

**In France, the number of Women on Boards progress is high, while the ones on Executive Committees stagnates.**

**Is it really surprising? What conclusions can be drawn from it?**

Many statistical studies published within the last years show that in France, in particular because of the January 2011 French Law, the number of Women on Boards progress is high, on the other hand the number of women on Executive Committees (Comex or Codir) stagnates. Can it be explained ?

We can regret this fact, but objectively, one should not wonder.

The explanation which can be brought is rather simple and allows to propose a way of progressing

In any case, in France, the role and the mode of recruitment of the members of a Comex are very different from the ones of a board.

For the "professional" recruitment of board members, companies look for the variety of the profiles, in particular the independence criteria is examined.

Consequently, board members are generally searched outside the top leaders of the company. Such is not however the particular case of the Non-Exec Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (if the CEO is also an board member, rather rare case within French Boards).

The pool of board members potential candidates, is thus widened, because candidates can present work experiences from diverse circles and other companies than those where they may apply.



On the other hand, for the recruitments of high level managers, future members of Comex, the searches target on candidates capable of operationally managing full-time entities or functions. Very different role from the one of board members.

The candidate has to know the domain of the company very well and to be considered as able to bring an insured contribution. The pool of the external to the company potential candidates, in particular women, is considerably reduced.

Then, consequently, for the Comex, it is rare to search for an outside personality, and when it is the case, often it is because no in-house person can be a good short-term candidate (example: after a Financial Director resignation).

However, in special circumstances, due to the objective of more women on the Comex,, recruitments of women external to the company, will have to be performed, but they will be a source of lack of motivation for the internal men "natural" candidates for such positions. The latter will perceive these recruitments as due to the gender and not to the merit. This question arises very rarely in the case of a board.

Generally, the persons becoming Comex members are thus chosen among top leaders of the company.

Yet, because of the still existing glass ceiling, the number of potential women candidates is often low. Even with the willingness and support of convinced women board members, women's Comex recruitments will still be difficult for the coming next years.

Why ? Indeed, before any women Comex potential appointments, it is necessary, within the company itself, to bring qualified women to positions situated just below the Comex and give them operational experiences others than those of HR and Com.

Such a global objective within the company cannot be dictated by a Law, at best, legally, companies may be requested to publish their objectives. Such a formula exists moreover within the project of Madam Redding's European Directive.

**Conclusion: the comparison of the speed of feminization of Comex with regard to the ones of Boards must be treated with delicacy.**