



Foment del Treball, Barcelona  
9th June 2016

### About the Final Conference:

The **She Decides, You Succeed Final Conference** was co-organized by the *Association of Organizations of Mediterranean Businesswomen (AFAEMME)* and the *Comissió Dona i Empresa* of *Foment del Treball* with the support of the European partner organizations involved in the project: the *Centre for Inclusive Leadership (CFIL)*, *Associazione Imprenditrici e Donne Dirigenti d'Azienda (AIDDA)*, the *Women's Economy (WE)*, the *European Women Inventors & Innovators Network of Bawe (EUWIIN)*, the *Women's NGOs Cooperation Network of Latvia (LSOST)*, *Asociata Femei in Afaceri (AFEI)*, the *European Association for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology (WITEC)* and the *Organización de Mujeres Empresarias y de Gerencia Activa (OMEGA)*.

The Conference explored the conclusions and the results of the project on encouraging companies to actively promote the access of women to decision-making positions through highlighting the importance and benefits of having a better gender balance in the different areas of responsibility in the company.

### THREE MAIN PANELS:

- 1- Welcome and Opening
- 2- Accelerating Business Growth by Gender Balance in Decision-making Real Outcomes of "She Decides, You Succeed"
- 3- Women Leaders and Private Companies



From left: Ms. Pitarch, Mr. Gay de Montellá, Ms.de Felipe, Mr. Tarradellas Espuny



Ms. de Felipe

## 1- WELCOME AND OPENING SESSION

- Ms. de Felipe Lehtonen  
*President of AFAEMME*
- Mr. Joaquín Gay de Montellá Ferrer-Vidal  
*President of Foment del Treball (Catalan Employers Organization)*
- Ms. Teresa Maria Pitarch i Albós  
*President of Institut Català de les Dones*
- Mr. Ferran Taradellas Espuny  
*Head of the European Commission Representation in Barcelona*

**Ms. de Felipe Lehtonen** welcomed the group and spoke on the overall project design, and **Mr. Gay de Montellá Ferrer-Vidal** explained the role that Foment del Treball has played in empowering Spanish women in the business world. He outlined particular challenges that impede women's success in business, such as lack of confidence, cultural barriers, and limited access to finance and corporate networks. **Ms. Pitarch I Albós** spoke on the goal within the Catalán Women's Institute to inform the public about the benefits of including

women in company boards and highlighted the fact that men are two times more likely to be found in management positions than women. Finally, **Mr. Tarradellas Espuny** noted that the EU wants to utilize better female talent and that to do so, a comprehensive approach is needed. While some steps have been taken, barriers remain and women in general work fewer hours, receive lower wages, and are concentrated in sectors characterized by lower pay.

## 2- ACCELERATING BUSINESS GROWTH BY GENDER BALANCE IN DECISION-MAKING

### REAL OUTCOMES OF "SHE DECIDES, YOU SUCCEED"



*Ms. van Eekelen*

- Ms. Mirella Visser  
*Managing Director of the Centre for Inclusive Leadership (CFIL)*
- Ms. Tatijana Hine  
*Member of European Women Inventors & Innovators Network International (EUWIIN)*
- Ms. Margarita Artal  
*General Secretary of the European Association for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology (WITEC)*
- Ms. Caro van Eekelen  
*Senior Vice President Talent & Culture Transformation of Accor Group Worldwide*

A second session in which the authors of the research developed during the first year of the project started a **debate about women’s presence in top management, ICT and Innovative Companies**.

The session focused on women’s presence in top management, ICT and Innovative companies in the five countries studied (Italy, Latvia, Romania, Spain and UK) and illustrated the results from research elaborated in the framework of the project. **Ms. Artal** spoke specifically on the situations found in these five countries. Romania had a surprisingly high quantity of female entrepreneurs and women in IT fields. Italy and Spain however, presented a respectable number of women in business, but they were located mostly in positions of middle management as opposed to the top level of decision-making. The UK was a mixed situation, despite having worked on gender balance. In general, women are found in social companies instead of tech-related ones, and while there has been progress the situation is still far from gender equality. **Ms. Hine** followed with a speech including data on the great economic benefits of incorporating women in company boards. She also mentioned in particular that women in the UK are generally against quota laws, feeling that there must be a more natural way to achieve gender parity.



Ms. Artal



Ms. Visser



Ms. Hine

**Ms. Visser** described the women situation in top management as a *chicken & egg situation*: to get women on boards we need more women CEOs, but to get more women CEOs we need more women on boards to populate these positions, we need to build a better pipeline. In addition, she commented specifically on the legal situation in Italy and Latvia, and noted as how government programs are more effective when backed by concrete sanctions. She also highlighted the importance of the quality controller role in the project’s unfolding, as companies were swayed by the inclusion of practical arguments instead of solely academic ones. The final speaker was **Ms. van Eekelen**, who explained the gender issues within the company and actions they have taken towards a greater gender balance. She remarked on Accor Hotels’ impressive goal to reach 35% female general managers by 2017. She also emphasized that diversity is more far-reaching than just the male-female dichotomy and advised that women make themselves more visible in the business world, taking action without fear. This session also included a screening of “The Seven Benefits”, a short video created by **Ms. Britt Albers**

which illustrates visually the advantages of promoting women to top management. Following the panel, there was a Question & Answer session with the audience where various pieces of advice were presented, both from panelists and from attendees. It was suggested that young students should be encouraged to stretch their perceived boundaries from an early age, especially in academics where they are sometimes instructed to just statically absorb information from the teachers. The importance of choosing a supportive partner was also mentioned. Interestingly, it was also advised that a woman who finds herself up against a glass ceiling should not attempt to break her way through it; instead, she should just move on until she finds an environment conducive to her success. Finally, women were encouraged to step forward in the office and openly demonstrate their skills, as well as to look for passion in their careers so as to make their professional journey one of continuous learning.

