REDEFINING PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS AND CONCEPTS OF EXCELLENCE: INTEGRATING A GENDER…

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REDEFINING PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS AND CONCEPTS OF EXCELLENCE: INTEGRATING A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Irene Kamberidou and Eva Fabry

Abstract

Integrating a gender perspective means eliminating the wastage of talent— utilizing all human resources— and as a result boosting innovation, a prerequisite for economic growth and effective sustainable development. In the last decade studies confirm that companies, firms, organizations and institutions that recognise talent in any form and make good use of it show greater success rates with regard to profits and sustainability. Research shows that women are an economic force to be reckoned with for sustainable economic recovery. This does not mean that women are inherently more talented and better skilled than men. It does however indicate that companies that have utilized their entire talent pool and identified and promoted female talent into leadership roles, have a vital competitive advantage. Surveys also confirm that female-led ICT businesses and women-owned firms (women entrepreneurs) have been successfully competing in the global market, the latter using more high technology systems than their male counterparts. Despite gender mainstreaming policies, legislation and the recognition by many companies, organizations and institutions that diversity is essential, women are less satisfied with their careers as they still lag behind men in compensation and advancement. In examining the three major gender gaps— the leadership gap, the pay gap and the participation gap— this paper argues that integrating a gender perspective is vital in order to eliminate *gender devaluation*, namely the subtle processes by which women's contributions are minimized, undervalued or devalued in the so-called male professions. Integrating a gender perspective, a social, cultural and technical process, requires shifts not only in organisational practices, attitudes or ways of thinking, but also in resource allocations, goals and structures along with monitoring processes. This paper argues for an *Alternative Model* which entails: recruitment and politicizing the personal, namely "flexibility re-thought" along with technology as an *enabler*, re-thinking and redefining the model for professional life, auditing compensation practices, identifying high-potential people and re-training returners. Specifically, gender diversity mainstreaming (integrating a gender perspective) in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), research and development (R&D), the academia, product and service innovation, health action and services, innovation management and economic global competition, which is becoming increasingly tough, means redefining professional success and concepts of *excellence*. It requires setting up an *all encompassing European collaborative platform* or hub of information that will encourage future debates and synergies for establishing measures and best practices at many levels, finding alternative paths to advancement and participation (eg. A holistic approach, flexible work, eliminating age barriers for men and women, rewarding social service), identifying the voice of the next generation, creating opportunities for visibility, testimonial sharing, generating insights on how to contribute effectively to organizational growth, formal mentoring programs for both women and men, ethnic minority groups, among other things.

Keywords: wastage-leakage of talent, gender devaluation, gender fatigue, tokenism, glass escalator, gender energy, renegotiating concepts of excellence/success

Gender integration: "No place for macho nonsense in our digital future"

On a global level there is a shortage of 1.2 million staff in the ICT sector! With regard to the European ICT sector, the Commission estimates that it will face a shortfall of 700,000 skilled workers by the year 2015, partly explained by a lack of women engineering and computing graduates. In addressing the gender deficit in ICT, Neelie Kroes, Commissioner of the Digital Agenda said "We need to tackle the problem early and from many angles", stressing that "Companies and governments need to do more than run networks and camps - the effort must range from better child care to a better balance of subjects in the school system […] From classrooms to boardrooms to garage start-ups: my message is the same. There is no point in getting half of Europe digital. There is no place for macho nonsense in our digital future. Until the whole sector understands this and acts on it, we will remain at risk of a massive skills gap and we will hold Europe back."[1] One must also call attention to the alarming predictions that if there is no drastic change in the female employment rate, demographic developments in Europe indicate that by the year 2036 there will be a drop of 24 million in the active workforce[2]!

Accordingly one need point out that the European Centre for Women and Technology[3] (ECWT) Position Paper and Report— from the *Women for Smart Growth* workshop held at the First Digital Agenda Assembly[4], 16-17 June 2011 in Brussels— stress that " the minimum 50% of the success of delivering the Digital Agenda will depend on whether the European Commission will find ways and means of integrating a critical mass of women in Europe into the access, design, research, innovation, production and use of ICT during 2011-2020."[5] The ECWT has been persistently arguing that this integration process needs to be based on a holistic approach, ie. all Directorate Generals of the European Commission collaborating around a Gender Action Plan for the Digital Agenda.

Since its establishment in 2008 the ECWT— a multi-stakeholder based non-profit organization which by the end of 2011 has had on board over a hundred major public, private organizations, academia and NGOs—has been leading systematic and strategic work to promote and emphasize that "Getting more women into ICT and technology is today, especially in the times of global economic crisis, not just a question of social justice, but a question of economic necessity, growth and competitiveness."[6] In 2011 the ECWT— in connection with the Centenary International Women's Day Conference 'Women in Science, Innovation and Technology in the Digital Age', 7-8 March 2011, Budapest chaired by Vice President Neelie Kroes, Commissioner of the Digital Agenda— launched a Position Paper to

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[1]See: "Don't take no for an answer – Neelie Kroes addresses gender deficit in ICT" (07/03/2011), in *Europe's Information Society Thematic Portal*: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/itemdetail.cfm?item_id=6786&utm_campaign=is p&utm_medium=rss&utm_source=newsroom&utm_content=tpa-9Eurostat 2005. Also see: Global Insight 2000-2030 McKinsey.

