

Women2020: Leading the Way

The Women2020 platform – a stakeholder dialogue on the contribution of women to achieving the *Europe 2020 strategy for growth and jobs* – was formally launched in Brussels on 8 March 2013. The launch event report “Women2020 Bold Beginnings” as well as the event reports “**Women2020: Smart Progress**” and “**Women2020: Spring forward**” can be found on the Women2020 website. ([link](#))

The present report summarizes the discussion and conclusions of the fourth of our five-part series held on 14 November 2013 on the topic of “Women in Leadership for Inclusive Growth: Promoting Women in Public and Private Sector Leadership in Europe”. The high-level breakfast briefing was generously hosted by the GSMA. The event featured an excellent panel and was attended by 50 high-ranking members of the public and private sector as well as from academia. In addition, xx participants followed online via Twitter and webstreamed channels. The series of reports will be released collectively in a final “women2020 Action Plan” in early 2014.

Host of the meeting **Martin Whitehead, Director, GSMA Europe**, welcomed participants and committed to joining the debate “with the support of his daughters in mind”. **Cheryl Miller, Executive Director of Zen Digital Europe and Founder of Women2020**, immediately stressed that male support is vital to any grassroots initiative, particularly on women issues or diversity topics. She shared the vision of organising a 50-50 conference whereby an equal number of men and women discuss support for women in strategic sectors.

She explained that at the root of the problem lies an economic rather than a female empowerment issue and quoted a recent European Commission study that presented women in ICT statistics. The figure that made the headlines states that the annual GDP of Europe would increase with 9 billion euro if as many women were working in ICT as men. This huge economic potential will remain untapped, however, since by 2020 about one million jobs are expected to remain unfilled because of a skills gap. This latent demand for jobs could be addressed, for example, with a little bit of focus on and marketing of the currently very leaky pipeline. The different levels of the supply pipeline should be able to attract more women to ICT careers... and then retain them! This key issue would not only be an advantage for the women concerned but also for the economy and our society at large.

Changing the mindset

Keynote speaker, **Agnieszka Skuratowicz, Member of Cabinet to EU Commission of President Barroso responsible for the Europe 2020 Strategy** explained that the strategy sets concrete priorities and actions with actionable goals and targets for economic imperatives such as employment rates, innovation, fighting poverty and social exclusion, sustainability, climate change and education. She stressed that, with the female employment rate currently at 62% across the EU Member States compared to a male employment rate of 74.5%, it is all hands on deck for Europe to reach the target of 75% regardless of gender. In fact, 13 Member States had already received recommendations about female employment such as the urgency to improve childcare, to tackle fiscal disincentives for women returning to work after maternity leave or to address the gender pay gap.

To her, the Europe2020 strategy is a real transformational agenda characterised by a holistic approach. Transformational because Europe needs leaders and leadership to make a sustained, collected effort towards change. In her view, leadership too often almost apologetically quotes various studies from the OECD or other renowned sources that prove that empowering women is necessary. Instead, leadership should boldly state that *course* women empowerment is necessary since they are 50% of the supply pool of potential skills.

Quote in text – after or near this para:

“I believe that ‘transformational’ and ‘holistic’ are two keywords for today’s discussion.”

Quotes in side box

Agnieszka Skuratowicz, Member of Cabinet to EU Commission of President Barroso

It is a simple fact that Europe’s ambitious goals for smart, green and inclusive growth cannot be achieved without women.

Empowering women in society makes me think of reflexology and Chinese massage: when your neck hurts they start with your foot.

As a Polish, I experience the issue on how to push forward the careers of people from new Member States first hand. I have to struggle daily for my seat close to the President of the European Commission because protocol services do not understand my role. They look at my grade, which is lower than in the system they used to work with before new Member States joined.

Change could be accelerated by an external factor. ICT or technology could be such agents of change as could education, quite similar to how oral contraception once changed the way women behaved in economic life. Education could in fact be a major trigger if Europe succeeded in giving girls and women the proper education early on and create the proper environment for them to stay in the field once they have acquired the skills.

The strategy is also holistic; it is based on a comprehensive approach that covers all areas and involves all levels of society including bottom-up levels.

