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Europe/International

International Women's Day in the name of parity

Women attend the cross-border event in Bocholt

"Women in politics? And if so, how many? " This was the motto of International Women's Day in Bocholt. The "International Women's Day" has been celebrated since 1911 to draw attention to women's rights and gender equality worldwide. More than 60 women and a few men from Germany and the Netherlands attended this event, which was organised on a cross-border basis.

The participants discussed the question of whether a parity law regulating the ratio of women in political bodies was not long overdue. The participants received expert support from Prof Dr Silke Ruth Laskowski from the University of Kassel, who was invited as a speaker. She regularly deals with the issue of parity electoral lists for German parliaments and worked as an expert in the German Bundestag's commission on the reform of federal electoral law and the modernisation of parliamentary work.

Event organised in cooperation with the Bocholt Political Women's Network

Bocholt city councillor Alexandra Tünte welcomed the participants as one of the hosts for the Bocholt Political Women's Network. She particularly welcomed Anne König, member of the Bundestag, Nina Andriehsen, member of the state parliament, Mechtild Schulze Hessing, mayor of Borken, Monika Ludwig, Bocholt city councillor and chairwoman of the parliamentary group, and Nicky Eppich, member of the council from Arnhem, as a guest from the Netherlands. They answered the participants' questions in the discussion round and described their personal entry into a political career.

Launch of the Bocholt - Borken democracy workshop

Astrid Schupp, Equal Opportunities Officer for the city of Bocholt and spokesperson for the NRW state working group of municipal women's representatives and equal opportunities centres, and her colleague Carina Sienert, Equal Opportunities Officer for the city of Borken, moderated the evening. They posed the question "Women in politics? And if so, how many? ", which forms the basis of the Bocholt-Borken Democracy Workshop. A study by the "Atlas on Equality between Women and Men in North Rhine-Westphalia" from 2023 revealed that 72.4 per cent of all seats in the NRW state parliament are occupied by men. "The fact that 65 years after the birth of the Equal Rights Act, there are still significantly more men than women," according to Astrid Schupp, "who shape political decisions, is a constant source of controversy."

Online survey - vote in favour of the introduction of a parity law

The organisers used the online tool "Slido" at the beginning and after Prof. Dr Laskowski's presentation to ask participants about their expectations regarding the introduction of a parity law. As expected, the approval of such a law changed and increased significantly after the presentation and Q&A session. Many women see the need to give half of the population the same power in politics as men through a parity law, similar to that in large companies. In the discussion that followed, it became clear that women also need to get involved and contribute themselves. According to the young female politicians König and Andriehsen, this still happens far too little. According to the state and federal politicians, experienced female politicians in particular are open and supportive of new female colleagues.

Open access to politics in the Netherlands

Dutch councillor Nicky Eppich reports that Dutch municipalities introduce their political representatives to political work through specially organised events. On five to six evenings, she explains, there is the opportunity for interested parties to familiarise

themselves with the function and working methods of a city council, independent of party politics. Those who are still interested can gain a deeper insight by attending meetings.

According to Eppich, this low-threshold approach to local politics leads to more women getting involved in politics than in Germany. Together, the speakers were available to the participants after the event for cross-border networking. As part of their cooperation, the equal opportunities officers of the cities of Bocholt and Borken will plan the next democracy workshop for autumn 2024 in Borken.

Promotion

The cross-border event for International Women's Day in Bocholt is made possible by the INTERREG Germany-Netherlands programme and its programme partners and is co-financed by the European Union.



In the picture: Monika Ludwig, parliamentary group leader Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, Mechtild Schulze Hessing, mayor of the city of Borken, Nina Andrieshen, member of the state parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia, Nicky Eppich, councillor of the city of Arnhem (Netherlands), Astrid Schupp, equal opportunities officer of the city of Bocholt, Carina Sienert, equal opportunities officer of the city of Borken, Alexandra Tuente, city councillor of the city of Bocholt and political women's network Bocholt, Anne König, member of the German Bundestag and Prof. Dr Silke Ruth Laskowski, member and expert of the Electoral Law Commission of the German Bundestag. Dr Silke Ruth Laskowski, member and expert of the Electoral Law Commission of the German Bundestag.

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