[2] Global Insight 2000-2030 McKinsey.

[3] www.womenandtechnology.eu

[4] Digital Agenda Assembly, http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/digital-agenda/daa/

[5] Women for Smart Growth (2011). http://www.womenandtechnology.eu/digitalcity/news/w_newsheading.jsp?dom=AAABECDQ&hir=B AAFKWON&fmn=AAABDVVI&prt=AAABDUAV&men=AAABDVWG

[6] ECWT Position Paper 2011 p.1

initiate a European level dialogue with all key actors engaged in collaborations for measurably and significantly increasing the number of girls and women in ICT, innovation and technology. The consultation process will be rounded off in 2012 by an EU Parliamentary hearing and is expected to lead to adoption of a resolution.

The lack of talent in the ICT industry and the small minority of women entering the job market in this field is a disadvantage for all, given that diversity and inclusion drive societal development, productivity and social cohesion. Women in Europe are drastically underrepresented across the board in ICT – in the academia, in education, in training programmes, in industry and in high level careers in this sector—so we need to address the factors that act as obstacles to inclusion and ensure that the opportunities are open to women on equal terms with men. If not addressed resolutely, the shortage of ICT-oriented women will have a great impact on future generations. Consequently, Europe's young people must be re-socialized to view ICT as an appealing or viable career option and field of study.

Current research indicates the need to focus on innovative approaches to getting gender back onto the agenda: reproducing women's participation, recruitment, retention, advancement and agency. We need to work for greater incorporation and awareness for women in the world of technology, engineering and science. Integrating a gender perspective is vital as women face many obstacles in their careers. How do we know women face obstacles? Through research of course! (Fabry 2011, Fabry, Püchner, Sangiuliano 2011, Farrington 2011, Kamberidou 2010, Kelan 2010, Merriman 2010, Benschop & Brouns 2003, Hultin 2003) Despite the documented gendered barriers, it is also quite common nowadays to hear the view that equality of opportunity for women is no longer an issue. Could this be due to *gender fatigue*? Gender fatigue, a concept examined in the last part of this paper, refers to the loss of energy to acknowledge, oppose or tackle afresh something no longer perceived as a problem and as a result it reproduces and solidifies the *gender devaluation processes.* (Kamberidou 2011, 2010a)

Integrating a gender perspective is not a matter of adding one more variable to the equation of social justice but an issue of integrating diversity into the system—as opposed to wasting it. Integrating a gender perspective means eliminating the wastage of talent and as a result boosting innovation which is a prerequisite for effective sustainable development and economic growth. Innovation is uppermost in the mind of decision makers and policy makers all around Europe who have in recent years acknowledged this wastage of talent. It means strengthening performance, ie. giving businesses a competitive advantage, a much needed boost as global competition becomes increasingly tough. EU Heads of State and Government on 2 March 2012, stressed that one of the targets of Europe 2020, through the Innovation Union flagship is to boost innovation, research and development in Europe, a vital component of Europe's future competitiveness and growth. The Europe 2020 strategy is Europe's growth strategy. The conclusions of the European Council stress the need for more

efforts to complete the European Research Area by 2014, as well as a number of other important advances that are necessary.[7]

Gender integration refers to the process of assessing the implications for both women and men of any planned action, including policies, legislation or programmes at all levels, in all social, economic and political spheres. In other words, integrating a gender perspective means **recruiting** more women, **retaining** them (eliminating the leaky pipeline), encouraging, supporting and **re-training returners,** those who had taken a career break and early retirees re-entering the workforce as well as **advancement**, namely promoting women into leadership roles. Concurrently gender mainstreaming (integration) goes beyond increasing women's participation. It means bringing the experience, knowledge and interests of both women and men to bear on the development agenda. Specifically identifying the need for changes in that agenda. It requires changes in goals, strategies, and actions so that both women and men can participate, influence and benefit from development processes. The goal of mainstreaming gender equality requires the transformation of unequal social and institutional structures into equal and just structures for both men and women.