Having read the previous recommendations Women2020 made and agreeing with them she concluded by introducing ‘mindset’ as the final keyword to make things happen. She added that promoting women in economic life is not only about women but also about gender. Gender is about men and women’s roles, about power and burden sharing, about intergenerational aspects, about economy, society and culture. It is also about choices and opportunities.

She feared that without a change in mindset opportunities would remain untapped. Or as Anne Marie Slaughter, President and CEO of the New America Foundation and Professor Emerita of Politics and International Affairs at Princeton University, had pointed out during one of her presentations in Brussels: even though European Member States have many more laws that support women in the workforce than any other continent, the European society is much more gender-balance unfriendly compared to the United States where such laws do not exist. Ms. Skuratowicz concluded that only the right mindset would prompt Europe to move from ‘Yes, we can’ to ‘Yes, we will’ or ‘Yes, we will try’.

Ms. Miller applauded her vision for Europe and said it was high time to connect to identify what works and what does not by analysing the vision for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and collecting bottom-up input to help change the mindset and create the culture needed to evoke change. In her role as Belgian contact point for the European Centre for Women in Technology she certainly hoped that technology could help impact this mindset.

Quote next to previous para:

“We need to avoid the phenomenon of a drop of water on a hot skillet.”

The segregated labour market

Britta Thomsen, Member of European Parliament, highlighted three aspects that could help towards the European goal of having 75% of all citizens on the labour market.

The segregated labour market

Britta Thomsen, Member of European Parliament, highlighted three aspects that could help towards the European goal of having 75% of all citizens on the labour market.

1. Remove obstacles for employed women

One of the biggest hindrances for women to enter the labour market after maternity leave remains the lack of day care. The issue varies across Member States with Scandinavian countries having almost full coverage, southern European countries having a lot of coverage by relying on private carers and other countries such as Germany having a tremendous problem. Another aspect is the disparity between maternity leave across the European Union. She explained that the European Parliament had prepared a Maternity Leave Directive that is now being contested by the Council of the European Union. The Member States agree on 20 weeks maternity leave – even if for some Member States like her home country Denmark it means a drastic reduction – but some object to the leave being with full pay. Sadly, this issue is handed over from one EU Presidency to the next so she could not say when the Directive would be passed.

2. Remove obstacles for women in leadership

She explained that the European Parliament would vote for a Directive to get more women on boards at the next meeting in the European Parliament in Strasbourg. The draft EU Directive – which was passed on [20 November 2013](#) (note from rapporteur) – would force companies listed on stock exchanges in the EU to have at least 40% of their non-executive directors be women. After the vote, the draft Directive that she personally considers one of the most important in the EU would also have to be endorsed by the Council of Ministers of the European Union.

Quote in text – near previous paragraph

“The Directive came about because research, and I mean a lot of research, shows that diversity breeds better company results. It directly affects the bottom line.”

She mentioned that some – probably those that had been competing with 48% of the population to obtain their chair who now felt threatened by having to compete with the full 100% – argue against the Directive because it would stimulate mediocrity. They use the scientifically flawed argument that the chair should go to the best person regardless of gender.

She pointed out that in science, and for the upcoming research programme Horizon 2020, it is important to look at all aspects of gender. Counting the number of female researchers in a project is not enough; the research itself should clearly address the gender aspect as well. Medicine, for example, works differently on men and women. So if only tested on a young man’s body, there should be no surprises if it has adverse effects on an older woman.

3. Remove obstacles for female entrepreneurs

Female entrepreneurship needs boosting because women do not start up enterprises at the same rate as men do. Only 8.3% of the patents belong to women. Only 20% of companies receiving venture capital and only 5 to 10% of the high tech companies are owned by women. Here too the economic benefit is clear since research shows that women are less prone to start projects with insecure income possibilities. However, she warned that it would be easy to blame women by thinking that if only they started businesses the problem would be solved. Other obstacles need to be considered as well. When she had her own company in Denmark, she conducted a survey on women in the knowledge economy that proved that it was far easier for men to get a loan from the bank. The survey also showed that female entrepreneurs would start businesses small with an initial investment of about 3000 euro whereas male entrepreneurs would start by using the family home as a guarantee for the bank loan.

