DEMOCRATISATION AND FEMINISATION OF POLITICAL LIFE

EDITO

Behind the scenes of the Greek debt refinancing crisis, as recounted in *Adults in the Room*, meetings follow one another in rapid succession, tensions rise, and a basic need comes into sharp focus: that for an *"adult in the room"*, someone capable of rising above power struggles.

But can a democracy truly achieve such political maturity if half of its citizens, women, remain under-represented in the places where collective directions are decided?

Women hold only just over a quarter of seats in national parliaments worldwide, and fewer than one head of state or government in ten is a woman. This statistical gap is not merely a demographic curiosity.

The feminisation of political life is closely bound up with the pursuit of substantive democracy, because democracy cannot be reduced to electoral procedures alone. It is in the very nature of this political ideal to foster a form of social life that respects and genuinely enables equality between individuals and the exercise of their freedom. The fair representation of women and men, and the gradual elimination of gender-based discrimination, both in access to power and across all spheres of social life, are therefore inseparable from the democratic project.

A first reason lies in the very reality of civic life.

Throughout the world, women play a decisive role in the associative, educational, community and solidarity-based dynamics that structure democratic life on a daily basis. They help to sustain in concrete terms the social bonds on which every political society rests. If democracy presupposes that society should be reflected in its institutions, then political representation ought to mirror this civic life.



Yet access to political power follows its own distinctive rules. Politics is unlike any other profession. In this world, where advancement depends largely on ambition, co-option, networks and constant electoral competition, women more frequently encounter structural obstacles, which helps to explain why feminisation is progressing more slowly than in other professional spheres.

But the issue goes beyond the question of access alone; it also concerns the way power is exercised. Political practices are the product of social histories and cultures. In a sphere long shaped by masculine norms (ambition, competition, verticality, the personalisation of power), a more balanced representation can bring forth other ways of acting.

Not because women would by nature exercise power differently, but because different trajectories and experiences necessarily transform the ways in which public problems are approached. A more balanced presence of women and men in political life can therefore encourage a culture more attentive to co-operation, to a plurality of approaches and to the concrete realities of society.

The feminisation of political life is therefore not merely a matter of fairness. It forms part of a deeper movement: that of a democracy seeking to come closer to what it claims to be.