



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S  
LOBBY  
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES

# PRESS RELEASE

**Date:** 19 November 2009

**Issuing organization:** The European Women's Lobby (EWL)

## Open letter to the EU Heads of Government ahead of the 19 November Brussels European Council –

### The European Union, democracy and fundamental rights for both women and men – one step forward, two steps back!!!

Dear European Heads of Government,

You will this evening take the final decisions on the nominations for the so called 'EU Top Jobs', namely the President of the Council and EU foreign policy chief. Five among you will also be deciding on your choice of Commissioner.

So far, these negotiations have proceeded 'behind closed doors', in a manner unbecoming to European democracy and transparency. So far, the results these negotiations have delivered are unbecoming to European democratic diversity. So far, you have largely ignored the requests of Commission President Barroso, the European Parliament and civil society representatives to respect our legislation on non-discrimination and gender balance. So far, only five out of the twenty-seven of you have nominated women as your Commissioners, and very few female names have been mentioned for the 'Top Jobs'.

This situation is unacceptable, and this evening represents your last chance to change it.

The Presidencies of the Commission and Parliament are already held by men. We, representatives of more than 2500 women's organizations from throughout the Union, demand that at least one of the two remaining 'Top Jobs' go to a female candidate.

Concerning the incoming Commission, your collective failure to respect our long-standing call for parity leaves us with no choice other than to back stronger action. We, the European Women's Lobby, therefore adhere to the growing call for the veto by the Parliament of any Commission failing to contain at least the same number of women as the outgoing Executive.

We call on you, Madam and Sirs, to fulfill this evening your democratic duty towards all of your citizens, both women and men, and hope for a renewed European governance enjoying legitimacy and wide-spread support.

Sincerely yours,

Brigitte Triems  
EWL President

Myria Vassiliadou  
EWL Secretary-General



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.....ends.....

For more information, interviews, background or visual materials, please contact Leanda Barrington-Leach, EWL Communications and Media Officer, T: (+32) 2 210 04 41, [barrington@womenlobby.org](mailto:barrington@womenlobby.org), and see [www.womenlobby.org](http://www.womenlobby.org).

## Note to editors:

The **European Women's Lobby** (EWL) is the largest umbrella organisation of women's associations in the European Union (EU), working to promote women's rights and equality between women and men. EWL membership extends to organisations in all 27 EU Member States and the three candidate countries, as well as to 21 European-wide organisations, representing a total of more than 2500 associations.



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PRESS BRIEFING

## WOMEN IN EU TOP JOBS

### EWL resources:

EWL Flickr page with **photos** of [‘Women in top jobs’](#) demonstration of 18.11.2009 in conjunction with MEPs

EWL [Open Letter to EU Heads of State and Government ahead of the 29-30 October European Council](#). Also available in [French](#)

EWL Press Release 17.06.2009 [‘EWL 50/50 Campaign for Democracy - More Women in the European Parliament, What about EU Top Jobs?’](#)

EWL Editorial of October 2009 Newsletter: [‘Negotiations on the EU Top Jobs begin - will there be a woman?’](#)

EWL [Facebook page](#)

EWL [50/50 Campaign for Democracy](#)

EWL [website](#)

### Other resources:

[Petition](#) for gender balanced Commission

Margot Wahlström's [blog](#)

### Press coverage:

18: 11.2009 [Ras-le-bol des « costumes-cravates » !](#) (Libération)

18.11.2009 [Lucha por el número de mujeres en la futura Comisión](#) (El Mundo)

18.11.2009 [Taoiseach nominates Geoghegan Quinn for Europe](#) (Irish Times)

17.11.2009 [Petition calls for more female Commissioners](#) (European Voice)

17.11.2009 [Ireland picks Geoghegan-Quinn for Commission](#) (European Voice)

17.11.2009 [Sweden nominates Malmström as a commissioner](#) (European Voice)



