



PRESS RELEASE

Break gender stereotypes, give talent a chance!

Gent, 2/10/09- The European Commission has launched an initiative* to help private sector companies and in particular small and medium enterprises (SMEs), to **better understand the benefits of combating gender stereotypes** in the world of work, thus improving their competitiveness.

Gender stereotypes have a significant impact on the labour market and the business sector. Although companies cannot afford to waste talents, stereotypes related to what is more appropriate for men and women often act as barriers.

For instance, not so many are aware that: nearly 60% of all new university graduates and about 80% of students in business administration in Europe are women; women are in charge of over 70% of purchasing decisions; actions in support of gender equality have a positive impact on employees' motivation, creativity and productivity; firms with the best record of promoting women to high positions are between 18 and 69% percent more profitable than the median Fortune 500 firms in their sector.

All these figures show us that the presence of both men and women in enterprises are equally needed. In Belgium the statistics have shown us, there are still a lot of efforts to be done to really get to an equal situation for men and women: In 2007 the total employment rate in Belgium was 62%. There were 68.7% men employed, but only 55.3% women. This number of employed women is lower than the average of 58.3 % in Europe in 2007. Many more woman work part time than men (38.8% woman and 6.4% men in 2006). In 2007, if we look at the highest decision-making body in the largest publicly quoted companies, we see that only 6% of there members are women and 94% are men!

To address these issues, the initiative includes a series of workshops that take place in the 27 EU countries plus Iceland and Norway. Such workshops target staff of: chambers of commerce; business and professional associations; training bodies; businessmen and businesswomen; SMEs managers; human resource managers; and all those who work to improve SMEs competitiveness.

The action also develops and provides an ad-hoc training "toolkit" for better and full use of individual talents within a company.

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In Belgium there are 3 **workshops**, each of one day. They will take place 7, 8 and 9 October:

- 07 October (9h – 16h).
Location: Chambre de commerce et d'industrie du Luxembourg belge, Grand Rue 1,
6800 Libramont (French spoken)

- 08 October (9h – 16h).
Location: BECI, Louizalaan 500, 1050 Brussel (French spoken)
- 09 October (9h – 16h).
Location: Administratief Centrum Portus, Keizer Karelstraat 1, 9000 Ghent (Dutch spoken)

How to participate

There is no charge for participating in the workshops. However, places are limited and will be assigned on the basis of the company profile and that of potential participants.

To apply, please go to: <http://app-gender.itcilo.org/>

For further information please contact:



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or consult the Project's website

www.businessandgender.eu

** This initiative is commissioned by the European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities in the framework of the contract "Raising the awareness of companies about combating gender stereotypes" managed by the International Training Centre of the ILO in partnership with the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry (EUROCHAMBRES).*