Wastage and Leakage of talent: *disappearing* women, a threat to sustainability

In many countries around Europe an average of about 23% of women that graduate from technical universities do not apply for work and those that are working in the ICT sector eventually leave after a few years (leakage of talent or leaky pipeline), consequently adding to this global shortage of 1.2 million staff in the ICT sector as previously cited. Why do these professionals abandon their careers? What are the causes for this leakage of talent and gender participation gap? Primarily the gender-blind practices and policies that contribute to women's under-representation such as the gender pay gap, the gender leadership gap, the family-career imbalance, among other things. (Fabry 2011, Kamberidou 2011, Fabry, Püchner, Sangiuliano 2011)

For example, the "Women and ICT status Report 2009" (European Commission 2010) clearly shows that women across Europe earn about 17% less than men and in some countries the *gender pay gap* is widening even more, that is to say it increases as one gets older: the gender pay gap for young female engineers, scientists and technicians is 17% until the age of 35 and rises to 38% and 37% for the 45-54 and 55-64 age-groups respectively. As a result, women continue to leave the ICT sector in disproportionate numbers (leakage of talent). (Kamberidou 2010a) Additionally, the

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[7]"European Council confirms research and innovation as drivers of growth and jobs" (2 March 2012) http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/12/153&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en (retrieved 3/3/2012)

new e-skills report, *Technology Insights 2011*[8]: *"*the UK IT and telecoms industry needs more than 110,000 new recruits to just meet this year's demand."[9]

Karenza Griffith's (2010) "Disappearing Women" also confirms this shortage, wastage and leakage of talent in the ICT sector, that is to say the problem not only in attracting women into the sector (gender participation gap), but also in retaining them (leaky pipeline). In contrast to the majority of existing studies in this area that concentrate on women who remain in the ICT workplace, Griffith's *Disappearing Women* focuses on the women who left the UK ICT sector due to dissatisfaction with their work situations, in spite of having crossed the ICT recruitment barriers and amassed skills, expertise and qualifications. In this qualitative study professional women describe how they had been overlooked, effectively silenced and pushed out. Specifically, Griffith documents women's "disappearance" from the ICT sector through nine in-depth qualitative autobiographical interviews as well as using supporting studies and data such as those of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). The results of this qualitative study show that the number of women in the ICT sector has remained disappointingly small, even though women make up around 50% of the total UK workforce. "The whole IT profession needs to work together to create a pipeline of future female talent for the industry but we also need to focus on encouraging the women who are already working in the industry to stay and succeed." (Griffith 2010)

The IT industry's lack of gender diversity practices is also confirmed in the UK's Higher Education Careers Services Unit (HECSU) report, according to which another cause for concern is the ageing workforce: the proportion of IT and telecoms professionals aged under 30 has declined from 33 percent in 2001 to just 19 percent in 2010, the sector favouring experienced workers over new graduates. (Nguyen 2010)

Despite legislation and gender mainstreaming policies, the recognition by many companies, organizations and institutions that diversity is essential, many studies show that women are less satisfied with their careers than men and abandon them since they lag behind men in compensation and advancement. Women are consistently overlooked in decision making positions in the ICT sector, in the business sector, in S&R, in the academia, on research committees, etc (Fabry et al., 2011, Farrington 2011, Kamberidou 2010c, Kelan 2010, Merriman 2010, Fabry 2010, Benschop & Brouns 2003, Hultin 2003)

In the global business sector this *leadership gender gap* seems to be widening, despite the fact that research— in the business sector in Europe and the US— shows that companies with women in leadership positions are more successful in regard to

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[8] Which is the sector skills council for business and information technologies report: "The UK tech industry needs 110,000 new recruits, says e-skills". *ComputerWorld UK*, *the Voice of IT Managment.* Published: 18 January 11, 12:30 GMT (http://www.computerworlduk.com/news/careers/3257145/uk-tech-industry-needs-110000-new-recruits-says-e-skills/

[9] Ibid.

return on sales, equity and invested capital.[10] In the top European companies, from 2004-2008, women's participation in decision making positions has hardly risen. The number of women on the boards of European companies in 2004 was 8% and in 2008 it slightly increased to 8.5%, with the exception of the Scandinavian countries. (Fabry 2011, European Commission 2010, CEW 2009)

   The leadership gender gap is also observed in Australian companies. For example, the percentage of women CEOs increased slightly between 1994 and 2008, a period of record economic growth for Australia. The percentage of women CEOs increased from 8% in 1994 to only 10.7% in 2008. Moreover, in 2008 women on boards represent only 8.3% (CEW 2009:5). Alarming as well is the decrease in the percentage of female directors. In 2004, 50.3% companies had at least one female director (something we can perceive as a *token*[11]), whereas in 2008 this percentage decreased to 49%, less than it was in 2004! This underrepresentation is not an issue of women's workforce participation or education level, since women make up around half of all workforce entrants and are graduating in equal or even greater numbers to men in faculties of economics, commerce, business and law. Women also lag behind men in Australian companies when it comes to remuneration (gender pay gap). Despite equal pay legislation passed 50 years ago, female executives still earn considerably less than their male counterparts. An analysis of remuneration in company annual reports shows that the overall median pay for women executives is only 58% of the median pay for men. The gender pay gap persists in 9 out of 10 industries and is greatest in the financial services. (CEW 2009: 4-9)

