



WOMEN IN EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT 2010

THE EUROPEAN TRAINING FOUNDATION

IS THE EUROPEAN UNION'S CENTRE OF EXPERTISE SUPPORTING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING REFORM IN THIRD COUNTRIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EU EXTERNAL RELATIONS PROGRAMME.

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Foreword

Education and training are among the fundamental areas where gender adjustments are needed. Today, almost two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults are women. Excluding girls and women from education increases their vulnerability and affects their participation in civil and political life.

Even in today's Europe, a lack of proper education can compromise the autonomy of women. Research covering

transition periods in the Western Balkans shows this. Women who lost their jobs and had no other financial resources often became fully dependent on their husbands. Others got caught up in prostitution. Only in the last few years, women's centres, external associations and vocational programmes have been re-established to teach women to take matters into their own hands.

We have in education a powerful tool to right this wrong if we use it to instil in young people the principles of equality. And if we use it, to provide women with the tools they need for self-help and empowerment through social and economic independence.

To initiate a dialogue with our colleagues in the partner countries who work with gender mainstreaming in education and training was one of the reasons we convened the conference in Turin, Italy on the eve of the International Women's Day 2006. We have tried to give this conference a dynamic profile by inviting a broad group of young men and women representing women's business associations, students, researchers and NGOs.

Similarly, responsibility for organising the conference was given to younger members of ETF staff; of these, a special mention is due to Agnes Flak for her hard work and tireless commitment to getting the conference off the ground. The format chosen was a dynamic one, putting the accent on the personal as well as the professional and allowing time for informal discussions in small groups and brainstorming sessions as well as the more conventional plenaries and presentations. In addition, prior to the conference, ETF had launched an essay competition where we asked people aged 18 to 29 from our partner countries to tell us about their image of women in education and employment in 2010.





Our hope was that both the conference and competition participants would invest their energy, courage and expertise in helping us to develop a vision for women in education and employment in 2010 and in making recommendations on how to turn this vision into reality, especially in our neighbouring countries.

As the following pages illustrate, they have done just that. They reassured us that governments have to realise that training women to find a job, to set up their own businesses, to help each other and become independent are the best ways to protect them from abuse and trafficking. Organisations involved in shaping government policies and national educational programs must keep gender mainstreaming as a crucial factor on the agenda. We have to enhance institutional mechanisms in order to implement the gender-sensitive educational reforms put in place over the past decade. Equally, we have to push for a gender perspective in all policies and programmes yet to be developed.

I genuinely hope that both the conference and this publication are the start of a much closer, more fruitful and mutually beneficial cooperation in the years ahead both between the ETF and the individuals or organisations who strive to put gender equality on their country's agenda and between educators, employers and women's associations in the countries themselves.

Dr Muriel Dunbar
Director
European Training Foundation (ETF)

Introduction

On 6 and 7 March 2006, seventy young women and men from 24 countries came to Turin to celebrate the eve of International Women's Day with the European Training Foundation and attend the ETF's first conference entirely devoted to gender issues. The title of the conference was Women in Education and Employment 2010. The idea was to look at how education and training can enhance the status of women in society and in the labour market.

Education is a powerful tool for reducing inequality as it can give people the ability to take control of their lives. Women, who may come across discrimination in many spheres, have a particular need for this. In the words of Shirin Ebadi, 2003 Nobel Prize winner and leading campaigner for the rights of women and children in Iran, "knowledge is a window to freedom. An educated woman will not put up with oppression."

Some progress, but not enough

However today we are still far from giving women an equal chance of an education. In many societies, families may be reluctant to send their female children to school and girls are often the first to be taken out of school if the money for school fees becomes scarce. The textbooks and curricula used in schools can often serve to reinforce traditional ideas of women as mothers and homemakers rather than active, equal participants in public life. Even in those societies where the issue of equal access to education has been more or less resolved, many female students still tend to study those subjects which lead to careers with lower pay and less status than their male counterparts.

In the labour market, women have taken big steps forward, but full equality continues to elude them. Even in the most advanced countries, the gap between men's and women's earnings is proving difficult to eradicate and women crowd the lower ranks of different trades and professions but are strangely absent at the top. The lack of childcare and the failure to achieve a fairer sharing out of domestic work too often means a woman's right to work has become a woman's right to work a double shift. More change is needed.

One way of bringing about change is by ensuring that women are present and able to take decisions in all areas of public life. Nowhere is this more important than in the political arena. While the fact of being a woman does not automatically make a female politician supportive of women's



rights, “a high representation of women in politics is always good for gender politics,” says Dutch academic Mieke Verloo. Here there has been progress, but nowhere near enough. At the end of 2005, women accounted for 16.3% of parliamentarians around the world, up from 15.7% in December 2004 and 11.3% in 1995, according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union. This figure masks big differences between regions. Nordic countries lead the way with 40% of women deputies while Arab countries are at the other extreme with an average of 8%.



Placing gender at the heart of its activities

Since its foundation the ETF has striven to serve both women and men in the partner countries with whom it works. This is in line with the European Union’s long-standing commitment to equal rights for women and men enshrined in the Treaty of Rome since 1957. However it is only more recently that the ETF has decided to take a more active stance on gender equality. In 2005, the ETF set up a working group which aims to place gender at the heart of the ETF’s work. It has drawn up guidelines on how ETF staff can integrate a gender perspective into their daily work by actions such as using data which breaks down by sex and ensuring there is a balanced representation of women and men wherever possible. In this way the ETF hopes to make gender mainstreaming an essential ingredient of new projects and their implementation in the field.

A wealth of new ideas for action

Organising a conference on gender is another part of this commitment. Doing so was a departure for the ETF in more ways than one. It was decided to invite participants aged between 20 and 35, giving a younger profile than is

usually the case at ETF events. In this way, the ETF hoped to encourage a lively debate and generate a wealth of new ideas for action to feed into its work in Turin and in the field. It was hoped the participants would benefit from useful pointers and suggestions to put into practice in their daily work as well as the chance to network with colleagues from around the world.

In the event, these expectations were more than met and the ETF has decided to produce this brochure as a permanent record of those two days of intense debate and exchange. At the request of Anna Záborská, chair of the European Parliament’s Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality, the ETF presented the recommendations of the conference to the Parliament in May 2006.



Pour quelques questions

Qu

Vous êtes marié?

Non, célibataire.