Ms. Thomsen concluded that these factors prove that Europe – although it is more widespread in some Member States than in others – basically has a segregated labour market; one for men and one for women.

Quotes in side box

Britta Thomsen, Member of European Parliament

Even though today women make up 60% of all university graduates in the European Union and they get higher grades than their male counterparts; they still lack behind in employment rates and pay.

So why are so many against this Directive? Because men know that if there are only 8 chairs and 3 have to go to women, 3 men have to leave.

It is a simple fact that if you cannot find someone to take care of your children, you cannot work. Women have studied; the society and the market have invested in their education so why not invest in day care so that they can work?

It is a fact that men don’t listen... because they (don’t want to admit they) lose their hearing on average 10 years before women do.

The practitioners’ point of view

Before introducing the practitioners’ point of view, Cheryl Miller summed up the first half of the meeting by stating that if the female growth model, i.e. ventures that are less high risk, were presented as a core value for more sustainable and less volatile growth for Europe there would immediately be a place for more women in leadership and enterprise.

The road to diversity is paved with...

First, **Karin Ahl, President, Fiber to the Home Council Europe**, explained that her path to become President had been somewhat unusual. She started as a member of a working group and attended a conference on the great potential of fibre technology. Upon returning, she mentioned to her director that the organisation had great potential but focussed too much on technology. The technology already worked and just needed to find its way to the market. He encouraged her to get involved, she did and found that her view was embraced immediately.

During her first year as treasurer, she realised thanks to her background in policy and economics that what the organisation needed was not a technology shift but a comprehensive shift of how people perceived them. She ran for President and her election and that of other women had brought many new values to the member organisations since.

Ms. Ahl also explained that one of the main reasons for joining Women2020 was to find a solution for a problem she experienced in her organisation. Despite her personal involvement in mentoring programmes or on social media the fact still remains that men take part in working groups until they are promoted whereas women stay until they refuse promotion and drop out. She hoped that today’s debate would help her find out why this happens and how to solve it.

Quotes side box

Karin Ahl, President, Fiber to the Home Council Europe

Having so many women present today puts me outside of my comfort zone. When I speak at a conference on fibre throughout Europe, usually about 200 men and one woman attend.

When I was asked to run for President, my first reaction was a typical female one. ‘Of course not, what about my two young children and

Karin Ahl, President, Fiber to the Home Council Europe

Having so many women present today puts me outside of my comfort zone. When I speak at a conference on fibre throughout Europe, usually about 200 men and one woman attend.

When I was asked to run for President, my first reaction was a typical female one. 'Of course not, what about my two young children and my family?!' My friends were against it too. And you think Sweden is an equal country. Luckily my husband said 'Go for it, you don't get the question twice'. So I did. Two weeks later, another woman was elected for another Council. Two more women followed later on.

Although second practitioner, **Jaana Kajanmaa, Senior Director of Technical Services, Cisco** echoed the concern about women dropping out, she also broadened the definition of diversity since for Cisco diversity is a true business problem. She admitted that this might sound surprising from a profit making company, run by 90% men, for which business is going well. Cisco cares firstly because of basic mathematics, tapping into 50% of the workforce does not make sense, and secondly, because of the fact that diverse companies make better decisions. This was confirmed by Harvard Business Review in September <[linkhttp://hbr.org/2013/09/executive-summaries/ar/1](http://hbr.org/2013/09/executive-summaries/ar/1)> and by many scientific studies prior.

She shared a few observations for the group to reflect on. Fewer women start a technical or ICT education. Fewer female ICT graduates take up a career in ICT and when they do they take on non-technical roles.

Ms. Kajanmaa closed off by stating that it is unlikely to expect that the numbers will become 50-50 quickly but emphasized that diversity – even in smaller numbers – is highly attractive. Cisco has set up an internal talent pipeline to remedy the situation. She stressed that business development targeting male and female customers benefits from other aspects of diversity such as different cultures, religions, value systems, holidays etc. Finally, she explained that her main challenge now is to create a workforce that is sensitive to the diversity of the customer in all its aspects, not just gender.

