

# Benefits of gender equality

Online discussion report



# Women and political decision-making

Online discussion report



ISBN 978-92-9218-454-4

doi:10.2839/63305

© European Institute for Gender Equality, 2014

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

This publication summarises the views expressed by more than 30 people participating in an online discussion held on 24 and 25 April 2013 through the EuroGender online platform (<http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu>) of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). This report was published in the framework of the 'Animation-online discussions within EuroGender' EIGE/2012/OPER/23 service contract, delivered by Cultura Lavoro srl in partnership with the European Service Network (ESN). The findings, interpretations and conclusions are entirely those of the authors and should not be attributed in any manner to EIGE. Neither EIGE nor any person acting on its behalf may be held responsible for the content of the information contained in this publication.

Printed in Belgium

PRINTED ON ELEMENTAL CHLORINE-FREE BLEACHED PAPER (ECF)

# Contents

Introduction	5
Organisation	5
Participation	6
Background	6
Summary	7
Experts' contributions and key issues	8
Conclusions	14
Annex I — Resources	15
Annex II — Transcripts	16
Annex III — List of participants	17



# Introduction

In April 2013, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) launched a new project on the benefits of gender equality (BGE). By introducing a focus on benefits, EIGE seeks to support effective advocacy for gender equality in the political agenda across the European Union (EU), in times when the economic and social crisis hampers progress.

The BGE project includes background papers and expert group meetings among renowned experts and relevant networks working on evidence-based advocacy for gender equality in the EU. An important component of the BGE project was an online discussion through EIGE's online platform, EuroGender, on preliminary ideas about the benefits that gender equality has brought in different sectors and at different levels.

To contribute to preparations for the expert group meetings, EIGE organised an online discussion on the linkages between women's empowerment and active participation in society and the broader social and economic benefits for individuals, families, organisations, governments and societies. The online discussion aimed to stimulate interest in EIGE's new project; provide a forum for discussion among different stakeholders; map out the main benefits of gender equality; and identify literature, rationale and stories that can strengthen advocacy for gender equality in the EU in the current climate of austerity measures and the weakening of the welfare state.

This report summarises the major points made during the discussions, although it is not possible to accurately reflect all the variety of viewpoints. For further consultation, discussion transcripts can be found in Annex II.

# Organisation

Ahead of the expert group meetings, the online discussion on BGE set out to map out the benefits of gender equality in the EU and to explore existing approaches to conceptualise and measure some of those benefits. To this end, EIGE invited experts and practitioners to identify and assess the key benefits of gender equality to individuals, families, communities, business settings, institutions and societies, bringing to light stories of successful initiatives, policies and methodologies.

Invitations were sent to relevant European networks such as the Thematic Network on Gender and Evaluation in the European Evaluation Society (EES), the European Gender Budgeting Network (EGBN), the Platform for Equal and Non-Transferable Paternity Leave (PLENT), EIGE's Expert Forum, the European Community of Practice on Gender Mainstreaming (Gender-CoP) and EIGE's specialised networks: Gender Mainstreaming Thematic Network, Beijing Working Group and Working Group on Gender Equality Index.

The online discussion ran for 2 days, from 24 to 25 April 2013, and was divided into four sessions. Participants were invited to comment on several issues concerning the contributions of gender equality to social and economic progress:

- Session 1: Assessment of gender equality benefits through recent history;
- Session 2: Advocacy strategies in times of crisis;
- Session 3: The economic case for gender equality;
- Session 4: The business case for gender equality.



# Participation

The participation broadly covered geographical and organisational sectors across the EU. Online discussion respondents were from academia, civil society organisations, organisers (EIGE and Cultura Lavoro S.r.l.) and expert networks.

More than 60 people registered for this online event and 34 shared comments, documents, examples and experiences related to the topics of discussion. The majority of participants were from Spain and Italy. During the discussion, a total of 141 messages were posted by different participants. The discussion was conducted in English. Additional information concerning the online discussion can be found in Annex II and Annex III.

# Background

Gender equality is a value in its own right, and not only a means to other ends. Nevertheless, in the last decades, gender equality policies in the EU have been motivated by a plethora of political concerns related to increasing participation in the labour market and reducing social costs.

The EU implements a two-pronged approach for gender equality policies on the basis of the specific and often different needs and interests of women and men. On the one hand, the strategy of gender mainstreaming integrates the awareness of these different needs and interests into all policies, programmes, projects and institutional structures and procedures. On the other hand, inequalities are also addressed through gender-specific measures involving women and men, either separately, together or through measures designed explicitly to overcome inequalities. Mainstreaming can include gender-specific actions where necessary.

In the past few years, different actors in the EU have made serious efforts to tap into the benefits of gender equality at different levels and in different dimensions as a political advocacy strategy. The most widely used arguments can be grouped under the concepts of the economic case for gender equality; the business case for gender equality in private companies; and at personal level through the work on stereotypes. Outcomes of gender equality go beyond the economic effects of equal access of women to the labour market that have tended to dominate policy thinking in the EU, and they are also concerned with the broader concept of the quality of life of individuals, societies, families and communities.