Vous avez quel

Making sure women have an equal chance of an education

Women are far more likely to get a decent education these days than was the case thirty or forty years ago. What is more, progress in narrowing the gender gap has been greatest in those countries which were previously furthest behind. In the 1960s, women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) ranked far behind their counterparts in Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia and Latin America in terms of educational achievement, according to the United Nations Development Fund for Women. Today, due to sustained efforts to improve access, most MENA countries have either eliminated this gap or are moving towards this goal at a fast pace.

However the situation varies a great deal from one country to the next. In a minority of the partner countries of the European Training Foundation, girls' participation in education still lags far behind that of boys. In the majority, equality of access is no longer such a problem and other issues such as how many young women manage to complete their education or what subjects they tend to study have come to the fore.

The ETF recently commissioned four studies on what is being done to “engender” education and employment in Morocco, Jordan, Serbia and Turkey. Each illustrates a different aspect of the issues involved in achieving gender equality in education. Mieke Verloo, co-author of the studies and lecturer in gender studies at Nijmegen’s Radboud University in the Netherlands, presented a summary of each to the delegates as a way of fuelling the debate.

The gender equation in four countries

In Morocco, women are still far from enjoying equal access to education; indicators show that only 55% of girls finish primary education as opposed to 67% of boys. In the adult population, the disparities are even greater. In spite of considerable efforts to boost adult literacy by the Moroccan government and NGOs during the 1990s, almost 64% of Moroccan women are currently illiterate compared to 38% of men.

Turkey has shown a strong political commitment to education for women since the republic was founded in 1923. This has been reflected in continued increases in literacy and





who tend to get the higher degrees. However the Serbian education system has one characteristic common to many countries, namely a high degree of segregation in the subjects studied by males and females. "This is something seen all over Europe," says Dr Verloo, "women tend to cluster in those "soft" subjects where job prospects are poorest." The Serbian authorities are now moving to tackle a second problem; the strong gender stereotypes commonly found in school textbooks.

enrolment rates for women over time and women now consistently outperform men at all levels of the education system. But other factors such as regional or urban/rural divides and high rates of migration to the cities still condition women's access to an education. This, together with a strong patriarchal culture, means Turkey is still some way from achieving real gender equality in education.

Jordan has been extremely successful in narrowing the gender gap in education, but has had much less success in the labour market. Indeed Jordanian women only make up between 15%-25% of the labour force, one of the lowest participation rates in the region.

"Jordan provides a striking paradox," says Dr Verloo, "it goes to show that improving gender equality in education does not automatically lead to better prospects for women in employment."

Serbia has achieved a reasonable degree of equality in the numbers of girls and boys attending its primary and secondary schools, although rates of completion are less equal. At universities, the participation rates for female students are high, although it is males

A gender-blind approach will not work

Many factors can work against women's chances of an education and these can vary from country to country. Finding solutions is no easy matter. A country's constitution will usually include some affirmations about the equality of all of its citizens, but the situation on the ground is often far from these ideals. However many governments are reluctant to admit that a problem of inequality exists, even though, in the case of women, this discrimination may affect half the population.

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If the information gathering services in a given country do not collect data in such a way that it can be broken down according to gender, such as the number of girls completing secondary education compared to boys, then it is harder for pressure groups to back up their calls for action. "One of our problems in Arab countries is that when you talk to the leaders, all of them say our law makes no distinction between girls and boys so there is no difference," says Mostefa

Shirin Ebadi: Women are the last group to enjoy democracy



Until she attended a seminar in Finland last year, the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize Winner Shirin Ebadi was under the impression that women in Northern Europe had managed to achieve a reasonable degree of equality with men. At the seminar, the lawyer and human rights campaigner from Iran was given a badge which showed a euro coin with a quarter cut away. The badge was a symbol of the fact that Finnish women still earn on average a quarter less than Finnish men. "This made me see that women suffer discrimination in Northern Europe just as they do in Muslim countries," she says, "I wore the badge for the whole of the event."

Dr Ebadi believes that the discrimination women face in all countries without exception means they are last group in the world to enjoy full democracy. "Working women still bear a double responsibility, their public role at work and their private role at home, so they have less chance to use their opportunities than men," she says.

Education must help women find work

Dr Ebadi is a firm believer in the need for women to be educated as she states that "an educated woman will not put up with oppression." In her native Iran, women have made so much progress in this respect that they now make up more than 65% of university graduates. However this achievement does not translate into a similar success on the labour market as Iranian women are three times as likely to be unemployed than men. "Although education can play a big role in empowering women, if it doesn't facilitate finding work, it just becomes a luxury," she says.

Governments should also think carefully about how labour law can affect women's job prospects. In Iran, new mothers have the right to three months maternity leave and workplaces which employ more than ten women are obliged to provide nursery provision. However the government expects employers to bear the full cost of these facilities and this makes many employers reluctant to employ women. "Laws that were designed to protect women are actually having the opposite effect," says Dr Ebadi.

Firsthand experience of discrimination

Shirin Ebadi knows plenty about discrimination from her own life experience. In 1969 she became Iran's first female judge and later became president of bench 24 of Tehran's city court. In 1979, in the wake of the Iranian revolution, Dr Ebadi and her female colleagues were dismissed from their posts and given clerical duties due to the belief that women could not be judges under Islam. Dr Ebadi's application to practice law was turned down and she was unable to work for several years until she managed to obtain a licence to begin private practice in 1992. She has since become one of the most respected voices of Iran's reformist movement and has taken on many of the country's most politically-sensitive cases, sometimes at personal risk to herself.

These days Dr Ebadi is reasonably optimistic about the situation of women in Iran. Although she stresses much has still to be done, she points to the achievements of the Iranian feminist movement which in recent years has campaigned for and won changes in the law giving women more rights in divorce and inheritance.



Poverty and unsafe conditions keep girls out of school

Economics as well as legislation has a direct bearing on women's chances of getting an education. If a family cannot afford to send all of its children to school, it is often the girls who are kept behind. In rural areas, this problem can be made worse if schools are a long way from children's homes. "Women in rural areas of Kosovo are not in a good position," says Mirlinda Kusari, president of women's business association SHE-ERA in Gjakova, Kosovo, "they do elementary education and some of them finish secondary school, but very few make it to higher education. Some families support the women, but in poorer families, priority is usually given to the boys." Since 1999, the situation has been improving, says Kusari, as people are becoming more open-minded and many are changing their lifestyles completely by migrating to urban areas.