Fig 1: The "Stupid Curve"
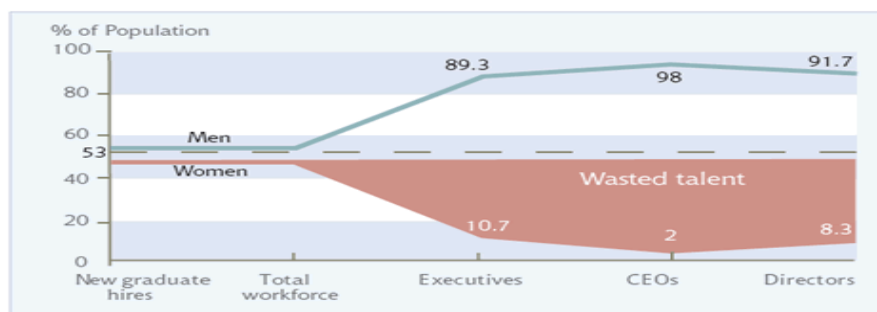
Source: The CEW CEO Kit edition 2, EOWA Australian Census of Women in Leadership 2008

   The *"Stupid Curve" (Wasted talent)* describes the failure of companies and organizations to recognize and promote women as leaders, consequently missing out on a significant and measurable competitive advantage. This term (*"Stupid Curve"*)— a phrase coined by former Deloitte USA Chairman Mike Cook— is used to emphasize the wastage of internal talent in Australian companies in a report released by Chief Executive Women (CEW), February 2009, according to which Australian organisations select 90% of their leaders from only 50% of their workforce (the male half). Consequently, the other 50% (the female half) of the workforce is overlooked, underutilised and devalued. Although men and women enter the workforce in about

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[10]Source: Women Leaders and Resilience: Perspectives from the C-suite, Accenture 2010. (http://newsroom.accenture.com/news/resilience+key+to+keeping+your+job+accenture+research+finds.htm)

[11] Tokens are usually women, ethnic minorities, the aged or individuals with special needs who are often treated as *symbols* or *representatives* of a marginal social group.

equal numbers, men have a nine times better chance of reaching the executive level. (CEW 2009)

What a wastage of talent, as many studies confirm that companies with over 30% women at the top perform better,[12] that women have different leadership behaviours and practices than men,[13] among other things. The integration of a gender perspective is vital today due to the ongoing gender devaluation processes, namely the subtle processes by which women's contributions are minimized, undervalued or devalued, (Benschop & Brouns 2003, Farrington 2011, Kamberidou 2011). This gender devaluation and wastage of human resources is also observed in European universities and in the media hierarchies. In the 27 countries of the European Union, even though 59% of university graduates are women, only 18% of full professors are women, and only 9% of universities have a women at the top of the organisation.[14] Women are also underrepresented in executive levels of the mass media. A survey conducted by the Global Media Monitoring Program in 2010 shows that women lag behind men in professional categories as media authorities, newsmakers, experts and spokespersons. Women barely feature in news stories and make up only 19% of spokespersons and 20% of experts. In contrast, 81% of spokespersons and 80% of experts in the news are male.[15]

Another study followed the career progress of 4,143 women and men with MBA's from leading business schools in Europe, the United States, Asia and Canada who were working full-time in companies and firms. (Carter and Silva 2010) According to the results, men were twice as likely as women to be at the CEO/senior executive level and women lagged behind men in compensation and advancement and were less satisfied with their careers than men. Career path profiles were created for the 4,143 women and men from the data and findings gathered from an online survey of 9,927 alumni who graduated between 1996 and 2007 from MBA programs at 26 leading business schools, working full-time in companies and firms at the time of the survey (2007-2008). The study compared job placement opportunities, career advancement, remuneration (the gender pay gaps) and job satisfaction. According to the results here too the promise of the *pipeline* for women into senior leadership was found to be

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[12] *Women matter: gender diversity, a corporate performance driver*, January 19, 2012 By Curt Rice, http://curt-rice.com/2012/01/19/women-matter-gender-diversity-a-corporate-performance-driver/ (retrieved 21/2/2012).

[13] *Women matter 2: female leadership, a competitive edge for the future*, January 23, 2012 By Curt Rice http://curt-rice.com/2012/01/23/women-matter-2-female-leadership-a-competitive-edge-for-the-future/(retrieved 21/2/2012).

[14]see the European Commission's: "She Figures 2009 Statistics and Indicators on Gender Equality in Science" in: http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document_library/pdf_06/she_figures_2009_en.pdf (retrieved 21/2/2012).

[15]According to Valérie Tandeau de Marsac, founder and President of **vox**femina (http://voxfemina.asso.fr)--a French non-profit organization created to enhance the visibility of female experts in the media— in an interview in the February edition of the ECWT Newletter.

lacking. In other words, women faced the same problems in career advancement: the glass ceiling and the leaky pipeline.

