



Irish Presidency 2013 Gender Equality Conference

‘WOMEN’S ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT AND THE EUROPE 2020 AGENDA’

Printworks Conference Centre, Dublin Castle, Ireland

08:45 a.m. on 29th April 2013

to

14:30 on 30th April 2013

and

Royal Hospital Kilmainham

20:00 on 29th April 2013

Organised by the
Gender Equality Division Department of Justice & Equality
with the assistance of the
European Commission

Concept Notes





GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPLOYMENT CONFERENCE

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

Why focus on Women's Employment?

In 2010, the European Council adopted the Europe 2020 Strategy, the European Union's new strategy for jobs and smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It included among its five headline targets, the aim

to raise to 75 % the employment rate for women and men aged 20-64, including through the greater participation of young people, older workers and low-skilled workers and the better integration of legal migrants

This target cannot be achieved without a marked increase in women's labour market participation, as acknowledged in the new EU Employment Strategy¹ and by the European Council. The European Commission's conference "Europe and Jobs"², attended by the Presidents of the European Council, Parliament and Commission, placed an emphasis on women's employment, and the benefits to business of capitalising on the academic and professional credentials and competencies of women in the EU.

The Irish Presidency re-launched discussion on this topic as an element of the public policy debate on the European Semester at its February 2013 EPSCO³ Council. The active engagement of other Member States in the discussion lends support to the belief that further debate would be beneficial to the Europe 2020 process and to Europe's economic growth, while also advancing the economic independence of women and advancing de facto gender equality.

Key statistics suggest missed economic opportunities

Eurostat's Labour Force Survey offers a range of statistics which help to crystallise the current situation on the employment of women in Europe:

- The comparative employment rates for women and for men are 62.3 per cent for women and 75.1 per cent for men, a gender gap of 12.8 percentage points(pps)
- At present, 46 million women in the age group 20 to 64 years are outside the labour market, compared with 25 million men – a gender gap of 21 million women
- Among those in the workforce, 32.7 per cent of women have attained a minimum of lower tertiary education⁴, compared with 26 per cent of men, reflecting the higher educational attainment of women

¹ Strasbourg, 18.4.2012 COM(2012) 173 final

² Jobs 4 Europe: The Employment Policy Conference: Commission, September 2012

³ Council of Employment, Social Protection and Health Ministers

⁴ ISCED 5 and 6



- Almost a quarter of the women (24.6 per cent) in the EU workforce, who have tertiary or higher education, work part-time, compared with just 7 per cent of men with equivalent educational standards, representing an under-utilisation of women's education
- A special module of the EU Labour Force Survey in 2010 on reconciliation between work and family life showed that
 - Among parents of young children⁵ taking parental leave for more than a year, just 2.7 per cent were men, while 97.3 per cent were women
 - Among parents of young children who stopped work to care for their child, 3.3 per cent were men and 96.7 per cent were women
 - Among parents of young children who reduced their working hours to care for their child, 20.2 per cent were men and 79.8 per cent were women.
- In 2011, there were 4.1 million female managers and 8.2 million male managers in employment in the EU – just one woman manager for every two male managers
- Women represent only a third of the self employed and of all “business starters” in the EU – again one woman for every two men.

Linking the European Union's Economic and Gender Equality Policies

Europe's Economic Policy

Europe's economic policy, the Europe 2020 Strategy, outlined three priorities which should be at its heart and which are mutually reinforcing; offering a vision of Europe's social market economy for the 21st century. They are

- Smart growth – developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation
- Sustainable growth – promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy and
- Inclusive growth – fostering a high-employment economy delivering economic, social and territorial cohesion.

In relation to employment specifically, the Europe 2020 Agenda notes that due to demographic change, our workforce is about to shrink. Only two-thirds of our working age population is currently employed, compared to over 70% in the US and Japan. The employment rates of women and older workers are particularly low. Young people have been severely hit by the crisis, with an EU –wide unemployment rate over 21% (at time of publication).

⁵ Aged under 8 years



Furthermore, in relation to skills levels in the EU, about 80 million people have low or basic skills, the impact of which is compounded by the fact that lifelong learning is mostly availed of and therefore mostly benefits the more educated. By 2020, the EU predicts that 16 million of its projected stock of jobs will require high qualifications, while the demand for low skills workers will drop by 12 million jobs. Ensuring longer working lives will also require the possibility to acquire and develop new skills throughout the lifetime.

