

# EQUAL PAY IS A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT. LEAD BY EXAMPLE.

## SIMONETTA SOMMARUGA

### PRESIDENT OF THE EQUAL-SALARY FOUNDATION

**Vevey, Switzerland / March 1, 2024** – The EQUAL-SALARY Foundation is delighted to announce the election of former Federal Councillor Simonetta Sommaruga as the President of its Foundation. This is Mrs. Sommaruga's first public engagement since her departure from the Federal Council end of 2022. This engagement breathes a new momentum into the pursuit of equal pay and equal opportunities in Switzerland and beyond its borders.

As head of the Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP) for eight years, Mrs. Sommaruga's time in office was characterized by a bold approach to promoting equal pay and the representation of women in listed companies. She played a decisive role in the introduction of equal pay analyses and quotas in favor of women, thereby changing the Swiss professional landscape. These legislative reforms obliged large companies to eliminate pay discrimination and promote greater diversity in management positions and on boards of directors.

By taking over the presidency of the EQUAL-SALARY Foundation, Mrs. Sommaruga is stepping up the pressure to eliminate pay inequality. Such inequality, according to the latest figures published



*EQUAL-SALARY Foundation, Noémie Storbeck, Simonetta Sommaruga and Lisa Rubli. Photo: Raphael Moser*

by the Federal Statistical Office, is decreasing too slowly. Sommaruga thus continues her long-standing commitment to tackling inequality by emphasizing corporate responsibility. *"With the EQUAL-SALARY certification, companies take a decisive step towards equal opportunities. Today, a modern employer must be able to demonstrate that it offers women the same opportunities as men in terms of employment, training, and promotion."* says **Simonetta Sommaruga**, President of the EQUAL-SALARY Foundation.

The EQUAL-SALARY Foundation certifies companies that can demonstrate, based on an internationally recognized scientific methodology, that they not only adhere to wage equality but also provide equal opportunities throughout the life cycle of their employees (recruitment, ongoing training, and promotion). This certification is a positive, voluntary, concrete, and tangible measure that allows companies to communicate about equality with evidence while preserving the confidentiality of their employees' data.

To date, the foundation has conducted more than 150 certification procedures in over 90 countries. Several certified companies have renewed their commitment and show strong dedication to promoting equality, building trust, and respecting their employees, clients, and partners. EQUAL-SALARY certified companies are in an excellent position to attract and retain talent and demonstrate compliance with good governance rules.

Since 2024, the EQUAL-SALARY Foundation offers a new service: wage analyses using the "Logib" tool for equal pay (provided free of charge by the Swiss Confederation) can be integrated into the certification process after an external review. This allows companies to move directly to the second phase of certification: the qualitative on-site audit. This simplified procedure should encourage

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more companies to strive for equal pay certification and thus implement not only the purely quantitative but also the qualitative elements of equal opportunities in their company. *"Today, companies are increasingly looking for qualified personnel, and at the same time, there are more and more highly educated women. Equal pay and work-life balance are therefore key factors not only for the society but also in the interest of the economy,"* adds **Simonetta Sommaruga**, President of the EQUAL-SALARY Foundation.

Internationally, the European Commission has issued a pay transparency directive, which came into effect in spring 2023. The goal of this standard is to grant employees access to information about their pay, as well as that of their male and female counterparts. Employers are responsible for offering salaries that comply with equal pay and meet such transparency requirement. Swiss companies with activities in Europe will also have to comply with this directive sooner or later. The EQUAL-SALARY certification provides direct and concrete support to companies wishing to already comply with this new directive.

*"It is with immense pride that we welcome Simonetta Sommaruga as President of the EQUAL-SALARY Foundation. Her pragmatism, influence, and continuous commitment to equality make her the ideal person to represent the Foundation and improve the cause of equality in Switzerland and abroad. The fair sharing of economic power and responsibilities between women and men has been long overdue, and this news represents the beginning of a significant and joyful advancement for all,"* commented **Lisa Rubli** and **Noémie Storbeck**, co-CEOs of the EQUAL-SALARY Foundation.