Unstable conditions can also affect the equation. According to Albania's National Institute of Statistics, illiteracy rates for men and women have increased in recent years but for different reasons. Many young men are leaving school early to either become breadwinners for their family at home or

Boudiaf, who acts as the Gender Focal Point of Employment and Skills Development at the ILO's International Training Centre in Turin. "Their intentions are good, but this attitude is counter-productive because it does not address the disparity between girls and boys in schooling," he adds.

A gender-blind approach often makes politicians reluctant to adopt special measures to ensure the inclusion of women. Similarly, politicians may not take on board the fact that changes in legislation will often affect men and women differently. "If you reorganise education so that people have to pay for it, you immediately know that poorer people will be excluded and that you are building in an immediate gender bias because people are less willing to spend money on girls' education," says Mieke Verloo. She believes that a gender perspective must be included at all levels of administration if equality is to be achieved. This should include not only designing policy but also monitoring its effectiveness. "It is important that civil servants are trained to spot the gender aspect of things, but this is not usually the case," she says, "this kind of expertise is not usually considered important within state hierarchies."

'A gender-blind approach often makes politicians reluctant to adopt special measures to ensure the inclusion of women. Similarly, politicians may not take on board the fact that changes in legislation will often affect men and women differently...'

Albania: Challenging times for women

The legal standing of women in Albania has improved substantially over the past fifteen years, but difficult economic and social conditions mean this has yet to produce much improvement in women's daily lives.

The Albanian government has ratified several international conventions on women's rights and a new constitution, a new family court and a law on gender equality have made domestic law much more women-friendly, according to Eglantina Gjermeni, director of the Gender Alliance for Development Centre in Tirana.

However Albania's economic transition is proving painful. "In the early 1990s, there was a very high level of unemployment and poverty," says Gjermeni, "domestic violence shot up and trafficking started to become a problem." Even today when factories close down or reduce their workforce, women tend to bear the brunt. Many women working in the private sector do so without contracts or social protection. The public sector has a formal commitment to equal pay, but Gjermeni reports a kind of hidden discrimination. "Men are at the highest levels of decision-making, they are the ministers, company directors and university rectors," she says, "as they are at the top, they get paid more."

Education for women a strong value in Albania

In rural areas, traditional attitudes and long distances between schools and homes can work against young women's chance of an education. All is not doom and gloom however. Albanian society does appreciate education for women, says Gjermeni. "This is a deep value in our society," she says, "under communism, women were educated as

well as men so when the transition came we were already well-educated." Today more Albanian women graduate from university than men.

The Gender Alliance for Development Centre has recently helped the Albanian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs review its strategy on employment and is pleased to have introduced a dose of gender sensitivity.

"Our emphasis will now be on pressuring the government to implement it and back it up with a proper budget," says Gjermeni. She is convinced that gender-sensitive policies can make a difference and believes that moves to support women entrepreneurs should be a priority. "We need to encourage women to set up business networks or pool their resources," she says, "we are often reluctant to set up co-operatives because of the socialist period, but I think this can really help."



‘Social pressures and fixed ideas of what is appropriate for women have a big influence on gender equality in education everywhere. Young women may lack positive role models...’

to move abroad in search of work. In the case of young women, families sometimes decide to keep them at home due to concerns about their safety.

“Families in rough areas do not send their daughters to school because the schools may be far away and they are afraid they could be trafficked or kidnapped,” says Eglantina Gjermeni, from the Gender Alliance for Development Centre in Tirana, “when they see they are reaching puberty and starting to look like women instead of girls, they are afraid for them.”

These reactions reached a peak after the unrest following the collapse of pyramid saving schemes in Albania in 1997, although the security situation has since improved. Gjermeni admits that traditional ideas of women’s roles also play their part. “When women reach a certain age, they have to start taking care of their households and prepare to get married,” she says, “this is especially true in the rural areas.”

Social pressures and stereotypes

Social pressures and fixed ideas of what is appropriate for women have a big influence on gender equality in education everywhere. Young women may lack positive role models. Although women often make up the majority of teachers and lecturers in the schools and universities, head teachers, heads of departments and rectors are still most likely to be men. The debate is still open on why girls overwhelmingly favour arts and social science subjects over hard science and technical subjects, although it is clear that a complex combination of factors produces this imbalance.

Families may not support a young woman’s desire to continue her education or society may not approve. Rola Chbaklo is currently combining her work as head of support and development at Lebanese NGO Social Welfare Institution with studying for her second Master’s degree. “People ask me – why are you going for a second Master’s degree?,” she says, “they tell me I will never be able to get married because I will be better educated than my partner.”

Positive role models and good advice

In terms of solutions to the gender gap in education, one idea that came through strongly was the need for data which is disaggregated by gender. Without this basic information, the delegates stressed that it is impossible to measure the extent of the problem or monitor progress towards greater equality. It was



Israel:

Religion and army holding women back

Courses on the situation of women in Israel usually start off by saying that it has one of the most advanced legal frameworks on gender equality in the world, according to Claudia Goodrich-Avram, programme director of KIDMA women's outreach project at Haifa University. The laws on equal pay and sexual harassment are seen as particularly exemplary. But sadly the situation on the ground is less inspirational. In Israel, like everywhere else, the ideal of total equality between men and women is still some way off.

Israel has achieved a reasonable degree of gender equality in terms of enrolments and completion rates in education – as Goodrich-Avram points out more Israeli women currently graduate from university than men. However Arab women still fare worse than Jewish ones and there are still significant concerns about gender stereotyping in school textbooks and the continuing underachievement of girls in science and maths, according to the Israeli Women's Network.

Pay gap persists in spite of the law

Nevertheless, it is when women move onto the job market that the gender gap opens up alarmingly. Women tend to cluster in certain types of jobs such as in the public sector and are usually to be found in the lower ranks of hierarchies. And despite the law on equal pay, women still earn 30% less than their male colleagues. "When it comes to wages, there are all kinds of ways of paying men more such as paying overtime for staying more hours even if they don't really or giving a different title to the same job or providing a company car," says Goodrich-Avram.

She is convinced that two cultural factors specific to Israel go a long way to explaining these disparities. The first is the centrality of the army in Israeli society. "The army is a stepping stone to all of the top jobs in industry and politics," says Goodrich-Avram, "and since women do not reach the highest ranks in the army, they do not progress outside the army." She believes that the army acts as a kind of old boys' network in which women have no part. The last two Israeli prime ministers have both been ex-army generals and even

when a politician is not a high ranking soldier, a certain culture of glorifying the military still pervades, she says.

