



HOUSE OF LORDS

European Union Committee

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE EUROPEAN UNION SUB-COMMITTEE B INTERNAL MARKET, INFRASTRUCTURE AND EMPLOYMENT

CALL FOR EVIDENCE

EU WOMEN ON BOARDS PROPOSALS

The European Commission has announced that it is considering proposing legislative quotas to improve the representation of women on boards across the EU, and recently held a consultation into the matter.

In March 2011, Lord Davies of Abersoch published a review of women on boards in the UK, examining the business case for gender diversity and the obstacles faced by women in achieving board level appointments. This put forward 10 recommendations to business, including a target of a minimum of 25% female representation on FTSE 100 boards by 2015.

One year on, the Government report that nearly three in 10 board appointments in the FTSE 100 went to women, with the UK on course to achieve a 27% total representation of women on boards in 2015. At the same time, around one in 10 FTSE 100 boards, and almost half of FTSE 250 boards, are composed entirely of men. With this inquiry, the House of Lords European Union Committee intends to examine the case for European intervention in this area.

Contributions are invited from all individuals and organisations with an interest in this issue. Particular questions to which we would like you to respond are below; however, respondents need only reply to those questions which they consider relevant to them.

Instructions regarding the call for evidence are attached at **Annex I**.

Questions

1. To what extent does the EU have a role to play in improving the representation of women on boards? Should this be tackled through measures at a European level or is it a matter for national Governments? Do the differences in board structures across the EU affect the pursuit of a common European approach?
2. Can a “voluntary approach”, or self-regulation, achieve a fair representation of women on boards? How can change through voluntary measures be sustained?
3. How should progress be monitored and audited? Should monitoring be coordinated at the European level?
4. Should progress be incentivised, or a lack of progress punished? If so, how could this be achieved?
5. What level of progress is acceptable? Is there a point at which it should be determined that self-regulation is not working and that a legislative intervention (whether at national or European level) is needed?
6. Has the introduction of quotas in some Member States had any impact on the single market? What are the arguments for and against consistency across the EU on women on boards?
7. What impact would a higher level of representation of women on boards across Europe have on the UK? Would it bring any advantages and/or disadvantages?
8. What are the positive and negative effects of legislative quotas?
9. Other than quotas, what measures could be considered at European level to directly improve the representation of women on boards? Are there alternative measures that should be pursued, but which are better suited for action at a national level?
10. Is support needed for women when making their choice of careers, and throughout their careers, to ensure that there are sufficient candidates for board appointments? Is this a matter for European-level action, or should it be a matter for national governments?
11. What does success look like? What should be the ultimate goal with respect to women on boards across the EU?

ANNEX I: GUIDANCE FOR SUBMISSIONS

Written submissions should be provided to the Committee as a Microsoft Word document and sent by e-mail to **daviesma@parliament.uk**. Please do not submit PDFs (if you do not have access to Microsoft Word you may submit in another editable electronic form). If you do not have access to a computer you may submit a paper copy to **Mark Davies, EU Sub-Committee on the Internal Market, Infrastructure and Employment, Committee Office, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW**; the fax number is +44(0)20 7219 6715.

The deadline for written evidence is **Tuesday 10 July**.

Short, concise submissions, of no more than six pages, are preferred. A longer submission should include a one-page summary. Paragraphs should be numbered. Submissions should be dated, with a note of the author's name, and of whether the author is acting on an individual or corporate basis. All submissions will be acknowledged promptly.

Personal contact details supplied to the Committee will be removed from submissions before publication but will be retained by the Committee staff for specific purposes relating to the Committee's work, such as seeking additional information.

Submissions become the property of the Committee which will decide whether to accept them as evidence. Evidence may be published by the Committee at any stage. It will normally appear on the Committee's website and will be deposited in the Parliamentary Archives. Once you have received acknowledgement that your submission has been accepted as evidence, you may publicise or publish it yourself, but in doing so you must indicate that it was prepared for the Committee. If you publish your evidence separately, you should be aware that you will be legally responsible for its content.

You should be careful not to comment on individual cases currently before a court of law, or matters in respect of which court proceedings are imminent. If you anticipate such issues arising, you should discuss with the Clerk of the Committee how this might affect your submission.

Certain individuals and organisations may be invited to appear in person before the Committee to give oral evidence. Oral evidence is usually given in public at Westminster and broadcast in audio and online. Persons invited to give oral evidence will be notified separately of the procedure to be followed and the topics likely to be discussed.

Substantive communications to the Committee about the inquiry should be addressed through the Clerk or the Chairman of the Committee, whether or not they are intended to constitute formal evidence to the Committee.

This is a public call for evidence. Please bring it to the attention of other groups and individuals who may not have received a copy direct.

You may follow the progress of the inquiry at **www.parliament.uk/hleub**