The Europe 2020 Strategy notes that over 80 million people were at risk of poverty even prior to the economic crisis. In those years, eight per cent of people actually in paid employment did not earn enough to exceed the poverty threshold, while unemployed people were regarded as being particularly exposed to the risk of poverty. As a result paid employment has long been regarded as central to the avoidance of poverty over the lifetime.

Accordingly, the economic policy impacts of the Europe 2020 Agenda can influence not just the European economy but also the prosperity of each and every citizen of Europe, something of particular challenge at this time of economic crisis and uncertainty.

Europe's Gender Equality Policy

The European Commission publishes a new gender equality policy every five years following an extensive consultation process and taking on board the views and priorities of Member States. The Strategy for Equality between Women and Men represents the European Commission's work programme on gender equality for the period 2010-2015. It is a comprehensive framework committing the Commission to promote gender equality into all its policies under the following thematic priorities:

- equal economic independence for women and men;
- equal pay for work of equal value;
- equality in decision-making;
- dignity, integrity and ending gender-based violence; and
- promoting gender equality beyond the EU.

The first three of these priorities are clearly linked, both in name and in focus, to the economic empowerment of women and to maximise the contribution that empowered women can make to economic growth at local, national and international levels, while also ensuring the personal prosperity and social inclusion of these women. It is also worth noting that raising the economic prosperity of women has a positive ripple effect throughout society since women, with the resources to do so, tend to prioritise the education of their children and thereby improve the educational, economic and social prospects of the next generation.

Member States actively collaborate with the Commission in the achievement of these priorities through the annual programme of work linked to the EU Presidency, the work of the Commission-chaired Ad Hoc High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming, the Advisory Committee on Equality between Women and Men and the monitoring of progress on the implementation of the UN Beijing Platform for Action, which was agreed at the fourth World Conference on Women.



Strengthening Gender Equality to Achieve Economic Growth

Research undertaken for the Swedish Presidency of the European Union in 2009 suggested that the European Union would experience significant economic growth if women were to become more actively engaged in the labour market. If both genders worked at the same levels, the overall forecast capacity for growth was over 27 per cent.

More recent work by the OECD reaffirms evidence of the linkages between economic growth, gender equality, the comparatively high educational attainment of women, and their increased attachment to the economy, through either employment or entrepreneurial activity. Accordingly, there appears to be a strong case for ensuring that economic policies continue to focus specifically upon the untapped and underexploited cadre of women who are either outside the workforce or not engaged to their full potential within the workforce.

As the European Council noted in relation to employment at its most recent meeting, *“work must also continue more generally, further to the Employment package, including as regards bringing significantly more women into work, reducing long term unemployment and ensuring full participation of older workers. It is crucial to tackle the social consequences of the crisis and fight poverty and social exclusion”*.

Other countries, outside of the EU, have made significant progress in this regard and therefore it is essential to ensure that women in the EU maximise their potential contribution to economic growth and competitiveness and to enable the European Union to be a key player on the global market. However, this is not just an economic imperative as it also serves to assist women’s economic independence and diminish their risk of poverty and social exclusion, particularly, but not exclusively in older age. Furthermore it has the added benefit of reducing the demand for Government assistance and social protection from economically vulnerable women.

Let us Re-open the Debate - Ireland’s Presidency Conference

With generous funding from the European Commission and support from the Irish Presidency, the Gender Equality Division of the Department of Justice and Equality in Ireland is hosting this major international conference for key decision-makers to encourage debate on the key issues of gender equality and the economic engagement of women, with a focus on the attainment of the employment objective of the Europe 2020 Agenda.

The Irish Presidency hopes that the exchange of knowledge, policies, experiences and good practices between a very experienced panel of European experts from a wide range of backgrounds; (Government officials, including employment and equality experts; representatives from the private sector; gender equality machineries; from civil society; academics and other relevant fields) will lead to a lively debate and will further develop the thinking that was evident at ministerial levels during the public policy debate on Employment and Europe 2020 at the February 2013 meeting of the EPSCO Council of Ministers.



