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Women2020: Facing the Future

The Women2020 platform – a stakeholder dialogue on the contribution of women to achieving the *Europe 2020 strategy for growth and jobs* which was formally launched in Brussels on 8 March 2013 – concluded its event series with the fifth exclusive gathering on the topic of “Young Women for Europe2020 - Promoting Young Women for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth in Europe” on 17 December 2013. The present report summarizes the discussion and conclusions of the event, which was generously hosted by Cisco.

The launch event report “Women2020 Bold Beginnings” as well as the event reports “Women2020: Smart Progress”, “Women2020: Spring forward” and “Women2020: Leading the Way” can be found on the Women2020 website.

The final event of the women2020 platform took the form of a concluding dialogue about – and for – young women as well as a networking dinner with the keynote speakers and panellists. It was attended by 40 participants representing the public and private sector, including academia. In addition, several participants followed online via Twitter and webstreamed channels.

The European policymaker viewpoint

The keynote presentation was given by **Mr. Mikael Gustafsson, Chair, European Parliament FEMM Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality** who underlined three issues related to sustainability for young women:

1. Green and sustainable economy

The global climate crisis demands a global solution that involves greening the economy. Mr. Gustafsson regretted that not enough progress towards a global solution has been made to date. He thought that one of the reasons for this slow progress is the fact that men are overrepresented in the decision-making bodies since, women’s ecological footprint is far smaller than men’s.

Quote in text

“Women live more sustainable lives than men. So not having their voices heard means that society as a whole is losing important solutions and views.”

Mr. Gustafsson described a second inherent failure of today’s economy that affects women which is the fact that certain goods and services such as babysitting, cooking, farming or fetching water are not valued at their true economic worth or are even totally invisible in the economy. He warned that this makes the labour market unequal for women compared to men and poses the risk that women will be under-represented in future green jobs.

He stressed that in order to generate future jobs for young women; society needs to be socially, environmentally and economically sustainable. To this end, education and training needs to emphasize gender equality to enable women to contribute to the green economy with jobs in areas such as transport, construction and manufacturing. The definition of ‘green jobs’ needs to be expanded to include jobs with a very low environmental impact such as administrative positions or jobs in education, childcare and nursing homes.

2. Stereotypes connecting to girls and technology

On the topic of stereotypes, Mr. Gustafsson repeated the well-established fact that around 60% of university students are women. Yet, in the upper hierarchy of universities, in the boardrooms of companies and in the higher paid jobs men are still overrepresented.

Wondering why this was and what to do, he suggested that one way forward could be to turn the argument around.

Instead of focusing on how to recruit women, the structures that exclude women should be focused upon as they are often a reflection of the inequalities found in our society at large. This focus on structures should not be limited to universities – the academic world is not an isolated instance – but start from day-care and include primary and secondary schools since gender stereotypes, the idea that technology is for men, for example, are placed in children's minds long before they think about university.

Reflecting upon everyday stereotypical behavior in toy stores or schoolyards, Mr. Gustafsson wondered how society expects girls and women to feel that technology is for them when they learn early on that technological

toys are for boys only. Likewise, he asked how society could expect boys to choose caring occupations when they are told that caring and cleaning is for girls while boys are expected to play with guns.

Quote in text

“What we need is education in gender equality, and ways to combat gender stereotypes everywhere, from pre-school to university, from the toy stores to the boardrooms. The reason there are less women than men in the world of technology is not a dilemma of individual choice, but of cultural and societal power structures that we consciously and unconsciously help maintain. And the solution cannot be only to make girls interested in science but also to make science interested in girls.”

3. Work-life-balance

As a third element, Mr. Gustafsson introduced an item which is high on the political agenda of the Women’s Rights and Gender Equality Committee, FEMM, of the European Parliament: a balance between work and private life as key to gender equality and sustainable development for young women.

He regretted that the Europe 2020 strategy does not include gender equality per se and does not urge for the current female employment rate to be raised from 62% to 75%. Mr. Gustafsson highlighted the unequal share of family responsibilities as a root cause for lower female participation in the labour market and stressed that women’s overrepresentation in part-time or temporary jobs does not necessarily result from a voluntary choice. In many societies, women and men are still forced to make a choice between work and family and, in reality, women are put into the impossible situation of ‘negative choice’.

