

SUMMER SCHOOL FOR FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN THE DIGITAL AGE

VALENCIA, 25-30 JUNE 2023

Dear All,

I am happy to continue supporting the School for Female Leadership in the Digital Age for one more semester, in which I have been proudly involved since the very beginning. I am humbled to accept the role as Honorary President of the 2023 Summer School for Female Leadership in the Digital Age. Not only is it being held in my home country, Spain, but it also comes at the start of Spain's presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Valencia is an excellent choice of a host city, where it is now more important than ever to ensure that no steps backwards are taken regarding women's rights. Culturally, Valencia blends a rich history and culture with a dynamic modern outlook, I hope that continues to be so for us, women. I hope you will have the chance to discover its hidden gems and meet local women.

The School's goal of female empowerment and gender equality is a subject that is very close to my heart as a mother, as an academic and as a politician. It is a lifelong passion. All my academic production has been specialized on building a non-androcentric knowledge and understanding gender economic inequalities to better combat them. And now, as policy maker, I am really committed for a world that works for all, including women and girls.

Back in 2011 I was proud to receive the Meridiana Award in the "Initiatives promoting the development of values in defence of equality among young people or enterprises" category in my region, Andalucía. Today, as an MEP, I work to advance equality all over Europe as a member of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) within the European Parliament. But my commitment to promoting equality throughout Europe extends beyond it, and I strive to incorporate a gender perspective into all aspects of my work inside and outside the European Parliament, from the moment I wake up until I go to bed.

I am particularly interested in the School's focus on supporting women to thrive and lead us into a sustainable and fair digital age. The digital transition offers enormous potential to deliver opportunities for all, and this is something which we explore in a number of groups on which I sit in the European Parliament - including the Panel for the Future of Science and Technology (STOA), the Spinelli Group Intergroup on Artificial Intelligence and Digital and the European Internet forum.

I am convinced that we can only completely serve our society when we can empower all citizens to reach their full potential. We must ensure that everyone has an equal chance to benefit from technology and that nobody is left behind, as the motto of this School goes. We will achieve this by continuing to strive for equal economic independence for women and men, closing the gender pay gap, advancing gender balance in decision making and stamping out gender-based violence. I am encouraged to see so many of these themes being addressed in the Summer School programme!

Both the European Parliament and European Commission currently have a female president, so I hope that the 29 young women starting their journey in Valencia will be encouraged to follow their dreams, no matter what they may be. Promoting female empowerment, closing the gender gap and opening doors for women are key objectives of the European Union. We are slowly getting there, and this school and the significant skills you will acquire through are proof that it can be done!

However, as we are advancing, we are equally facing a strong gender equality back-lash we all need to combat. This is the reason I cannot be personally with you. In my own country, several equality institutions are disappearing at a local and regional level and I am specially committed to reverse this anti-gender trend and I am combatting it.

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In fact, our individual responsibility and behavior is also a collective one. For you too. By coming here, you do not only have an individual responsibility towards your future, but a collective responsibility with all girls and women. And with gender equality in the world. We need you for a better and fairer world.

Digitalization is changing our societies, and we, as women, need to be present in its design and development. I hope that you will all make the most of the opportunity and will take the chance to learn from experts and mentors. And most importantly, I hope that you all enjoy it. That you share ideas and experiences with each other and get inspired by other women to take the next step in realising your ambitions. I have been at the previous editions and, if well used, this programme can truly be life-changing.

My message to the 29 smart young women joining the School is: Use this opportunity wisely! Grasp every opportunity to learn from mentors and peers and take inspiration as you go out into the world and begin your careers. And most importantly: take time to enjoy it and make lasting friendships.

With best wishes,

Lina Gálvez Muñoz
Member of the European Parliament