

New Commission should be more gender balanced, survey says

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News

The new European Commission has been urged to be “more gender balanced” when it takes office after the European elections.

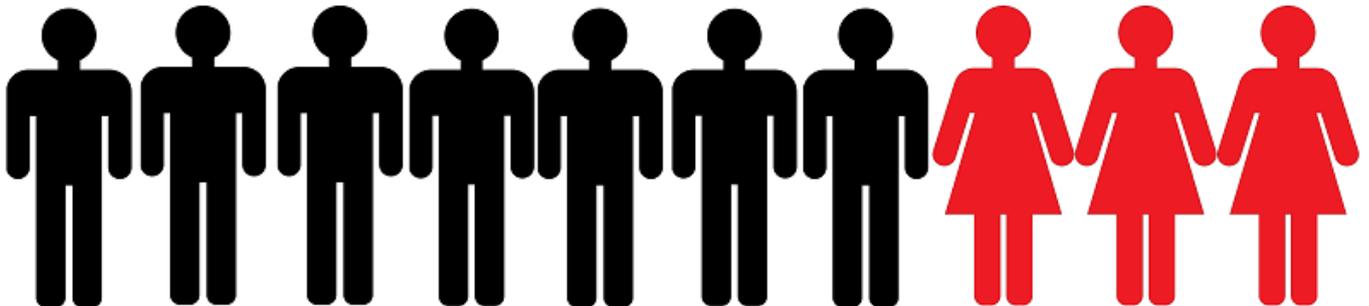


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The demand came with the results of a new survey showing there is growing support for the next Commission President to be a woman.

According to the Europe-wide online survey, current Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager is the best commissioner on Jean-Claude Juncker’s team and should be the next President of the executive.

Speaking at a news briefing on Tuesday, Joanna Maycock, Secretary General of the European Women's Lobby, said that currently less than one third of EU commissioners are women.

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This contrasts sharply with the findings of the survey on the “best performing” commissioners that ranked three women commissioners in the top five.

Maycock said, “There has to be more gender balance in the next Commission.”

She pointed out that Parliament has proposed in future that each Member State puts forward two candidates, a male and a female, for its choice of commissioner.

The survey shows that 54 percent of those questioned believe there should be more gender balance in the next Commission which will take office later this year after May's elections.

“It is a failure of the Juncker Commission not to have achieved more gender balance in the Commission ... Ahead of the European elections, it is time to put gender balance at the top of the agenda” **Joanna Maycock, Secretary General of the European Women's Lobby**

Maycock said that there had never been a woman Commission President but, even so, only 23 percent of the sample said they thought the next President should be a female.

It was suggested that the findings may have been influenced by the fact that 65 percent of those quizzed were men.

Maycock told reporters, “We need to lift the barriers that exist for women and their full participation in the EU decision-making process.”

“The full participation of women is vital for democracy and the democratic process. Women tend to vote less than men in elections but if this is to change women need to be more fully involved.”

“It is a failure of the Juncker commission not to have achieved more gender balance in the commission. Progress in this field has slowed so, ahead of the European elections, it is time to put gender balance at the top of the agenda.”

“Hopefully, this is one of the key messages that will go out from this report today,” she added.

The results were unveiled by public affairs and communications agency BCW (Burson Cohn & Wolfe).

“We hope that the findings [of the survey] will inform the next Commission’s mandate and set-up, as well as providing food for thought as the new European Parliament prepares for its hearings with Commissioners-designate” **Karen Massin, CEO BCW Brussels**

The ‘European Commission 2014-2019 Scoreboard’ survey invited respondents to give their verdict on the performance of each individual commissioner - ranking them from 0 to 10 - and taking account of their initial objectives.

Vestager was the only official to achieve a score above 50 percent and the preferred choice of those questioned to take over the presidency of the new Commission this autumn, despite not being an official party candidate for the job.

Vestager comes just ahead of Federica Mogherini, Vice-President and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, with 49.6 percent in the ranking, followed by Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President, with 46.9 percent and Cecilia Malmström, Trade Commissioner, with 44.7 percent.

Juncker is the fifth highest ranked in the list, with a score of 44.4 percent.

At the other end of the scale is Tibor Navracsics, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, who is graded at 19 percent, just below Neven Mimica, the Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, with 20.6 percent.

Respondents were also invited to rank the performance of former Commissioner Michel Barnier, the EU’s Chief Brexit negotiator, who earns an approval rating of 57 percent.

Nearly 1,800 stakeholders from Brussels and beyond took part in the survey, which was conducted online between 9 October and 3 December 2018.

Nationals from all 28 Member States and further afield participated in the #ECscoreboard survey.

The three largest countries by population (UK, France and Germany) accounted for the highest number of responses. Nearly 40 percent of the feedback for the survey came from respondents living in Belgium, at the heart of the EU and host of its major institutions.

Karen Massin, CEO BCW Brussels, commented: “We hope that you will find the findings fascinating - we certainly do. The results provide valuable insights from a wide range of actors and influencers, including business, officials, trade associations, media, NGOs, think tanks and academia.”

“We hope that the findings will inform the next Commission’s mandate and set-up, as well as providing food for thought as the new European Parliament prepares for its hearings with Commissioners-designate,” she added.

The 20-question survey also rated the overall performance of the Juncker Commission at 46 percent. When asked how the Juncker Commission compared with its predecessor, 41 per cent said it was better and 34 percent worse.

When asked who should be the next President of the European Commission, Vestager scored 20 percent, former MEP Alexander Stubb 7 percent, Timmermans 6 percent, Barnier 5 percent, the same as Angela Merkel, while only 4 percent favoured the EPP choice, German MEP Manfred Weber.

On what should be the next Commission’s top three priorities, 38 percent said the environment and

climate, 24 percent said migration, the same as the economy.

About the author

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