Women find themselves in traditional roles

Religion is another factor which holds Israeli women back. Although only 20% of the Israeli population defines itself as Orthodox, the ultra-religious parties enjoy a degree of power in Israeli politics which is out of proportion to their share of the vote. They promote an ultra-conservative agenda, have very few women in their ranks and tend to channel funding towards their own institutions which also exclude women.

Due to its special role in Jewish-Israeli identity, religious feeling is very pervasive even though many Israelis are not actively religious. "Judaism is a main theme in the country and so many women find themselves in somewhat traditional family-orientated roles like taking care of the children because families are seen as so important," says Goodrich-Avram. Although the Israeli women's movement is strong and well-organised, she believes real progress will not come while these two factors remain in place.



also seen as important that the data is reliable and, in the interests of transparency, that it is made widely circulated. “The information must reach the general public as well as institutions,” says Alessandra Bonezzi, a vocational trainer from Reggio Emilia, Italy, “so if the institutions are not willing to change, then the public can put pressure on them to do so.”

Bringing the politicians onboard is also seen as essential. The delegates believe that politicians must be asked to include a gender perspective in all measures affecting education and training. The formation of specific working groups within departments is a good way of keeping gender issues high on the political agenda. “We must make sure that the VET ministry has a specific gender group because it is important to have the political will expressed somewhere,” says Mostefa Boudiaf.

Teachers also have an important role to play within their institutions. Not only can they try and ensure a gender perspective is built into the curriculum, but they can also act as positive role models for their students. “This means including gender issues in the way I teach and trying to promote a deeper awareness of the need for equality,” says Bonezzi.

There is also a need for better career guidance for girls to ensure that they do not make the wrong choice of subjects early on. “In Egypt, it is not so much a question of increasing access to education, it is more a question of the quality of the education girls receive and especially the counselling mechanisms that guide them throughout,” says Eman El-Hadary, a research assistant at Cairo’s American University, “there is no clear guidance for boys or girls which can lead to girls making the wrong career choices.”



Essay competition: A real life story from Bulgaria

Seventy young people gave their vision of women in education and employment in 2010 as part of the European Training Foundation's first essay-writing contest launched in September 2005. The competition was aimed at people aged 18 to 29 from the ETF's partner countries. They were asked to discuss how vocational education and training can advance the position of women in the labour market and business or in society in general.

The ETF jury was delighted at the response and finally selected four winners who attended a prize-giving ceremony during the conference. These were Zhibek Karamanova, a student of international law from Kazakhstan, Evgeniya Koeva, a project consultant and student of European affairs from Bulgaria, Melhem Mansour, a student of information technology and freelance trainer for EU Youth programmes from Syria and Abdelfattoh Shafiev, a journalist specialising in youth issues from Tajikistan. Koeva was given the additional prize of a four-month traineeship at the ETF.

A Syrian man's views on women

Mansour was keen to give a Syrian's point of view on the subject. "In my region, you rarely come across these kinds of initiative which encourage young people to give their opinions," he says, "even though the topic is women, we young men also want to say what we feel about women because they are our future partners." His essay looks at the changing role of women in Syria.

Evgeniya Koeva was intrigued by the subject matter when she came across the competition on a local government website. "It was an interesting topic and I had a very good idea for it so this gave me a lot of encouragement to write," she says. Koeva's essay depicts an anonymous

female, identified only as the Woman, reflecting on her life so far and how her love for education and learning has helped her reach her goals. The tale of her professional successes is intertwined with an account of her failing marriage – "men hate it when women are better educated than them," comments a friend.

Present day contrasts with sad past

The Woman's description of her studies abroad and fulfilling career contrast strongly with the tale of her grandmother whose time at university ended abruptly when her father was arrested. "This is based on the real life story of what happened to my own grandmother," says Koeva, "her father was killed by the communists some sixty years ago and this inspired me to write."

Koeva's tale is set in the future when Bulgaria has already joined the European Union and is reaping the benefits of much improved investment in human capital. In real life, Koeva is convinced EU membership will be very positive for her country. "Some people are afraid that the economic effects will be negative, that SMEs small businesses will lose out to European companies," she says, "but personally I think that the advantages will far outweigh the disadvantages."





Looking for a fair deal for women in the workplace

Although women have made progress in many areas of their lives over the past 40 years, the labour market is one arena where equality is still a long way off. While enlightened legislation in many a country proclaims a woman's equal right to earn her living alongside men, the reality in the workplace remains stubbornly unequal.

In more developed countries, professional women come up against a glass ceiling which allows them to climb only so far up the career ladder. And in spite of equal pay legislation, women still routinely earn less than men. A recent study by the European Commission found that European women earn on average 15% less per hour than men. In the United States, the difference in median weekly pay was 20%. The UK's Women and Work Commission last February published its findings on why women earn less. It found that the difference was not really due to women being paid less than men for doing the same job. The problem was that women tend to make the wrong choices at school and in the early stages of their careers. Once women have children, their earnings drop sharply and do not recover when they return to often part-time jobs after their children have grown up.

In transition countries, working women get much more of a raw deal. A recent report by the United Nations Development Fund for Women on the conditions for working women in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States makes for sobering reading. It found that millions of women have lost their jobs in the transition process as many state industries were privatised or closed down altogether. Many others are in low-paid work and have to put up with a high degree of job segregation, while only an elite has been able to take advantage of the new opportunities provided by their changing economies.

Having children means a shorter working life

No matter where they live the one thing that conditions all working women's lives is the fact they have children and that most women are still more involved in looking after





them than most men. This one fact has knock-on effects for all aspects of women's employment. It means that women have shorter working lives than men and can offer less flexibility in terms of availability to work overtime or travel. It also means that they have less time overall to devote to their careers and to those extra-curricular networking activities that can help advance their careers. It is not by coincidence that the delegates identified time as one of the most precious resources and something which decisively conditions women's position in the labour market.

'In more developed countries, professional women come up against a glass ceiling which allows them to climb only so far up the career ladder. And in spite of equal pay legislation, women still routinely earn less than men...'

