



LOBBY EUROPEEN DES FEMMES EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY

Brussels, 9th October 2008

To Annemie Neyts, President of the European Liberal Democrat and Reform party

Dear President,

RE: Candidates' 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 has received the support of a number of decision makers (MEPs, MPs, Commissioners and ministers across Europe) affiliated to the ELDR party.

In this context, **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 26 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. At the same time, 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 aims to promote citizen's participation, democracy and equality between women and men. The has already been endorsed by a number of 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.

Also a number of MEPs and members of the European Commission affiliated to the ELDR party such as Diana Wallis (UK) and Maria Robsahm (SE), and Mariann Fischer-Boel (DE) and Neelie Kroes (NL), have already given their support for the 50/50 Campaign and its aims. We are grateful for the support we have received from the ranks of the ELDR party, and we very much hope that you as the President of the party will 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

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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 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.

The ALDE group in the EP already has a significant representation of women (over 40%) and we at the EWL are confident that the progress towards the equal representation of women and men will continue with the European Elections of 2009. While we know that the decisions on candidates' lists are made at national level, as the President of the ELDR party you have the possibility to recommend that the national members of your party 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 among elected MEPs from your party.

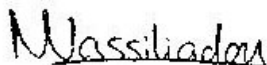
Within the 50/50 Campaign for Democracy, the EWL, through its wide membership, will mobilize European voters to cast their votes for parties who both ensure equal representation of women and men on their candidate lists and commit themselves to putting gender equality on the top of their agendas. We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

- 1) What steps are the ELDR party 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 ELDR party 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 national members of the ELDR party, 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