Women's Economic Engagement and the Europe 2020 Agenda

THE CONFERENCE – SESSION BY SESSION

Opening Session

The opening session of the Conference will hear speeches of welcome from the Irish Presidency including the Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence, Mr. Alan Shatter, T. D. and the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Mr. Richard Bruton, T.D. The European Parliament will be represented by Mr. Mikael Gustafsson, Chair of the Parliament's FEMM Committee – its Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, while Dr. Daniela Bankier from DG JUST of the European Commission will also make some introductory remarks. The Opening Session will be moderated by Ms. Kathleen Lynch, T.D., Minister of State for Disability, Equality, Mental Health and Older People.

Session One - More Women in the Workforce – Making Sense for Business and the Economy

Session One of the Conference will take much of the first morning. The first half of the session will be moderated by Mr. Aongus Hegarty, Irish and Irish-based President of Dell, Europe, Middle East and Africa, who has been particularly influential in fostering gender equality in his company.

This session will hear from Dr. Willem Adema of the OECD of recent research from the OECD published in December 2012 entitled "Closing the Gender Gap – Act Now". An extract from its Executive Summary presents a strong justification for the focus of the present conference, stating that *"gender equality is not just about economic empowerment. It is a moral imperative. It is about fairness and equity and includes many political, social and cultural dimensions. It is also a key factor in self-reported well-being and happiness across the world... Gender inequality means not only foregoing the important contributions that women make to the economy, but also wasting years of investment in educating girls and young women. Making the most of the talent pool ensures that men and women have an equal chance to contribute both at home and in the workplace, thereby enhancing their well-being and that of society."*

Dr. Adema will present some of the key findings from this extensive piece of research, with a particular emphasis on its relevance to the European Union and on the topics of female employment and entrepreneurship.

Ms. Wallis Goelen will present the perspective of DG Employment of the European Commission, while Dr. Daniela Bankier will contribute the gender equality perspective, based on the work undertaken by DG Justice of the Commission.

This session will break for a short coffee pause, following which Minister of State Ms. Kathleen Lynch T.D. will moderate the second part of this first session. Mr. Tom Bevers from Belgium, who is Chair of the European Union's Employment Committee and Mr. Thomas Dominique, Chairperson of the Social Protection Committee will present their insights on women's economic engagement. These two Committees of Experts, drawn from all Member States play a crucial role in informing employment



and social policy formulation at EU level, and make an input into each meeting of the Council of EPSCO Ministers.

Ms. Avivah Wittenberg-Cox will offer us an interesting insight from the private sector and this will be followed by a discussion including all the session speakers.

Session Two – Women Returning to Work – a “Win Win” for Women and the Economy

While the employment situation in the European Union is faced with many challenges at present, including unemployment caused by the prolonged economic downturn and increasing levels of youth unemployment, particularly among early school leavers, the need to grow Europe’s economy, through increased employment, is vital.

The EU **Employment Package**⁶, launched in April 2012, identifies the EU's biggest job potential areas and calls on Member States to harness the potential of these job-rich sectors. These include the ICT sector, in which the presence of women could be strengthened through enlightened policies that prepare them for and attract them to ICT as an exciting employment and career prospect. The health care sector (or “white economy”) in which women are already well represented also offers increasing opportunities for women (and men) of all levels of educational achievement - from a wide range of positions in the caring sector across to senior managerial and professional positions.

The EU Employment Package also encourages Member States to support job creation and restore the dynamics of labour markets through a range of measures. This Session will reflect on some of the practical steps which can be taken in promoting gender equality through labour market policies. It will benefit from a contribution from Dr. Erika Mezger, the Deputy Director, EUROFOUND, one of the oldest EU Agencies, located in Ireland since 1977, specialising in the analysis of living and working conditions.

The Netherlands has long had one of the highest rates of labour market participation of women and Ms. Antia Wiersma from the Dutch Institute for Gender Equality and Women’s History will talk about the factors which fostered this situation.

The EU Employment Package also recommends that the new round of EU Structural Funds be used to foster sustainable growth and job creation. Ireland made ESF funding available to a number of small projects working with women outside the labour market and the managers of two such projects, Ms. Dolores James and Ms. Jennifer D’Arcy will give a flavour of their experiences and successes.