To address this issue, Mr. Gustafsson described four important elements pivotal to a proper policy mix:

- 1) support for parents and carers with affordable and accessible quality childcare;
- 2) flexible and secure working arrangements which supports return to the labour market - or in other cases - staying on the labour market;
- 3) parental leave which is generous enough to be used more equally by both men and women; and
- 4) care for the elderly and disabled.

To that end, the FEMM committee strongly supports the objectives set at the European Council in Barcelona in 2002 on the provision of childcare facilities. It is also delighted that from 2014 on, Member States will have to implement the revised Parental Leave Directive. He described the challenge for the Member states to introduce legislation to promote change towards accessible care structures and to increase men’s involvement in this sector with a few facts:

- Among parents of young children who stopped work to care for their child, 3.3% were men and 96.7% were women.
- Among parents of young children who reduced their working hours to care for their child, 20.2% were men and 79.8% were women.

The FEMM committee is convinced that a more equal sharing of care and responsibility for children is politically very important to achieve gender equality, to meet the needs of our economies and to respond to women's and men's demand of life quality. These are especially important for young women.

Mr. Gustafsson concluded by stressing the importance of a close cooperation between different stakeholders – the public and the private sector, trade unions, NGOs and civil society representatives at regional, national and European levels – and his personal conviction that ‘if we want to advance the rights of young women we need to transform our thinking and attitudes in society!’

Quotes in side box

Mr. Mikael Gustafsson, Chair, European Parliament FEMM Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality

Due to different gender roles men more frequently drive cars, consume more, and eat more meat than women do.

When discussing green jobs, we need to think outside the box. Many jobs that are not traditionally seen as green have, in fact, a very low environmental impact.

Let's look at the ways we consciously and unconsciously train girls to be carers and boys to be explorers.

Even LEGO, which used to be a more gender neutral toy, and especially interesting in this context as it promotes construction and invention, is now found with a boy-range of construction, pirate ships and adventure, and a relatively new girl-range in soft pastel colors, consisting of dolls, flowers and readymade pieces, with none or little construction necessary.

I am committed to this issue and have personal experiences with sharing equally the responsibility for the upbringing of my children and the changes it has meant for me and my family (my wife), as well as for me in my political life.

Ms. Cheryl Miller, Executive Director of Zen Digital Europe and Founder of Women2020, thanked Mr. Gustafsson for his contribution and asked about his personal opinion on whether or not introducing quota would be a solution for Europe. Mr. Gustafsson explained that his party [Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left (Note from rapporteur)] is not in favour of quota at EU level but believes this decision should be taken by the Member States individually. He is personally supportive of the concept because a formal quota system would allow women to break through the current informal male quota system of men nominating men, men electing men and men promoting men.

Advice for and from young women

For the second part of the gathering, Ms. Miller invited an impressive panel to give short, inspirational lessons from their own personal or institutional backgrounds to share with the young women present.

Young women need a comprehensive strategy

Ms. Amelia Andersdotter, Member of European Parliament, was the first panellist to share her political viewpoint and personal experience as a young woman.

Ms. Andersdotter looked at the overarching issue of how the European Union can stay together despite all the ongoing changes in communication and information technologies rather than at the Europe 2020 strategy from a gender equality point of view. She explained that the European Union overall – not just the Europe 2020 strategy – lacks a comprehensive strategy in terms of how it wants to benefit from communication and information technologies. The EU does not yet have a strategy, for example, that defines how and if the Internet is useful to the European Union or not; whether the Internet could, for example, bring forward the European idea of cooperation, transparency, decentralisation and collaborative decision-making; or, whether the Internet is simply an instrument where we place relatively much control in the hands of relatively few people. This discussion needs to be held urgently and also address the fact that 'people' is currently defined as 'men with economic or financial power', a definition that excludes women, particularly young women, from the onset.

