The business case for gender equality


Starts at: 24/04/2013, 07:06 CEST (+02:00)
Ends at: 25/04/2013, 21:00 CEST (+02:00)

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 organizational strategy. Advocates of gender equality in private companies provide some evidence that women in greater than token proportions improve decision-making; improve shareholder value; and lower risk-taking.

The Business Case for Gender Equality can also encompass non-financial benefits such as better governance, cohesiveness and diversity-boosted creativity in the work place.

Guiding questions:

- Stock performance, return on equity, lower gearing, higher price/book value, 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?

To read the transcript of the discussion follow the link below:

File attachments: online discussion - The business case for gender equality -transcript.pdf

Facilitators: Katarzyna Pabijanek, Susi Billingsley

1. Susi Billingsley | 25/04/2013, 14:15 EEST (+03:00)

Welcome all, hopefully a good lunch and coffee has energized all of you for our afternoon session addressing the Business Case.

Feel free to comment on any of the above guiding questions! If you are entering the conversation kindly just say hi!

thanks!
2. **Jurgita Peciuriene** | 25/04/2013, 14:21 EEST (+03:00)

Hello everyone,

Non-financial parameters are very important, as 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.

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3. **Regina Frey** | 25/04/2013, 14:31 EEST (+03:00)

I am not convinced of the studies linking economic success of private companies directly to the percentage of women in leading positions. I would be interested if anyone had a closer look of the methodology of the research work (for example: Why women matter, McKinsey).

In the first report "why women Matter" the authors state: "companies with a higher proportion of women on their management committees are also the companies that have the best performance" But they also say: "these studies do not demonstrate a causal link" (p. 14). However, when these studies are quoted it always sounds like the companies perform better BECAUSE they have more women. There are many factors for the proportions of men and women in companies: Their history, their branch - to make a causal link, one would habe to exclude those factors. Does anybody know about research doing so?

**Comments:**

- **Susi Billingsley** | 25/04/2013, 14:46 EEST (+03:00)
  Dear Regina, this is one of the docs we used to prepare for the discussion, you might find it insightful: Gender Diversity and Corporate Performance. Author: Credit Suisse- Research Institute. Date: August 2012. Affiliation: Credit Suisse. Link:http://tinyurl.com/cl5jzco Abstract: The impact of gender diversity on corporate leadership has been widely debated for many years. This report addresses one key question: does gender diversity within corporate management improve performance? In testing the performance of 2,360 companies globally over the last six years (2005-2012), this analysis shows that it would on average have been better to have invested in corporates with women on their management boards than in those without. The study also find 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 six years (from 2005 to 2012). After assessing the impact of female board representation at a global level, the study identify seven key reason why greater gender diversity could be correlated with stronger corporate performances. Finally, the report provide a description of some barriers that limit female representation on the board or indeed in other senior management
positions. This report also include an interview with Professor Katherine Philips, Paul Caello Professor of Leadership and Ethics, Columbia Business School, New York.

4. **Tindara Addabbo** | 25/04/2013, 14:41 EEST (+03:00)

Good afternoon to everybody from Tindara (European Gender Budgeting Network & Department of Economics Marco Biagi University of Modena & Reggio Emilia - Italy). Thanks Susi for bringing us to the business case for gender equality. Let's remind some results from the literature & empirical evidence. Gender equality measures improving work like family balance can increase parents' return to work after childbirth. Also due to the asymmetry of labour rights in connection to childbirth (that Cristina reminded us this morning) shown by many countries, this will mainly affect women's working profile reducing the turnover costs for firms. A recent evidence supporting it has been found for instance in Japanese firms by Kawaguchi (2013 in the Japan Labor Review). Extending the business case to take into account also other dimensions, as the guiding questions of this discussion reminded by Susi suggest us, will further contribute to the business case for gender equality policies. The gain in enhancing diversity & improving the work environment connected to gender equality policies at firm level have a positive effect on performance.