In the context of the current crisis and changes, gender equality needs to engage with discussions about the post-crisis economic and social model in the EU. Research shows that austerity measures and welfare reforms impact upon already unacceptable levels of gender inequality. Furthermore, gender equality is now perceived as a burden on business and a cost for public bodies.

However, long-term change requires steady resources and strategies to tackle deep-rooted power relations that require generations to surmount. At a time when budget cuts and austerity talks in the EU put gender equality structures and policies under enormous pressure, gender equality advocates the need to use convincing arguments and innovative approaches to advocacy and promotion of gender equality.

Economic arguments in favour of investment in gender equality on the basis of its capacity to spur economic growth can provide a powerful tool for advocates and have helped to garner cross-party support in many countries in the recent past, including Ireland, Spain and the Netherlands. But the economic argument for investing in gender equality and women is not without its critics and has been accused of prioritising the well-being of markets and the neo-liberal agenda.

This online discussion sought to shed light on current advocacy and arguments to support and sustain government interest on gender equality.



# Summary

## Session 1: Designing a collective assessment of gender equality benefits through recent history

### Introduction

In the year 2013, EIGE is devoting energies and resources to identify key benefits of gender equality and highlight the contribution of gender equality to the social and economic development in the EU and its Member States.

The discourse on gender equality is challenged and threatened by the nowadays economic and financial crisis and the subsequent current austerity measures. Gender equality is perceived as a consequence, not a cause, of prosperity

### Guiding questions

- *What are some of the benefits that gender equality has brought to EU societies?*
- *How could we cluster the benefits of gender equality into meaningful groups or dimensions?*

### Main conclusions

Tangible benefits accrue to individuals, particularly women, including education, career, financial independence and new roles. Intangible benefits accrue to individuals including freedom, choice and happiness. Benefits accrue to the wider society including human development and economic growth

## Session 2: Advocacy strategies in times of crisis: how to address gender equality in the current political agenda

### Introduction

Some of the key ways to address gender equality are based on: (a) ethics — women represent more than 50 % of the EU's population; (b) rights-based approach — women and girls represent the most disadvantaged social group across all other inequalities; and (c) proven results — investing in women has been shown to increase social welfare and economic growth.

There is an urgent need to strengthen advocacy for equality. Although equality is addressed not only as a matter of fundamental rights, but also as an economic resource and a driver of well-being, the current economic climate has relegated gender equality to oblivion. The discussion focused on the importance of using the economic benefits of gender equality as a strategy to promote and preserve gender equality policies and institutions.

### Guiding questions

- *Do you perceive that the rights discourse is no longer effective in advocating for gender equality in the EU?*
- *What do you think are the current perceptions on gender equality in the context of the economic crisis?*
- *How is gender equality connected to the current economic and financial crisis?*
- *What evidence-based advocacy on gender equality do we need?*

### Main conclusions

Advocacy strategies need to evolve to be relevant to new policies and new policy processes. Advocacy goals must be developed to address failures to implement gender equality policies, the lack of popular demand for gender equality and the need for new tools to advance gender equality. The role of civil society in advocacy needs to be supported and further developed. The evidence basis for advocacy is central to its capacity to make an impact. The ethics and rights basis of advocacy remains vital.

## Session 3: The economic case for gender equality

### Introduction

The economic case for gender equality stresses the wider economic benefits that span individuals, firms, regions and nations. It recognises the costs of non-equality in terms of well-being and starts viewing gender equality as an investment: a productive factor that can be leveraged, exploiting the full productive potential of the labour force, a precondition for sustainable demographic development and an increase in net contributions to fiscal systems providing financial gains to public governments.



### Guiding questions

- *Do you think that women's participation in the labour market should be the main rationale for investing in gender equality?*
- *How and to what extent is gender equality related to economic growth?*
- *What are your opinions on using demography as the rationale to increase public investment in gender equality?*
- *What are the strong and weak points of the economic case for gender equality?*
- *What evidence-based advocacy on gender equality do we need?*

### Main conclusions

The economic case is tightly linked to women's labour market participation and gender equality in the labour market. It can be considered in terms of entrepreneurship and unleashing the full range of talents and creativity in society. It includes issues of demography as well as a linked caring dimension. There is a danger in using the economic case for shifting from a policy focus on benefits to a focus on reducing costs and there is a need to broaden the concept of gross domestic product (GDP) if it is to be the measure of progress.

## Session 4: The business case for gender equality

### Introduction

The business case for gender equality places an emphasis on equality measures as a business necessity and an essential management tool where equality is at the very core of the organisational strategy. Advocates of gender equality in private companies provide some evidence that a higher rate of female employment can improve decision-making, improve shareholder value and lower risk-taking in a company.

The business case for gender equality can also encompass non-financial benefits such as better governance, cohesiveness and diversity-boosted creativity in the workplace.

### Guiding questions

- *Stock performance, return on equity, lower gearing, higher price/book value and better average growth are the basis for the business case on gender equality. How solid do you think current research on the business case for gender equality is?*
- *What about using other 'non-financial' parameters, such as working environment, governance, creativity, etc. as evidence for the business case for gender equality?*

### Main conclusions

The business case has been referred to in terms of, inter alia, enhanced profit, performance, innovation, recruitment, working environment and image. Research findings, however, predominantly indicate correlation rather than causality between gender equality and business performance. The understanding of a business achieving gender equality is limited in some research. There are dangers in the business case as its focus can be too narrow, it can stereotype women and men and its focus on difference could lead back to essentialist views of women and men.

