

**WOMEN ON BOARDS: ANTECEDENTS, DYNAMICS AND CONSEQUENCES OF DIVERS BOARD COMPOSITION**

**Joint track between the Corporate Governance SIG and the Gender, Race and Diversity in Organisations SIG**

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## Abstract

“Women on Boards” – this is an issue that is gaining momentum in many European countries. Academic debate on the strategic importance of women corporate directors is widely recognized and still open. Norway had hold for some time sort of a leading role in the process of getting women onto boards. Indeed, in 2005, the Norwegian government passed a quota law requiring Norwegian public limited-liability companies to have at least 40% of each gender represented on their board of directors. Other countries as France, Italy, Netherlands and Spain have recently brought quota laws on the way. In Germany a vivid discussion on appropriate measures to involve more women in boards and to increase diversity in general has developed.

We consider this the right time to get engaged into this debate as scholars and members of EURAM. In the U.S. and Scandinavia, especially Norway, several very important empirical studies have been conducted and published already. From those, scholars in many other European countries have learnt and based their own research on. Currently, several research projects are running in Europe (as in France, Spain, U.K., Germany, the Netherlands) and some of the researchers involved have been presenting first results in our track on WoB at EURAM 2012. We are strongly convinced that the ongoing research and newer approaches should be discussed in EURAM 2013, thus providing an even broader arena for scholars from different countries and disciplines to share their ideas, concepts and results.

The Women on boards debate is going global, and we believe the next Euram meeting in Istanbul provide an excellent opportunity to engage with other researchers in Turkey as well as other Middle Eastern researchers in the area.

Our contribution could be to analyze antecedents, processes, dynamics and consequences/outcomes of the growing presence of women on boards on three levels:

- **Individual level:** Who are the women on boards? What recourses do they rely on? How are they recruited? (Heidenreich 2010) What motivates, qualifies, or hinders them to become board members and to perform on boards? How do they deal with stereotypes and stereotype threat (Roberson & Kulik 2007)? Which strategies have they developed? What are the effects of their position as board-member on the individuals (well-being, further career, income, family life)?
- **Organizational level:** What are the characteristics of recruitment processes which focus on new board members from diverse back-grounds? What relevance has got the concept of “critical mass” (Torchia, Calabro & Huse 2011; Erkut, Kramer & Konrad, 2008)? Do women support women on boards and to which extent (Oehmichen, Rapp & Wolff 2010)? What is going on in the “black-box” of boards with different gender composition? What governance practices and boardroom processes emanate from the presence of a critical mass of women on boards (Bilimoria 2008)? How can a performance-supporting culture in diverse boards be conceptualized? Is “WoB” a business case (Nielsen & Huse, 2010 a + b, Hillmann, Shropshire & Cannella, 2007)? How do women directors contribute to firms’ outcome?
- **Societal level:** What political strategies are appropriate in which societal settings (including cross-cultural perspectives, including the specific situation of post-socialist countries)? What are the effects of quota-laws? In which general strategy are those imbedded? In which settings diversity on boards could be increased? What are the effects (see e.g. Seierstadt & Opsahl 2011) of this (as societal justice, gender equality,

generating additional welfare, improved use of human capital, increased international competitiveness of the country or weakening of countries with drain of women being recruited from other countries)? What effects have specific gender arrangements in different societies?

We welcome papers investigating one or several of the questions formulated above, specifically papers presenting a multi-level approach and cross-cultural research on women on boards.

We are particularly interested in understanding the mechanisms of diverse boards from a multidisciplinary point of view, combining a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives.

**Keywords:** Women directors; board diversity, HRM practices, business elites, top management teams, corporate governance, cross-cultural studies.