change is possible and that it makes good business sense.

By putting together facts, solid research and experience about women leaders, we wish to connect further with business leaders, supervisory board nominating committees, executive search companies, research

institutes and universities, individual women and men, women's networks, and all those who are interested in diversity issues.

EuropeanPWN firmly believes that change will happen by working with and within the current power structure, and by demonstrating success and added value. After all, women increasingly represent an economic source of power, as customers, clients, employees and colleagues on the board.

Moving the mountain

In 'Part one: Finding the facts', we examine the data from the EuropeanPWN BoardWomen Monitor which was run in 2004 and 2006. Here we see how the situation differs widely in each European country, and how the numbers of women on boards are still very low and growing slowly. The mountain is steep and the slope is slippery.

In 'Part two: Identifying the issues', we present new data from a recent EuropeanPWN research carried out by Mercer, comparing the profile of the top 100 board women in Europe to those of the top 100 board men. Here we also examine recently coined metaphors referring to the advancement of women in corporations such as 'glass cliff', 'glass ceiling', the issues faced while serving on boards, and board-training. Visibility at 'high altitudes' can be deceiving, so proper preparation is vital for a successful journey.

Finally, in 'Part three: Creating a change', you will find concrete tips on how we can improve board diversity, from the use of quotas and the effect of having three or more women in a team, to appointing women CEOs,

and power networking. Here we also present the point of view of executive search professionals and what we can learn from their experience. There are many routes leading to the top.

We would like to particularly thank our corporate partner Amrop Hever for enabling us to publish the book and Mercer for carrying out the study reported on in 'Profiling the power and the pipeline'. In addition, we thank Egon Zehnder International and BoardEx our partners in the EuropeanPWN BoardWomen Monitor, and Cap Gemini for providing the cartoons, as well as the many contributors from our network: Natasha Gunn (the final editor of the book and editor of our monthly newsletters), Margaret Milan, Jennifer Varino Thiis-Evensen, Stephanie MacKendrick, Ruth Sealy, Peninah Thomson, Marijo Bos, Christine Rösingh-Koetsier, Laurence Monnery, Ine Mariën, and Griet Claeys. We would also like to thank our EuropeanPWN Board colleagues for their advice and support: Marie-Claude Peyrache, Brigitte Pichat-Sese, Thérèse Torris, Cécile Demailly, Kate Philipps and our community manager Pernille Giraud-Sauveur, Véronique Bourez and Avivah Wittenberg-Cox for writing the first Women on Boards book, the Presidents of the local networks and all members of EuropeanPWN.

This book has been written by our members, professional international women who are committed to sharing their experience and knowledge with other professional women across Europe. All proceeds go to support the EuropeanPWN network and our research.

To continue the conversation, please write to us at: wob@epwn.net