As a second point, she emphasized that a legal framework for gender equality does not always represent the social reality in the country concerned. On the topic of women's rights, for example, her home country, Sweden, has had legal abortion since the 1970s, has equal marriage laws and has made it illegal to hit children. However, social segregation between men and women does exist since men barely socialise with women and vice versa. In other Member States social interaction between men and women is far more common since they are not based on gender identity but rather on common interest while the legal frameworks in those Member States may be more prohibitive.

Taking the same overarching viewpoint, she emphasized an overall strategic priority for ICT rather than focussing on *women* in ICT only. The Internet, when it emerged to a larger network in the 1990s, was also characterised by this diversity, she underlined, but now it no longer is.

Quote in text:

"We have extreme amounts of control over information and technical features and use this knowledge to impose more controls – installed in the core of our networks – over this information and the end users."

The issue of Internet data management was a large part of the debate earlier in the year when government agency involvement in the formulation of technical standards, the installation of control features and the management of conflicts were discussed.

As part of her personal advice to policymakers, Ms. Andersdotter stated that the European Union's most pressing political reform is to decide "that a centralised form of control is not good for our society, and that secretive, control-imposing actions by centralised figures are not helpful".

Switching from the political to the personal experience, she shared her experience with stereotypes from when she was a student of mathematics. She said that people portray a female mathematician in a certain way: smart, very talented, struggling in a male-dominated environment. They also placed obligations upon her simply because she is a *woman* that likes to solve equations. She agreed with Mr. Gustafsson that strong gender-typical stereotypes are the most difficult to change.

Ms. Andersdotter concluded that even if society were able to motivate pre-schoolers to start careers in technology it would still remain a challenge to tackle gender-typical segregation: the idea that *women* in technology have different interests than *men* in technology. The challenge is to create an environment in which it is completely natural for any child to take an interest in technology.

Quotes in side box

Ms. Amelia Andersdotter, Member of European Parliament

Society has a strong assumption of what men and women are supposed to do and supposed to be. So if you are a woman interested in technology, you will be expected to be interested in a particular way. This is not easily solved.

I don't like linear algebra. As a woman, I often felt it was not okay to say that because the social pressure on me to be a smart girl was very high.

Ms. Miller thanked Ms. Andersdotter for her contribution and for her availability to remain present for the rest of the discussion. She then invited the next panellist, **Ms. Daniela Gomes, Octopux Consulting's Partner & CEO of Octopux Consulting and coach for SMEs** on research and innovation projects to give some concrete recommendations to the European leadership on how to improve the life of young women in the private sector.

Remove barriers so young women learn to dare

Ms. Gomes immediately provided policymakers with two key recommendations. First, she raised the sensitive issue of taxation. Taxation is a barrier – particularly in Belgium with some of the highest tax rates of the EU – for any aspiring entrepreneur, but for women more than men it is a particularly sensitive issue. More women than men perceive taxation as a barrier that prevents them from setting up a business rather than a stimulus to fight more for their entrepreneurial plans.

To that, **Ms. Amelia Andersdotter** added some additional administrative obstacles in the Member States that *prevent* people from becoming an entrepreneur. She feared that administrative registration requirements contribute to people not starting business at all and gave the example of France where President Sarkozy had made it much easier to register new businesses online without other administrative procedures or the involvement of notaries. A second impediment across the EU is the lack of venture capital, on the one hand, and the administrative burden of diverse rules for obtaining venture capital, on the other hand.

Ms. Gomes continued with her second point for policymakers: to tackle youth unemployment. Youth unemployment is at an all-time high due to the financial crisis and research shows that young women are particularly affected. For that reason, a part of her company's mission is to break young women out of the downward spiral of unemployment or employment in unstable financial situations such as, for example, low paid or even unpaid traineeships.

The women are coached – on a daily basis and sometimes almost aggressively, she admitted – and obtain practical advice, skills, competences and knowledge such as how to do accountancy and how to run a company. Octopux Consulting would even allow the best to run a company on their behalf.

Quote in text

"I want to transform young women into future business guerrillas. My message to them is: If I can do it as a 27-year old, you can succeed as well."