Quotes in side box

Jaana Kajanmaa, Senior Director of Technical Services, Cisco

You cannot connect to customers if you cannot resonate the customer's background. Connecting to your customers means creating a group that gets used to the fact that some people have different accents, some wear high heels and others don't, some have Diwali and others have Christmas....

There are 6 million devices in the world. Mobile connectivity is growing with 10 000 connections every single day. About 50% of the users are female but not 50% of the designers are female.

Ms. Miller thanked both practitioners for sharing their points of view. She found 'getting people used to not seeing the same as what they know all the time' an interesting point of departure and a justification for diversification in the workforce. She related an anecdote about a man that told her "I don't hire men or women, I hire good people". She had answered that if he did not diversify "he would continue to gravitate towards what he knows only and miss out on the rest."

... a different workforce

Delving more deeply into building a culture of diversity, Ms. Miller introduced **Claire Godding, Diversity Manager, BNP Paribas Fortis**. Ms. Godding started a diversity initiative in BNP Paribas and became a leader on the issue in the financial sector.

An avid supporter of quota, she explained that of the 16 000 people in the bank sector in Belgium, for the first time, 50.7% are women. In senior management, women make up around 20%, in middle management 45%, and in management 28%. The group is now focussing on reaching the quota of 25% women in senior management positions by 2014.

She then pointed out two elements on which the quota discussion does not focus enough.

Firstly, the quota debate tends to dismiss the fact that quota is about having a better mix rather than fighting for more women. Homogenous management teams tend to be more prejudiced in general, not just against women. A gender mix inspires a higher degree of professionalism since diverse groups raise different questions and it is the Board of Directors' role to make questions flourish and answer them appropriately.

Secondly, the quota debate underestimates the importance of role models. When presented with the 'we hire the best, regardless of gender' argument she answers that ambitious people who do not see themselves reflected in the higher group will simply hide their ambition and go elsewhere.

Quotes in side box

Claire Godding, Diversity Manager, BNP Paribas Fortis

A group of men with a similar education and from a similar geographic background will most likely not be open to someone with a different accent or sexual orientation.

As to the argument of 'we hire the best', I say: "Imagine you are entering a new company and you discover that the three top levels are green aliens that speak a different language. What are your chances to remain at this company and become part of that group? How would you feel?" Then they understand.

Ms. Miller hoped that she would get around to asking the men present more about the fear factor surrounding quota. She admitted that it is very comfortable to opt for status quo but wondered where you go as a man if quota are introduced.

... inclusive leadership

Christel Verschaeren, Vice President, CIO Organization Europe, Global Change Management, IBM Europe had never been engaged in gender issues until she was asked to become the general assistant of the director, a position that you normally cannot refuse. However, as a single mother with a young daughter she felt refusing was her only option. To her surprise, the director asked what she needed to accept the position. She listed a number of practicalities and created a positive precedent for the company overall.

Ms. Verschaeren stressed that what shocked her was that she had never thought about the question herself. She had just dismissed the opportunity altogether.

To her, including women is about creating an ecosystem that fosters sustainability enabled through technology. The key to inclusive growth is inclusive leadership, the right balance of skills, competences and talent, at any level. Female leadership is typically about collaboration, listening to everyone, looking for win-win situations and looking at the broader picture. A company looking for that balance will definitely find the challenge worthwhile. Particularly because there are more female decision-makers among their clients as well, an aspect that cannot be ignored.

She fully agreed with the importance of creating a different mindset and listed the strategies she had implemented at IBM to accomplish that. She had first launched a top-level development programmes to create the environment for women to grow. Management training had been a second important part of the programme which included diversity and assertivity trainings as well. She stressed that trainings are only effective if they are followed by coaching and if the lessons learned are embedded in standard processes such as salary increases or reporting processes. Only then is the training validated, the trainee awarded and the mindset changed.

She also endorsed the significance of role models. Role models can be important mentors, particularly if they are cross-company (e.g. from a client) and therefore not biased by one company culture. IBM had asked female senior executives to write a letter to their younger selves. This turned out to be a powerful inspirational tool for women.

coaching and if the lessons learned are embedded in standard processes such as salary increases or reporting processes. Only then is the training validated, the trainee awarded and the mindset changed.

