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7 March 2023

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Event highlights

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# Second ESAs' high-level conference on gender equality

## Are we on the right track?

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### Introductory remarks

On **Tuesday, 7 March** about 300 colleagues from various agencies of the EU gathered once again, this time at the **second ESAs' high-level conference on gender equality, "Are we on the right track?"** to analyse the situation in the different sectors and to share personal experiences.

Our **Executive Director, François-Louis**, opened the floor and **welcomed** participants to the event, highlighting that gender equality is a key objective in all European organisations and EU agencies have taken an active role in tackling it. *"...Our agencies bear a huge responsibility in this area and need to resemble the society they are embedded in,"* he remarked.

### Panel discussion – Gender equality: views from financial agencies

With the engaging moderation of the panel discussions by **Bjarke Smith-Meyer, Politico Fintech Correspondent**, the exchanges kicked off.

The **first panel** included our **Chairperson, José Manuel**, who drew attention to the EBA's study in the area with the recent release of the [Report on the benchmarking of diversity practices](#) showing that women's representation on boards has gradually improved, but imbalances remain. **Verena Ross, ESMA Chair**, recognised the lack of data in this area in the financial sectors and praised the EBA's work to quantify inequality. She emphasised that studies show that diversity leads to better economic and innovation outcomes. **Petra Hielkema, EIOPA Chair**, mentioned that the pension gap originates in the pay gap: women receive 30% less pension on average. *"Women are at risk. There is a need to address this topic and make policies going forward,"* she expressed.

To conclude, the panelists also shared some **inspirational words** with the audience:

*"Do not try to be a superwoman, you do not have to be excellent in all dimensions. And that is fine"* our **Chairperson, José Manuel**.

*"Go for it! Take the opportunities when they arise. Do not question yourself, you can do it, you have the capabilities and the strength. Enjoy and make the most out of it"* **Verena Ross, ESMA Chair.**

*"Dare to speak up, you can grow, talk to someone in your organisation, get a mentor or a colleague, listen to them carefully express your doubts"* **Petra Hielkema, EIOPA Chair.**

## Keynote and dialogue

The conversation continued with a **keynote** and dialogue by **Mairead McGuinness, European Commissioner for Financial Stability, Financial Services and the Capital Market**, who hopes to be inspirational to other women by being the first woman to hold this office. She stressed the importance and priority of reaching gender balance in Europe. Having flexible working conditions is one of the aspects to reach this goal, she pointed out. *"There is more work to be done in the area,"* she concluded.

## Panel discussion – Gender equality: sharing experience across sectors

The **second panel** evolved around sharing experiences across sectors. **Elisabeth Werner, Deputy Secretary General, European Commission**, insisted that there is a need to discuss the matter and that in the Commission there is a dedicated task force for this where all departments are involved. From the Commission's point of view, equality is guided by rules and culture, she noted. **Emer Cooke, Executive Director, European Medicines Agency**, highlighted that the pharmaceutical sector is in a different position, it already has a lot of women in the workforce. However, she stated that enabling and facilitating work-life balance is the key to success. The exchange was followed by **Maria Jepsen, Deputy Director, Eurofound**, who said that it is crucial to be aware that there is still a long way to go. The labour market is very segregated, women and men do not concentrate in the same sectors or occupations. *"The culture is still to be reformed,"* she emphasised. **Gertrud Ingestad, Director General for Human Resources and Security, European Commission**, encouraged women to network, coach and mentor other women. She emphasised that culture is crucial to motivate women to put themselves forward.

Their **motivational takeaways** concluded the exchange:

*"We should never take it for granted that we are doing well, this has to remain on the agenda on the daily basis"* **Elisabeth Werner, Deputy Secretary General, European Commission.**

*"Be brave and don't be afraid. Women tend to suffer from being afraid, they think that they cannot do it but if you do not try, you are not going to do it. Go for it!"* **Emer Cooke, Executive Director, European Medicines Agency.**

*"Choose the right employer, the one that supports diversity and inclusion in the workplace"* **Maria Jepsen, Deputy Director, Eurofound.**

**"Don't be afraid to bring your vulnerability to a manager position" Gertrud Ingestad, Director General for Human Resources and Security, European Commission.**

## Concluding remarks

The event closed with remarks by **Carlien Scheele, Director, European Institute for Gender Equality**, who highlighted the importance of data collection for understanding each situation and how to go about it. It is important to have equal representation and concrete measures in place, such as HR policies. Member states must take equality on board in their recovery and resilience plan. *"I hope that one day we do no longer need this discussion and that we are not surprised to see women in the EC presidency or parliament,"* she underlined.

In the end, our **Executive Director, François-Louis** took the floor to thank the speakers and audience for their participation, fruitful discussions and interest. He concluded by highlighting once again the significance of this topic in our agendas as EU representatives.