Turning to the young women present in the room Ms. Gomes shared her most personal take home message – as a young woman who knows what it is to be unemployed before venturing into a men's world – 'do not let your fears stop what you really want to do!'

She concluded by saying that it is important to blow a new wind to society by starting new initiatives, especially in the private sector.

Quotes in side box

Ms. Daniela Gomes, Partner & CEO, Octopux Consulting

We see young entrepreneurs, especially women, struggle every day although they are excited about what they do.

Be proud to tell the whole world what you do, what you did and what you intend to do.

If you work with other brilliant people – women or men – you achieve a lot, regardless of whether it is in a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) area or not.

Cheryl Miller thanked Ms. Gomes for her inspirational contribution and applauded her courage for mentioning taxation; an issue that she also believes is a major impediment for setting up an SME. She agreed with Ms. Andersdotter that the mechanics of starting one's own enterprise have to be made as easy as possible in general but also wondered why the number of female-led start-ups is so much lower. She invited the next panellist, **Ms. Caroline Jenner, CEO of JA-YE**, to give her view on how to drive more female-led enterprises globally.

Entrepreneurship in Education

Ms. Caroline Jenner, CEO of the largest conglomeration of youth enterprises in Europe, saw the contribution of Ms. Gomes echoed in JA-YE's experience which focuses on establishing student companies in secondary schools. She explained that mentoring has an amazing effect on young people, particularly on girls. These student companies often consist of a group of as many as fifteen 16 to 17-year old girls with products ranging from homemade goods to digital products such as apps or software.

Ms. Jenner stressed, however, that once the girls start higher education, the entrepreneurial spirit becomes diluted; the student company is discontinued or not used as the start of another entrepreneurial adventure later on life. Higher education should ideally kickstart the entrepreneurial skills gained in secondary school but, in reality, it rather halts them since it takes about ten years to keep the original motivation alive and equally long to revive the original business after graduation. As an organisation, JA-YE is not certain how to keep the numbers high but it does know that without education only 5 to 6% of the graduates will become an entrepreneur after university whereas 10 to 15% do if education gives them 'a kick'.

Ms. Jenner pointed out that these statistics take a broad approach towards entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurial experience. They consider skills, employability and the aspect of being an entrepreneurial employee within a company or an organisation as well as being an entrepreneur in the strict sense of the word. Aspects such as teamwork, problem solving, group dynamics, decision-making and citizenship are also addressed.

She highlighted that Europe is quite successful at a currently less visible aspect of entrepreneurship: entrepreneurial value creation inside large corporations. This presents an opportunity for the European Union if it chose to focus on this aspect and the spin offs or innovation projects that are created from this type of entrepreneurial thinking within a company. In doing so, it could make entrepreneurship more attractive, particularly to women.

She welcomed the documents from the European Commission's Directorates-General Enterprise, Education and Employment that mention that every young person should have an entrepreneurship experience before they finish formal education. In Sweden, for example, JA-YE conducted a survey for anyone who had been in a formal education between 1997 and 2007 and girls were 80% more likely to be an entrepreneur thanks to this education compared to 60% of the boys. Another interesting fact is that student companies draw girls into STEM fields because the product or the company creates the interest in these fields. This proves that education can trigger an interest in STEM fields and that girls may need a different trigger than used to date.

Quote inside text:

"In terms of self-efficacy – a term to describe motivation and self-confidence – there is a 78% increase in leadership roles and 54% of the CEOs in student companies are female."

Ms. Jenner advised policymakers to invest heavily in entrepreneurial education by providing participants with qualifications that recognise this experience. A youth guarantee would also be important. By investing in entrepreneurial education, Europe would address the dilution of motivation and have more women enter the labour market immediately after graduation. Europe would also boost two of the currently slowest moving areas, healthcare and education, both in terms of policy and services since women are very talented social entrepreneurs.

Her final advice to policymakers is that although one experience at the age of 17 can have an impact, impact is only guaranteed if entrepreneurship is offered in different forms and at different levels of sophistication in primary, secondary, middle school and at university level.