She also endorsed the significance of role models. Role models can be important mentors, particularly if they are cross-company (e.g. from a client) and therefore not biased by one company culture. IBM had asked female senior executives to write a letter to their younger selves. This turned out to be a powerful inspirational tool for women.

Finally, Ms. Verschaeren addressed a change in women's personal mindset. Women need to step up and decide what they want as an individual instead of just answering to what mentoring or their environment wants. Once their personal ambitions are clear, the rest – the commute, children, family duties and so on – is a matter of organisation. Too often women stop themselves by saying they cannot do it in advance. They need to learn to make their achievements visible without feeling they are overselling or boasting.

Quote in text

"Developing a career is like climbing a mountain. Sometimes you have to pull someone up, sometimes you need to be pulled up. You have to want to climb the mountain. There is nothing wrong with setting up basecamp and staying there. One thing you should never do, however, is carry dead weight."

Quotes in sidebox

There is a lack of skills and competences in sales, marketing and technical positions and ignoring 50% of the talent pool would be crazy.

Sometimes I had to wake them up and ask them about their daughters to get through the resistance I felt in the boardroom.

It is important to have a flexible workload. We have more and more men who ask to work 80%.

... an organisational campaign

Cheryl Miller applauded the practitioners' insight, practical advice and helicopter perspective and hoped that some of the insights would be reflected in the diversity campaign that **Therese Betchov, Senior HR and Staff Development Professional, Diversity Lead, UN International Telecoms Union (ITU)** was about to present.

Ms. Betchov stressed that the ITU, whose gender advocates Dr. Hamadoun I. Touré and Doreen Bogdan had previously taken part in a Women2020 gathering, has diversity opportunities other companies may not have since they have a large influx of diverse geographic and cultural backgrounds. She introduced the Gender Equality and Mainstream (GEM) Policy endorsed by the 48 ITU Member States in June 2013 with the operational aspects now to be covered by separate action plans.

She emphasized that operationalising such a strategy is really a global change management agenda. The gender policy will become a properly propagated policy, implemented identically to an HR strategy or any other policy.

Ms. Betchov shared the following interpretations for any business thinking of developing a similar strategy:

- Staff composition: Look at recruitment and distribution, not merely by focussing on how many staff members you have but by focussing on what the trends are and by institutionalising the statistics. It is important to look at the pipeline and if it is too thin, quota may not be a solution but, for example, including the top female candidate in any selection list of the pre-final phase could be.
- Management style: Organisational culture is about embedding your values in the workforce. Think of behaviours that reflect the company success. Present a roadmap on how people become part of these behaviours.
- Decision-making process: Think of inclusiveness. Be conscious of women in the room and whether they spoke or were invited to speak.
- Programmes and services: Outreach needs to be inclusive and the impact on a diverse population assessed. English, for example, is a fairly gender-neutral language but other languages are not, how does your company deal with that?
When developing communication campaigns, reflect on whether the layout and photos used are gender-balanced.
- Governance composition: Consider changing the constitution if required.

Ms. Betchov concluded that, in her opinion, changing the culture is about leadership, about looking at success in the most diverse way and about creating advocates that carry that same message forward.

Quotes in side box

Therese Betchov, Senior HR and Staff Development Professional, Diversity Lead, UN International Telecoms Union (ITU)

I once did a test with brochures addressing students about online security to see what type would be selected by girls based on the cover photo. Lo and behold, the female candidates would all chose brochures with women in the cover photo.

Step back and see the problem. Often there is a highly competent female doing the job but she isn't up there because she doesn't have the grade.

... successful role models

Cheryl Miller zoomed in on the notion of success by asking the last panellist of the day, **Anne Bouverot, GSMA Director General**, if she felt successful and if she could share her vision with women who wanted to use her story as a benchmark.

Anne Bouverot immediately rose to the challenge by stating that she does feel successful but with that, she emphasised, comes a responsibility to speak up and help other women.

When she joined the GSMA was quite balanced overall although the top level were all male and all from the UK and the US. The Board of 25 members were all men with a larger geographic diversity. Her original team is still performing well and she has since hired a female chief strategy officer from Korea and a Chinese man as a business manager to bring more cultural diversity.

