

**De :** Nadia Hadad <[nadiahad@hotmail.com](mailto:nadiahad@hotmail.com)>

**Envoyé :** dimanche 1 mai 2022 0:28

**À :** Catherine Naughton <[catherine.naughton@edf-feph.org](mailto:catherine.naughton@edf-feph.org)>; 'Pierre Gyselinck' <[gyselinck@aeh-europe.de](mailto:gyselinck@aeh-europe.de)>; ...

**Cc :** Ines Bulic <[ines.bulic@enil.eu](mailto:ines.bulic@enil.eu)>; u87817003 <[jamie.bolling@independentliving.org](mailto:jamie.bolling@independentliving.org)>; Natasa Kokic <[Natasa.Kokic@enil.eu](mailto:Natasa.Kokic@enil.eu)>

**Objet :** Upcoming Presidential Election

Dear Fellow Board Members,

We are reaching out to you because we feel an urgent matter should be discussed, that is the upcoming presidential election of EDF.

As most of you have probably seen, again there is only one candidate for president, Yannis Vardakastanis. While we deeply respect and acknowledge Yannis' longstanding work as EDF president, we feel this issue requires urgent attention by all EDF Board members. It is not right that the person in the most senior leadership position of an organisation like ours remains unchanged for 20 years. It looks bad from the outside, but more importantly, it reflects on questionable democratic values and internal power hierarchies of that organisation.

It is a responsibility of all EDF Board members to secure democracy, gender diversity, and diverse disability representation, and to make sure elections are based on choices. We think presently some of these democratic values are at risk because of no choice for the leading position of our organization.

In addition, having a single member of our community acting as the president of both EDF and IDA means less diverse representation.

If nobody else runs for president, it looks like nobody is interested in leading the organization, and also, it appears as if the empowerment of talents has failed – and as if we, the Board just allowed this to happen on our watch. We feel a slight amount of shared guilt, but we also feel like it is not yet too late to act.

### **We would like to emphasize that our concern is not personal, but procedural.**

Change and diversity should be part of every democratic system, including within EDF and it is our task to make steps to explicitly support practice that reflect these values.

Thus, we would like to propose the following steps be discussed and perhaps voted on by the EDF Board:

1. **Establish an extraordinary procedure now, and extend the nomination period for the president position only.** This can be a deadline that is feasible procedurally for the Secretariat to manage the election practically. This extraordinary procedure would allow alternate candidates to come forward. By having other candidates, we will have the opportunity to express our support to one of the candidates, which presently, having only one candidate is not a real option.
2. **During the extended nomination period all of us should encourage possible candidates.** We understand that the task may seem enormous for many, but we also know from our experience in other (very similar) organisations that presidents often get a lot of support by other Board members and the Secretariat. In other words, there is not only one good way to do it. So, we are positive that with the right

division of responsibilities and tasks, and with support by the future Executive Committee, the Board and the Secretariat, the task before a new president would be totally manageable.

3. If, under this extended period no other candidates come forward, **we should establish a committee to do an investigation into the reasons for limited nominations to the position of president at EDF.** This would aim to identify the barriers amongst members. What led to this situation where for 20 years there is no change in the most senior position? Why has support for young talents been so limited? Which type of empowerment is needed to enable diverse leadership? There can be other questions for the investigation, specified later.
4. In the future, placing a limit on the number of consecutive terms of office of Board members and Executive Committee members should be envisaged at an Extraordinary General Assembly in order to further a more representative and democratic policy.

EDF has always built on democratic values. Our work must reflect diversity and gender balance. We believe it is not too late to act, but we need to act swiftly and approve a procedure that offers a possibility to find a solution now.

Yours sincerely,

Nadia Hadad, ENIL

Jolijn Santegoeds, ENUSP

Gabor Petri, MHE

PS: Six more Board members expressed support to our concerns but wished to remain anonymous. .