This is one of the reasons why Italian women are so under-represented in politics, according to Maria Bellino, a trainer at Consortium for the Development of Electronics and Automation in Turin. Italy stands out as having the lowest number of women in parliament in Europe; currently only 11.5% of Italian deputies are women compared to 36% in Spain. The Italian way of doing politics involves a lot of making long speeches at meetings, says Bellino, "you never know what time a political meeting will end in Italy so that makes it difficult for women to attend."

When women take time out from work in order to look after children, it can be very difficult for them to get back on the career track afterwards, according to Paola Carburlotto, a headhunter in Milan and a member of Turin's Association of Women Entrepreneurs. "If you have had your children and you want to go back to work at the age of 38, not many people will have you," she says.

Multinationals see women as an asset

However Carburlotto notices a big difference between the attitudes at multinational companies and local Italian companies when it comes to working mothers. She finds that multinationals tend to see all their employees as assets and so will invest a lot of time and effort in initiatives like women leadership programmes or ways of making it feasible for women to fit back into the organisation after time out for children. Carburlotto sees human resources policy in Italian companies and those of most of the Mediterranean countries as much less enlightened and more old-fashioned. "They tend to see their employees, including women, not as assets but more like dead weight that has to pulled along so they don't invest in them," she says.

Discrimination against women over the issue of children will often take place in a hidden or unofficial way which makes it harder to challenge.

Anna Záborská: Why women must get involved in politics

Anna Záborská is a firm believer in the need for women to get actively involved in party politics. “Those parties which have a strong female representation will tend to support the position of women in many fields,” she says.

The chair of the European Parliament’s Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality and MEP for Slovakia’s Christian Democrat party practices what she preaches. Dr Záborská began her political career in the early 1990s soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall when she became a member of her party and also got involved in her city council. Local politics can be a good starting place for women, particularly if they have family responsibilities, she says, “it can be a good way in and allows you to achieve a better balance between work and family.”

Dr Záborská was soon promoted to head of her local party, then became its regional president. After four years, she found herself on the Christian Democrats’ national council. “My party is a traditional one so at the beginning it was mainly the domain of men,” she says, “however I have seen the balance of forces gradually changing over time. What is important is that women have the courage to speak out and express their ideas so that the men can see they also have something to say on most situations.”

Much of women’s work is unpaid

Dr Záborská believes governments in Europe must adopt family-friendly policies to encourage demographic growth as well as an innovative approach to facilitating women’s right to work. For Dr Záborská, this includes financial compensation for the amount of unpaid work that women currently do as carers or in family businesses. “Economists estimate that around 30% of women’s work is neither recognised nor remunerated,” she says, “I believe that this is one of the main reasons why we are seeing a growing feminisation of poverty in Europe.”

She points out that there are many women working in agriculture who help out their husbands; “they receive no salary nor pension rights because they are not registered to avoid paying social security,” she says. Women or men should also have support from their governments if they decide to take time out from their jobs to raise children. “You sometimes see other peoples’ attitudes towards people who have children; well it’s your choice,” says Dr Záborská, “but society must be prepared to take some responsibility for everyone’s children as they represent the future.”

Preventing forced prostitution at the World Cup

As chair of the European Parliament’s top committee on gender, Dr Záborská sees a lot of different initiatives pass through her hands. Recent projects include a report on the situation of Turkish women and an evaluation of the gender impact of the Lisbon Strategy. A subject close to Dr Záborská’s heart is her committee’s support for the campaign to prevent forced prostitution during the World Cup in Germany in June 2006. Many organisations feared that thousands of women would be brought to World Cup venues over the summer against their will to satisfy the expected hike in demand for sexual services. The committee added its voice to the protests against this form of exploitation. It hosted a seminar on this subject on International Women’s Day and called on the European Commission and Member States to launch a Europe-wide campaign aimed at educating the public, and in particular football fans, about the incidence of forced prostitution at big sporting events.



Serbian employment law shows a strong formal commitment to gender equality, but Sanja Popovic-Pantic, president of the Association of Businesswomen of Serbia, observes that multinational companies setting up in Serbia are operating according to another set of rules.

“It is not legal but women are being asked at job interviews whether they are thinking of having children,” she says, “I have even heard of young women being asked at interviews to promise that they will not have children for at least three years.” Long working hours can be another barrier, as companies may have an official working day of eight hours, “but your boss actually expects you to stay on until seven at night every night,” she says.

What came up repeatedly in the discussions was the need for the state to take some of the care burden off women’s shoulders by providing more facilities for looking after children and the elderly. There was also talk of the need for fathers to take on more responsibility for looking after their children and for employers to make this possible. “If

‘No matter where they live the one thing that conditions all working women’s lives is the fact they have children. It means that they have shorter working lives and can offer less flexibility in terms of availability to work overtime or travel..’

men could stay at home, look after the kids and do a part-time job without it damaging their career, then maybe things could change,” says Carburlotto.

More than formal commitments is needed

All the delegates agreed on the need to lobby governments to provide more than just formal commitments to gender equality. They

should be encouraged to introduce policies that take into account some of the extra responsibilities women bear in society and which can help remove some of the very specific barriers that women face. Many believed that a gender-mainstreaming approach – one which seeks to introduce a gender-perspective into each and every policy measure – can be helpful. One positive example given was a new tax law currently being drafted by the Uzbek government, according to Dildora Tadjibaeva of Tashkent’s Businesswomen’s Association. This will introduce tax benefits for women entrepreneurs and for women heads of households who are paying school fees.

A second point on many people’s lips was the need to positively engage employers in improving women’s position on the labour market. Melham Mansour, a freelance trainer from Damascus, Syria, mentioned the Spanish government’s recent decision to impose quotas of equal numbers of male and female employees on all companies with a staff of over 250 people, but many people did not seem to think this is the best way to go. “We cannot impose or oblige people to do things,” says Paola Carburlotto, “if a company wants to employ a certain person, they will take that person on no matter what.” Zhibek Karamanova, a law student from Almaty, Kazakhstan, believes that it is best to



Kyrgyzstan: Women entrepreneurs take the initiative



More women in Kyrgyzstan finish their education than men, but this higher educational attainment does not translate into success on the jobs market, according to Aigul Alymkulova, executive director of the Women's Support Centre in Bishkek.