# Experts' contributions and key issues

## Session 1: Designing a collective assessment of gender equality benefits through recent history

This session debated the benefits that gender equality has brought to individuals, families, communities, business settings, institutions and EU societies. This session also examined how to categorise these benefits and how to group them into meaningful categories.

The discussion starting point was the challenges and threats which gender equality is facing due to the current economic and financial crisis and the subsequent austerity measures. In the public scene, in fact, gender equality seems to be more and more a consequence of well-being in times of prosperity.





The most immediate and tangible benefits from gender equality were seen to accrue to individuals. These benefits were initially named in terms that covered tangible issues such as education, career, financial independence and new roles.

“Some aspects to take into account are the following benefits — social, education, career in terms of promotion/salary/categories and conciliation of family and work.” Foundation of One-Parent Families, Isadora Duncan

“One of the main outcomes of gender equality is to allow, at a certain level, a financial independence to both genders, and to limit the personal dependence within a relationship and by extension within society. This relative independence ... allows a bigger choice in professional direction, lifestyle, etc.” Bettina Braun

“Gender equality in Europe has contributed to challenging traditional female and male roles. Although important gender inequalities still exist, women have increased their participation in political life and in the labour market. Hence, nowadays women have more voice in the definition of public policies and have increased their access to and control over economic resources.” Julia Espinosa

Benefits were also named in relation to less tangible issues such as freedom, choice and happiness.

“If I look at my personal life and compare it with my mother’s, I could say I have gained in freedom and choice.” Priya Alvarez

“In countries that have a consolidated gender equality approach women are happier. Happiness seems to me a great benefit.” Barbara Leda Kenny

These individual benefits were primarily seen to accrue to women but benefits to men were also suggested.

“The whole gender equality movement is for men and women to have the internal freedom expressed in a secure and respectful environment.” Alexandrina Satnoianu

“Men benefit from gender equality because gender equality contributes to going beyond the traditional ideology of masculinity.” Carla Fronteddu

Broader benefits that stretch beyond the individual were a focus in the debate. Benefits such as freedom, choice and capabilities drew the debate towards the benefits of gender equality to human development. The debate did not ignore the contribution of gender equality to economic growth.

“The first benefit of gender equality is its contribution to human development. Gender equality actions in Europe have contributed to enlarging women’s and men’s choice, capabilities and freedoms. Gender equality actions have put people, and their needs and interests, in the core of the policymaking process.” Julia Espinosa

“The wider participation in economic life achieved by women in Member States, and especially in some regions, has positively contributed to economic growth and human development.” Tindara Addabbo

New challenges for gender equality were acknowledged. It is difficult to hold onto the benefits achieved and there are reversals. Progress has created new contexts that hold further challenges for women and gender equality.

“When we consider the impact of recent austerity measures across the EU, women are consistently more adversely affected by gender-blind policymaking and gendered assumptions of women’s and men’s roles and lives.” Angela O’Hagan

“My generation is facing new challenges, and sometimes renegotiating things we thought were settled and assumed. In Italy, where I live, in the last years all the cuts to welfare and public political discourse were saying to women “Go back home! Clean, stay with the child and take care of grandpa.” Chiara Fattori

## Session 2: Advocacy strategies in times of crisis: how to address gender equality in the current political agenda

This session debated the need for a renewed advocacy strategy, the efficacy of the rights-based approach, current perceptions of gender equality in a time of economic and financial crisis and the need for evidence-based advocacy.

Some of the key ways to address gender equality are based on: (a) ethics — women represent more than 50 % of the EU’s population; (b) rights-based approach — women and girls represent the most disadvantaged social group across all other inequalities; and (c) proven results — investing in women has been shown to increase social welfare and economic growth.

There is the urgent need to advocate for equality. And, as costs and economic priorities represent the key argument to put aside gender equality, using economic benefits of gender equality as a strategy to foster (and preserve) gender equality



seems to be a good pattern. In this context, equality is addressed not only as a matter of fundamental rights, but also as an economic resource and a driver of wellness.

Limited change when it comes to how gender equality is viewed, and the extent to which policy processes to advance gender equality are implemented, was seen as one important context for advocacy.

“*‘Gender equality is still seen as a cost and not as an investment.’* Carla Fronteddu

“*‘Political decisions are not taking into account the issue of gender equality as a prerequisite for development and they are focusing on adjustment policies. They rely on the “trickle-down effect” — if our GDP increases, gender equality data will improve automatically. So gender equality is a secondary objective.’* Julia Espinosa

“*‘Insisting on fulfilling some of the requirements already established may be another small building block for a new advocacy strategy.’* Victoria Sánchez Esteban

Viewed another way, significant change was seen as an important context for advocacy. New policy processes have evolved and new policies are being pursued in a context of economic and financial crisis. Advocacy strategies need to evolve to be relevant to this changed context.

