

This document relates to the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Bill (SP Bill 16) as introduced in the Scottish Parliament on 15 June 2017

# Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Bill

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## Explanatory notes

### Introduction

1. As required under Rule 9.3.2A of the Parliament's Standing Orders, these Explanatory Notes are published to accompany the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Bill, introduced in the Scottish Parliament on 15 June 2017.
2. The following other accompanying documents are published separately:
  - Financial Memorandum (SP Bill 16-FM);
  - Policy Memorandum (SP Bill 16-PM);
  - statements on **legislative** competence by the Presiding Officer and the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities (Angela Constance MSP) (SP Bill 16-LC).
3. These Explanatory Notes have been prepared by the Scottish Government in order to assist the reader of the Bill and to help inform debate on it. They do not form part of the Bill and have not been endorsed by the Parliament.
4. The Notes should be read in conjunction with the Bill. They are not, and are not meant to be, a comprehensive description of the Bill. So where a section or schedule, or a part of a section or schedule, does not seem to require any explanation or comment, none is given.

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## The Bill

5. Explanatory Notes on the various provisions of the Bill are provided below. A detailed explanation of the policy intentions underpinning the Bill can be found in the Policy Memorandum.

### Section 1 – Gender representation objective

6. Section 1 sets a gender representation objective for a public board that it has 50% of non-executive members who are women. There is a definition of ‘non-executive member’ in section 2. Where a public board has an odd number of non-executive members, the gender representation objective applies as if the board had one fewer member.

### Section 2 – Key definitions

7. Section 2 defines the Bill’s key terms:

- “appointing person” means, in relation to the function of appointing a non-executive member of a public board, a person who has that function. For example, the Scottish Ministers;
- “excluded position” in relation to a public authority, means a position mentioned in the second column of the table in schedule 1 which corresponds with the public authority mentioned in the first column. Where a position is an “excluded position”, it is not a “non-executive member” position as defined in the Bill. As a result, “excluded positions” are discounted for the purposes of calculating the percentage of non-executive members who are women under section 1 and no action is required under the Bill in relation to “excluded positions”. Non-executive members who are elected as opposed to appointed to the board of a listed public authority have been excluded;
- “non-executive member”, in relation to a public authority, means a position on its public board that is:
  - not an excluded position;
  - not held by an employee of the authority, i.e. an executive member;
- “public authority” means an authority listed, or within the description listed, in the first column of the table in schedule 1;
- “public board” means:

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- if the public authority is a company, the directors;
- if the public authority has a statutory board or other equivalent statutory management body, that board or body;
- in relation to any other public authority, the membership of the authority.

## Sections 3 and 4 – Duty when appointing non-executive members

8. Section 3(1) describes the circumstances in which section 3(2) applies. Under section 3(1), section 3(2) applies where there is:

- a vacancy in a position of non-executive member of a public board;
- more than one candidate for the position;
- at least one candidate who is a woman; and
- at least one candidate who is not a woman.

9. Under section 3(2) an appointing person must, in making the appointment to fill the vacancy, act in accordance with section 4 with a view to achieving (or making progress towards achieving) the gender representation objective immediately after the appointment takes effect.

10. Section 3(3) provides that when an appointing person is making more than one appointment:

- both or all of those appointments must be taken into account in identifying the number of non-executive members; and
- the appointing person must act with a view to achieving (or making progress towards achieving) the gender representation objective after all of those appointments have taken effect.

11. Section 4 requires an appointing person to determine whether any particular candidate is best qualified for the appointment. If no particular candidate is best qualified for the appointment, the appointing person must identify candidates it considers are equally qualified. Provided that there is among those candidates who have been identified as equally qualified, at least one candidate who is a woman and at least one candidate who is not a woman (see explanation of section 3 above) the appointing person must

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give preference to a candidate who is a woman if appointing that candidate will result in achieving (or making) progress towards achieving) the gender representation objective.

12. Section 4(4) provides that an appointing person must consider whether the appointment of a candidate who has been identified as equally qualified and is not a woman is justified on the basis of a characteristic or situation particular to that candidate. If so, the appointing person may give preference to that candidate.