As a part of the former Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan has inherited high rates of literacy and enrolments in schools, however Alymkulova reports that these have been falling during the harsh economic climate of the transition years. In this case, it is boys who are more affected than girls. "In the cities, we are seeing a lot of boys who are having to drop out of school early to find work and help out their families," she says, reporting that a visit to the bazaars of the capital Bishkek will find many young boys working on the stalls. Currently more females complete all levels of education except colleges which provide vocational training.

Kyrgyzstan, still mainly a rural economy, has been carrying out a major land reform, designed to give property rights to small farmers over the past five years. While women are in theory equally as entitled as men to their share of land, this does not always hold true in practice. Responsibility for overseeing distribution is usually left to tribal elders who may ignore a young woman's property rights. If a woman divorces, she is often forced to forfeit her land as the law obliges her to sell it back to her husband's family. Alymku-

lova reports one recent case of a woman who arrived in Bishkek with her five children and no money after losing all her land due to divorce.

Women are moving off the land

The lack of opportunities in densely populated rural areas such as the Fergana Valley in the South is pushing many young people off the land. "Many daughters when they leave do not inherit any land and do not receive any compensation," says Alymkulova. Most end up in the big cities looking for work. Women are over-represented in the informal economy, which is estimated to account for over a third of the whole. In the formal sector, as in other countries, women tend to cluster in certain sectors such as health, education and culture. There is also a large pay gap between the earnings of men and women and it is widening. In 2000, women earned 32.4% less than men on average, by 2003, the gap had grown to 36%.

One positive sign however is the success of women entrepreneurs. In the changed economic conditions after the collapse of the Soviet Union, many women took the initiative and set up as traders, travelling to neighbouring countries to bring goods back to Kyrgyzstan. By 2000, 7% of Kyrgyz women were involved in this trade according to the United Nations Development Programme.

use the carrot rather than the stick to produce results. "If the state wants women to get jobs, it must offer incentives to employers," she says, "this could be tax breaks or something that small businesses are interested in, you can't just force companies to employ 50% women."

Support for women entrepreneurs

The need to support women entrepreneurs was a common theme. Many people see encouraging women to start up small businesses as a good way of boosting female employment, especially in transition countries where many women have lost their public sector jobs as a result of privatisation. Nevertheless women do need help to adapt to this new and demanding way of earning a living.

Sanja Popovic-Pantic believes that women need training to provide the right information and to raise their self-confidence but that this alone is not enough. "Sometimes women do gain more self-confidence from training, but they begin to lose it when they go back to their own environment and see that they face exactly the same problems as when they left," she says, calling for support to continue after the training has finished. Her Association of Businesswomen of Serbia is currently in talks with the Serbian finance minister on how to make the Serbian government's budget more gender-sensitive. One of their demands is for banks to provide better credit conditions for women entrepreneurs. Many people working with women's business associations in the partner countries have stated that the issue of access to start-up capital for women entrepreneurs is also a problem in their countries.

Decent work not welfare

Every effort should be made to make sure women entrepreneurs are not forced to end up operating outside the formal system. This is no easy matter as it requires governments to provide a framework which is conducive to setting up small businesses. Mirlinda Kusari reports that many women are setting up micro-businesses in rural areas of Kosovo, but prevailing conditions mean nearly all are in



Mieke Verloo: Freeing-up the power of women

Atending this conference has left Mieke Verloo, lecturer in gender studies at the Netherlands' Radboud University Nijmegen, with food for thought. "I am still puzzled by the mismatch between women's high educational achievement and their lowly position in the labour market," she says, "I wonder – if there are all these highly educated women around who can't get jobs, what are they all doing?" The Belgian-born expert on gender wonders what would happen if all this untapped female potential were to be channelled into something creative.

Women's energy can lead to radical change

Dr Verloo cites several points in recent history when a build-up of underused female energy has led to profound social change. "If you look at the birth of the women's movement in the Netherlands in the 1970s, you find a similar paradox – a very traditional society and then suddenly all the women get educated and there is no space for them," she says. Further back, nineteenth century Europe provides another example. "There were these rich women who were quite well-educated but were not expected to work," she says, "they started working in the civil rights movement for the abolition of slavery and all kinds of charity work.

Freeing up women's potential has been an ongoing quest for Dr Verloo since she began her work on gender mainstreaming in the mid 1990s. She believes women entrepreneurs in transition countries face very specific challenges. Many of these countries have experienced serious disturbances in recent years such as war in the Balkans or economic crisis in Turkey. When new businesses spring up after the upheaval, their source of funding is often illicit or at the very least dubious. "Some people make a lot of money during crises and these are the ones who start big businesses afterwards," she says, "but women are

hardly ever part of these semi-legal situations and so can only ever set up small affairs."

Indirect ways of introducing change may be best

Traditional ideas of what is appropriate behaviour for women can also restrict their chances on the labour market. "If you want to set up a business, you need to be roaming around meeting people and finding resources and, if this is not part of your regular life, it will be much harder for you," she says.

Dr Verloo is impressed by the wealth of ideas put forward by the delegates from the partner countries. She thinks initiatives such as new tax incentives for women described by Dildora Tadjibaeva of Tashkent's Businesswomen's Association are particularly appropriate. The Uzbek government is proposing to introduce tax benefits for female heads of households paying school fees, young women enrolling in higher education and women starting businesses. "I think this indirect way of trying to introduce change into society could succeed," she says, "tax benefits for women do not immediately hurt anyone else and it can be very influential."





the informal sector. International organisations also have a role to play. Hala Ayoubi, secretary general of the Young Entrepreneurs' Association in Amman, Jordan, believes that EU programmes have only had a limited success in creating jobs for Jordanian women over the past ten years. For Ayoubi, the projects adopt too much of a welfare-orientated approach such as micro-financing for cottages industries that women can run from their homes. "I don't believe this has worked as these kind industries have very little capacity for growth," she says, "I think we should concentrate on training in the formal sector and avoid welfare-orientated programmes which always link women to the issue of poverty."

Finally there are plenty of ways that women can help themselves and provide support for each other at the same time. The most obvious way is by mastering the art of networking. Women's networks, such as the Balkan Women's Business Coalition set up last year on the initiative of the Center for International Private Enterprise in Romania, can be a ready source of information and support to their members. "Women don't usually network and often don't know what networks are available," says Paola Caburlotto, "they should know that networking is one of the best tools for growth."

Turkey: Giving the women

In the mid 1990s the South Eastern region of Turkey with its mainly Kurdish population was facing a brain-drain. Lack of opportunity combined with the political violence associated with the Turkish government's campaign against the Kurdish separatist movement convinced most of the region's best and brightest to study and work elsewhere, often in the big cities of Western Turkey.

