



LOBBY EUROPEEN DES FEMMES EUROPEAN WOMEN'S LOBBY

Brussels, 6th October 2008

To Brian Crowley and Christiana Muscardini, Co-Presidents of the Union for Europe of the Nations Group

Dear Presidents,

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

I am writing to you in the context of the European Women's Lobby (EWL) 50/50 Campaign for Democracy. I would like to remind you of the importance that the lists of candidates for the 2009 European elections 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 in this context.

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 Campaign has already been endorsed by a number of well known personalities from across Europe and across political ideologies, such 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 Prize winner Orhan Pamuk, and the former President of the European parliament Simone Veil. We very much hope that you 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 democratic deficit threatening the legitimacy of European institutions and of 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 fulfil the EU's promises regarding gender equality.

We know that 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

EWL- LEF, 18 rue Hydraulique, B-1210 Bruxelles
Tel. +32 2 217 90 20 – Fax: +32 2 219 84 51 - e-mail: ewl@womenlobby.org
Website: <http://www.womenlobby.org>

have therefore an enormous impact on the results of the elections in what comes to achieving greater representativeness, justice and equality. At the moment only 12% of the MEPs of the UEN group are women, which is significantly less than the average 31% in the European Parliament and less than in any other political group. Much can be therefore improved in this respect in the European elections next year. While the decisions on candidate lists are made at national level, as the President of the UEN group you have the possibility to recommend that the national members of your party would ensure women's equal presence on the lists and the use of zipper systems.

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 candidates' lists and who commit themselves to putting gender equality on the top of their agendas.

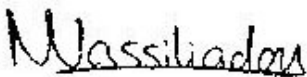
We would therefore very much appreciate your reply to the following questions, which will help our members to make an informed choice when they vote for the European elections next year:

- 1) What steps have the UEN group and its member parties been 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 programmes of the member parties of the UEN group 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 member parties of the UEN group and forward us their answers to our questions.

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