

# Information Bulletin

Addressed to the members of the association

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## **An unnecessary and counterproductive affront**

The controversy generated by the precedence given to Charles Michel, President of the EU Council, at the joint meeting of Tuesday 6 April in Ankara, with the President of the European Commission and the President of the Turkish Republic Recep Tayyip Erdogan, was felt with emotion and as an affront by many members of the SEPS / SFPE.

The image of President Ursula von der Leyen, obliged to sit on a couch in withdrawal was not only an incomprehensible lack of courtesy but also a lack of respect towards the Institution she represents.

That the services of the protocol on both sides have contradictory readings of the International Protocol and the precedence rules only adds to the consternation.

We would like to underline here the important work carried out by all the European institutions on equal treatment and the advancement of the positive agenda, work that seems to have been overshadowed by this case.

Besides the disappointment of the disagreement that has developed between the representatives of the European Institutions at the highest level, this episode has reignited the issues of equality and respect for diversity that are the foundation of the European construction, of our work and of our European identity of which we are proud.

Below Luigia Dricot-Daniele, General Secretary, and Milvia van Rij-Brizzi, Member of the Board express their feelings, shared by many of our colleagues.

Serge Crutzen  
President

## **So petty. So unnecessary**

We think in this particular case we can generalise and say that we all colleagues pensioners of the European Institutions, independently from our gender, have been offended and saddened by the images splashed in the press and on the Internet of the treatment the President of the European Commission received during her official visit to Turkey.

The least that it can be said is that it was unnecessary, inelegant and anachronistic.

We, mothers, teach our daughters from their very young age not to tolerate bullies; to stand up for themselves; that their worth is in who they are and the values they represent. Certainly not to succumb to those who try to diminish them. To raise above the noise and not to be distracted.

That is what President von der Leyen did last week in Ankara. And when all is said and done, it was she who owned the room.

But what is also saddening about what happened last week in Ankara is the unfair light in which the Presidents of two European Institutions were put and how the press revelled in it, stoking the flames of discord between two Institutions that are part of the same architecture and depend on each other.

The Council, the European Parliament and the European Commission, have a long and successful history of joint and cooperative work for the advancement of the equality agenda, the respect of individuals and their diversity.

What is saddening is that this cooperation and its achievements have been shadowed by the “sofa gate” and lack of basic courtesy.

Still, did the “sofa gate” undermine gender equality and diversity? Nope, quite to the contrary. Did it add positively to the standing of the President of the Republic of Turkey? Neither.

It was “si inutilement désagréable que désagréablement inutile”.

Milvia van Rij-Brizzi  
Member of the Administration Board

Luigia Dricot-Daniele  
General Secretary

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