Nurcan Baysal, the seventh of a family of ten children from Diyarbakir, was no exception. After studying political science in Ankara, she was pleased to get a job teaching at a university in the capital. "I was planning to return one day, but maybe after the age of 30 or 40 because there aren't many job opportunities in my region," she says. This all changed when Baysal spotted an advertisement for a job supporting entrepreneurship in her native Diyarbakir. She applied on the offchance and was given the post. "All my



some credit

life I had been indignant that when people get the chance to study elsewhere, they never come back,” she says, “so there are not many well-educated people in my region. I am the only one of my brothers and sisters to have returned.” Baysal braved strong family opposition to her idea; “My father did not speak to me for a year because he thought it was so dangerous to come back here,” she says.

Migration changes status of women

What she found were extremely difficult conditions for women in her region. The often violent conflicts of the early 1990s had forced large numbers of people from the countryside to migrate to the cities. “Before in the rural areas, the women were at home and sometimes helped their husbands with farming and animal husbandry,” says Baysal, “in the cities, they have no animals any more, the men have no jobs and all this changed the status of the women.” Women needed to work so support their families and, due to the difficulties of finding salaried work, the local women’s organisations encouraged them to become small time entrepreneurs.

Working at Diyarbakir’s GAP-GIDEM Enterprise Support Centre, a project supported by the European Commission and the United Nations Development Programme, Baysal has gained firsthand experience of the problems these future businesswomen face. The lack of know-how and self-confidence is one issue. “When a man applies to

my office to start a business, he finds it easier because all of his life, his experience has been to go and bargain for things so he knows how the market works, but a woman usually has no experience outside of the home,” she says. Access to start-up capital is a second, and in Baysal’s opinion, bigger stumbling block. Turkish banks have no special programmes for providing credit to women entrepreneurs and the few NGOs working on micro-credit can only offer very limited amounts, she reports.

Pushing for more support for women entrepreneurs

Last year, a group of women’s NGOs from the region met to try and put this right. “We were giving training and consultancy to women entrepreneurs but in the end we were not achieving much,” says Baysal, “we need someone powerful to intervene and say to the banks – change your policies.” Several meetings further on, they are now proposing to set up a national organisation for women entrepreneurs with support from the Turkish government and international organisations. A major conference is planned for June in Ankara and efforts will be made to launch a debate in the Turkish media. The idea is to use this new organisation to act as a lever, pressuring the authorities and the main players in the economy to provide a more supportive environment for women entrepreneurs. “There are lots of NGOs working on female entrepreneurship in Turkey so if we all come together, then we can approach the banks and the other places we need,” says Baysal.





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Conference on Women in Education and Employment 2010 6-7 March 2006; Turin, Italy

Key recommendations

FOR EDUCATORS

- Integrate a gender dimension into the curricula at all levels of education
- Design specific modules and programmes on gender issues
- Include empowerment training for women in curricula at all levels
- Train people on how to include a gender perspective in sectoral programmes in education and training
- Make efforts to break down the gender boundaries in subjects such as science and maths – encourage girls to study “boys” subjects and boys to study “girls” subjects
- Inform all students about job prospects – encourage young women to choose subjects which can lead to good jobs via job clubs, careers services
- Encourage women to join the education system by providing appropriate information
- Encourage and empower women to get into decision-making positions within institutions
- Participate in equal opportunities committees



FOR EMPLOYERS

- De-gender jobs by concentrating on individuals and skills instead of gender
- Analyse women's problems in seeking jobs on the local labour market
- Organise childcare within companies, share best practice on childcare between companies
- Allow workers to work from home or at a distance
- Provide affordable training for women on empowerment and building self-confidence
- Look for indicators that can measure the extent of invisible work

FOR POLICYMAKERS

Regarding women and education:

- Raise awareness of the need for gender equality in education
- Improve access to education, especially in rural and poorer areas – boarding, transport, free textbooks
- Train male and female teachers on gender issues
- Provide education and training for women at favourable prices
- Ensure curricula, textbooks do not reinforce gender stereotypes

Regarding women and work:

- Encourage public and private care provision to support working mothers
- Provide better conditions for mothers – maternity leave, different work models, longer stay with child without affecting pension rights
- Provide paid paternity leave and encourage more flexible working arrangements for fathers
- Introduce quotas for women or fiscal benefits from employing women in male-dominated sectors
- Launch public awareness campaigns to promote a positive image of women at work
- Integrate gender issues when drafting laws on microfinance

- Provide tools through public and private projects and programmes to support women entrepreneurs
- Improve financing possibilities for women e.g. for business start-ups
- Give dignity and recognition to domestic work e.g. salary
- Encourage public-private-civil society partnerships focusing on gender issues

Overall:

- Set up a national body dealing with gender mainstreaming
- Design a national strategy for gender equality including measurable performance indicators such as enrolments at all levels of education
- Introduce a gender dimension into all budgets
- Produce gender disaggregated data
- Ensure equal representation of women and men in decision-making positions, using quotas if necessary
- Encourage public-private-civil society partnerships focusing on gender issues
- Use media for awareness on gender issues and initiatives

FOR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS LIKE THE ETF

- Build a gender dimension in the design of all projects and programmes
- Make gender an integral part of the annual work plan
- Make use of the knowledge of local experts in partner countries to identify resources, act as a local gender focal point and provide input to the ETF's interventions
- Gather and use data which is disaggregated by gender
- Disseminate best practice on gender mainstreaming initiatives
- Create a forum or portal to encourage dialogue between the different actors in the gender debate
- Distribute ETF/EU/ILO/UN guidelines on including a gender perspective in projects
- Be a resource but also a support mechanism

FOR INDIVIDUALS

- Provide a positive role model at work by organising flexible working hours, better wages and lifelong learning
- Respect your own working hours and those of others
- Be understanding of other people's care responsibilities
- Use networks to advance your career and support others
- Teach others about the importance of a gender perspective in all aspects of life
- Encourage men to see why gender equality is important for them too
- Give friends and colleagues personal support when raising gender issues
- Work on creating and strengthening links with other gender activists
- Create a pressure group on gender issues



Bios of keynote speakers

Simonetta Cavazza, International Training Centre, ILO

Simonetta Carvazza is an expert in the fields of women's rights, gender training, local development and documentation. She has spent most of her career within the International Labour Organisation's International Training Centre in Turin. In 1992, she took up the position of programme officer for the Technical Programme on Women in Development. Here she has designed and run a wide variety of seminars, courses and workshops aimed at boosting the status of women at work and promoting equal opportunities. She is currently gender coordinator within the ILO's Gender Coordination Unit. The unit works to ensure that a concern for gender equality is embedded in all of the International Training Centre's training activities.