This complex evidence should call for more data crossing firms and individuals/household information possibly longitudinal to show the effect of gender equality measures on different dimensions of working conditions, outcomes for firms and workers with a special attention to what happens to carers in their return to work and their career within the firm.

5. **Cristina Castellanos Serrano** | 25/04/2013, 14:52 EEST (+03:00)

Skills are very varied among people, so, companies with a more varied workforce have more opportunity to succeed, as they have more resources to face new contexts and deal with uncertainty. They can readjust better to survive, to make profits and to keep employing people… Formal and informal training is not equally distributed either among people in women and men, so entrepreneurs, managers and workers from different backgrounds may make a difference… Some companies have started to include this idea, in terms of marketing strategy. It’s not only about including “men and women”, but a diverse range of all of them, as happens in politics… It’s very unlikely that minorities have a real voice in groups and even less likely that they can change the structures, policies and systems of enterprises, boards, etc.
6. **Susi Billingsley** | 25/04/2013, 14:59 EEST (+03:00)

Here is another interesting paper on women in boards and their impact on companies performance

"Women Directors on Corporate Boards: From Tokenism to Critical Mass" by Mariateresa Torchia Andrea Calabro` and Morten Huse

From the abstract: This article addresses the following question: does an increased number of women corporate boards result in a build up of critical mass that substantially contributes to firm innovation? The aim is to test if ‘at least three women’ could constitute the desired critical mass by identifying different minorities of women directors (one woman, two women and at least three women). Tests are conducted on a sample of 317 Norwegian firms. The results 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. Moreover, the results show that the relationship between the critical mass of women directors and the level of firm innovation is mediated by board strategic tasks. Implications for both theory and practice, and future research directions are discussed.

here goes the link [http://www.gravitasllc.com/resources/article_docs/17%5EBA9.pdf](http://www.gravitasllc.com/resources/article_docs/17%5EBA9.pdf)

7. **Cristina Castellanos Serrano** | 25/04/2013, 15:02 EEST (+03:00)

Hi again,

Regina, referring to causality, this is a key issue. Most studies I’ve been working with, when they present positive relation between gender equality and business performance, they talk just about correlation. In statistics, correlation doesn’t mean causal link. But this is used very often. To demonstrate causality other kinds of analysis are needed.

However, I would say that this is not a problem. The main methodological challenge is what they consider gender-equality enterprises or board of directors. Having 5-10% of one sex (women generally) in a board of directors is not a gender-balance board, but in most of these studies is considered as such. Thus, I would say that evidence so far (there are supporting and refuting this relation) is not good evidence enough.

8. **Niall Crowley** | 25/04/2013, 15:06 EEST (+03:00)
Cristina Castellanos wrote:

Skills are very varied among people, so, companies with a more varied workforce have more opportunity to succeed, as they have more resources to face new contexts and deal with uncertainty. They can readjust better to survive, to make profits and to keep employing people… Formal and informal training is not equally distributed either among people in women and men, so entrepreneurs, managers and workers from different backgrounds may make a difference… Some companies have started to include this idea, in terms of marketing strategy. It’s not only about including “men and women”, but a diverse range of all of them, as happens in politics… It’s very unlikely that minorities have a real voice in groups and even less likely that they can change the structures, policies and systems of enterprises, boards, etc.

Hi

Niall Crowley, independent consultant from Ireland again.

I am not sure that it is just skills diversity that brings the benefit. I think it is also diverse perspectives, values, experiences - the intangible differences lead to greater innovation if they are allowed to speak up and participate

Interesting American study in 1999 of 12000 Defence Personnel (Knouse and Dansby) showed that task performance increased in a group as gender diversity rose from 10% to 50% women and declined after that point.

9. Regina Frey | 25/04/2013, 15:19 EEST (+03:00)

Thank you for providing us with the material, next time I will read first and then discuss ;-)  
Causality is an important point and I will look into the material which methods and approaches have been used. In Germany there is a huge controversy on the quota and specific action for women. When discussing these issues I really need strong evidence (correlation will not do) – so thank you again.

