



Freitag, 9. Juni 2017

**European Employment Lawyers Association (EELA) Conference Zurich 2017
Kongresshaus Zürich**

Begrüßungsansprache Stadtpräsidentin Corine Mauch

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure and privilege to welcome you to Zurich and congratulate you on the choice of site for this year's annual conference of the European Employment Lawyers Association (EELA). May I take this opportunity to extend to all of you warm greetings on behalf of the entire City Council.

Year after year, Zurich is awarded one of the top positions in the Mercer Study which compares the quality of life in the world's most important cities – and I hope you will have the opportunity to experience our quality of life and «joie de vivre» first hand during the next couple of days.

Gender equality may not be an official criteria for quality of life - but it certainly contributes to the wellbeing of people, not only women by the way. Gender equality creates fair chances for all and enables women and men to realize their individual needs and wishes.

Reality though, lacks behind. Woman leaders from business, politics and entrepreneurship will share with you their experiences as «Women at the Top» this morning. Let me take this opportunity to look at the related facts and figures in Switzerland and in Zurich.

There are some good news: After a deadlock of 10 years, the share of women in management positions in the largest 100 Swiss companies has increased from 6 % in 2016 to 8 % in 2017. The rise of 2 percentage points in the last year equals the rise in the previous 10 years combined. The share of women serving on the board of directors is 17% as compared to 16% in 2016. There are 4 female CEOs and 2 chairwomen in the largest Swiss companies.

Whoever coined the saying «It's lonely at the top» must have been a woman. Switzerland has to make particular efforts to catch up to European countries, where the share of women on the boards is significantly higher.

The Swiss federal government proposes a women's quota of 30% on the boards of directors of listed companies. It remains to be seen whether the federal parliament will follow the lead. There is reason for doubt.

Numbers in the public sector look a bit better: 14% of the leading positions in the federal government and the cantons are held by women. Public administrations tend to promote compatibility between family and career to a greater extent than private businesses.



Why is it so difficult to achieve gender parity in business and politics? Is it because women don't plan and don't pursue a career? Because women don't seem to be forceful enough or don't have the courage to apply for management jobs or high offices in politics? Or because they don't want to deal with setbacks and defeats?

For sure: There are such cases and I myself have experienced some of them. But these answers beg the question anew: If most women really don't pursue careers, if they lack the courage for high positions in business and politics, if they can't deal with criticism - why is this the case?

The answer is: Because it's lonely at the top! For women.

When Zurich's citizens elected me as the city's first woman mayor in 2009, the reports in the months following my inauguration did not focus on my goals or achievements, but rather on my appearance, on the color of my clothes and on my hairstyle. That would not have happened to a man. Furthermore: I was measured against the "typically manly" characteristics of my male predecessor - and I did not fit. The image most people had in mind when thinking of a mayor was a decidedly male image.

It took some time until people could associate the role of mayor with a women. But it worked! And the hard part for me, was not to change myself, but to change the image of a mayor in the perception of people.

Other women's successes are motivating – in business as in politics. The University of Zurich examined every communal election held in the canton of Zurich since 1970. Their findings: if a woman was elected in a municipality in 1970, 60% of these municipalities would see another woman stand as a candidate during the next elections. This so-called "neighborhood effect" is a positive aspect.

As mayor, I have experienced a similar mobilizing effect. The fact that I am a women at the top encouraged many other women to apply for top jobs. We all know how important a good network is when climbing the career ladder. A close network of women who have succeeded will help other women to follow their lead.

Whoever has made it to the top is a role model and responsible for enabling women to follow. We need to make use of our power and promote equality.

But role models are not enough. Promoting gender equality is back-breaking work. In the City of Zurich, we work hard every day taking small steps towards more equality. We train key players in the administration, influence recruitment processes and launch projects that will promote compatibility between family and career.

People at the top have room to maneuver - and we should use it! The fact that power is attributed to my office - more power than I actually have! - gives me more leeway. I can use my position, the know-how and the resources of the administration to foster gender equality. To be sure: not alone, but in cooperation with other decision makers, I can gain insights into problems and propose solutions.



The City of Zurich is currently implementing an action plan for gender equality. The plan contains measures to advance the proportion of women in management positions in the city administration. It targets a minimum of 35% representation of women in all management positions - in all departments separately and in the administration as a whole.

This is an ambitious goal. But I am confident that we will succeed by joining forces.

In Zurich's presidential department, I am proud to say, women fill 50% of the senior management positions.

And more good news: After almost 8 years in the office, my bad hair days are not mentioned in the press anymore and neither is my wardrobe an issue. I am measured by what I achieve.

We have come a long way. However, the demand for the equality of women in business and politics remains as yet unfulfilled. We women are needed more than ever. Not because we are better the job. But because business and politics are better when more perspectives are involved.

I wish you an inspiring panel and successful meeting.

Thank you.

(Es gilt das gesprochene Wort)