Milena Corradini, ETF

Milena Corradini has worked in international cooperation in Southern Africa, Eastern Europe, Russia and the Mediterranean region for more than 25 years. After joining the ETF in 1995, she worked as country manager for Romania and FYR Macedonia before taking on her current post as country manager for Turkey. Ms Corradini has considerable experience of all aspects of managing a project and has worked on initiatives financed by the World Bank and the EU's Phare, CARDS and ACP programmes. Ms Corradini set up the ETF's new working group on gender issues in 2005. It aims to advise staff on how to make gender mainstreaming an integral part of their work when designing new projects and supporting their implementation in the field.

Muriel Dunbar, Director, ETF

Muriel Dunbar, since 1st July 2004, has been serving as the director of the European Training Foundation. Before taking up this position, she was deputy director of the British Council in Indonesia. Dr Dunbar, who is British, has spent her entire 30-year career working in the field of vocational education and training. She was previously a senior consultant in education and training at the British Council in Indonesia working on a variety of education reform projects, and has advised on many donor-funded projects in vocational education and training in developing and transition countries.

Before moving onto the international scene, Dr. Dunbar was assistant director at the Scottish Qualifications Authority. She holds a Master's degree and a Doctor of Education degree from the University of Sheffield.

Shirin Ebadi, Lawyer, Nobel Peace Prize Winner 2003

Shirin Ebadi is a leading campaigner for democracy and greater rights for women and children in her native Iran. A lawyer and former judge, she became the first Iranian and first Muslim woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003. Dr Ebadi was one of the main movers behind the reform of Iran's family law which gave women more rights in matters of divorce and inheritance. In her work as a lawyer, Dr Ebadi has never shied away from taking on politically sensitive cases. She has defended journalists in trouble over issues of freedom of expression, such as Abbas Marufi and Faraj Sarkuhi. Dr Ebadi also acted for the mother of Zahra Kazemi, a Canadian-Iranian journalist killed in custody in Teheran in July 2003.

Giovanna Pentenero, Piedmont Region

Giovanna Pentenero acquired broad hands-on experience of vocational education and training at a grassroots and a higher policy level before becoming councillor for education and training for Italy's Piedmont Region in April 2005. Working as a professional educator, she has provided tutoring and guidance to disabled job seekers. Ms Pentenero then took on responsibility for European policy and projects for social inclusion at the Forcoop Training Agency in Turin. She now combines her work at the Piedmont Regional Council with acting as deputy mayor for the town of Casalborgone near Turin.

Mieke Verloo, Nijmegen Radboud University

Mieke Verloo lectures in political science and women's studies at Nijmegen Radboud University in the Netherlands. Her range of research interests take in equality policies, feminist methodology, housing and social movements. Since 1992, she has specialised in developing tools for gender mainstreaming and critical analysis of mainstreaming initiatives. Outside her work at Nijmegen, Dr Verloo acts as research director for MAGEEQ, a comparative study of national definitions of gender equality in six European countries and the EU. Dr Verloo has also been helping the ETF with its project on gender mainstreaming policies in education and employment, which aims to boost in-house expertise in this area and ensure that gender equality issues are integrated into all of the ETF's interventions.

Anna Záborská, MEP and Chair of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, European Parliament

Slovakian MEP Anna Záborská chairs the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality. The committee promotes the rights of women in the work of the Parliament in the countries of the European Union and beyond and shapes gender policy with a special focus on equal opportunities in the workplace. Ms Záborská has combined her career as a doctor with political activism. She worked for 16 years in Slovakia as an eye, ear, nose and throat specialist. Since 1993, Ms Záborská has occupied a number of positions of responsibility in Slovakia's Christian Democratic Movement, developing strong expertise in foreign policy, health care and preparations for accession.





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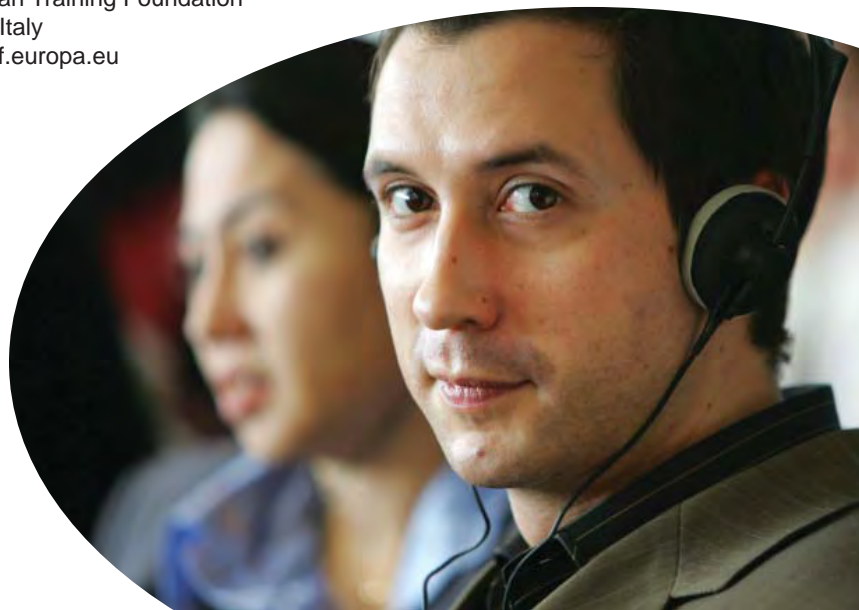
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Links

Europa (European Union online)

www.europa.eu

European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/femm_home_en.htm

European Training Foundation

www.etf.europa.eu

Interagency Network on Women and Gender Equality

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/>

International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

<http://www.un-instraw.org/>

Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/>

United Nations Development Fund for Women

www.unifem.org

Women's Empowerment (A sub-section of the United Nations Development Programme)

<http://www.undp.org/women/>

Women Watch

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/>

A great deal of additional information on the European Union is available on the Internet. It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu>).

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