



Conference Conclusions of Gender Equality Experts
on Employability and Entrepreneurship – Gender Stereotypes

Whereas:

The entry of women into the labour market in the last decade has made a decisive contribution to the pursuit of the Lisbon Strategy objectives for employment. However, this favourable trend in the growth rates of female employment should not obscure the many aspects of inequality between women and men in the labour market.

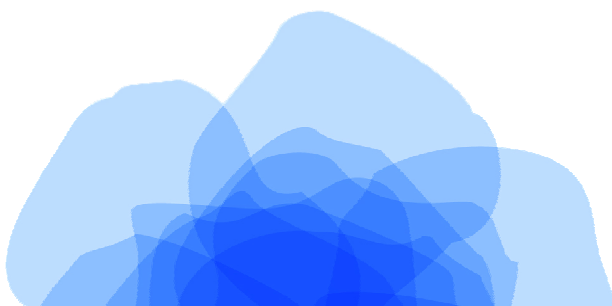
These inequalities have proven to be persistent and deeply rooted in stereotypes which influence the professional and personal choices of both men and women, placing women at a disadvantage with regard to the conditions for participation in the labour market, specifically in terms of the gender pay gap and their presence in positions of leadership or economic decision-making, and men with regard to the conditions for participating in family life.

The increase in female participation in the labour market has not been counterbalanced by a corresponding rise in male participation in the responsibilities of caring for the home and family members, specifically children. Women continue to face the greatest difficulties in reconciling their professional, family and personal lives, with adverse effects on the conditions for their employability and the creation of self-employment for women.

The demands of flexible labour have had a disproportionate impact on women and men. Gender gaps persist in the use of part-time employment which, because of the divide that separates the two sexes, shows differences in the way time is spent. This has repercussions on precarious employment for women, progress in their careers, the difference in the division of family tasks and, consequently, the reconciliation of professional, personal and family life.

Feminine and masculine stereotypes influence societal expectations about choosing a profession and thus guide women toward the social, educational and cultural realms and men toward the fields of technology and those related to the pure sciences. The growth in female employment rates is concentrated around activities and roles predominated by women. Social practices persist which assume that unpaid work resulting from taking care of a family is a primary responsibility of women and paid work resulting from economic activity is a primary responsibility of men.

The same stereotypes make it difficult for women to start companies, as they face more obstacles than men in terms of credibility, confidence or access to credit. The promotion of female entrepreneurship is a privileged instrument which ensures that men and women participate on an equal footing in the creation of businesses, one which increases employment rates for women and simultaneously improves their position in the labour market, their economic independence, social status and personal fulfilment, whilst increasing the competitiveness of European economies, particularly when this entrepreneurship is linked to innovation.





It is necessary:

To strengthen the gender dimension in the Lisbon Strategy as a way to meet the targets for female participation in the labour market (60% in 2010), encouraging access for women to decent, high-quality jobs (more and better jobs).

Encourage female entrepreneurship as a factor for innovation and competitiveness through vocational training and re-skilling, financial incentives, micro-credit, creation of organisational networks, meetings and sharing good practices, thus fostering a positive climate for female entrepreneurs.

To promote the knowledge of female entrepreneurship by developing specific indicators as a means of exchanging good practices and monitoring the several modalities of entrepreneurship, namely innovation and sustainability entrepreneurship, as well entrepreneurship based in needs.

To promote measures which ensure that women entrepreneurs are not a target of gender discrimination when applying for a bank loan.

To foster increased public aid to access credit and micro-credit, not only for women who are undertaking an economic activity for the first time, but also for those activities already created, increasing the information available about possible innovative business forms.

To promote the integration of entrepreneurship education into national study programmes, establishing clear targets to eliminate gender stereotypes that influence the professional and personal choices of men and women as a way to increase the number of female entrepreneurs.

To eliminate segregation in the labour market, thus facilitating, on the one hand, the entry of women into non-traditional sectors and promoting, on the other, the presence of men in traditionally female occupations. To place greater emphasis on the lifelong education, skills and vocational training of men in the areas of care and social action and of women in the areas of knowledge, leadership, innovation and new technologies whilst also taking into account the skills acquired in informal contexts.

To overcome the disadvantage faced by men as regards the conditions for participating in family life, defining measures to foster male participation in private life, namely by creating new options at national level for paid paternity leave or increasing the possibility of non-transferable, paid parental leave.

To promote measures which ensure maternity and paternity rights for women and men who carry out self-employment activities.

To develop specific indicators for paid and unpaid work carried out by men and women in order to generate data about the difference in the way time is spent and promote measures that support spouses of those that undertake independent work.

To develop effective measures to encourage the reintegration of women and men into employment, without a loss of skills or pay following a period of maternity or paternity leave or leave to care for dependant family members. National plans to reform the system for calculating pensions should also



prevent women from losing the right to a pension or seeing the value of their pension considerably reduced because of part-time work and interruptions in their professional career due to family obligations, considering the necessity to overcome pay gap, time gap and care gap.

To promote corporate social responsibility with regard to real equality between women and men in accessing jobs, training and career progress and in reconciling professional, personal and family life.

To motivate public and private sector companies to adopt equality plans and encouraging social partners and all participants in this social dialogue to incorporate the many dimensions of gender equality into the various levels of intervention.

To promote the adoption of political measures that ensure the elimination of gender pay gap.

To ensure that national "flexicurity" strategies adopt a gender perspective.