Comments:

- Susi Billingsley | 25/04/2013, 15:22 EEST (+03:00)
  Dear Regina, we are here for sharing :) resources, ideas, bibliography are all tools we put out for all to share!

10. Niall Crowley | 25/04/2013, 15:27 EEST (+03:00)
Regina Frey wrote:

Thank you for providing us with the material, next time I will read first and then discuss ;-)

Causality is an important point and I will look into the material which methods and approaches have been used. In Germany there is a huge controversy on the quota and specific action for women. When discussing these issues I really need strong evidence (correlation will not do) – so thank you again.

I agree the correlation is a weakness. However it is consistent across all jurisdictions and times so it cannot just be ignored. 2004 study of 353 Fortune 500 companies found a 35% difference in return on equity and a 34% difference in total return to shareholders between firms with highest and lowest women's representation in senior management positions

11. Susi Billingsley | 25/04/2013, 15:45 EEST (+03:00)

Dear participants, to address the economic case, we would like to share this video: Christine Lagarde, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, what would happen if women ruled the world?

Lagarde 4 points envisioned manifesto

1) better balanced society throughout
2) better concerned for education and health investments and matters
3) a world of peace linked to the fact that women bear children
4) more inclusive

IMF chief Christine Lagarde: 'Women should not imitate men'

Any comments are welcome

12. Cristina Castellanos Serrano | 25/04/2013, 15:55 EEST (+03:00)

Sure, Niall. I totally agree. Thanks for the clarification! It was just an example about human capital. Different perspectives, approaches, etc. coming from diverse women and men may make a difference and create better strategies, products, services, polices, institutions...
Regina Frey wrote:

I am not convinced of the studies linking economic success of private companies directly to the percentage of women in leading positions. I would be interested if anyone had a closer look of the methodology of the research work (for example: Why women matter, McKinsey).

In the first report "why women Matter" the authors state: "companies with a higher proportion of women on their management committees are also the companies that have the best performance" But they also say: "these studies do not demonstrate a causal link" (p. 14). However, when these studies are quoted it quite always sounds like the companies perform better BECAUSE they have more women. There are many factors for the proportions of men and women in companies: Their history, their branch - to make a causal link, one would have to exclude those factors. Does anybody know about research doing so?

Dear Regina,

I cannot agree more with you. I have been checking closely the last report from Credit Suisse


In most cases they make conclusions based solely on published data for corporations, performance data. They do not claim causality but correlation. In many cases the claims are based on just one woman in the board...how strong that correlation can be? this info is not disclosed. In fact, the whole methodology remains very obscure.

Hello again from Tindara. Quick reply to Regina's question I am aware of a large panel data study by Cristian Dezsö & David Ross, recently published in the Strategic Management Journal, based on 1500 S&P firms showing that women's representation in top management improves firm performance if the firm strategy is focused on innovation. Moreover as recently shown by Johanne Grosvold and Stephen Brammer in a paper
published in Corporate Governance (2011) the very board composition is affected by country-level institutions. I would say that there is room for more research on this topic and also for sensitivity analysis on the outcomes and determinants of firms' management.

15. priya alvarez | 25/04/2013, 16:08 EEST (+03:00)

Cristina Castellanos wrote:

Sure, Niall. I totally agree. Thanks for the clarification! It was just an example about human capital. Different perspectives, approaches, etc. coming from diverse women and men may make a difference and create better strategies, products, services, polices, institutions...

I also find that women (and probably men) remain stereotyped 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. It was one of the points in the Credit Suisse example and also in the Icelandic case. Does it mean that women are not so adequate managers and CEOs in times of prosperity?

16. Angela O'Hagan | 25/04/2013, 16:08 EEST (+03:00)

Hi there, Angela from Glasgow here again.

What an interesting discussion so far. I am sorry I did not participate earlier, but have read the comments from this morning's discussion.

I agree with TIndara's suggestion for advancing understanding and evidence on the inter-relationship between household - employment - gender equality. Evidence on employment practices that support business case arguments for gender equality exists and 'does the job' in arguing for decent working conditions. However, I feel business case arguments do not sufficiently acknowledge the underlying issues nor address the causal factors. Business case arguments have always felt appeasatory to me - and I say that having previously worked in role promoting these policies.