Women's under-representation or wastage of talent is also observed in entrepreneurship. Women constitute only 34.4% of the EU's self-employed workforce and only 39.4% women choose to be self-employed compared to 50.2% men.[16] Utilizing the entire talent pool is essential in this sector as well in order to generate and stimulate economic growth, especially since many surveys confirm that female-led ICT businesses as well as women-owned firms have been successfully competing in the global market.

Entrepreneurs: the female and migrant talent pool

"Of our 8,000 partners worldwide, 15% are women. We are white males—that's where we come from. Our objective is not 50/50. It's the best people. But that is closer to 50/50 than it is to 85/15"[17] (Samuel DiPiazza, Jr, CEO, Pricewaterhouse Coopers)

Surveys conducted by the National Foundation of Women Business Owners (NFWBO) show that women-owned firms compete in the global market, stimulate growth and are focused on business expansion.[18] Women entrepreneurs have a significant impact on the economy, not only in their ability to create jobs for themselves but also in creating jobs for others.[19] Women entrepreneurs are highly educated and use more high technology systems than their male counterparts. However, they constitute, as previously mentioned, only 34.4% of the EU's self-employed workforce and only 39.4% women choose to be self-employed compared to 50.2% men.[20] Women also create smaller but relatively more viable enterprises, are more cautious than men and possess better awareness regarding the risk of failure.[21] Consequently, it is vital for more women to learn how to play the international trade game and to raise the visibility of women's entrepreneurship. A global network of women's business associations as well as information technologies could help in many ways to encourage women to launch their own businesses, identify markets, provide industry information and spotlight trends on the role of women in sustainable economic recovery. (Kamberidou 2010b)

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[16]"Women Entrepreneurs encouraged to take the plunge", 08/12/2010, in: http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/1675&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en
[17] In: Why Women Mean Business (2009) by Avivah Wittenberg-Cox & Alison Maitland. Wiley: John Whiley & Sons, Ltd. Publication.
[18]See: International Entrepreneurship in: http://www.internationalentrepreneurship.com/european_entrepreneurship/greece_entrepreneur.asp (retrieved 12/2/2012)
[19]"Women Entrepreneurs encouraged to take the plunge", 08/12/2010, in: http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/1675&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en
[20]Ibid. Also see figures in: "Women Entrepreneurs encouraged to take the plunge", 08/12/2010 http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?displayType=news&lang=el&tpa_id=1020&item_id=4772&tk= (retrieved 26/2/2012).

[21]Ibid.

In order to foster growth and jobs in Europe, making the most of Europe's potential, we also need to support another important pool of entrepreneurs, that of migrants and people from diverse ethnic minorities. Statistics show that proportionately more migrants and members of ethnic minorities than nationals start small businesses! The Commission and Member States have been supporting and promoting migrant and ethnic minority entrepreneurs, helping them overcome difficulties that prevent them from starting businesses in Europe. Undeniably they have accomplished a lot in dealing with problems of deliberate discrimination. However there is still a need to raise awareness amongst the different stakeholders and establish measures at many levels of government.[22] Many problems migrant/ethnic entrepreneurs confront do not differ from those confronted by women or native speakers, however the additional difficulties that appear to primarily affect this pool of entrepreneurs are: language barriers, social discrimination and prejudices (such as racism and xenophobia), access to financing and to support services, limited business, management and marketing skills, over-concentration in low entry threshold activities with limited scope for diversification into mainstream markets and so forth. In this framework, as previously cited, the ECWT has been systematically working to increase women's participation and emphasizing that "Getting more women into ICT and technology is today, especially in the times of global economic crisis, not just a question of social justice, but a question of economic necessity, growth and competitiveness." [23]

Finally a further dimension of the gender diversity agenda is dealing with problems of deliberate discrimination faced by migrant and ethnic minorities, where there is still a need to raise awareness amongst the different stakeholders and establish measures at many levels of government.[24] Utilizing or taking advantage of the entire talent pool—migrant/ethnic social groups and women— can provide an important competitive advantage since many studies confirm that companies that recognise talent in any form and make good use of it have greater success rates. For example, a 2008 McKinsey & Company study shows that companies with the most gender diverse management teams have on an average higher business results, greater success with regard to profits and sustainability.

Another study carried out by the Technology & Social Change Group (TASCHA) with the support of Microsoft about Immigrant women, e-skills and employability in Europe (Garrido 2010) suggests that strengthening e-skills among immigrant women is an important factor for improving women's position in the labor market. This study also confirms that NGOs play a pivotal role in fostering social, economic and cultural integration and in promoting many of the competencies identified by the European Union as critical to succeed in today's labor market.

