



LOBBY EUROPEEN DES FEMMES EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY

Brussels, 30th October 2008

To Lothar Bisky, Chairperson of the Party of the European Left

Dear Sir,

RE: Candidate lists for the 2009 European elections and women's equal representation

I am writing to you in the context of the European Women's Lobby (EWL) 50/50 Campaign for Democracy, which aims to promote citizen's participation, democracy and equality between women and men.

I would like to remind you of the importance for the lists of candidates for the 2009 European elections to reflect the fact that women make up more than 50 percent of the European population. The member organisations of the EWL in all EU Member States (representing over 2000 women's organisations across Europe) will be in contact with national political parties on this issue, as we are aware that the composition of candidate lists is the responsibility of national parties. However, I also wish to convey this message directly to you as the European party leader, since a consistent European approach that respects and promotes democracy and European values is important on this issue.

The EWL 50/50 Campaign (www.5050democracy.eu) launched on 16.09.09 is endorsed by almost 200 well known personalities from across Europe and across political ideologies, such as European Commission President José Manuel Barroso, European Commission Vice President Margot Wallström, Prime Minister of Belgium Yves Leterme, President of the Slovenian Republic Danilo Türk, former Irish President Mary Robinson, Nobel Price winner Orhan Pamuk, and the former President of the European parliament Simone Veil.

Decision-makers affiliated to the European Left such as MEP Luisa Morgantini (IT) and the leader of the French Communist Party Marie-George Buffet have already given their support for the 50/50 Campaign. **We very much hope that you as the Chairperson of the European Left will also personally endorse the Campaign by filling the enclosed form.**

One of the key messages of the 50/50 Campaign is that the current under-representation of women in the European Parliament (EP) as well as in the European Commission is a serious democratic deficit threatening the legitimacy of European institutions and political parties. If the Lisbon Treaty enters into force, it will increase the powers of the European Parliament. Therefore it is more important than ever that the decisions of the EP take into account the

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needs, interests and perspectives of all the women and men who are affected by European policies. The European Parliament will also need a stronger presence of women in order to improve its policy making and to be able to fulfill EU's promises regarding gender equality.

The number of women elected in the European Parliament will reflect the number and placing of women on the lists of candidates. Choices made by political parties have therefore an enormous impact on the results of the elections in what comes to achieving greater representativeness, justice and equality.

At the moment 31,7% of the MEPs of the GUE/NLG group in the EP are women, which is close to the 31% average representation of women in the European Parliament. While we know that the decisions on candidates' lists are made at national level, as the chair of the European Left Party, you have the possibility to recommend that your member parties continue their work to ensure women's equal presence on the lists and use zipper systems or other mechanisms to ensure an equal representation of women and men.

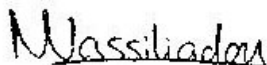
Within the 50/50 Campaign for Democracy, the EWL, through its wide membership, will mobilize European voters to cast their votes for parties who both ensure equal representation of women and men on their candidate lists and commit themselves to putting gender equality on the top of their agendas. We would therefore very much appreciate your reply to the following questions:

- 1) What steps are the European Left and its member parties taking in order to ensure true democracy and the equal representation of women and men on the lists of candidates for the European elections next year?
- 2) What concrete measures are contained in the programme of the European Left and its member parties for the European elections to address persistent inequalities between women and men in all areas of life?

We also would like to kindly ask you to distribute this letter to the member parties of the European Left, so that also they could directly answer our questions. This will help our members to make an informed choice when they vote for the European elections next year.

I am confident that you will do your utmost to ensure an equal representation of women and men in the next European Parliament and put gender equality at the heart of your priorities.

Yours sincerely,



Myria Vassiliadou
Secretary General of the European Women's Lobby