Before an open discussion, participants will also hear from Ms. Rachel Mooney of Vodafone Ireland which has actively undertaken a programme to recruit women to its workforce, focusing particularly on women who left the company on maternity leave. .

⁶ Towards a Job-rich Recovery COM/2012/0173 final



Session Three – Challenges for Women in the Workplace – Working Together to Overcome the Barriers

Ms. Renee Dempsey, Chief Executive Officer of the Equality Authority and Chief Executive Officer Designate of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission has kindly agreed to moderate this session.

While the subject matter is very broad and has been discussed at many previous conferences, all of the literature and policy documents continue to identify ongoing problems, ranging from the availability of affordable quality childcare and flexible leave to less tangible barriers such as direct and indirect discrimination against pregnant workers; the long-hours culture as well as patriarchal attitudes and ingrained prejudices, all of which can impact on the role of women in the workplace.

The Barcelona Targets for Childcare – agreed by the EU Prime Ministers in 2003 – required Member States to take steps to achieve the following targets by providing childcare by 2010 to:

- at least 90% of children between 3 years old and the mandatory school age and
- at least 33% of children under 3 years of age.

Such provision was to be measured as the proportion of children cared for by formal arrangements, (other than by the family) as a proportion of all children in the same age group (children under three or between three years and the mandatory school age). This indicator is broken down by the number of hours per week during which the children are cared for (up to 30 hours a week /30 hours or more a week). Data are collected through an EU harmonised survey, the EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC).

Formal arrangements are defined as the following services: pre-school or equivalent, compulsory education, centre-based services outside school hours, a collective crèche or another day-care centre, including family day-care and professional certified childminders. The care provided by family members, neighbours or non-certified childminders are therefore not included under this definition of “formal arrangements”.

The EU has also agreed a number of binding directives in relation to maternity leave and parental leave. Proposals to lengthen maternity leave across the EU have run into difficulties. However, recently, steps have been taken to ensure the availability of parental leave (often on an unpaid basis). The uptake of parental leave and of flexible working hours is still low for men, as is their participation in the sharing of family responsibilities.

Professor Francesca Bettio from the University of Siena (IT) will share her experiences and research findings on these challenges, while Ms. Lucie Davoine of DG Justice in the European Commission will outline recent research on childcare across the European Union.

The session will hear of good practice initiatives undertaken by two major multi-national firms who are located in Ireland, hearing from Ms. Cecilia Ronan, of Citi and Ms. Margot Slattery of Sodexo Prestige Ireland. Again the session will conclude with an opportunity for a discussion with the speakers.

Session Four – Toward the Top – Advancing Women in the Workplace

Ms. Virginija Langbakk, Director of the European Institute for Gender Equality will moderate this session on steps which can be taken to encourage women into leadership roles within employment.



The United Nations has long fostered equality between women and men in decision-making at all levels, noting that the achievement of a gender balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning. The UN also talks of 30 per cent as the critical mass for women to make an impact as decision-makers.

The European Commission and the European Union, through a number of sets of Council Conclusions adopted at EPSCO, have fostered equality in decision-making and especially in economic decision-making for some time and this is now an objective in the European Commission's Strategy for Gender Equality 2010 to 2015.

If women are not encouraged to advance into more senior positions within their place of employment, then the balance of decision-making within that company is unlikely to shift to greater gender equilibrium.

Recent research from both sides of the Atlantic suggests that there is merit in having a gender balance in the board room. Access to executive positions within the board room frequently requires access to the most senior positions within the company. Further evidence suggests that women participating in graduate training programmes are often placed (possibly voluntarily) in roles which are not normally feeder channels to the top positions in the firm – for example women opt for, or are placed in, sectors like human resources and marketing rather than the operational functions which carry the most influence in the strategic direction of a company. A number of international firms have taken initiatives to actively encourage the advancement of women within their organisation and these will be explored.