The economic case for equality is more substantive and fundamental, and of course links into a business case argument. I think the caveats Regina has raised are valid as any coupling of economic efficiency and equality requires careful framing.

Business case works well at the micro-level of individual companies and employers, and for sectoral leverage. For transformative change at the macro-level, we need to build the economic case. I would also add that I think the economic case should be about challenging the cleavage to GDP and look to alternative and additional indicators of
social and economic wellbeing which would also make women's unpaid contribution to economic performance visible.

A final through for now is to share a recent publication by the UK Government Equalities Office published January 2013. Colleagues might be interested to have a look, "The Business Case for Equality and Diversity: A Survey of the Academic Literature", *BIS Occasional Paper No.4, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills*.

Angela

17. Cristina Castellanos Serrano | 25/04/2013, 16:08 EEST (+03:00)

Honestly, I wouldn’t say that correlation is not good evidence. It is used very often and, especially to support policy decisions. However, I think that it is important to really present the variables that summarize what we want to measure. Having 10% of men and 90% of women in a group is not a gender equal group. No matter that 30 years ago the distribution was 1%- 99%.

I think that the Norwegian case with the quotas may provide good samples for studies and good evidence.

By the way, thank you very much for the video and all the references.

18. priya alvarez | 25/04/2013, 16:10 EEST (+03:00)

*Regina Frey* wrote:

Thank you for providing us with the material, next time I will read first and then discuss ;-)  

Causality is an important point and I will look into the material which methods and approaches have been used. In Germany there is a huge controversy on the quota and specific action for women. When discussing these issues I really need strong evidence (correlation will not do) – so thank you again.

Regina, we plan to discuss a review of these studies during expert meetings in vilnius. I find this point very interesting. There is a member of EIGE's expert forum, Giovanni R, who has conducted an analysis of the robustness of these studies in the UK.

19. Niall Crowley | 25/04/2013, 16:10 EEST (+03:00)
Susi Billingsley wrote:

Dear participants, to address the economic case, we would like to share this video: Christine Lagarde, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, what would happen if women ruled the world?

Lagarde 4 points envisioned manifesto

1) better balanced society throughout

2) better concerned for education and health investments and matters

3) a world of peace linked to the fact that women bear children

4) more inclusive

IMF chief Christine Lagarde: 'Women should not imitate men'

Any comments are welcome

It is fair enough. But there is no guarantee as we have seen in some instances! Overall I think it is not about one or other group ruling but about the mix and the equality in the mix - whether in business or in society

A post from Irene Rosales

Good morning,

Besides the risks already underlined in the background note regarding the instrumentalisation of gender equality as a mean to and end instead of fundamental rights, I would like to share what I also consider as weak point of the economic benefit approach to advocate for gender equality. Last year, I developed a research on the swift of the frame of gender equality in the political discourse of the Spanish socialist government before and after the financial crisis. One of the changes that was observed through the analysis was an increase on the arguments on gender equality bringing economic benefits that could help to overcome the crisis (instead of a more human rights/democratic approach to gender equality that was used prior the crisis). Instead of equality, a difference based approach was fostered to justify the economic benefits of gender 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 be to frame the business case very carefully in order to avoid an essentialisation again of the
gender differences and roles which will definitely not help to overcome gender inequality.

21. Susi Billingsley | 25/04/2013, 16:19 EEST (+03:00)

Discussion is super-vibrant, way to go!

We are collecting resources and data material on the business case. Starting from this quote posted by Prya:

"I also find that women (and probably men) remain stereotyped 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."

Is it true that we inhabit "that special pink thing" that makes us more inclusive, reliable and accountable? Regardless of good times or bad times?

22. Niall Crowley | 25/04/2013, 16:20 EEST (+03:00)

priya alvarez wrote:

Cristina Castellanos wrote:

Sure, Niall. I totally agree. Thanks for the clarification! It was just an example about human capital. Different perspectives, approaches, etc. coming from diverse women and men may make a difference and create better strategies, products, services, polices, institutions...

