

Dear All,

I am honoured to accept the role of **Honorary President of the School for Female Leadership in the Digital Age**, taking place in France during its 2022 presidency of the Council of the European Union. I am delighted that this event is hosted by the southern city of Nice. The city's rich European history, its exceptional location and its reputation as a hub for research and innovation make it a perfect place to gather for this occasion.

The digitalisation of our economy and society is speeding up. The European Union has been promoting a comprehensive policy framework that aims to make Europe fit for the digital age. The French government, during its presidency, will be pushing an ambitious agenda seeking to harness all aspects of this major social, economic, and cultural shift. All actors (citizens, political leaders, associations, businesses) must fully endorse these objectives and work together to achieve them.

As a member of the European Parliament sitting in the "Employment" and the "Gender Equality" committees, I am particularly attentive to the consequences caused by the digital transition on those specific issues. Digital technologies offer great prospects for society as a whole. But it also creates the risk of exacerbating disparities between its different parts. Our challenge is to provide all our fellow citizens with an equal chance to benefit from digitalisation. If we fail to build an inclusive digital society, people will lose trust both in leaders and businesses' capacity to meet their needs and expectations.

Women, who already face many discriminations and must overcome several obstacles to succeed in their careers, should be at the heart of a digital transition that works for everyone, and that everyone can work for. This is why I am particularly enthusiastic to support an initiative that aims at reducing gender inequalities through the promotion of female role models. Inspiration is the first step towards success. Showing that breaking the "glass ceiling" is possible is key to encouraging all women, with diverse profiles and from various backgrounds, to give themselves a chance.

To the participants, I say congratulations, thank you and good luck. Congratulations for being selected to take part in this Winter School. Thank you for the model you are working hard to become. And good luck with your future responsibilities as leaders of the digital age.

In the city of Nice, almost one hundred years ago, a great female leader who has inspired many generations was born and raised: Simone Veil. Despite being a witness to humanity's worst atrocities, she once declared: « Je ne suis pas de ceux et de celles qui redoutent l'avenir ». I invite you to be inspired by Simone Veil's strength and optimism, and to trust in a future where efforts and commitment to defending our shared European values will bear their fruits.

Have a wonderful time in Nice and enjoy the great trainings, the rich encounters, and the fantastic life experience that I am confident this Winter School will provide you.

Bien à vous,

Sylvie Brunet
Member of the European Parliament,
Honorary President, 2022 Winter School
for Female Leadership in the Digital Age