“*‘There are new policy instruments based on deliberation, coordination and orchestration of multiple participation and stakeholders online and in real-time contexts. They require alignment between multiple levels of government and co-governance processes ... Gender activists have to be even more agile to set new agendas, to create new hubs of networking and knowledge sharing and to build novel social practices.’* Liisa Horelli

“*‘Governments are now focused on cutting expenditure. Gender equality needs public expenditure to provide for services in the care economy and unleash women’s potential for the labour market.’* Priya Alvarez

Advocacy goals also need to be reconsidered in the light of this changed context. The lack of popular demand for gender equality was identified as an issue. The need for new tools to advance gender equality in the policy process was seen as another. Goals in relation to these issues were seen to be mutually reinforcing.

“*‘The ENEGE [European Network of Experts on Gender Equality] network report as well as the EWLs [European Women’s Lobby’s] one on the impact on women of the crisis, even if their standpoints might diverge, agree on the need for gender budgeting as a pre-assessment tool.’* Barbara Leda Kenny

“*‘Advocacy needs to present evidence to the policymakers just as it needs to empower a new value base across society to achieve this popular demand.’* Niall Crowley

“*‘If we are to change the value base from which gender equality is argued, I think that it is absolutely part of the change in advocacy and one of the reasons why gender budget analysis and gender analysis across the policy process is so important.’* Angela O’Hagan

It was also pointed out that advocacy goals need to take account of the more complex policy processes, in particular at EU level.

“*‘There is a need to advocate for the inclusion of a gender perspective in the European semester process, from the approach of proven results of gender equality in the social and economic fields. But an ethics- and rights-based approach needs to also be promoted and must be our ground for advocacy.’* Irene Rosales

The need to support and further develop the role of civil society in advocacy was highlighted. This role involves contributing to cultural change in support of gender equality and to the implementation of policy processes for gender equality.

“*‘Civil society should be involved in the process of gender budgeting and should have a voice. Perhaps neglecting this voice and detaching it from decision-making can be considered at the root of a model of development still characterised by sharp gender inequalities ... a way to listen and to advocate for these voices to be listened to should be found.’* Tindara Addabbo

“*‘We should be concerned with civil society and the quality of the push for gender equality from civil society. Civil society is one of the casualties of the crisis too — this has weakened women’s voices through various associations. This area needs reinvigoration so that it has resources but also so that it evolves and becomes fit for purpose in these very difficult times.’* Niall Crowley



The ethics and rights basis of advocacy was seen as vital. It was also recognised that advocacy has to focus on current policy priorities and to build a gender dimension into these policies. However, it was emphasised that advocacy has to focus on the full range of issues that make up the gender equality agenda. New ways of presenting gender equality as a driver for change in the wider economy and society were suggested.

**“** *I think the rights discourse still has a long way to run, in part as I don't think it has been fully understood or maximised in campaigning.* Angela O'Hagan

**“** *If there is a need to promote gender equality into these new processes of political decision as they are setting the agenda and the political priorities, there is also a need to go beyond these economic priorities and advocate for including new perspectives and priorities. If not, the risk is that some of the important goals of the feminist agenda are irremediably left out of the political agenda.* Irene Rosales

**“** *We should change the way we advocate for gender equality. The paradigm that took us to the crisis was based on inequality and exclusion, and economic and political power was male dominated. Gender equality, and equality at large, could be advocated as a driver for change.* Barbara Leda Kenny

The audience for advocacy work was understood broadly in terms of both policymakers and the general population. There was a call to specifically focus on men.

**“** *When advocating for gender equality, a big target audience many times forgotten is men. They should see the clear benefits of gender equality for them.* Dimitris Tsoutsias

The evidence basis for advocacy was considered central to its capacity to make an impact. Data on gender inequality, on how gender inequality is a brake on human development, on how gender inequality impacts on human capabilities, on how firms that have good equality systems have fared in the crisis and on the economic case for gender equality were all highlighted as important.

**“** *We need evidence-based data about the increasing gender inequalities in EU countries and about how they are a great challenge for the social and economic development of these countries. We need to show how gender inequalities impact on our daily lives and how they limit human capabilities as well as an exit from the crisis.* Julia Espinosa

**“** *It can be important to collect evidence on how firms and institutions characterised by higher gender equality and by the implementation of policies able to improve gender equality ... reacted to the crisis.* Tindara Addabbo

### Session 3: The economic case for gender equality

This session debated women's labour market participation as the main rationale for investing in gender equality, the relationship of gender equality to economic growth, demography as an argument for investment in gender equality, the strengths and weaknesses of the economic case and the evidence-based advocacy required.

The economic case for gender equality stresses the wider economic benefits that span individuals, firms, regions and nations. It recognises the costs of non-equality in terms of well-being and starts viewing gender equality as an investment: a productive factor that can be leveraged exploiting the full productive potential of the labour force, a precondition for sustainable demographic development, and an increase in net contributions to fiscal systems providing financial gains to the states.

The economic case for gender equality was viewed primarily as being tied up with women's labour market participation and gender equality in the labour market. It was also posed in terms of entrepreneurship and unleashing the full range of talents and creativity in society.