The importance of technology in social entrepreneurship

Ms. Miller fully endorsed the idea that more exposure to entrepreneurial possibilities gives more options for personal-led growth. She shared her belief that instead of a lifelong process whereby women continually seek to fit as “square pegs” into the “round hole” of patriarchal society, why they should not be more empowered to create the system themselves. On the topic of counterbalancing dilution by instilling entrepreneurial skills earlier on in the education system, she agreed with Ms. Andersdotter that comparing Europe to the US – or only California as is often the case – is indeed wrong, although as an American she does find it useful to explore cultural differences. She knows first-hand that many children in the US have their first entrepreneurial experience on their sidewalks rather than in schools.

Ms. Miller referred to research conducted in the US that combines the importance of technology and social entrepreneurship. The survey had asked young girls why they *would* (not *did*) find ICT important. They had answered that they would like ICT if they could do something good with it!

She added that if this finding were extrapolated to Europe, it could echo Ms. Jenner’s experience that girls are great social entrepreneurs and could be an answer to Mr. Gustafsson’s plea to have more women involved in green jobs. Currently, however, being a social entrepreneur in Europe still gives you access to less funding than in other sectors and risks placing women, or anyone attracted to this area – as Ms. Miller put it – in ‘the ghetto of entrepreneurship’.

Ms. Miller concluded that motivating girls to enter STEM fields, or women with a STEM background to become entrepreneurs would directly impact social entrepreneurship. Regrettably, in Belgium, only one third of the SMEs are run by women and only 3% of the technological start-ups are run by women, so there is a long way to go still.

Quote in side box

Ms. Cheryl Miller, Executive Director of Zen Digital Europe and Founder of Women2020

When I grew up in the US, for example, it was perfectly acceptable to sell macramé bands on the streets, whereas my kids would be stigmatised doing the same thing in Brussels.

Co-creating with ICT

With that, Ms. Miller introduced a leading woman on involving women in ICT, **Ms. Anneke Burger-Tebbens Toringa, CIO, GDF Suez Energy Holland and co-author of the book “Ronde vormen in ICT”**, freely translated as “curves in ICT”. Ms. Burger-Tebbens Toringa’s business career had brought her to IT via marketing and sales. She fully agreed with Ms. Jenner that large companies employ entrepreneurial people responsible for a team, developing a product, managing a budget etc.

Turning to the young women present, she added, however, that in order to succeed as an entrepreneurial spirit within a company, the employee needs to be able to step outside her comfort zone by challenging herself. Leadership also needs to step outside its comfort zone and for example promote women.

Ms. Burger-Tebbens Toringa then raised a second important aspect that is often overlooked: sponsorship. A sponsor is slightly different from a mentor in the sense that a sponsor plays a more active role in the career track of the person sponsored. This role is incredibly important especially if women switch from one company to another.

Quote in text:

“My drive in life: Nothing happens without motion!”

On the topic of education, she said that IT, technology and the need for information management go hand in hand in any business sector including fields like marketing, communication, HR, environmental care and other fields that did not use to be IT-driven. She strongly believes that adapting the educational curriculum to incorporate IT would lower the threshold for women to choose a professional career in IT later on.

Once women enter the labour market, they could benefit from another trend highlighted by Ms. Burger-Tebbens Topping. Currently, the so-called pure IT jobs that are available have more balanced profiles than they used to have and require soft skills like empathy. In her opinion, these 'feminine' competences make it easier for women to join the ICT sector and present a tremendous opportunity for government, universities, business and local authorities to work together and co-create.

Her closing advice to business leaders was therefore that leadership needs to think of IT as a strategic enabler - combining hard and soft skills - to innovatively achieve the company's strategic goals. This mix in business thinking with ICT thinking will surely lead to a cultural company mix that will enhance the creativity of the company as well. She described that in her home country, the Netherlands, there are some good local initiatives that offer a space to combine knowledge with exploration to co-create innovative solutions already.