I also find that women (and probably men) remain stereotyped 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. It was one of the points in the Credit Suisse example and also in the Icelandic case. Does it mean that women are not so adequate managers and CEOs in times of prosperity?

Good point re stereotyping. Another real problem that can underpin some of the work making the case. I think though the focus on mix rather than one gender or the other is helpful and avoids that trap

23. Cristina Castellanos Serrano | 25/04/2013, 16:26 EEST (+03:00)
Priya, I would say that it’s different stereotyped that generalised. Women are more likely to be risk-averse. The reasons why men are considered more risk-taking than women could be really different (social, economic, cultural…) and may change when other factors change….

I would say that this benefit may also happen in prosperous times. It depends on the company objectives. As in other economic transactions, profits and risks used to be inversely correlated. In a prosperous times (as well as in critical times), if a company wants to think about the long term survival, having a good mix of risk-taking and adverse-risk managers may produce a better balance. If the aim is a quick huge profit, a risk-adverse manager (men or women) does not seem the best option. So, at that point, relations among stakeholders and payment designs are a critical point. Who is going to undertake the consequences in the long term? Owners, managers, workers, society as a whole, politicians, … I

Comments:

o Susi Billingsley | 25/04/2013, 16:40 EEST (+03:00)
   About risk-adversion, stereotyping and concrete effects, there is this interesting article by Julie Nelson about the financial crisis Title: Would Women Leaders Have Prevented the Global Financial Crisis? Implications for Teaching about Gender, Behavior, and Economics Author:Julie Nelson Date:2012 Link:http://tinyurl.com/cysy4r6 Affiliation:Tuft University Abstract: Would having more women in leadership have prevented the financial crisis? This question may arise in courses on Gender and Economics, Money and Financial Institutions, Pluralist Economics, or Behavioral Economics, and offers an important teaching moment. The first part of this essay argues that while some behavioral research seems to support an exaggerated “difference” view, non-simplistic behavioral research debunks this and instead reveals the immense unconscious power of stereotyping. The second part of this essay argues that the more urgently needed gender analysis of the financial industry is not concerned with (presumed) "differences" by sex, but rather with the role of gender biases in the social construction of markets.

24. Tindara Addabbo | 25/04/2013, 16:28 EEST (+03:00)

25. Angela O'Hagan | 25/04/2013, 16:40 EEST (+03:00)

'I routinely characterise the credit crunch as "men behaving badly" - because it's almost impossible to find a woman to blame'. Is a much-used quote from the BBC's Business Editor, Robert Peston, discussing the financial crisis in 2009 at the time of other commentary that had Lehman Brothers been Lehman Sisters then things might have been different.

I only offer this as a contribution to the discussion on stereotyping, generalisation - and maybe to make you smile.

Irene's cautionary comments on avoiding essentialism are, I think, very pertinent, to discussions about representation and substantive presence of women  I think the parallels between women's representation in politics and on the boards of business are of interest and carry the same caveats about substantive and descriptive representative, and discursive representation - i.e. what do they do and talk about differently. A series of articles by Holli, Celis, and Squires in Representation 44 (2), 2008 extend this discussion [http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00344890802080464](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00344890802080464)

Some comparative research on the arguments and evidence for increasing women in politics and in business would be of use perhaps.

A

26. Sheila Quinn | 25/04/2013, 16:48 EEST (+03:00)

Hi everyone

Sheila Quinn, Wicklow Ireland here. Slightly technologically overwhelmed and not sure I'm au courant with the discussion and trying to manage work deadlines. So just what comes off the top of my head.