**“** *The positive impact of gender equality on economic growth can be related to the positive impact of greater gender equality on women's labour force participation and to a more efficient use of skills.* Tindara Addabbo

**“** *Women's participation in the labour market is being generally used as evidence that gender equality (narrowing gaps in employment rates in this case) increases the size of the cake (the overall GDP of a country) and therefore policymakers are interested in gender equality. It does represent a strong rationale.* Giovanni Razzu

**“** *When it comes to entrepreneurship or new initiatives, limiting talent to that of men is just that: limited talent. There can be so many more good profitable ideas, progress and innovation by unleashing women's talent and creativity.* Priya Alvarez



The economic case was seen as a package with a number of dimensions. While the labour market might be the dominant dimension, issues of demography are also key to this case. The caring dimension to the economic case for gender equality is linked to the issue of demography.

“One [argument for gender equality] that I find particularly interesting in both its “good” and its “not so good” dimensions is the argument about increasing fertility rates and healthy demographics. Some people argue that the real EU crisis is the demographic deficit at the base of the population pyramid that will lead to huge difficulties with public systems like health and pensions.’ Priya Alvarez

“Everybody at some point in their life needs to be cared for. A more efficient distribution of the care activity would boost the economy. It would be more efficient to share care activities.’ Cristina Castellanos

Participants identified a number of difficulties with presenting gender equality in terms of an economic case. There is the danger of a shift from a policy focus on benefits to a focus on reducing costs. Labour market participation can become a requirement without a focus on the right to care. The economic case could become unhelpful, it was suggested, where gender gaps are small compared to the level of labour market participation by women.

“Quoting Rubery and Rafferty ... now that the coalition government’s policy is to reduce active support for working mothers in couple households, what remains of the economic case for promoting higher employment among women is a focus on reducing welfare expenditure by increasing pressure on all lone parents with a child over 5 years old to seek work. This exemplifies the one-sided nature of the approach, where the right to work has become a requirement to work without a complementary right to care.’ Tindara Addabbo

“For some countries where gaps are not large, calculations of the economic benefit from narrowing gaps might not result in “important” benefits as more women in work might displace men.’ Giovanni Razzu

Nonetheless the economic case for gender equality was seen as important.

“To argue the economic case is a strategy to address persons who otherwise will never ever listen to a gender equality discourse. To make the person start to think about gender equality who would otherwise not do so ... The economic case is strategically useful, but it has its limits. Persons are not human resources and gender equality is not an instrument of the economy.’ Regina Frey

Particular issues were identified in relation to economic growth. GDP is a narrow concept and is problematic from the point of view of sustainability. A number of contributors posed the need to broaden the concept of GDP as the measure of progress. However, it was pointed out that GDP remains the dominant concept.

“The current model of economic growth is not sustainable and we need to think how to generate a more sustainable and fair economy model. In this case it could be interesting to include the economic contribution of non-paid work carried out by women in the economic case for gender equality.’ Julia Espinosa

“The economic case should be about challenging the cleavage to GDP and look to alternative and additional indicators of social and economic well-being which would also make women’s unpaid contribution to economic performance visible.’ Angela O’Hagan

“Despite all the problems of GDP, I’m afraid it’s going to be a key indicator (at least for policymakers and economists) for a while. So let’s use it, especially the GDP per capita. Nordic countries have the highest ones in Europe and among the highest worldwide. I would say that the case is clear. It has to do with a more efficient use of their main resource: human capital.’ Cristina Castellanos

#### Session 4: The business case for gender equality

This session debated current research on the business case, the quality of the evidence for better business performance and the use of non-financial parameters to make the case, such as: working environment, governance and creativity.

The business case for gender equality places an emphasis on equality measures as a business necessity and an essential management tool where equality is at the very core of the organisational strategy. Advocates of gender equality in private companies provide that employing women in greater numbers can improve decision-making, improve shareholder value and lower risk-taking in a company.

The business case for gender equality can also encompass non-financial benefits such as better governance, cohesiveness and diversity-boosted creativity in the workplace.



The business case for investing in gender equality has been well researched and a number of research reports were referred to in the discussion.

“*The study [Credit Suisse] finds that companies with one or more women on the board have delivered higher average returns on equity, lower gearing, better average growth and higher price/book value multiples over the course of the last 6 years (from 2005 to 2012).*’ Susi Billingsley

“*The results [Torchia, Calabro and Huse] suggest that attaining critical mass — going from one or two women (a few tokens) to at least three women (consistent minority) — makes it possible to enhance the level of firm innovation.*’ Susi Billingsley

“*The research I conducted in Poland showed six key motivations for implementing diversity management and equal treatment policies in the area of gender — gaining new recruitment pools, retaining the talented and the experienced, reacting to stakeholders’ expectations, proper image, increased work effectiveness and team innovativeness and better atmosphere at work.*’ Magdalena Gryszko

Non-financial parameters were identified as playing an important role in realising the business benefits from gender equality and in underpinning and giving expression to the commitment to gender equality.

