



Press release

Knights Gianella BoD Survey 2021/22

BoD members expect a 35% proportion of women in three years

- **Swiss BoD members are expecting that within three years, the proportion of women on the Boards of Directors in large companies will increase from 26% to 35% and on the Executive Boards from 14% to 25.5%.**
- **The majority of women and the majority of men agree that the lack of will on the part of women to pay the price of a career is a significant inhibiting factor for more women in leadership roles.**
- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is becoming more important for corporate strategy. For three-quarters of those surveyed, CSR increases the corporate value.**
- **Covid-19 no longer has priority. Today, the focus is on tackling the cyber risks and ensuring the future viability of companies.**
- **89% of the BoD members are demanding a quantum leap in the digitalisation of public authorities – digitalisation in healthcare, an electronic ID and the digital processes between citizens and authorities.**
- **Three-quarters of the respondents feel that in society, in the economy and at universities, the moral discourse about good and bad dominates, at the expense of the dispute regarding true and false facts.**
- **28% of those surveyed believe that globalisation has reached its peak. However, there is no talk of ending globalisation.**

Zurich, 26 November 2021 – BoD members from publicly listed and large Swiss companies are expecting that the proportion of women will increase from 26% today to 35.5% over the next three years. Those surveyed are reckoning with an increase from 14% to 25.5% on the Executive Boards of these companies. The improvement in gender diversity is underway and is only mentioned by 10% of those surveyed spontaneously as a significant challenge for the members of the Boards of Directors.

This is the conclusion reached by the eighth survey of the executive search company Knight Gianella, which has been carried out by the Management Institute IMD. 210 BoD members were surveyed, of whom 75% are involved in publicly listed companies. 24% of the respondents are women.

Male and female BoD members have a divergent view on the topic of gender diversity. They do not agree on the biggest inhibiting factors for better gender diversity. While 35% of the women are convinced that social values inhibit gender diversity and that consequently, the rules of the game in the economy need to change, this conviction is only shared by 4% of the men. Women are thus in favour of introducing a quota, while men

feel that gender diversity can be solved by development programmes. The majority of women and the majority of men agree that the lack of will on the part of women to pay the price of a career is a particularly significant inhibiting factor. Other important reasons are the lack of networks and role models, sufficient available time and the lower international mobility of women.

Dr. Fabienne E. Meier explains: “Since the quota was introduced, the search for women for positions on Boards of Directors and Executive Boards has increased sharply. As an executive search company, we need to be very careful that we select women for tasks who have the right attitude, are able to impress with their expertise and who fit in with the company from a cultural perspective.”

Cyber risks burden leadership

Sandro V. Gianella explains: “A year ago, concerns about the impact of Covid-19 were first and foremost for the BoD members and the CEOs. Covid-19 was the dominating topic. That is now a thing of the past. Digitalisation, cyber risks and ensuring the future viability of companies are the biggest challenges today. This will be a hard endurance test for leadership.”

In addition to tackling the cyber risks, the most important task of BoD members is to make companies future-proof and to find the balance between long-term investments and short-term success. 95% of those surveyed consider that the requirements for BoD members will increase accordingly over the next two years.

Corporate Responsibility increases corporate value

Three-quarters of those surveyed believe that investments in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) will increase the corporate value, while 71% expect a benefit for customer acquisition. 59% want to make substantial investments in CSR over the next few years. The female BoD members assess the value of CSR more positively than the men.

The significance of CSR as an important, if not the most element of corporate strategy, has further increased. At the same time, considerably more respondents (28%) than in the previous year are demanding that the economic benefit of CSR investments needs to be quantified.

Customers, employees and executives are increasingly posing the question of the rationale of their own actions and that of the company – the “purpose”. The agreement of those questioned on the purpose is, at 80%, very high. However, the topic is now less regularly discussed in the BoD than in the previous year. At the same time, the women are significantly more convinced of the meaning of the purpose for the company than are the men.

The BoD members are concerned about the increasing moralisation of the debate culture at the expense of the dispute regarding facts. Three-quarters of the respondents believe that in society, in the economy and at universities, the moral discourse about good and bad dominates, at the expense of the dispute regarding true and false facts.



A digital quantum leap by the authorities is essential

89% of the BoD members are in agreement – they are demanding a quantum leap in the digitalisation of public authorities. The focus here is on the digital processes in healthcare, an electronic ID and the digital processes between citizens and public authorities as well as amongst the various authorities themselves.

Despite various prophecies of doom, the BoD members surveyed do not want to proclaim the end of globalisation. Although 28% of those surveyed believe it is possible that globalisation has reached its peak and that world trade will stagnate or shrink, practically nobody is convinced of the end of globalisation.

You can find the results of the study at:

<http://www.knightgianella.ch/verwaltungsrats-umfrage/>

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About Knight Gianella

The executive search consultancy Knight Gianella is focused on the national and international direct search for executives, on the evaluation of their Boards as well as on advice on filling key positions at executive management and Board of Directors levels. Founded in 1965 as a member of a consulting group in the US, we have been an independent, Swiss-oriented and acting partnership with a boutique character since the mid-1990s. Knight Gianella is readily consulted with regard to specific succession planning and new appointments with sensitively construed processes. The success rate over the last few years is at a high 98%, while repeat business is at over 70%. On average over the last few business years, the partners Sandro V. Gianella, Dr. Fabienne E. Meier and Stephan Reifferscheid have successfully and sustainably filled around thirty key positions at executive management and Board of Directors levels each year.

