FINAL SUMMARY REPORT - WOMBOARDNET

Main results

The IEF project WOMBOARDNET aimed at investigating if and how networks can increase the possibilities of self-regulation with regards to women's presence on boards since quotas are not applied in all European countries and have been lively debated. The IEF project was carried out to reach both research and training objectives. Research objectives were centred around the theoretical and empirical investigation of networks in the corporate elites, formal women-only networks, and board appointments of women in terms of both human and social capital. Training objectives were centred around training in methods, publishing, dissemination, and teaching.

Summary of results

With regards to the research and training objectives, the most significant results achieved by Florence Villesèche during the IEF are:

Research

- A theoretical paper about formal women-only business networks published in an international peer-reviewed journal (accepted September 2016; published August 2017)
- A book chapter published in an edited volume about women on boards in Europe, with an internationally recognized publisher (September 2017), with a foreword by former EC vice-president Viviane Reding
- Best International Symposium Award at a major international conference (August 2015) for the research symposium entitled *Women on Boards: Re-opening Governance*
- A theoretical paper about identity and diversity management published in an international peer-reviewed journal (January 2016) and a signed contract with a recognized publishing house for a book about diversity and identity at work to extend this contribution (forthcoming 2018)
- A book chapter on talent management and diversity management accepted for publication in an edited volume about Talent management with an internationally recognized published (forthcoming 2018)
- New research collaborations with scholars in Denmark (in the research group; at CBS; in other universities) about networks, elites, and gender/diversity
- Several papers published in the proceedings of major international conferences
- Best reviewer award at a major international conference (August 2014)

Training

- Newly acquired theoretical knowledge on corporate governance, women on boards, diversity management, and social-symbolic work
- Newly acquired analysis skills in quantitative methods, in particular social network analysis – training both at CBS and at U. of Kentucky
- Completion of all mandatory courses in Copenhagen Business School's teaching training program for assistant professors
- PhD-level co-supervision of a thesis encompassing the themes of corporate elite, networks, identity, and gender

- Completion of the Copenhagen Business School Media training program
- Features in Danish media

Main conclusions

The IEF project lead to several important conclusions with regards to gender, networks, and access to leadership positions such as board directorships. They can be summarized as follows:

- The corporate elite, of which board directors are part of, constitutes a group with a distinct social identity, which means that entering such a group supposes being recognized as a worthy member. This worth is not simply a measure of human capital, but gives high prominence to social capital. Participation in formal women-only networks are one way through which women can build additional social capital, and benefit from undertakings such as mentoring schemes or knowledge transfer.
- In countries with no quotas such as Switzerland, nationality and a career in large or quoted firms appear to be stronger predictors of influence than gender, even in a situation where women are poorly represented. This opens up new avenues regarding diversity on boards, as it questions how diversity can truly be achieved if policies concentrate only on gender without looking at further intersections with elements such as nationality and expected career paths.

Impact

The results of the project are of significance for the field of research, as well as for the individual researcher, host research group, and host institution. This led CBS to offer Florence Villesèche a contract extension until 2018, with a possibility to apply for an Associate professor in Corporate Governance and Diversity Management in early 2018. This will allow her to continue with the locally initiated collaboration, and to actively participate in the newly created inter-departmental 'business in society platform' about diversity as a researcher, teacher, and social media manager.

In addition, the work carried out contributes to European excellence and competitiveness in furthering economic and social goals jointly. Such research efforts complement work carried out by the European Commission, as well as by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). Throughout the project, Florence Villesèche sought for a balanced contribution to academic research and broader social impact.

The academic impact is reflected in the publication list (see list), in the sizeable publication pipeline, as well as in her promising careers prospects. Florence Villesèche was also a speaker in several events at CBS to encourage and guide applicants to Marie Curie actions; she also successfully coached two candidates. In addition, her related expertise with women in leadership position led her to be chosen to co-conduct a report on Gender and Academic Leadership Practices at Copenhagen Business School, resulting in the development of new local policies (see publication list).

The impact towards policy makers and civil society is visible both through book chapters and dissemination in media. For example, the recently published book chapter in an edited volume about women on boards features a foreword by former EC vice-president Viviane Reding, which testifies to the relevance of the research beyond scholarly circles. In addition, several media features in Denmark reported on Florence Villesèche's research and used her expert input regarding women in leadership positions both in firms and NGOs.

It is expected that with upcoming publications her work will get increased attention within and beyond the research community, thus extending the impact of the results past the timeframe of the IEF project.