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[22]See: Migrant and ethnic minority entrepreneurs - reference documents 2008 Conference "Migrant Entrepreneurship/ Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship - Diversity in a united Europe", article " Entrepreneurial Diversity in a Unified Europe, 05/03/2008 @ Brussels, Belgium, in: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=3294 (retrieved 12/2/2012)

[23] ECWT Position Paper 2011 p.1

[24]See: Migrant and ethnic minority entrepreneurs - reference documents 2008 Conference "Migrant Entrepreneurship/ Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship - Diversity in a united Europe", article " Entrepreneurial Diversity in a Unified Europe, 05/03/2008 @ Brussels, Belgium, in: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=3294 (retrieved 12/2/2012)

Gender fatigue

"Younger women find it difficult to connect to women's networks in the workplace, because they view these networks as something that belonged to their mother's generation." (Merriman 2009)

A recent study blames "gender fatigue" (Kelan 2010) for the failure of companies and organization to increase the number of women reaching executive ranks. Gender fatigue refers to the loss of energy to acknowledge and oppose gender discrimination, including the lack of interest to tackle afresh something no longer perceived as a problem. It refers to the individual's feelings of weariness or of being too drained out to discuss gender discrimination and social bias. (Kamberidou 2010c). Gender fatigue, especially observed in younger women, refers to the lack of energy to repeatedly reconstruct the workplace as *gender neutral*, despite the fact that discrimination continues to exist.

Elisabeth Kelan (2010) argues that if you talk to people today in the workplace they construct the workplace as gender neutral. They assume that gender no longer matters because the issue has long been solved. Kelan calls this phenomenon *gender fatigue*. A qualitative study conducted, prior to the publication of her book, in two large organisations/companies in Information Communication Technology (ICT) in Switzerland—that promote themselves as having leading-edge policies and programs for gender equality— reveals that many of their female employees experience gender fatigue. Specifically, Kelan conducted job-based observations of 16 female employees as wells as 26 qualitative in-depth interviews with the staff— 16 men and 10 women. The age range of the participants was 25 to 54, the majority of which were in their late thirties. The ICT sector was chosen for this study because it is commonly perceived as an egalitarian and gender neutral sector, namely a true meritocracy sector where gender should not matter. One need point out, however, that this is also a sector which is male dominated and where there is a **25% gender pay gap**, despite the fact that on a global level there is a shortage of 1.2 million staff in the ICT sector.[25]

In this study Kelan (2010) examines the ways in which employees navigated the dilemma of simultaneously acknowledging gender discrimination in the workplace whilst holding the view that their workplace is gender neutral. Most of the participants were reluctant to even talk about gender, an attitude which could lead to totally dismissing the relevance of gender in the workplace, in other words **stabilize/ solidifying women's underrepresentation**. As observed in the study, younger women in particular are the ones who experience gender fatigue since they confront more subtle gender bias in the workplace, which is much harder to deal with, especially since younger women are not active or engaged in discussions in women's networks or forums. In an interview to Reuters Kelan argues that: "Younger women find it difficult to connect to women's networks in the workplace, because they view these networks as something that belonged to their mother's generation." (Merriman 2009)   Although companies have been taking measures to eliminate gender

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[25]Eurostat 2005, Global Insight 2000-2030 McKinsey.

discrimination by appointing diversity officers and running diversity programs— that are seen by many people in the workplace as helping to ensure equality—women are usually excluded from the networking and client work in the workplace.

Glass escalator

On the other when men enter female dominated professions—social work, librarianship, nursing and elementary education, etc. — they do not experience gender fatigue. They are not excluded from the networking and client work in the workplace. They do not experience the gender pay gap or the gender leadership gap. They do not confront invisible obstacles such as the *glass ceiling*, the *sticky floor or the leaky pipeline*, but instead they experience positive discrimination.

They ride up—on what sociologist Christine Williams (1992:296) was the first to call the "glass escalator".[26] In other words underrepresented men are welcomed into the so-called female professions and workplace. They are encouraged, supported, retained, receive higher salaries and are promoted up the ladder, into the managerial ranks, more frequently and much faster than their female counterparts, and not only! They are overrepresented in the upper hierarchies! (Kamberdiou 2010c, Kimmel 2004, Hultin 2003, Williams 1992). Undeniably, as Hultin (2003) argues, the glass escalator has been taking underrepresented men on an upwardly mobile internal career path at a speed that their female colleagues can hardly enjoy.

Men who enter so-called women's professions/workplaces and women who enter the so-called men's professions also experience "*tokenism*" (Kimmel 2004:198-199). In both cases women and men experience tokenism, however their experiences as tokens are quite different. Research reveals strikingly different experiences when women are tokens in male dominated workplaces and when men are tokens in predominantly female workplaces. (Kimmel 2004, Williams 1992, Kanter 1977) Tokens are people who are hired or accepted into an organization, an institution or a company because of their minority status. Tokens are usually women, ethnic minorities, the aged or individuals with special needs who are often treated as *symbols* or *representatives* of a marginal social group. Inevitably this focus on difference, as opposed to respect for diversity, reproduces workplace inequalities, social stereotypes and the gender order.