How many of us use the business case for gender equality as a concept, framework, rationale etc in our work? I do, just a little. In a kind of impressionistic way of illustrating how the corporate world view women and or the concpet of gender equality as a marketing tool - either to market their products or to market their company in terms of good governance. I suppose I feel kind of cheating because it is not a priority argument in my arsenal. I don't see it to be a strategy for seeing significant advance in the real world of gender equality. So back to my question - how many of us use it? Thanks

27. Niall Crowley | 25/04/2013, 16:48 EEST (+03:00)
just to go back to the the non financial parameters.

the research is strong here with greater job satisfaction co-related (same problem) with work-life balance systems and equality policies. however there is then a wider body of research that does link job satisfaction with loyalty and productivity so the case becomes stronger maybe?

28. Irene Rosales | 25/04/2013, 16:50 EEST (+03:00)

Hello everyone. I am glad to be able to join this conversation. Thank you Priya for posting my contribution.

I totally agree on what Susi, Priya and Niall are saying about re stereotyping. And I think that the trap goes even beyond re stereotyping it has to do with essentialising and legitimate gender differences and then inequality (as for example, it can be argued that women's supposed wonderful advantages in time of crisis can maybe not be needed anymore afterwards).

I agree that the focus has to be on diversity. And also on ethics being 50% of the population. I am stressing this out since maybe gender inequality in the labour market can become again invisible if we focus generally all forms of diversity.

Thank you for the references to the researches on this topic and the video.

29. Cristina Castellanos Serrano | 25/04/2013, 16:53 EEST (+03:00)

Gender equality may be also presented for the business case as improving fair competition among companies and sectors.

As there are economic sectors which are mainly male-dominated and others female-dominated, the business cost are uneven distributed. Why should health and education sectors have to deal with workers away of their jobs because of childcare reasons while other sectors do not have to think about it? If every worker had equal and non-transferable parental leaves, employers, employees and companies of all sectors may compete in the same conditions.

30. priya alvarez | 25/04/2013, 17:01 EEST (+03:00)

Sheila Quinn wrote:
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Sheila, I can report pretty much the same as you do: another bullet in case I need to bring it out. However, I have seen two interesting reactions to this: it is highly shared and acceptable, almost everybody in the room can find a case or repeat a similar argument. Second reaction, in real life men are much more likely to be hired for the job than women, meaning that there is what somebody Hester Eisenstein calls "feminism seduced". Capitalism uses feminist lines as part of the discourse while they do something different as part of real implementation. The world's ruling elites utilize women's labor and the ideas of women's liberation and empowerment to maintain their economic and political power.


31. priya alvarez | 25/04/2013, 17:06 EEST (+03:00)

Niall Crowley wrote:

just to go back to the the non financial parameters.

the research is strong here with greater job satisfaction co-related (same problem) with work-life balance systems and equality policies. however there is then a wider body of research that does link job satisfaction with loyalty and productivity so the case becomes stronger maybe?

Well, yes, Niall, good point.

In time of non-crisis, I can remember those lists of good places to work where everybody wanted to be hired, like google, etc. One of the points that made them very attractive was
the counter-culture in the sense of flat hierarchy, creativity, a lot more diversity (not necessarily gender but also...).

I was visiting google offices in NY a few months ago. They have many more men than women, the cleaning lady is still a lady. Parental leave is non-transferable and men have long parental leaves and the same as women in length and conditions, but women have some extra time (so not really the same)....

There is also the issue of women being absent from the workplace more than men. Even successful women giving up:

32. Niall Crowley | 25/04/2013, 17:07 EEST (+03:00)

Sheila Quinn wrote:

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How many of us use the business case for gender equality as a concept, framework, rationale etc in our work? I do, just a little. In a kind of impressionistic way of illustrating how the corporate world view 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. I suppose I feel kind of cheating because it is not a priority argument in my arsenal. I don't see it to be a strategy for seeing significant advance in the real world of gender equality. So back to my question - how many of us use it? Thanks

Hi Sheila. I have used it extensively and as time goes on I get more and more worried about it. I end up in the space you describe. Using it pragmatically but knowing it is the ethic and justice of it that counts. In terms of a more popular commitment to equality there is a danger if we use it too much too - the business case calls up arguments that are essentially self interested whereas equality requires a more generous society focused on commone good. Niall

33. Susi Billingsley | 25/04/2013, 17:10 EEST (+03:00)
Quoting from Irene "I agree that the focus has to be on diversity. And also on ethics being 50% of the population. I am stressing this out since maybe gender inequality in the labour market can become again invisible if we focus generally all forms of diversity."