Cheryl Miller applauded co-creation since without public-private-partnerships Women2020 would also not have come to fruition. She took the opportunity to inform the audience of a new Zen Digital initiative to be launched in 2014. The g-hive will be a space for girls and women to have a combination of self-driven and expert-led exploration into digital creative endeavours, biotech, software development and more with public and private sector involvement for the necessary content, and even financial support.

She then introduced **Ms. Laura Hemmati, Founder of Leadarise**, an organisation that promotes young professional women in leadership in Brussels, Dublin and New York.

Young women as a group in their own right

Ms. Hemmati immediately wondered whether the Europe 2020 strategy allows women to contribute equally to society and whether it addressed women's needs. To set the scene, she referred to her home country, the UK, where female graduates are always in a catch up situation since male graduates are much more likely to obtain the best paid positions; female unemployment is at a 24-year high and cuts to public sector jobs and salary freezes affect women more. Finally, women between the age of 25 and 35 are more likely to succumb to stress and anxiety-related illnesses than any other age group.

Ms. Hemmati therefore advised policymakers to address the following aspects:

1. Consultation on investment decisions:

To ensure a democratic process, young women need to be present when decisions on items that concern them are made. Currently only 1 in 4 British Members of Parliament is a woman and young women are only represented in 22% of the media. Although some policymakers consult with youth NGOs before they take decisions that concern youngsters, they do not consult with young women when taking decisions that affect them. Yet the problems young women face are new compared to other groups: the near extinction of the entry level job; early burnout and health problems before starting a family; ever increasing graduate debt; increased family reliance on income upon graduation and finally, no prospects of retirement or a pension.

Quote in text:

"Policymakers consulting with youth NGOs frankly do not represent any of the young women here. We do not represent the 18 to 24-year old bracket. The problems we face are very different from the problems women faced 20 years ago."

2. Removing unpaid internships from the job market:

Internships tend to be low paid intellectual work and therefore more likely to be filled by women. Interns operate at high-level stress and uncertainty rates and internships provide low security and social benefits - even though the intern 'may be in their late twenties with everything that that entails'. Ms. Hemmati stressed that unpaid internships create a class system of workers which is open to abuse and offered the solution of having fairly paid internships, - at least 1000 EUR per month - enough to provide financial stability that makes obtaining an entry level position more feasible.

3. Leadership training in the broader sense:

Ms. Hemmati referred to the Harvard business review article "Women rising: the unseen barriers" <<http://hbr.org/2013/09/women-rising-the-unseen-barriers/>> from September 2013. The article concluded that, for young women, a successful transition into higher paid leadership roles requires a fundamental identity shift

that educators and employers need to provide training for. Young women do not automatically view themselves as leaders and therefore the “job is advertised, apply for it”-approach does not work. Employers should realise that women have to combat a lifetime of conflicting societal norms and prejudices, including their own, in order to be seen as a leader.

She concluded that organisations such as Leaderise can contribute to this process in their own right but a fundamental shift is needed as well.

Quotes in side box

Ms. Laura Hemmati, Founder of Leaderise

Organisations such as mine are a wonderful example of what young women who volunteer their free time to help each other are capable of.

In the UK more women than men enter university and they are less likely to drop out. Yet men are more likely to get the high paid jobs and the gender pay gap is 10%. And that's with a female monarch for 60 years!

Young women can do a lot to help themselves by encouraging each other and setting up their own mentoring initiatives but we are a long way away from that being a societal norm. Where women just get up and help each other.

Moved by Ms. Hemmati's contribution about leadership and the rather bleak prospects for young women, Ms. Miller introduced the last panellist, **Ms. Alison Storey, European Acquisition Quality Manager, Cisco, host of the evening**, as is an example of an enterprising young woman with a strong STEM background and a great career in a prominent corporation.

Ms. Storey - who had welcomed participants as the host of the evening - re-emphasised the support she and other women obtain from Cisco leadership and higher management. She started by pointing out that young women are inclusive, smart and sustainable - the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy - but her first recommendation would be for the strategy to find a way to allow young women to move forward by being passionate, authentic and brave.

