Men in Senior Management Positions Show Particularly Strong Opposition to the Board Gender Quota in Germany

Who endorses the gender quota on supervisory boards, and who rejects it? In a recent study, a team of researchers from the Universities of Mannheim and Göttingen has looked more closely at this question. The results show a strong discrepancy in support for the quota between men and women.

For the first time, it is now possible to assess precisely which factors contribute either to the support or to the rejection of the gender quota introduced in 2016. The highest level of approval is found among single women who themselves hold a management position, whereas married women and young men show the lowest level of support. The results of the study were published in Soziale Welt, a German journal for research in the social sciences.

Professor Katja Möhring and Dr. Christopher Buss from the University of Mannheim, together with Professor Céline Teney from the Institute of Sociology at the University of Göttingen, used data from the German Internet Panel (GIP) from March 2017 to examine individual and job-specific factors influencing the level of support for the gender quota. The GIP is a representative population survey of the Collaborative Research Center “Political Economy of Reforms” (SFB 884) at the University of Mannheim.

“The data show that the gender quota is met with the strongest disapproval among those who feel excluded by this measure or see their future opportunities on the labor market endangered,” Teney explains. Men in top management positions tend to reject the quota more strongly than men who work in middle management or do not hold a management position. In contrast, women who occupy management positions themselves are particularly in favor of the gender quota.

In addition to gender and the position held on the labor market, the perception of unequal treatment of women and, in the case of men, age, are also decisive factors. Young men, in particular, tend to disapprove of the quota. Both women and men endorse the gender quota more strongly if they are aware of unequal treatment of women on the labor market.

“Personal experience and the perception of inequality play an essential role in the personal assessment of measures promoting gender equality,” Möhring states.
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