This is not the case when women enter male dominated professions, as confirmed by the figures previously cited in this paper. Women do not ride up the glass escalator, since women continue to be exceedingly underrepresented, and especially in decision making positions in the ICT sector, in research, engineering, science and technology (S&T) and so forth. The invisible obstacles –glass ceiling, sticky floor— that prevent women from getting on the glass escalator (moving up the ladder) indicate that *gender devaluation* processes are consistently being reproduced. This is the case in the academia as well, as many findings confirm that women's interest in an academic career has been steadily decreasing due to the gender-blind academic structures and policies that devalue their services! (Farrington, 2011; European

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[26] Following interviews with seventy-six men and twenty-three women in four professions considered "female fields": social work, librarianship, nursing and elementary education

Commission 2010, Kamberdiou 2010c; Kamberidou 2008, Vlahoutsikou & Abatzi, 2007, Vosniadou 2004; Benschop & Brouns 2003)

Women friendly means people friendly: concluding remarks-recommendations

How can we move from gender devaluation and gender fatigue to *gender energy* and get more women to ride up the glass escalator? Integrating a gender perspective, getting more women on the glass escalator, requires "getting gender back on the agenda" (Kamberidou 2010c). It means redefining professional success, finding alternate paths to participation and advancement as opposed to the linear-traditional male model in which the professional is focused on a career full-time, with few family duties (the male model), thereby preserving male stereotypes and making it difficult for individual men to break out. For instance, an obstacle women constantly confront is that of being a parent. Many studies confirm that in evaluations mothers[27] are usually penalised for having children while fathers are rewarded.[28] Integrating a gender perspective means acknowledging that "Women friendly means people friendly" (Cox & Maitland 2009: 281), namely improving the quality of the workplace for everyone. It means re-thinking and redefining the model for professional life—changing mindsets and stereotypes— that allows both men and women to flourish as individuals and professionals. How can this be achieved? We already have all the necessary research and analyses so what we need to do now is act. In order to accomplish this, initially we need to integrate a holistic approach, the human dimension into the equation, specifically to politicize the personal, which is largely ignored as a strategy relevant for reforms. One need reiterate here that the European Centre for Women and Technology (ECWT) has persistently argued that this integration process needs to be based on a holistic approach, which includes all Directorate Generals of the European Commission collaborating around a Gender Action Plan for the Digital Agenda. Both the ECWT Position Paper and Report from the Women for Smart Growth workshop held at the First Digital Agenda Assembly[29], 16-17 June 2011 in Brussels stress, that "the minimum 50% of the success of delivering the Digital Agenda will depend on whether the European Commission will find ways and means of integrating a critical mass of women in Europe into the access, design, research, innovation, production and use of ICT during 2011-2020"[30].

        Politicizing the personal:
1. Recognize that gender balance is not exclusively a women's issue. The establishment or institutionalization of specific policies and funding for

[27] Thoughts on university leadership. The motherhood penalty: It's not children that slow mothers down December 8, 2011 By Curt Rice
http://curt-rice.com/2011/12/08/the-motherhood-penalty-its-not-children-that-slow-mothers-down/
[28] *Thoughts on university leadership. The fatherhood bonus: Have a child and advance your career* December 14, 2011 By Curt Rice, in: http://curt-rice.com/2011/12/14/the-fatherhood-bonus-have-a-child-and-advance-your-career/ (retrieved 21/2/2012).
[29] Digital Agenda Assembly, http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/digital-agenda/daa/
[30] Women for Smart Growth (2011).
http://www.womenandtechnology.eu/digitalcity/news/w_newsheading.jsp?dom=AAABECDQ&hir=BAAFKWON&fmn=AAABDVVI&prt=AAABDUAV&men=AAABDVWG

professional support and survival services in companies, organizations, firms and universities, such as family-life balance programs: a) Formal career spousal/partner hiring policies, since many findings reveal that women who are professionals frequently have husbands or partners who are professionals, b) sharing parental leave (not only maternal leave), c) institutional day care, d) with regard to universities longer tenure tracks for both men and women, e) ensuring that the legal mechanisms are in place and that they actually work—accountability and penalties— since studies (Benschop and Brouns 2003) show that although such policies do exist, they are usually ignored.