Her second recommendation was that the Internet should be supported as a fantastic leveller for innovation, freedom and flexibility since it provides the freedom to innovate on any topic one feels passionate about. In terms of flexibility, she stressed that the days of working nine to five are gone. Young women need to have the flexibility to work when and where they want. This can only be achieved if the employer trusts the employee and vice versa. Giving employees the freedom to work from home, for example, does not only help employees to find a better work-life balance, it is also environmentally friendly.

Her third recommendation was to introduce computer programming at primary school level already as a practical application. She wondered that since children nowadays will have their entire lives online, why they should not be encouraged to build their own worlds online.

Quote in text:

“Coding is a sexy term for computer programming. It is just a language, if you can speak a second language, you can code.”

After her recommendations to policymakers, she too turned to the young women present and stressed that they are all ‘ambassadors for the brand of women who have to help change the perceptions of a male-dominated world’. Women need to learn to be authentic and to reach out to other women, to promote themselves and ask for sponsorship and mentorship by filtering out the standards and advice that they are surrounded with at all times.

Quotes in side box:

Ms. Alison Storey, European Acquisition Quality Manager, Cisco

I am not a politician, I am a geek. I read the initiative: smart sustainable and inclusive. As young women, we are all smart and sustainable and inclusive, we just don't have the pension prospects. I will probably be working till I am 80!

The Internet has given us a level platform. We can be whoever we want to be, we can do whatever we want to do.

Ms. Cheryl Miller, Executive Director of Zen Digital Europe and Founder of Women2020 concluded the gathering by thanking Ms. Storey for mentioning 'smart, sustainable and inclusive' and therefore unknowingly bringing the Women2020 initiative full circle. She enlightened that when she launched Women2020, she had felt that this was exactly the connection that was not being made between the Europe 2020 strategy and women, especially young women.

Because anything that is smart, sustainable and inclusive surely must be talking about women? And anything that is not talking about women can by definition not be any of these three things.

Conclusions

The reflections on Young Women closed off an entire year of discussion on Women in the Europe 2020 strategy. Panellists and participants provided the following concrete recommendations for the Europe 2020 Strategy for growth and jobs:

Policy-makers are asked to:

1. Include (Young) Women in strategies that green the economy such as the creation of green jobs;
2. Expand the definition of green jobs to include all jobs with a low environmental impact;
3. Create the proper policy mix to ensure a balance between the professional and private lives of employees;
4. Create an overall, diverse strategy on how to benefit from information and communication technologies (ICT);
5. Remove administrative barriers for aspiring entrepreneurs and alleviate tax pressures for SMEs;
6. Urgently tackle youth unemployment;
7. Support entrepreneurial education initiatives and increase social entrepreneurship in doing so;
8. Consider young women as a group in their own right and consult them on policy matters that affect them;
9. Outlaw unpaid internships;
10. Revise the Europe 2020 strategy; and to make the necessary budgets, timelines and educational programmes available to accomplish the foregoing.

Educators are asked to:

1. Evaluate educational structures – from day care to university – so as to tackle the disconnect between girls and technology as well as dismantle gender stereotypes;
2. Tackle gender-typical segregation in the educational system and create environments that allow any child to take an interest in any field;
3. Include entrepreneurship experiences in the formal curriculum from an early age on and continued throughout the educational system;
4. Adapt the curriculum to include IT, including coding, and information management from primary school on;
5. Provide leadership training to young women;

Leadership is asked to:

1. Support mentoring or sponsorship initiatives;
2. Step outside the comfort zone when recruiting or promoting women in otherwise male-dominated positions;
3. Think of IT as a strategic enabler that combines hard and soft skills to co-create innovative solutions;
4. Use the Internet as a leveller for innovation, freedom and flexibility with the aim to enhance business results and increase employees' work-life balance.

Take home messages for Young Women:

1. Be aware of the stereotypical obligations placed upon you when you are a woman in a male-dominated environment;
2. Do not let fear hold you back;
3. Feel empowered to make and create the system;
4. Step outside your comfort zone by challenging yourself;
5. Take part in leadership initiatives;
6. Be an ambassador for young women by being authentic and reach out to other women.