“*Non-financial parameters are very important as the working environment should attract and engage everyone, should treat all with dignity and encourage diversity and inclusion. But usually environment and governance are not women-friendly.*’ Jurgita Peciuriene

“*Gender equality measures improving work–life balance can increase the chance of a parent returning to work after childbirth ... this will mainly affect women’s working profiles, reducing turnover costs for firms.*’ Tindara Addabbo

“*The research is strong in relation to non-financial parameters, with greater job satisfaction co-related with work–life balance systems and equality policies. The findings are strengthened by a wider body of research that does link job satisfaction with loyalty and productivity.*’ Niall Crowley

Questions were raised in the debate as to whether the business case had actually been convincingly established in the research work conducted to date. The findings indicate co-relation rather than causality between gender equality and business performance. Questions were also raised about the methods used in some research.

“*I am not convinced of the studies linking economic success of private companies directly to the percentage of women in leading positions.*’ Regina Frey

“*Causality is a key issue. Most studies I’ve been working with, when they present a positive relation between gender equality and business performance, they talk just about co-relation ... To demonstrate causality other kinds of analysis are needed.*’ Cristina Castellanos

“*The main methodological challenge is achieving what they consider to be gender equal enterprises or boards of directors. Having 5 % to 10 % of one sex (women generally) in a board of directors is not a gender balanced board, but in most of these studies it is considered as such.*’ Cristina Castellanos

Pitfalls in framing the business case were identified. There were dangers of stereotyping women and men. Fears were expressed that the focus on difference could lead to a return to essentialism in understanding women and men.

“*Women (and probably men) remain stereotypes in these studies. They say now that women are good in times of crisis because as managers, they (we?) are a lot more risk averse ... Does it mean that women are not such adequate managers and CEOs in times of prosperity?*’ Priya Alvarez

“*Instead of equality, a difference-based approach was fostered to justify the economic benefits of equality. The argument was based on the idea of women bringing different and new approaches to the business sector that can be beneficial. In my opinion we would need to frame the business case very carefully in order to avoid an essentialism again of gender differences and roles.*’ Irene Rosales

Some participants expressed a concern with arguing a business case for gender equality. The focus of the business case can be too narrow and the manner in which firms appropriate this business case can be for their own ends rather than for gender equality.



“*Business case arguments do not sufficiently acknowledge the underlying issues nor address the causal factors. Business case arguments have always felt appealing to me.*’ Angela O’Hagan

“*I use the business case as a kind of impressionistic way of illustrating how the corporate world views women and/or the concept of gender equality as a marketing tool — either to market their products or to market their company in terms of good governance.*’ Sheila Quinn

A number of areas for further work were identified to evolve the business case.

“*I think the Norwegian case with quotas may provide good samples for studies and good evidence.*’ Cristina Castellanos

“*I would stress again the need for better sources of data and the relevance of making surveys on the business case, crossing the firm’s gates to see the effect of policies and different organisational models characterised by different degrees of gender equality. In addition, there is a need to try not to limit oneself to the outcomes in terms of firms’ performance but to show the wider impact on society of what happens within firms in terms of gender equality.*’ Tindara Addabbo

## Conclusions

In the current context of crisis and change, gender equality is increasingly perceived as both a burden and a cost. Gender equality concerns are no longer a key consideration in policymaking. There is a need to strengthen advocacy for gender equality and to bring a stronger focus on gender equality into the discussions about the post-crisis economic and social model in the EU.

Advocacy for gender equality can call on both tangible and intangible benefits that accrue from gender equality to individuals, particularly women, and to society. Tangible benefits for the individual include better education, career progression, financial independence and new roles in society. Intangible benefits for the individual include freedom, choice and happiness.

At a societal level benefits can be identified to the economy, including at a business level. Economic arguments in favour of investment in gender equality and women on the basis of its capacity to spur economic growth provide a powerful tool for advocates. However, economic arguments have been criticised for prioritising the well-being of markets and an economic agenda that does not serve gender equality. Gender equality can, however, be addressed as a matter of fundamental rights as well as an economic resource and a driver of well-being.

The economic case for gender equality includes economic benefits that accrue to individuals, firms, regions and nations. It recognises that there are costs associated with gender inequality that arise from diminished well-being. It is tied up with women’s labour market participation and gender equality in the labour market and poses gender equality as a productive factor that can be leveraged to realise the full productive potential of the labour force, to progress sustainable demographic development and to increase net contributions to fiscal systems. There are dangers to be avoided in making such arguments so that the case for gender equality does not shift from a policy focus on benefits to a policy focus on reducing costs, and so that the case for gender equality is not tied to a narrow concept of GDP as the measure of progress.

At a business level the case for gender equality can be made in terms of greater profit margins, enhanced organisational performance, workplace innovation, more effective recruitment, more productive working environment and better company image. This argument can also encompass benefits in relation to workplace governance. Gender equality in the workplace can enhance decision-making, improve shareholder value and lower risk-taking. There are dangers to be avoided in making such arguments, however, so that they do not stereotype women and men and do not lead back to essentialist views of women and men.

In taking up these challenges advocacy strategies need to evolve to be relevant to new policies and new policy processes. Advocacy goals need to take on a broad agenda to address failures to implement gender equality policies, the lack of popular demand for gender equality and the need for new tools to advance gender equality. The role of civil society in advocacy needs to be supported and further developed.