2. *Flexibility rethought - technology as an enabler*. In response to changing social attitudes, flexibility needs to be made a priority tool for attracting and retaining both male and female employees. **Men must also be encouraged to be role models for flexible working**. Flexi-programmes are usually associated with low commitment and perceived as a benefit for women with children. The demand for greater flexibility today is not only about motherhood. One need point out that teleworking— working at home using a computer and phone— is most common among highly skilled, senior-ranking men. (Cox & Maitland 2009) Not only women want more flexibility in relation to work today. New models of work are emerging due to globalization, changing demographics and social attitudes. For example, parenthood is a role that men are increasingly sharing. The concept of retirement is dying as older people work beyond retirement age and young people are taking time off to travel, study, work for non-profit organisations, do volunteer work, etc. In other words, recognizing that careers are no longer linear and unbroken is also essential. Assisted by technology, highly skilled people today are using technology as an enabler— working independently, monitoring results instead of hours and balancing their personal-family/career lives, which the traditional model or the long-hours tied down to a desk model does not permit.

Integrating a gender perspective means banning discrimination (including unconscious bias or forms of discrimination). For example, the results of research on the evaluation of men and women applicants for postdoctoral positions in Sweden show that a woman is required to have 2.5 times as many publications as a man to be judged as equally qualified.[31] Integrating a gender perspective means identifying and eliminating systemic bias from the academia, corporate structures, firms, career management systems and processes. It means looking at the data on recruitment, promotions and remuneration. Specifically, it requires the following steps:

Recruitment, remuneration and promotion/advancement

3. Recruitment, vital for closing the *gender participation gap*. Accordingly it is necessary to first know the facts, to initially examine: a) if recruitment campaigns are effective in attracting women, b) where

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[31] See article: "Equality targets as a leadership tool", November 8, 2011 By Curt Rice, in; http://curt-rice.com/2011/11/08/equality-targets-as-a-leadership-tool/ (retrieved 21/2/2012).

and how jobs are advertised, c) what images are used to convey the corporate/organizational/workplace cultures, d) What is the situation in your organization, company or institution?, e) How does your organization/company/institution/industry compare to its competitors in the same sector?

4. Increasing gender balance so as to improve the quality of the workplace for everyone as well as making diversity an integral part of leadership development programs. Make diversity a priority by getting the leadership of your organization/company/institution/industry on board.

5. Auditing compensation practices, trends and policies to uncover hidden or subtle forms of discrimination or gender devaluation processes which lead to gender fatigue, so as to eventually eliminate the gender pay gap and leadership gap.

6. Identify high-potential people. Integrating a gender perspective means a) examining if companies have a structured programme to identify high-potential female and male employees or motivated individuals and invest in them, b) creating the necessary support structures around them to eliminate structural barriers, such as motherhood penalties, age penalties and the subjectivity of peer evaluations. One need point out here that when the age is capped (typically 28-35), it discriminates against child-bearing women as well as older adults. Scandinavian companies have removed the age limit altogether and 'progressive' companies have raised it to 40-45. (Cox & Maitland 2009)

Mentoring programs

Having more women and minority/ethnic groups in top positions, although crucial, is not enough to raise awareness, to change the way we think about gender, race and knowledge production. Men also need to change and this could be accomplished with their participation in Mentoring programs for women.

7. Compulsory participation of both male and female executives and faculty members of all ranks in formal mentoring programs. This requires a) the formulation of specific guidelines on what the Mentor should do for the female mentee b) training programs for Mentors—training the trainers, educating the educators—so that they acquire the skills and know-how to discuss overt discrimination (including sexual harassment), subtle institutional and cultural forms of discrimination, social biases, and so forth. This could contribute to their sensitization, to eventually reducing or eliminating male stereotypes (the male model) of success or excellence.

A European collaborative platform or hub of information

The European Center for Women and Technology (ECWT) is continuing its discussions with interested stakeholders around the process of integrating a gender perspective into the workplace which could be facilitated by the establishment of **an** all encompassing European collaborative platform or hub of information, a version 2 of the European Directory of women and ICT developed during 2009-2010 with the

support of DG INFSO[32] — for thinking globally and acting locally— for identifying diverse stakeholders with a gender perspective, promoting intergenerational collaborations and networking with those who are at the forefront of implementing change, progressive thinking peers, universities, experts and the media. This could ensure that information and support services for women and minority groups are mainstreamed throughout the system to diverse stakeholders. Such a collaborative platform and forum for closing the gender gaps in Europe could promote:

8. The initial identification of issues and problems across all areas of activity
9. A gender-sensitive multi-stakeholders checklist or tool kit, etc.
10. A regional mapping for setting baseline indicators and accountability mechanisms for monitoring progress
11. The concept of gender integration/mainstreaming into practice: allocation of adequate resources, equitable participation at all levels of decision-making, women-specific policies and programmes, etc.
12. Partnerships and collaborations focused on eliminating the three major gender gaps in Europe: participation gap, pay gap, leadership gap.
13. Successful lobbying practices, alternative models, examine the effectiveness of existing legal or formal mechanisms in protecting women and ethnic minority groups, accountability processes, etc.
14. Projects for getting more girls to choose and to stay in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) as well as continuous impact measurement.

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[32] http://www.ictwomendirectory.eu

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