## Equal pay in practice

While most companies claim to pay women and men fairly, the global wage gap remains at 18% (ILO report, February 2020) <sup>1</sup>. In Switzerland, according to the latest survey by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office<sup>2</sup> on salary structure, the wage gap is still at 18%, with 47.8% unexplained.

## About the EQUAL-SALARY Foundation

EQUAL-SALARY is a non-profit foundation established since 2010. Its certification procedure is based on an internationally and scientifically recognized methodology. The development of EQUAL-SALARY certification has been financially supported by the Federal Office for Gender Equality (FOGE) and its methodology has been used as a reference in a decision of the Swiss Federal Court. EQUAL-SALARY is a member of EPIC - International Coalition for Wage Equality and the United Nations Global Compact.

## The EQUAL-SALARY certification process, a symbol of excellence:

Similar to an ISO standard for wages, all EQUAL-SALARY certification processes consist of two phases: firstly, experts engaged by EQUAL-SALARY conduct a statistical analysis of salary data. Starting in 2024, companies that have conducted an analysis using the Logib-module 1 tool may also, subject to a thorough review by an expert designated by the EQUAL-SALARY Foundation, present their analysis for this first phase. Once the first phase is successfully completed, demonstrating a global wage gap equal to or less than 5 percent, the second phase begins. This phase involves an audit conducted by major audit firms such as PwC, Mazars, or SGS, certifying the process's compliance. During this phase, auditors assess both the overall commitment of the company to wage equality and its implementation in human resources processes. To allow for a more in-depth investigation and a comprehensive approach, employees are involved through surveys and interviews during the on-site audit. Only companies that successfully meet all

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_dialogue/---act\\_emp/documents/publication/wcms\\_735949.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---act_emp/documents/publication/wcms_735949.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/fr/home/statistiques/travail-remuneration/salaires-revenus-cout-travail/niveau-salaires-suisse/ecart-salarial.html>

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requirements of all phases receive the EQUAL-SALARY certification, thus proving their excellence in wage equality and equal opportunities.

The EQUAL-SALARY certification allows organizations to verify and communicate that they remunerate their employees fairly and offer equal opportunities based on gender, ethnicity, or both. It is a practical and scientific solution to achieve transparency while preserving confidentiality.

## 3 questions to Simonetta Sommaruga

### 1. What were your motivations for accepting the presidency of the EQUAL-SALARY Foundation?

Equal pay was a significant concern for me as a federal councilor. That's why I had revised the equality law at that time. With the EQUAL-SALARY certification, we can make a concrete and attractive offer to companies: certification is a voluntary, positive, and measurable measure that allows a company to demonstrate its commitment to equal opportunities.

The international scope of the Foundation was also important to me. Thanks to its partners and the presence of EQUAL-SALARY auditors around the world, the Foundation can certify multinational as well as national companies worldwide.

### 2. How does the EQUAL-SALARY certification differ from other labels in the field of equality?

The certification is based on a robust, scientific, and internationally recognized methodology. It collaborates with globally reputable partners that lend it credibility. Its unquestionable rigor, guaranteed by a mechanism comparable to an ISO standard, is an extraordinary tool for continuous improvement. The EQUAL-SALARY Certification very high requirements also positions it at the top of the offerings for equal pay certifications currently available.

The EQUAL-SALARY certification consists of two stages, both scientifically validated and monitored by renowned auditing companies. Quantitative equality control is essential, but for overall equal opportunities, the second stage is also necessary, namely the control of concrete measures in the areas of recruitment, evaluation, continuous training, and promotion. Many companies feel the need to progress in this area as well. EQUAL-SALARY has developed a unique and internationally recognized instrument for this purpose.

### 3. As the President of the EQUAL-SALARY Foundation, what are your priorities and objectives for promoting equal pay?

The EQUAL-SALARY Foundation has done pioneering work nationally and internationally and has already achieved very good results. I want to continue this work and motivate even more companies to commit to equal opportunities. They have a lot to gain in an era where specialists are sought worldwide and where there are many well-educated women. The new European directive has created additional momentum, and I would like to capitalize on this momentum. Additionally, I observe in Switzerland and many other countries that society has forgotten that women still earn less than men simply because they are women.

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