This session will hear views from a number of different perspectives. Ms. Algimanta Pabedinskienė is the Lithuanian Minister for Social Security and Labour and she will bring her insights to the audience, as will Dr. Daniela Bankier of DG Justice in the European Commission. The meeting will hear from Dr. Ruth Sealy of Cranfield School of Management in Great Britain. Cranfield has a long tradition in programmes which aim to develop women in leadership roles, including for the British Civil Service. We will also get a private sector perspective from two further distinguished speakers - Ms. Mirella Visser has had a lengthy career in international banking, rising to very senior roles while Ms. Geraldine Huse, UK-based Vice President of Procter and Gamble in the UK and Ireland, has spearheaded initiatives in her global company specifically to retain and foster her well educated female work force.

Session Five – Women and Entrepreneurship

When we think of women and economic engagement, gender stereotypes and social reality both lead us to think of women as employees, rather than as employers. Indeed as the European Commission's website tells us:

"Whilst Europe does not have enough entrepreneurs following through on their ideas to set up in business, there are, disproportionately, even fewer women than men entrepreneurs. Europe's economy needs more entrepreneurs to take the plunge. The Commission is working with Member States to find ways to overcome the factors which particularly discourage women from taking up the option of entrepreneurship."



Entrepreneurs - people willing to take the risks and make significant commitments to get a new business off the ground or build on an existing one - are not common enough in Europe. For many reasons, not enough Europeans see running a small business as sufficiently more attractive than working as an employee of a firm, large or small, or in a public organisation. These reasons apply as much to women as to men, but there are certain additional factors which make entrepreneurship an even less attractive or viable option for women (in addition to those factors which count against women in all sections of the labour market).

*Although there has been an encouraging upturn in women running businesses in the past decade or so, much more needs to be done to overcome the specific factors which discourage women in particular from starting or taking over small firms. **Today women entrepreneurs in Europe are only 30% of all entrepreneurs.** And even more importantly, we have to create an environment in which those women who do run a small business can more easily grow their firms”.*

The European Commission launched a new Strategy on Entrepreneurship earlier this year, noting that “*entrepreneurship is a powerful driver of economic growth and job creation: it creates new companies and jobs, opens up new markets, and nurtures new skills and capabilities.*”

This session of our conference will be chaired by Ms. Julie Sinnamon from Enterprise Ireland, the Irish state body tasked to oversee industrial development, which has recently begun to focus even more closely on the potential for female entrepreneurship.

Mr. Marko Curavic of DG Enterprise in the European Commission will present its new Strategy on Entrepreneurship and the emphasis it places on female entrepreneurship.

We are delighted to share a particular Irish success story with the audience, which started life as a pilot initiative developed by Ms. Paula Fitzsimons in conjunction with Enterprise Ireland with a small grant from the European Social Fund as well as funding from the Department of Justice and Equality as part of the Equality for Women programme of positive actions. This project – Going for Growth – is now in its seventh season and provides mentoring opportunities by some of Ireland’s foremost female entrepreneurs to others who have the capacity to “go for growth”. We will hear from Paula and from Ms. Eileen Coughlan, an Irish venture capitalist in the IT sector who mentors participants in “Going for Growth” on a pro bono basis and from Ms Ceara McNeela who has developed an engineering company and who participated in the ESF supported Going for Growth initiative a few years ago.

We also hope that UK-based Ms. Rosaleen Blair, from Alexander Mann in the United Kingdom, one of Ireland’s most successful internationally-based entrepreneurs will be able to join us to share her experiences.

Session Six – Conference Closing Session

The Conference Closing Session will be chaired by Ms. Kathleen Lynch T.D., Minister of State and she will give a brief overview of the event, which will be followed by short reflections by representatives of the social partners representing the women of Europe, the trade unions and employee organisations and the private sector.

Following the conclusion, delegates will be invited to witness and toast the signature of the Trio Declaration on Gender Equality, which outlines the commitments of the EU Presidency countries of



Ireland, Lithuania and Greece to foster gender equality during their periods as President of the Council of Ministers until mid-2014.

**The Conference will end with the signature of the
Trio Declaration on Gender Equality
on behalf of Ireland, Lithuania and Greece
in the Portrait Gallery, Dublin Castle, followed by lunch.**

This conference is supported by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity – PROGRESS (2007 – 2013).

This Programme is implemented by the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment, social affairs and equal opportunities area, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Europe 2020 Strategy goals in these fields.

The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA-EEA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.