- 17.11.2009 [Women's lobby makes final plea for top jobs](#) (EurActiv)  
17.11.2009 ['Iron lady of the North' in late bid for EU's top job](#) (The Independent)  
17.11.2009 [Brussels blog: Scarcity of women candidates for EU jobs signals trouble ahead](#) (Financial Times)
- 16.11.2009 [EU Leaders asked to pick a woman](#) (BBC)  
16.11.2009 [EU- Swedish presidency favours top role for a woman](#) (Euronews)  
16.11.2009 [EU criticized for lack of women in top jobs](#) (Press TV)  
16.11.2009 [EU under pressure to consider women for top jobs](#) (New York Times)
- 15.11.2009 [Brussels attacked for lack of women in top jobs](#) (Financial Times)
- 12.11.2009 [Barroso unlikely to get more women in next commission](#) (EUobserver)  
12.11.2009 [Yes, Mrs President?](#) (Euronews)  
12.11.2009 [Gender imbalance mars formation of Barroso II](#) (European Voice)
- 05.11.2009 [Thank you Dona Quixote, for seeking presidency](#) (European Voice)
- 22.10.2009 [Hunt Continues for women to fill top EU posts](#) (EurActiv)  
22.10.2009 Letter by Finish MEP Anneli Jäätteenmäki: [Give women more top jobs](#) (European Voice)
- 15.9.2009 [EU urged to give more 'top jobs' to women](#) (The Parliament.com)

## Letter of MEPs to European Council 18.11.2009:

To the European Union Heads of Government,

You are meeting over the next few days to decide on the European Union's so-called 'top jobs' and some of you will also be finalising your choice of Commissioner.

To date these processes have been without transparency and have signalled the worst aspects of an old and unrepresentative EU. You have a few days to make a difference and to inspire our citizens to have more connection with our institutions.

If these posts were subject to an appointment process in any of our Member States, the process to date would be invalid for failure to respect our own legislation on non-discrimination and gender balance.

Be clear, if these posts are not filled in a way that reflects the diversity of European society, especially in respect of the number of female candidates, your choices may not pass the European Parliament.

Yours

The MEPs in Suits



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Press Release by MEPs 17.11.2009:

## EU top jobs

Cross-party MEPs call for more women in EU top jobs

Today, the Greens/EFA Group organised a press conference with MEPs from the European Parliament's five largest political groups. They issued the following joint statement on gender balance in the EU's "top jobs" and in the composition of the new European Commission.

*"After more than 50 years of gender equality treaty articles and legislation, the EU has still not achieved anything close to gender parity among its own top jobs, let alone in other areas of EU society. The EU loses credibility as a force fighting for gender equality when it cannot achieve such goals even within its own ranks.*

*The EU's top decision-makers should reflect the people they serve. Men have already been appointed to the presidencies of the Commission and Parliament. It is therefore inadmissible that so few female names are in the frame for the posts of Council President and foreign affairs high representative.*

*It is also unacceptable that only three of twenty-seven Member States have so far confirmed they will nominate a female Commissioner. The fewer the women in the proposed Commission, the greater its disadvantage when it is presented to the European Parliament for a vote of approval.*

*There is a shared responsibility for the composition of the new European Commission in terms of the quality of the candidates and its overall gender balance. The nominations by EU leaders are however critical and we call for action to ensure that more women are put forward for the EU's top jobs."*

Rebecca Harms, Greens/EFA Co-President

Diana Wallis, ALDE, European Parliament Vice-President

Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou, EPP-ED, European Parliament Vice-President and member of EP committee for women's rights and gender equality

Britta Thomsen, S&D, coordinator for EP committee for women's rights and gender equality

Ilda Figueiredo, GUE/NGL, member of the EP committee for women's rights and gender equality

Marije Cornelissen, Greens/EFA, member of EP committee for women's rights and gender equality

Press Release by MEPs 18.11.2009:



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Women MEPs dressed in shirts, ties and dress jackets demonstrated today in front of the European Council building in Brussels demanding gender balance in the selection of the European Union's top jobs and symbolically handing in their CVs to the Council.

The protest was provoked by the prospect of the next European Commission College becoming even more male-dominated as member states are nominating almost only men to fill the portfolios, as well as the fact that the names mentioned as potential candidates for the new top jobs are also almost exclusively male. These two positions are the new President of the European Council and the High Representative for Foreign Policy.

"It is high time that current Council President Fredrik Reinfeldt realises the need for change", said Eva-Britt Svensson, Swedish Left Party and GUE/NGL group MEP, taking part in the protest.

"This is not just an empty threat" Svensson said. "The European Parliament must approve the new Commission, and if it is not sufficiently equal it is possible that it will be rejected."

Among the other participants in the campaign were Diana Wallis, European Parliament Vice President and MEPs from the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL), Greens, Socialist and Liberal groups.

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