

“In the face of the economic downturn we must not let up in the efforts which have been made in this area. Our economies must reap the full potential of all our talents if we are to face up to global competition. Gender equality is not only a fundamental right, but is also good for business. Even in the current difficult circumstances, I am convinced that having more women in the labour market contributes to lasting economic growth.”

— **Vladimír Špidla, European Commissioner with responsibility for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, October 2009**

“There is a positive trend towards a more gender-equal society and labour market, yet gender inequalities persist, mainly to the disadvantage of women ... Policy makers have the opportunity to implement policies to make the labour market and society more gender-equal in the future.”

“In 2010, the European Commission will renew its commitment to promoting gender equality by adopting a gender equality strategy to follow up the current Roadmap for equality between women and men. The Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs will also be updated and it is important that gender equality is consolidated in the EU 2020 strategy.”

— **‘Equality Between Women and Men - 2010’,
Report from the European Commission, COM(2009)694 final, December 2009**

Abstract and Programme

Equality, based on gender, is a *conditio sine qua non* in achieving the European Union’s overall objectives in employment, social cohesion and economic growth. The participation of women in the labour market contributes substantially to the sustainability and economic development of communities throughout Europe. However, despite some modest developments, there are still significant **participation gaps** in the labour market – which varies between 36.9% and 73.2% – depending on the member state. If we include the employment rate between women and men with children, this gap increases dramatically. These disparities can only be overcome by challenging the deep-rooted **gender stereotypes** which shape women’s and men’s skills and influence the gender imbalance in paid and unpaid work.

Along with these tendencies, it is important to highlight the existing occupational and sectoral segregation contributing to the **gender pay gap**, which is 17.4% on average in the EU according to the 2007 *Eurostat* figures. In society, business and public life gender gaps still exist in extremes – Although the numbers of female managers in Europe remained stable during the last few years, averaging 30%, figures are much lower in the majority of member states.

Building on existing equal pay legislation, the European Commission launched a **raising awareness campaign** in 2007 in order to find solutions to overcome long-standing gender pay gaps. This campaign had a positive impact in some EU member states including the UK, Finland, France and Sweden. Despite those efforts, further and more intensive raising awareness and capacity building strategies are needed at all levels in Europe.

With the recent announcement that the Commission will renew its commitment in 2010 to promoting gender equality by adopting a gender equality strategy, this special International Symposium provides a timely opportunity for practitioners and stakeholders across the EU to discuss the next steps for the *Roadmap* for equality between women and men in the workplace and European labour market.

The *Centre for Parliamentary Studies* welcomes the participation of all key partners, responsible authorities and stakeholders. The Symposium will support the exchange of ideas and encourage delegates to engage in thought-provoking topical debate.



Centre for
Parliamentary
Studies

Minding the Gap: Overcoming Gender Inequalities in the European Labour Market

Tuesday 30th March 2010
Renaissance Hotel, Brussels

- 09:00 *Registration and Morning Refreshments*
- 10:00 Chair's Welcome and Opening Remarks
- Prof. Dr. Danièle Meulders, Professor of Economics,
 Université Libre de Bruxelles (confirmed)*
- 10:10 Session One: Gaps and Gains – Root Causes and Current Challenges
 in Tackling Gender Inequalities
- Speaker:
 Prof. Dr. Danièle Meulders, Professor of Economics, Université
 Libre de Bruxelles (confirmed)*
- 10:35 First Round of Discussions
- 10:55 *Morning Coffee Break*
- 11:15 Session Two: The Role of International Organizations in Promoting
 Gender Equality in the Workplace
- Best Practices and Lessons Learned in the EU
- Speaker:
 Prof. Dr. Alison E. Woodward, Senior Associate Fellow, Institute of
 European Studies, VUB (confirmed)*
- 11:40 Second Round of Discussions
- 12:00 Session Three: Promoting the Active Inclusion of Women in the
 European Labour Market

- Current Structural, Social and Economic Challenges and Obstacles
- Maternity, Paternity Leaves and Better Child Care Facilities – Towards a Multilevel Approach
- Lessons Learned from the Barcelona Objectives
- Women and Men in Decision Making – What Have We Learned so Far?
- Developing Entrepreneurship as an Effective Tool for Inclusion of Women in the European Labour Market – Capacity Building Strategies and Scenarios for the Future

Speakers:

Ms. Veronica Nilsson, Special Advisor - Gender Equality, European Trade Union Confederation (confirmed)

Ms. Madi Sharma, Group I – Employers – UK, European Economic and Social Committee (confirmed)

12:40 Second Round of Discussions

13:00 *Networking Lunch*

14:00 Session Four: The Dynamics of Gender Democracy in the EU

Speaker:

Agnès Hubert, Adviser, Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA), European Commission (confirmed)

14:25 Fourth Round of Discussions

14:50 *Short Break*

15:10 Session Five: Case Study – Eurochambers' Experience in Developing a Tool Kit for Preventing Gender Stereotyping

- Break Gender Stereotypes, give talent a chance – lessons learned

Speaker:

Mrs. Birgit Arens, Advisor - European Affairs and Coordinator, EWN EUROCHAMBRES (confirmed)

15:35 Fifth Round of Discussions

15:55 Chair's Summary and Closing Remarks

16:00 *Networking Reception and Refreshments*

17:00 *Symposium Close*