# Annex I — Resources

## List of resources made available on the EuroGender platform during the discussion:

### Written materials

1. Annesley, C. and Gains, F., 'Investigating the economic determinants of gender equality policy agendas', prepared for presentation at 2009 APSA conference, Toronto (Canada), 3–6 September 2009, 2009  
<http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/SSRN-id1451068.pdf>
2. Bussmann, M., 'Gender equality, good governance, and peace', draft version, prepared for presentation at the general PAC meeting, Gaillac (France), 7–9 June 2007, 2007  
<http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/GenderEqualityGoodGovernanceandPeace.pdf>
3. Löfström, A., 'Gender equality, economic growth, and employment', study financed by the Swedish Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, 2009  
[http://www.eurosfair.pr.fr/7pc/doc/1261581381\\_eu\\_studie\\_gender\\_growth\\_sidvis.pdf](http://www.eurosfair.pr.fr/7pc/doc/1261581381_eu_studie_gender_growth_sidvis.pdf)
4. Smith, M. and Bettio, F., 'Analysis note: the economic case for gender equality', European Commission's Network of Experts on Employment and Gender Equality issues (EGGE) report, European Union, 2008  
<http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ECO-CASE-final-1.pdf>
5. 'The business case for equality and diversity: A survey of the academic literature', BIS Occasional Paper No 4, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Government Equalities Office, 2013  
[http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/the\\_business\\_case\\_for\\_equality\\_and\\_diversity\\_1.pdf](http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/the_business_case_for_equality_and_diversity_1.pdf)
6. The Equalities Review: Interim Report for Consultation. The Equality Review, 2006  
[http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Equalities\\_Review\\_interim\\_report.pdf](http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Equalities_Review_interim_report.pdf)

### Videos

1. Christine Lagarde, Women should not imitate men  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-21698322>
2. Gloria Steinem, How far we've come  
<http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/multimedia/videos/gloria-steinem-how-far-weve-come>
3. Gloria Steinem on men, women and power  
<http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/multimedia/videos/gloria-steinem-men-women-and-power>
4. Gudrun Schyman from Swedish Left Party discusses gender equality  
<http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/multimedia/videos/gudrun-schyman-swedish-left-party-discusses-gender-equality>
5. Why do we have too few women leaders?  
<http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/multimedia/videos/why-do-we-have-too-few-women-leaders>

### Additional references provided by participants

1. Bettio, F. et al., 'Impact of the economic crisis on the situation of women and men and on gender equality policies', 2013  
[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/documents/130410\\_crisis\\_report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/documents/130410_crisis_report_en.pdf)
2. Credit Suisse —research institute, 'Gender diversity and corporate performance', 2012  
[https://www.credit-suisse.com/newsletter/doc/gender\\_diversity.pdf](https://www.credit-suisse.com/newsletter/doc/gender_diversity.pdf)
3. Della Giusta, M., article in Italian on correlation between gender policies and happiness  
<http://www.ingenere.it/persone/della-giusta>
4. Dezső, C. and Ross, D., 'Does female representation in top management improve firm performance? A panel data investigation', *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 33, No 9, 2012, pp. 1072–1089
5. Eisenstein, H., *Feminism seduced: How global elites use women's labour and ideas to exploit the world*, Paradigm Publishers, 2010 <http://www.amazon.com/Feminism-Seducd-Global-Elites-Exploit/dp/159451660X>



6. Gryszyk, M., 'Diversity management in Poland', 2009  
<http://www.diversite-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/ReportPoland.pdf>
7. Holli, Celis and Squires, Articles in Representation 44(2), 2008
8. Kawaguchi, A., 'Equal employment opportunity act and work–life balance: Do work–family balance policies contribute to achieving gender equality?', *Japan Labour Review*, Vol. 10, No 2, 2013, pp. 35–56
9. Knouse, S. B. and Dansby, M. R., 'Percentage of work-group diversity and work-group effectiveness', *The Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 133, No 5, 1999, pp. 486–493
10. McKinsey & Company, 'Women matter — gender diversity, a corporate performance driver', 2007  
[http://www.europeanpwn.net/files/mckinsey\\_2007\\_gender\\_matters.pdf](http://www.europeanpwn.net/files/mckinsey_2007_gender_matters.pdf)
11. Nelson, J., 'Would women leaders have prevented the global financial crisis? Implications for teaching about gender, behaviour and economics', Institute for New Economic Thinking, 2012  
<http://tinyurl.com/cysy4r6>
12. Picchio, A., Corrado, F., Badalassi, G. and Addabbo, T., 'A social reproduction and well-being approach to gender budgets', in Degavre, F., Eriksen, J., Addis, E. and de Villota, P. (eds), *Gender and well-being — The role of institutions*, Ashgate, 2011
13. Rubery, J. and Rafferty, A., 'Women and recession revisited', *Work, Employment, and Society*, Vol. 27, No 3, 2013, pp. 414–432
14. Stotsky, J. G., 'Gender and its relevance to macroeconomic policy: A survey', IMF Working Paper No 06/233, 2006
15. *The business case for diversity, good practices within the workplace*, European Commission, DG Employment, 2005  
[http://www.cartapariopportunita.it/files/18/busicase\\_en.pdf](http://www.cartapariopportunita.it/files/18/busicase_en.pdf)
16. 'The business case for equality and diversity: A survey of the academic literature', BIS Occasional Paper No 4, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Government Equalities Office, 2013  
[http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/the\\_business\\_case\\_for\\_equality\\_and\\_diversity\\_1.pdf](http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/the_business_case_for_equality_and_diversity_1.pdf)
17. Tomasdottir, H., 'A feminine response to Iceland's financial crash'  
[http://www.ted.com/talks/halla\\_tomasdottir.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/halla_tomasdottir.html)
18. Torchia, M., Calabro, A. and Huse, M., 'Women directors on corporate boards: from tokenism to critical mass', *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 102, No 2, 2011, pp. 299–317  
[http://papers.ssm.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1858347](http://papers.ssm.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1858347)
19. UN Women, 'Strengthening the business case for gender equality, nearly 400 CEOs commit to women's empowerment principles', press release, 2012  
<http://www.unwomen.org/2012/03/strengthening-the-business-case-for-gender-equality-nearly-400-ceos-commit-to-womens-empowerment-principles>

