



Female Leadership

FOR A EUROPEAN MODEL OF RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT





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{ FOREWORD

BY CARLO PARIETTI, PRESIDENT OF EUROCADRES

By working on the concept and practice of “female leadership”, *EUROCADRES* intends to take a step forward on the road to gender equality, beyond gender balance.

For a very long time, the very concepts of management and leadership have been associated with man's style, and even with military cultures and experiences. This project avoided falling into stereotypes. As there is not a unique man's style, there is not a woman's style.

The participants wanted to give a concrete example of managing diversity, and valuing differences. Then, the idea was to work on an integration of styles, in order to develop further the concept of a European Model of Responsible Management, with in its centre female leadership.

Such a qualitative growth is crucial. Equally, some traits of the women's styles are crucial in responding to the challenges of the knowledge-based economy, work organisation and management styles.

The main objective is to provide female managers and professionals with more tools to be successful in leadership positions; but also to show everybody that getting more gender balance, more integration of diverse management styles is a precondition for the success of the European social model.

In this sense, this document is a contribution to the renewal of the “Lisbon strategy”, calling for broad social participation and support for a competitive knowledge-based European economy.



1. INTRODUCTION

In 1996 *EUROCADRES* started to develop the European Management Model (EMM) which was then enriched with the concept of “Responsible European Management” (REM) in 2002. The aim was to link the EMM with the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR). The result of this exercise was the “Manifesto for Responsible European Management – An invitation to discuss the European Management Model” (2004). This manifesto contains only the short reference to gender equality, to the effect that “top-level management is crucial to promote the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process”. The EMM concept must evidently be further developed as regards gender equality. This draft brochure is actually an important step to that end. For *EUROCADRES* it is crucial to incorporate the issue of female leadership, because the problem is not only to get women into leadership but also to keep them there. Attention for female leadership has grown in recent years. Women have made substantial gains at the workplace. Despite this positive development, the number of female leaders is surprisingly low. In 2009, few

women occupy top executive positions and female CEOs are still rare. This twofold approach can be pursued through the recognition of a specific female leadership, and in a subsequent step through way to reconcile the male and female model of leadership.

EUROCADRES engaged the Leuven University Centre for Interdisciplinary research on Difference and Equality to conduct a study on existing literature¹ on female leadership of the last decades. The following topics have been explored:

- the actual status of female leadership
- the importance of gender diversity in business
- the possible pitfalls female leaders encounter in leadership positions
- examples of leadership skills and styles leading to successful and effective leadership
- specific female leadership styles
- a female leadership model and the European Model of Responsible Management

All findings and conclusions were tested by Leuven University Centre for Interdisciplinary research on Difference and Equality through real life case study analysis². The personal career stories of 19 successful leaders illustrate textbook material or add value by identifying pitfalls and by promoting effective leadership solutions. The case study selection guaranteed a mixture of sectors, company activity, company size and gender balance of interviewees. Finally, to complete the literature and case study findings, a two-day workshop was organized in Prague in April 2009 to gauge the opinions of *EUROCADRES* members and *FEMANET* members from 16 European countries.

1. Sophie van Eupen, S. *Female Leadership for a Responsible European Model of Management (EMRM)*: Literature Study. K.U.Leuven, LUCIDE - Leuven University Centre for Interdisciplinary research on Difference and Equality, Leuven, 2009.

2. ElsyVan Roy, E. *Female Leadership for a Responsible European Model of Management (EMRM)*: Case Study Report. K.U.Leuven, LUCIDE - Leuven University Centre for Interdisciplinary research on Difference and Equality, Leuven, 2009.

2. TO ALL WOMEN

The glass ceiling is broken! is it?

In 1986 the Wall Street journal reported that women in their working career eventually crash into an invisible barrier, a concept introduced as “*the glass ceiling*”. However, during the last decades women have made substantial gain in the workplace. Several factors have influenced these changes: anti-discrimination legislation to protect women from being denied access to (higher-level) employment activities and the fact that women are getting more educated than ever -- even more than their male counterparts. We can conclude that lack of education is no longer a pitfall for women in the workplace. However, the FEMANET workshop on “Female leadership for a European Model of Responsible Management” held in Prague in April 2009 questioned whether the glass ceiling is now broken as the Wall Street Journal stated in 2004. The discussion in the workshop pointed out that the glass ceiling is rather cracked in some parts.

