



PRESS RELEASE

Break gender stereotypes, give talent a chance!

Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bratislava, 14 September 2009 - 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.

In particular in Slovakia, gender stereotypes contribute to the existence of both horizontal and vertical segregation of the labour market. The rates of gender segregation in Slovakia are higher than the EU averages, standing at 22.4 in economic sectors and 29.5 in occupations. Moreover, the proportion of female managers in Slovakia is more than two times lower than that of male managers. In addition, Slovakia has a large gender pay gap of approximately 22% which is, furthermore, steadily increasing.

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.

The **national workshop** for Slovakia will take place from October 12 – 14, 2009 in Bratislava.

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>

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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).*