

Professional Progress of Women in Europe: Women on Boards & Executive Posts in the EU

Research team

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Research questions

What is the representation of Women on Boards & Executive Posts in the EU in comparison with other economies and with other decision making-bodies in Europe?

Does the representation of Women on Boards & Executive Posts vary among EU countries? What factors may explain these differences?

What are the trends in women's presence at board level? Does the evolution of women on Boards correspond to the advancement of women in education and employment?

What is the regulatory framework regarding Women on Boards across the EU? What might be learned from the experiences in different countries?

Constructing a common research framework

This project focuses on the analysis of the past and present situation of Women in top-decision making firm bodies, the factors that may have determined the past evolution and present situation and the regulatory framework (recommendations in Codes of Governance or/and laws) in different EU countries regarding female presence on Boards of Directors.

Although women make up nearly half of the workforce and more than half of new university graduates, women continue to be under-represented in senior positions in many fields. The perception that the increase in women employment's rate or in female university graduates will not by itself be sufficient to close the gender gap in top management positions and the glacial increase of female board members in the EU during the last years, helps explain the European Commission's threat to establish gender quotas if self-regulation fails in the EU. Different EU countries have already started implementing strategies at the regulatory level.

The research task encompasses different analytical perspectives and locus of interests, with an analytical focus on the impact of institutional contexts and regulations. The task is also characterised by a predominant methodological framework: collecting available data on corporate boards (and executive posts) with a common quantitative approach in several countries. Researchers in Spain, France, Slovenia, Sweden, the UK and Hungary have worked on this line. The project includes an analysis of the situation in the EU in comparison with other economies, and individual analyses of 8 EU countries: Norway, Sweden, Finland, UK, France, Spain, Slovenia and Hungary.

Main research findings

Low presence of Women on Boards and top management positions in Europe, although better than in some other parts of the world.

Slow increase of Women on Boards and top management during the last decades, with faster progress in some countries.

Different countries, different female presence on Boards of Directors:

- Scandinavian and Eastern European countries as leaders.
- Mediterranean countries occupy the last positions.

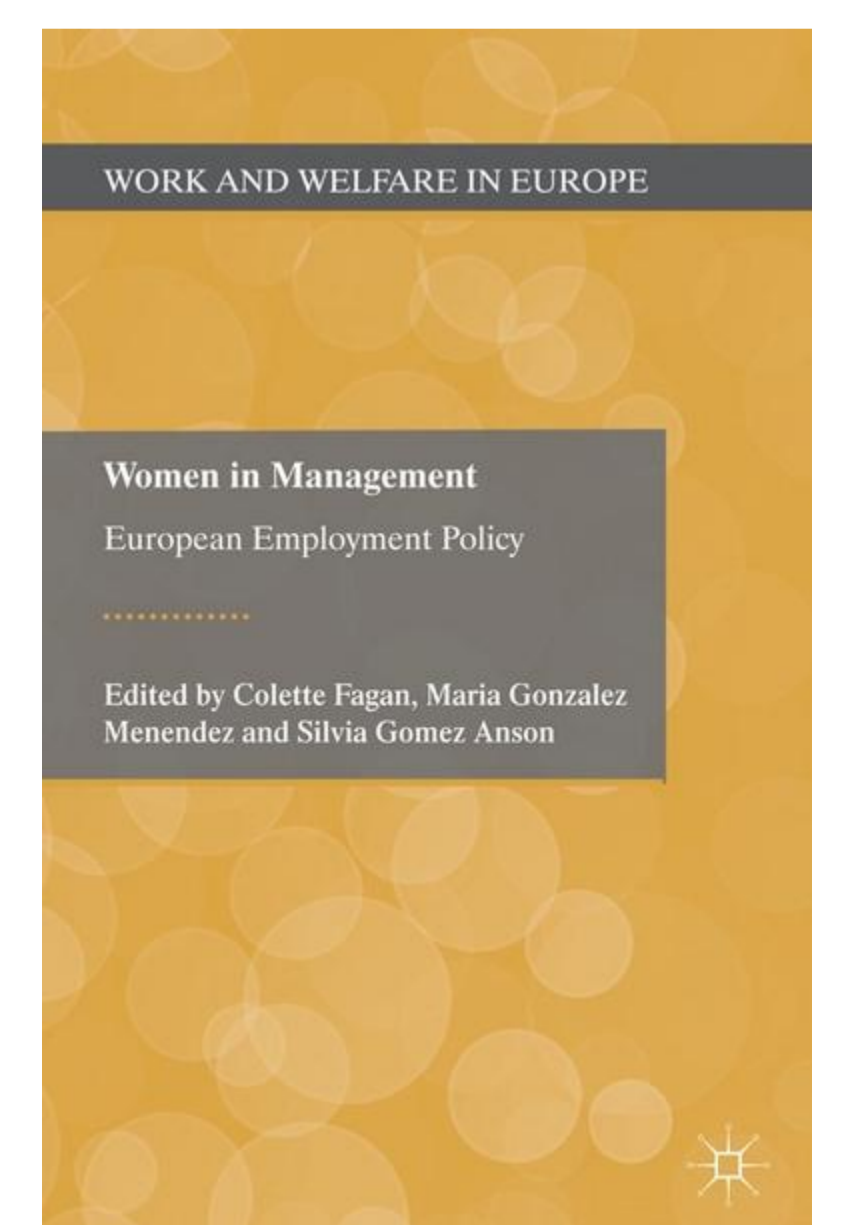
Different countries, different approaches whether to regulate or not and to the type of regulation (soft versus hard regulation).

- The predominant regulation is the inclusion of recommendations in Corporate Governance Codes (Belgium, France, Finland, Germany, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands and UK).
- Some countries have established or proposed quotas for public limited companies (Norway, Spain, Iceland, France, The Netherlands and Italy).
- There is not a strong connection between the type of regulatory approach adopted and the wider welfare state regime in place.
- Eastern European countries have not issued any type of regulation.

Publication outputs

Women in Management. European Employment Policy. Edited by Colette Fagan, María González Menéndez, Silvia Gómez Ansón. Palgrave Macmillan, 2011 (Work and Welfare in Europe Series)

1. "Introduction" by Colette Fagan, María C. González and Silvia Gómez Ansón
2. "Women on Boards in Europe: Past, present and future" by Silvia Gómez Ansón
3. "The Women on Boards in Europe Project: Aims, Methodology and Limitations" by María C. González Menéndez and Lara Martínez González
4. "Gender Quotas for Corporate Boards in Norway - Innovative Gender Equality Policy" by Mari Teigen
5. "Surge under Threat – The Rapid Increase of Women on Swedish Boards of Directors" by Magnus Bygren, Love Bohman and Cristofer Edling
6. "Individual competence and official support: Women on Company Boards in Finland» by Paivi Korvajarvi
7. "Women's representation on the boards of UK listed companies" by Nina Teasdale, Colette Fagan and Claire Sutherland
8. "Spain on the Norwegian pathway: Towards a gender-balanced presence of women on corporate boards" by María C. González Menéndez and Lara Martínez González
9. "Women in Top Management in France: still waiting for change" by Mark Smith, Priya Srinivasan and Katiaryna Zhuk
10. "New and persisting barriers for younger generations of women in management in Slovenia" by Aleksandra Kanjuo Mrčela, Barbara Lužar, Tonja Blatnik and Sonja Šmuc
11. "Women in management – the Hungarian case" by Beáta Nagy
12. "Conclusions" by Colette Fagan, María C. González and Silvia Gómez



WP03
Tensions between
Quality and
Quantity of Jobs

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