The participants of the workshop welcomed the new metaphor of “*the labyrinth*”, which may capture better the

variety of challenges that women confront in their leadership activities, as successful routes to leadership seem to be difficult for women to discover. The metaphor of the labyrinth suggests that the barriers women face in finding the route to high level positions, do not consist of one absolute impediment, but of numerous barriers, some rather subtle and others quite obvious. Thanks to the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men, barriers that women encounter no longer take the form of a rigid glass ceiling, but are more subtle and diverse, underlying the route to high level positions.

The *EUROCADRES* case studies report **some nuances** in these findings, as most companies have an explicit diversity policy, although gender segregation still persists in various sectors and the gender balance is still far from achieved in all teams.

3. TO ALL TOP MANAGERS

There is a (business) case for women!

To the question why women matter in high-level positions, two **important business arguments** can be raised. First, gender diversity can meet and stimulate business goals, because of the future needs for talented employees in several sectors. Many countries will face a shortage of talent at almost all levels. The proportion of women at the workplace can help fill this gap. Especially in male-dominated sectors (e.g. ICT or engineering) that are facing a talent shortage, a high percentage of educated women remain inactive. Gender diversity programmes can be a business argument to increase productivity and attract talented people.

The second argument is the positive relationship between the number of women working in an organization and corporate performance. Numerous studies on the nature of this relation exist and research results show two interesting findings: companies that score well on 9 organizational dimensions have successful business figures; as do companies with three or more women in senior-executive positions.

There still remains the argument of the **intrinsic importance of gender diversity**, i.e. that women's proportional representation within an organization and within working groups affects the workplace experience and performance in a positive way.

EUROCADRES stresses the importance of 10 areas for action that are of key importance for shaping a European Model of Responsible Management. One of these areas, which enhances the diversity of management methods in member countries, concerns the cultural diversity of Europe. The results of the study "*Women in Decision-making: From Europe to the Company*" show that women in decision making positions face difficulties and obstacles while occupying decision making positions. Differences in leadership styles may lead to misunderstanding, mistrust, clashes and conflicts. A model of female leadership can enhance the European Model of Responsible Management, by offering diversity of leadership styles and values.

4. TO ALL TRADE UNIONS

Beware of pitfalls of female leadership

The remarkable absence of women in leadership positions raises the question of female drop-out, despite the positive changes in the position of women at the workplace and in society.

Research has identified and analysed several possible factors that can become pitfalls for women on the path to leadership. The role of trade unions is to offer solutions and assistance to women on how to bypass those pitfalls. FEMANET undertook an endeavour some years ago and published a handbook entitled “**The FEMANET KIT for successful women**” (2006) with practical advice for women on how to manage obstacles in their careers. The main pitfalls will be described and some solutions from the FEMANET KIT will be mentioned below.

First, there is the impact of family responsibilities on women’s careers. Although male input in domestic work has never been higher, women still contribute more to domestic responsibilities: **the so called trade off between**

personal life and work³. Women are forced to take more career interruptions and maternity leave, and work more regular hours than men. Another downside of this trade off is that women are expected to put less effort in work than men, based on the assumption that women would give priority to the family. Studies have shown that this assumption is mistaken. Women do not put less effort in their work, they simply organize their work in a different way by avoiding long lunch breaks or after work drinks - yet the assumption remains.

Consequently, in dealing with the pitfalls of **managing working time**, women must build mutual commitment with the employer regarding working hours. It is therefore important to negotiate working time for meetings with the superiors and the team. In the case of **part-time working hours**, the decision should be envisaged as a stage in one’s professional life and to announce as much to the employer and co-workers. Moreover, when women face such a situation, and have to leave their work for a certain period of time, it

is important to **prepare the departure**. Arrangements about absence and return should be made with the employer beforehand. On such occasions, the trade unions can offer precise information on the rights and the procedures for exercising them, as well as on the possible effects thereof on one's career. Those on leave should nonetheless continue to avail themselves of the networks.

The second pitfall concerns **prejudice** - subtle links of people tend to hinder female careers more than explicit forms of prejudice. Associating women and men with different traits, whereby men with are identified with leadership and women not, could lead to the conclusion that no woman could have what it takes for powerful jobs. This link between male traits and leadership traits is a consequence of **gender stereotyping**, constituted by beliefs about social groups (female/male), and **gender symbolism** as to typical roles of women and men, both of which reflect the ability of each sex to perform important tasks in its particular culture. The **resistance to female leaders** is a direct consequence of the

unconscious gender biased impact of stereotypes and symbols in the judgement and evaluation of leaders. Research refers to this as a **double bind** that female leaders face:

- women tend to be evaluated less favourably because leadership abilities are perceived male stereotyped domains (with gender symbolism suggesting leadership roles are masculine and associated with male characteristics)
- women also tend to be evaluated less favourably concerning dominant leadership behaviour because 'male' behaviour is preferred over female behaviour (gender stereotypes defining women as communal, friendly, helpful and kind).