### 3- WOMEN LEADERS AND PRIVATE COMPANIES

- Ms. Inete Ielite  
*Chair of the Board Women's NGOs  
Cooperation Network of Latvia (LSOST)*
- Ms. Alice Botnarencu  
*President of Femei in Afaceri (Women in  
Business Romania)*
- Ms. Sally Arkley  
*Director of the Women's Economy (WE)*
- Ms. Franca Audisio  
*President of Associazione Imprenditrici e  
Donne Dirigenti d'Azienda (AIDDA)*
- Ms. Daniela Valente  
*AIDDA Woman Leader*
- Mr. Hermógenes del Real Álvarez  
*Representative of Organizacion de Mujeres  
Empresarias y Gerencia Activa (OMEGA)*
- Ms. Lorente Ozcariz  
*OMEGA Woman Leader*

The final panel focused on the **150 meetings with private companies** which were **done by Women Leaders in the framework of the project**. **Ms. Ielite** pointed out that Finland and Latvia have a higher number of women on boards, and that this is correlated with a strong presence of women in politics in these countries. She also commented that the historical trend of women only taking responsibility when men are away at war for example needs to change; women can and should be strong even when men are around.

**Ms. Botnarencu** spoke next on the surprising difficulty she encountered when trying to organize the meetings with private companies. In addition, she was surprised and disappointed



that while most HR departments were conscious of the benefits of including women, the companies still had made no plans for change. **Mr. del Real Álvarez** followed, explaining that women are present in both health and education sectors, but not politics. He also noted that the biggest problem for women is self-confidence, whereas men struggle with team building. **Ms. Lorente** noted that while women are in general more innovative, fear prevents people from accepting diversity. She ended her speech with the empowering phrase that the “future is written with the F for feminine.” **Ms. Arkley** spoke next on the project experience in the UK and how small companies in the UK have both awareness surrounding and interest in gender equality. She mentioned the initiative Think, Act & Report, which encourages corporations to collect data; this is more appealing to larger corporations because it will improve their public image. However despite this ‘interest’ of large companies, Ms. Arkley noted that gender issues in these same countries tend to be sent to the most junior women in the HR department. Ms. Arkley also explained that it was found during the project that women-owned businesses in the UK found it was difficult to raise finances and that they felt additional pressure from the banks to incorporate more men on the board. In terms of the women with which they interacted, Ms. Arkley’s team noticed that Caribbean women were the most entrepreneurial overall. To end her portion of the panel, Ms. Arkley left the audience with the thought that “we’re halfway there; we’ve made the case to the businesses, but now need to make the case to ourselves.” **Ms. Audisio** and **Ms. Valente**, finished the panel discussion with a commentary on the fact that bureaucracy can be discouraging to companies who wish to employ best practices. For example, Ms. Valente explained that business would build childcare facilities, but they abandon these types of initiatives after finding that bureaucratic hoops make the process too complicated. This absence of state level support hinders companies’ progress in incorporating gender-equalizing measures.



*Ms. Ielite and Ms. Arkley*



*Ms. Audisio and Ms. Vlaicu*



*Ms. Botnarenco and Ms. van Eekelen*

## CONCLUSIONS

During the conference the unequal representation of women in decision-making positions and economic leadership roles, as well as the lack of information on the importance and the benefits of having a greater gender-balance in economic decision-making positions, were reaffirmed. Both private companies and the general population are generally unaware of the potential of women to participate in economic decision-making and of the loss of opportunities and talent which this attitude causes.

Gender balance is still not fully present and it has been confirmed by results coming from the study conducted with the 150 companies involved in the project.

The results of these meetings were illuminating: despite the fact that 44% of the companies' personnel are women, **the number of women decreases systematically when ascending the decision-making ladder.** A 33% of women held middle-low positions, 24% positions of middle management, and only 8% held directive positions and leadership roles. Clearly, the actual situation is one still far from gender equality.

Analyzing the size of the investigated companies (with a classification of small, medium, or large), it is observed that **the majority of companies with women in decision-making positions are those that are medium-sized.**

In regards to the companies with women in top management, **73%** are medium-sized. Only 20% are large and only 7% small.



*Ms. Artal, Ms. Visser, Ms. Hine and Ms. van Eekelen*



*Ms. Grinda and Ms. Lorente*



*Mr. del Real Álvarez, Ms. Álvarez, Ms. Ielite,  
Ms. Arkley, Ms. Audisio*



*Ms. Botnarenco and Ms. Fdez-Tubau*

SMEs are also those which tend to be intrinsically motivated to improve the working conditions of women and to deconstruct the barriers preventing their professional development. A **65% of the best practices** and corporate policies in this topic were **applied voluntarily by SMEs**.

**Occupational segregation exists in terms of gender, but there is a clear increase of women in the ICT sector.**

Businesses within the ICT sector are incorporating more and more women into the management positions of their organizations. Of the 19 technology and innovation companies involved in the project, 73.68% have women in top management positions. In fact, 42.11% of the businesses have one or more women in their Board of Directors, and 36.84% are headed by a female CEO or General Director.

Spreading the information surrounding benefits for companies with women in top management could create a spillover effect with new corporate policy; this could lead to better gender equality in companies.



*From left: Ms. Hine, Ms. Álvarez, Ms. Audisio, Ms. Pitarch, Ms. Arkley, Ms. Fdez.-Tubau, Mr. Gay de Montellá Ferrer-Vidal, Ms. de Felipe Lehtonen, Ms. Ielite, Ms. Lorente, Ms. Grinda, Mr. Tarradellas Espuny, Ms. Botnarenco, Ms. Visser, Mr. del Real Álvarez*