## Annex II — Transcripts

Designing a collective assessment of gender benefits through recent history:

<http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/online%20discussion%20-%20Designing%20a%20collective%20assessment%20of%20gender%20benefits%20through%20recent%20history%20-transcript%20%282%29.pdf>

Advocacy strategies in times of crisis: how to address gender equality in the current political agenda:

<http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/online%20discussion%20-%20Advocacy%20strategies%20in%20times%20of%20crisis-%20how%20to%20address%20gender%20equality%20in%20the%20current%20political%20agenda%20>





*-transcript%20%282%29.pdf*

The economic case for gender equality:

*<http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/online%20discussion%20-%20The%20economic%20case%20for%20gender%20equality%20-transcript%20%283%29.pdf>*

The business case for gender equality:

*<http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/online%20discussion%20-%20The%20business%20case%20for%20gender%20equality%20-transcript%20%283%29.pdf>*

## Annex III — List of participants

Name	Organisation	Country
Alexandrina Satnoianu	EIGE	EIGE
Angela O'Hagan	European Gender Budgeting Network (EGBN)	United Kingdom
Barbara Giovanna Bello	University of Trento	Italy
Barbara Leda Kenny	Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini	Italy
Bettina Braun	European Service Network	Belgium
Birgitta Aseskog	Ministry of Labour of Sweden	Sweden
Carla Fronteddu	Independent expert	Italy
Chiara Fattori	Cultura Lavoro S.r.l.	Italy
Cristina Castellanos Serrano	Platform for Equal and Non-Transferable Paternity Leave (PLENT)	Spain
Dimitris Tsoutsias	EIGE	Lithuania
Edite Kalnina	National Gender Equality Committee	Latvia
Esther Fernandez	Foundation of One-Parent Families Isadora Duncan	Spain
Giovanni Razzu	EIGE's Expert Forum	United Kingdom
Graziano Di Paola	Cultura Lavoro S.r.l.	Italy
Gulay Gunluk-Senesen	European Gender Budgeting Network (EGBN)	Turkey



Inete Ielite	EIGE's Gender Mainstreaming Thematic Network	Latvia
Irene Rosales Jiménez	Thematic Working Group on Gender-Based Evaluation in the European Evaluation Society (EES)	Spain
Julia Espinosa	Thematic Working Group On Gender-Based Evaluation In The European Evaluation Society (EES)	Spain
Jurgita Peciuriene	EIGE	Lithuania
Katarzyna Pabijanek	EIGE	Lithuania
Kate Holman	European Service Network	Belgium
Liisa Horelli	Thematic Working Group on Gender-Based Evaluation in the European Evaluation Society (EES)	Finland
Lina Nilsson	Ministry of education and research	Sweden
Lut Mergaert	Thematic Working Group on Gender-Based Evaluation in the European Evaluation Society (EES)	Belgium
Magdalena Gryzko	EIGE	Lithuania
Niall Crowley	Freelance expert	Ireland
Priya Alvarez	EIGE	Lithuania
Regina Frey	European Gender Budgeting Network (EGBN)	Germany
Richard Colston	European Service Network	Belgium
Rosemary Hindle	World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts	Belgium
Sheila Quinn	European Gender Budgeting Network (EGBN)	Ireland
Susy Billingsley	Cultura Lavoro s.r.l.	Italy
Tindara Addabbo	European Gender Budgeting Network (EGBN)	Italy
Victoria Sánchez Esteban	Thematic Working Group on Gender-Based Evaluation in the European Evaluation Society (EES)	Spain

## Contact information

European Institute for Gender Equality

Gedimino, 16

LT-01103 Vilnius

LITHUANIA

Tel.+370 52157444 / 52157400

<http://eige.europa.eu/>

<https://twitter.com/eurogender>

<https://facebook.com/eige.europa.eu>

<https://youtube.com/user/eurogender>

<http://eige.europa.eu/content/eige-newsletters>

<http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/>





MH-04-13-192-EN-C