3. Within FEMANET and EUROCADRES the decision was made to chose the term personal life instead of private or family life because the term personal life indicates that people in a knowledge based society have many and various activities outside their working life which is not automatically dedicate to the family but, for instance, to social, political or educational activities. And those activities cannot be considers private either.

Under this negative tension between the leader and gender role of women, conforming the gender role leads to failure for leader role requirements, while confirming the leader role leads to failure for gender role requirements.

In order to overcome gender stereotypes and prejudice at workplace, **networking** with other women in managerial positions is a useful way to strengthen the position of women in organizations. Networks can provide an exchange of information and experiences, where values can be shared and models for problem solving found. However, part-time work and reconciling professional and private life makes it difficult and challenging to create new or to join existing networks. It is therefore crucial to make an effort to continue participating in the networks, although one's actual presence in the organization is limited. The advantage nowadays is that a great deal of communication and networking can be done through electronic and virtual means. Finally, **being member of a trade union** can help the individual to improve her situation. Trade unions can offer

expert information on legal regulations concerning gender equality rights, they can give strong support in negotiating working conditions and in establishing networks.

The third pitfall female leaders can encounter is **lack of visibility and empowerment**. Within FEMANET reports of members show that women might be less self-confident and tend to feel more unease in a male dominated environment. Furthermore, they have the tendency to blame only themselves when things go wrong. All this leads to a lack of visibility because women hesitate to push themselves to be more visible and to assume power. On the contrary, being aware that failure to face the problem of lack of visibility as a woman can lead to **increasing levels of performance pressure and stress** due to a feeling of being under constant observation. Consequently, to overcome the lack of visibility and to avoid performance pressure, women should look for a **personal mentor, counsellor or tutor** inside or outside the organization. A trade union representative can be such a person.

All these pitfalls on the path to female leadership together form a labyrinth, hindering women and slowing them down in their leadership position. There are no clear no visible obstructions or outspoken discrimination, but rather subtle processes that result, unintentionally form the most part, in an unconscious stereotyping career struggle.



CONCLUSION ON PITFALLS

EUROCADRES' case studies confirm these conclusions by stating clearly that a trade-off on personal life and work is experienced by a majority of the leaders questioned, both male and female. Although discrimination, prejudice and gender stereotypes are seldom recognized by male or female leaders, nearly all feel some resistance to their leadership and they are convinced that lack of visibility can be an advantage, but also a disadvantage in a leadership position.

{ 5. SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP SKILLS

A tremendous amount of research has focused on the question as to which skills, traits, characteristics and competencies lead to successful and effective leadership. Handbooks on leadership comprise studies to discover possible dimensions or characteristics of leadership such as intelligence, scholarship, knowledge, dominance, and even elements of physical appearance and their relation to leadership. But what is meant by leadership? Giving one clear cut definition of leadership is an impossible task. Leadership has been conceived as many things, such as the exercise of influence, an effect of interaction, the focus of group processes or a power relation. This manual will be working with a rather straightforward **definition of leadership**: Leadership entails being in charge of other people in multiple ways. It consists of influencing, motivating, organizing, and coordinating the work of others. An authoritarian control of knowledge workers can stifle innovation and creativity. Therefore, there is a need to find new approaches to leadership. And it is true that nowadays, the more interconnected and

interdependent knowledge workers are, the greater is the need for a shared and team-based leadership.

We find three primary **classifications of leadership theories** based on different determining factors in the literature. Personal behaviour theories state that leaders can be best classified by their personal qualities or behavioural patterns, concentrating on what leaders do to carry out their managerial tasks. Trait theories focus on traits or characteristics individuals inherently possess, whereby some traits would have specific potential for making people effective leaders. Contingency theories state that situational aspects are the primary determinants of what makes leaders effective and successful, emphasizing the influence of situational and environmental elements. Given these different perspectives it remains impossible to provide one clear model of successful leadership skills.

With the **introduction of transformational leadership**, a more dynamic way of looking at leadership was found. Transformational leadership became concurrently a leadership style as well as a leadership model. We will therefore discuss the concept of transformational leadership.