Ms. Bouverot also pointed out that the mobile sector's jobs directly contribute to the economy and more jobs could be created if more women were found. GSMA also profiles women in its communications materials and profiles them as speakers or workshop leaders at international corporate events. The latter is not easy because women tend to decline more than men do.

She agreed with previous speakers that role models are extremely important. To that end, GSMA organised Connected Women events focussing on women in the mobile industry.

Quotes in side box

Anne Bouverot, GSMA Director General

The mobile sector helps people juggle their personal and professional lives regardless of gender.

I was with my 3 year old son in London and as we were passing by a statue of Queen Victoria I explained to him that the UK does not have a president but has a queen. He promptly concluded "So the UK the queen can announce that she's been king" It is that simple!

Anne Bouverot, GSMA Director General

The mobile sector helps people juggle their personal and professional lives regardless of gender.

I was with my 3 year old son in London and as we were passing by a statue of Queen Victoria I explained to him that the UK does not have a president but has a queen. He promptly concluded: "In the UK the women are queens and they don't have kings." It is that quick! Role models are important!

Continuing her provocative streak as a moderator, **Cheryl Miller, Executive Director of Zen Digital Europe and Founder of Women2020** put the men present on the spot by asking them to react on what they had heard.

... better decision-making

John Doyle, Policy Officer, DG CONNECT, European Commission applauded the event, which from his point of view only missed one important key point: the notion of better decision-making, particularly in the public sector.

He stressed that there is no reason why decision-makers should not go for diversity; they see the effect on the bottom line. In his opinion, the financial services crash – a testosterone-driven lunacy as he called it – and the feminisation of education which deprives children of male role models in teaching are two blindingly obvious examples of why diversity matters. In both cases, better decision-making would have prevented a lot of trouble.

He admitted that diversity is not always the most comfortable option but feared that in times of crisis decision-makers tend to revert to a 'large ape leader'-mentality whereby "people just follow 'the gorilla' that makes the most noise".

With that in mind, he thought it would be a mistake to wait until women trickle up and he strongly argued for quota.

Quotes in side box:

John Doyle, Policy Officer, DG CONNECT, European Commission

What distinguishes the human animal from the other great apes is that we can make complex and different decisions. Apes just pick the biggest ape as a leader and follow it. Diversity is why we are strong; it is not an option, it is a must!

I don't have the slightest fear that if you remove 50% of the working men and replace them with any random woman on the street, the decisions would be better! And make a few children day care centres on the empty male floors!

... self-awareness

Wesley Himes, Managing Partner, Policy Action found the event extremely eye opening. His personal insight was that men struggle with self-awareness to some extent. The 'I hire the best' response seems a neutral statement at first. However, the rebuttal 'you are not dealing with the context' may sound accusatory to men and create a negative dynamic to the discussion. Whereas if men are made self-aware that they may have - not purposefully of course - that bias they would be more open to more complex decision-making.

Quotes in side box

Wesley Himes, Managing Partner, Policy Action

I am not a quota guy. I think it is a sledgehammer to a nut. I think we could look at the affirmative action experience from the US and look at that methodology to see what we can apply.

Thanking Women2020 for a fantastic session, **Martin Whitehead, Director, GSMA Europe** pointed out that self-awareness can also be triggered by external people. Bringing the meeting full circle, he referred to his inspirational daughters. They are in turn inspired by an external factor: <link><http://greenlightforgirls.org/> Greenlightforgirls, an organisation that makes science attractive for young women. He stressed that it is incredibly important for all young people to be inspired and motivated and - more importantly – for them to be *ready* to be inspired and motivated. He is convinced that this energy feeds the motivation that will drive a different dynamic in the future.

Finally, he remarked that it is incredibly important to hear the grassroots discussions to be reminded that it is too easy to be complacent.

Cheryl Miller, Executive Director of Zen Digital Europe and Founder of Women2020 concluded the meeting by pointing out that she had started Greenlight for Girls and it had inspired her to bring on more initiatives – such as Women2020 – that feed the leaky pipeline early on and also later in life.