13. The inclusion of section 4(4) in the Bill, which provides that an appointing person may over-ride the requirement to give preference to a woman in the circumstances described in sections 3 and 4 of the Bill, is required by the jurisprudence of the European Court of Justice which provides that such a requirement cannot be absolute (see Case C-450/93 *Kalanke v Freie Hansestadt Bremen* [1995] ECR I-3051; Case C-409/95 *Marschall v Land Nordrhein-Westfalen* [1997] ECR I-6363; Case C-158/97 *Badeck* [2000] ECR I-1875; Case C-407/98 *Abrahamsson v Fogelqvist* [2000] ECR I-5539; Case C-476/99 *Lommers v Minister van Landbouw Natuurbeheer en Visserij* [2002] ECR I-2891; *Briheche v Ministri de l'Interieur*, Case C-319/03, [2004] ECR I-8807; *Griesmar v Ministre de l'Economie*, Case C-366/99, [2001] ECR I-9383).

## Section 5 – Encouragement of applications

14. Section 5 places a requirement on appointing persons and public authorities to take such steps as they consider appropriate to encourage women to apply to become non-executive members of public boards. While it is for appointing persons and public authorities to ultimately determine what steps are appropriate, such steps could include:

- evaluating and targeting advertising strategies and outreach events to better reach and appeal to women;
- thinking creatively about the sorts of skills and attributes that are required and how these are expressed, with a view to attracting more women to apply.

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Appointing persons and public authorities may also refer to the Scottish Government's Succession Planning Guidance and Toolkit<sup>1</sup> which seeks to help public bodies to develop effective succession plans for their boards, building on good practice.

## Section 6 – Duty to take steps towards achieving the objective

15. Section 6 places a general duty on appointing persons and public authorities to take such steps as they consider appropriate, in addition to anything done under sections 3 to 5 in the case of appointing persons, and in addition to anything done under section 5 in the case of public authorities, with a view to achieving the gender representation objective by 31 December 2022. Under subsection (1), section 6 applies whenever the gender representation objective is not achieved in relation to a public board.

## Section 7 – Reports on progress towards achieving objective

16. Section 7(1) requires public authorities, if specified in regulations under subsection (2), to publish reports on the operation of the Act in accordance with provision made in the regulations. Under subsection (2), the Scottish Ministers may by regulations: specify public authorities for the purposes of subsection (1), and make further provision about reports mentioned in subsection (1). Section 7 will be used to ensure public authorities report on the operation of the Act.

## Section 8 – Power to modify schedule 1

17. Under section 8 the Scottish Ministers may modify schedule 1 by regulations so as to add an entry, vary the description of an entry or remove an entry. This would allow the Scottish Ministers to add a new public authority should one be created in the future, or similarly to remove such an authority should it be disbanded.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Guidance on Succession Planning for Public Body Boards', January 2017, <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Government/public-bodies/BoardChairs> [accessed 13 June 2017]

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## Section 10 – Equality Act 2010

18. Section 10 makes provision in relation to the Equality Act 2010. Sections 158 (positive action: general) and 159 (positive action: recruitment and promotion) of that Act are disapplied to action taken under the Bill, if enacted, so as to prevent overlap. Section 10(2) specifies that action under the Bill, if enacted, is not prohibited by Part 5 of the Equality Act (work).

## Schedule 1

19. Schedule 1 lists the public authorities covered by the Bill and includes certain public sector bodies, colleges and Higher Education Institutions in Scotland where that body has a board that includes non-executive members who are appointed to the board. In addition, schedule 1 specifies any “non-executive member” positions which are excluded from the terms of the Bill in relation to the authority in question. Where a position is excluded under schedule 1, it does not count as a ‘non-executive member’ position as defined by section 2. As a result, excluded positions do not count for the purposes of the gender representation objective at section 1 and an appointing person is not required to take action under sections 3 and 4 in relation to any such excluded position.

## Schedule 2

20. Schedule 2 makes special provision for certain public authorities covered by the Bill where this is required. An example of the need for such provision would be where there is more than one appointing person. This is the case with the Judicial Appointments Board for Scotland where the Lord President makes appointments of judicial members and Scottish Ministers make appointments of legal or lay members.

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