The following general approach can be taken to describe a list of **characteristics for successful leadership**:

- **change agent**: inspirational, risk taker, energetic, decisive, persuasive
- **managerial courage**: courageous, learns from adversity, resilient, resourceful
- **leadership ability**: intelligent, leadership ability, team builder, well-informed, visionary, strategic thinker
- **result oriented**: proactive, industrious, articulate, politically astute, action oriented, high expectations, achievement oriented

The *EUROCADRES* cases studies agreed on the characteristics for success as leaders. A special emphasis for effectiveness,

support-giving, motivating team members and task accomplishment was mentioned. It may be interesting to point out case study conclusions on the perceptions of leadership. Whereas the proprietary appreciation of male and female leaders for all cases is very positive, perception of appreciation by significant others is different for male and female leaders. Most male leaders are sure about an overall positive evaluation of superiors and team members, female leaders think that superiors and team members may be positive on specific elements of their leadership style.

{ 6. LEADERSHIP STYLES

Several leadership style classifications exist and many efforts have been made to extrapolate conclusions from one specific leadership style to another. Leadership styles can be described as the alternative ways that

leaders pattern their interactive behaviour to fulfil their roles as leaders. In real life situations, leaders act according to a mixture of elements on the continuum.

| | |
|--|--|
| Autocratic | Democratic |
| not allowing interference of employees | behaving in a democratic way |
| Task-oriented | Interpersonally-oriented |
| emphasizing accomplishment of assigned tasks, maintaining high standards of performance and having employees follow rules and procedures | maintaining positive inter- personal relationships such as available, friendly, looking out for employees' welfare |
| Agentic | Communal |
| being assertive, competing for attention, influencing others, initiating activity directed to assigned tasks, making problem-focused suggestions | speaking tentatively, not drawing attention to oneself, accepting other's direction, supporting and soothing others, contributing to the solution of relational and interpersonal problems |
| Participative | Directive |
| supportive orientation and attention towards subordinates | achievement and task oriented towards subordinates |

The most important paradigm of leadership styles in today's challenging reality is that of transactional, transformational and laissez-faire leadership styles, **shifting towards**

a more dynamic understanding of leadership, including the aspect of transaction or exchange between leader and team members.

Laissez-faire leadership

marked by a general failure to take responsibility for the management, exhibiting frequent absence and lack of involvement during critical junctures

Transactional leadership

obtaining cooperation by establishing exchanges with team members, monitoring the exchange relationship, rewarding satisfactory performance, attending to employees' mistakes and failures to meet standards, and intervening only when problems occur

Transformational leadership

establishing oneself as a role model by gaining followers' trust and confidence, motivating respect and pride from the association, communicating values, purposes, and the importance of the organization's mission; exhibiting optimism and excitement about goals and future state; examining new perspectives for solving problems and completing tasks; focusing on development and mentoring of the team and attending team members' individual needs

It is important to point out that transactional and transformational leadership both can be displayed by one person. As many of the great transformational leaders of the past (e.g. Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and John F. Kennedy) did not shy away from being transactional as well as transformational, they were able to move the nation as well as to play petty politics.

In modern conditions, **the concept of transformational leadership captures best the essence of effective leadership**. Therefore transformational leadership can be considered as a model for successful leadership, as evidence of overall higher effectiveness was provided by meta-analysis research on transformational leaders.

7. RECOGNITION OF A SPECIFIC SET OF FEMALE LEADERSHIP STYLES

Although some people see this debate as useless, recent research focuses on differences between leadership styles of women and men. Considering the afore-discussed pitfalls for female leaders, it seems useful to investigate possible differences in relation to effectiveness. Some literature emphasizes sex differences and similarities in leadership roles and some avoids this dichotomy by making the link with the social role theory of sex differences and similarities. Thus, leaders are influenced not only by their **leadership roles**, but also by the afore-discussed **gender roles**.

Recent studies assessing the correspondence between gender stereotypes and dimensions of effective leadership, have concluded that consideration -- one of the dimensions of effective leadership -- is typically perceived as a feminine characteristic. Despite stereotypical expectations that portray effective leadership dominated by masculine qualities, behaviour recognized as successful leadership includes feminine characteristics. Therefore leaders may seek to behave in

androgynous manner, i.e. in a way associated to masculine as well as feminine styles.

When seeking possible patterns between gender and the transformational leadership style, an important meta-analysis comparing women and men with respect to their transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles, has concluded that there are significant sex differences in most aspects of the three leadership styles; more specifically, that **women, more than men, have generally effective leadership styles**, being more transformational than male leaders, especially when it comes to providing support and motivating team members. Some reliable gender differences in leadership styles indicate that female leaders emphasize both interpersonal relations and task accomplishment more than male leaders do. Several possible explanations can be found as to why female leaders tend to favour transformational leadership. Their individualized consideration is consistent with the gender stereotype association of women being communal, concerned with interpersonal relations

and caring about the well-being of others. Female leaders also often face legitimacy problems, because of employees resisting or judging their leadership, therefore they may use a more democratic, participative leadership style to earn legitimacy and to avoid resistance from team members.

As the focus on differences between male and female leadership styles is becoming quite popular, possible **sex differences in underlying values of leadership behaviour** must be considered. In line with results on transformational leadership, research on job values indicates that women attach more importance to jobs that involve helping others, they overlook differences between themselves and others, and support policies that regulate and protect citizens, consumers and the environment. Female leaders are also less likely to accept materialism and competition.

The *EUROCADRES* cases studies conclude with some extra insights. The GRID⁴ international self-assessment test has yielded an overall score of a mixed leadership style combining **sound skills such as contributing and committing with accommodating skills such as yielding and complying**. A minority of leaders scores high on controlling skills such as directing and dominating. The **transactional and transformational leadership styles are both equally used** by the

male and female leaders interviewed in the case studies. On the subject of **democratic and autocratic leadership**, female and male leaders have no outspoken choices. However, female leaders use a more participative leadership style than their male colleagues, and male and female leaders agree that female leaders attach more **value on helping** others. A majority of all leaders is clearly **task- and problem-oriented**, more than people oriented.

The FEMANET Workshop on “Female leadership for European Model of Responsible Management” in Prague has consequently concluded that both male and female leadership styles are necessary, and that each has its advantages. In this respect, an important policy recommendation for organizational success is to guarantee a climate where a mixture of styles is encouraged and the capacity to combine characteristics of male and female leadership styles is put to practice.

4. GRID International self-assessment-test online on [Http://www.gridinternational.com/](http://www.gridinternational.com/)

8. CONCLUSIONS

Female leadership for a european model of responsible management

EUROCADRES' aim with this project is to develop further the model of European Model of Responsible Management into a model of Sustainable European Management.

Management must be carried out with a holistic approach to social, economic and environmental factors and concerns. The added value of looking at the EMRM model from a gender perspective -- the sometimes different and complementary qualities that men and women represent -- has shown new components that could strengthen the model and make management more sustainable. Europe needs a sustainable management approach in order to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. The present economic situation demonstrates the urgent need for other, more sustainable formulations of the role and management of the economy, not least within the financial system.

In our work on this matter we have come to the following conclusions:

→ Male and female characteristics/stances/perspectives should be balanced. This is not about men or women being better than the other, but rather about realising and using the insight that both female and male characteristics are needed in the workplace, and not least at the managerial level. Therefore a transformational leadership model should be discussed and explored further since it seems to be the best suited at present. Furthermore, the possibilities of including systems thinking and of reaching a balance between transactional/masculine and transformational/feminine perspectives should be explored

→ There is a need for a truly European model which mirrors the cultural and social environment of Europe. In the EMRM, the words responsiveness and responsibilities have a prominent position as regards the different stakeholders. The European focus is communitarian and social, whereas the American focus, for instance, is individualistic. In Europe there is an obvious emphasis on social responsibilities for future generations as well. The rising awareness of the need

for models in which environmental responsibility is a necessary part, makes systems thinking natural.

→ Management should be based on teamwork and co-operation, clear roles and responsibilities. The management of a company or an institution requires many professional skills, including the insight that no man or woman is a stand-alone hero, but an expert in making use of the broad diversity of expertise and experiences that are represented by all the employees both male and female. Management and leadership roles should not be confused, but can be discussed in similar terms.

We need to continue and broaden our work and propose the following actions:

- Further literature studies should be carried out with more emphasis on European research and situations.
- Further experiments should be carried out, especially in order to clarify male and female approaches to problem solving.

→ The continued work should be done in co-operation with representatives of employers' organisations and/ or e.g. human resources experts in order to broaden the input.

→ To conclude – we hope that our current and future work along these lines will bring insight and understanding, among other trade unionists as well as a broad spectrum of employers and employees, of the need to find a new model, or presumably models with a common base, for a Sustainable European Management.



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