This is a real risk we should address: speaking about diversity could lead to a loss of focus on gender equality. It would be interesting to have the experience of somebody from UK where, especially at a company level, several diversity departments where created...

34. priya alvarez | 25/04/2013, 17:26 EEST (+03:00)

I will go back to the initial questions:

what are the arguments for gender equality in private companies then?

The quotas for women in the company boards cannot address mass employment and equality for most women.

What are the arguments you will use? or you think need better evidence to be used (but look promising)?

Is it that gender equality is not really a benefit but a burden that nonetheless it is necessary to bear on behalf social justice?

35. Tindara Addabbo | 25/04/2013, 17:35 EEST (+03:00)

Very exciting discussion...I would stress again the need of better sources of data & the relevance of making surveys on the business case crossing the firms' gates to see the effect of policies and different organizational models characterized by different degree of gender equality. Trying not to limit oneself to compute the outcomes' in terms of firms' performances but showing the wider impact on the society of what happens within firms in terms of gender equality.

Tindara

36. Susi Billingsley | 25/04/2013, 17:50 EEST (+03:00)

Thank you Tindara for your recap comment.
We are now taking the last inputs since we are closing the 4th panel session, as planned, at 5pm sharp.

Last chance to make an impression and stir up things! :)

37. Niall Crowley | 25/04/2013, 17:53 EEST (+03:00)

Thanks Susi and all. It was really interesting.

38. Foundation of One-Parent Families Isadora Duncan | 25/04/2013, 17:54 EEST (+03:00)

This is really important since social values cannot be measured in terms of economic business benefits. Social changes, less gender violences and real social and individual changes for men and women, but also for politicians and law designers, too much away from women's and social reality.

Thank you for this exchange of opinions.

Fundación de Familias Monoparentales Isadora Duncan

39. Tindara Addabbo | 25/04/2013, 17:58 EEST (+03:00)

A partial reply to Priya's point: firms can be very sensitive to the outcomes shown (though the robustness of the results collected can be improved and sensitivity analysis can be performed) on the positive effects of greater gender equality in terms of more talented women who otherwise cannot enter the firms, enhanced diversity, better work environment, lower turnover... on firm's performances. This type of evidence can be provided and should in my opinion stress also the dynamic effect of greater gender equality on firms performances however there are other extended effects of greater gender equality that one can try to value and that go well behind firm's performance that can also affect in turn firm's performance but should require a more complex and wider analysis. Since time is elapsing I take this opportunity to greet you all and thank all of you and EIGE for these stimulating discussions. Yours Tindara

40. Cristina Castellanos Serrano | 25/04/2013, 17:59 EEST (+03:00)

Not a burden! But, as all changes, it has some costs for the transition period.
Quotas in the company boards may affect everybody. It's similar to the quotas in political parties. Boards have power to change things all across the organisations.

There are some changes difficult to do bottom-up, so they may be done up-bottom. Only if boards are sufficiently representative of workers, and of population as a whole, they will provide strategies and action plans which may benefit all the stakeholders.

Thanks for all the interesting comments!

Best,

Cristina

41. Susi Billingsley | 25/04/2013, 18:03 EEST (+03:00)

We thank you all for having been generous with your time and for showing interest, passion and engagement throughout the four planned sessions. Collective conversations are always the most interesting truly reflecting how complex the issues at stake are.

I personally wish to thank you for I have learned much in these two days and I look forward to meeting you again on Europlatform and around, because we live in a small world indeed!

Hopefully this two-days-marathon has helped in creating a common ground understanding for gender equality advocacy

Warm wishes to all,

Susi

42. Regina Frey | 25/04/2013, 18:13 EEST (+03:00)

priya alvarez wrote:

I will go back to the initial questions:

what are the arguments for gender equality in private companies then?

The quotas for women in the company boards cannot address mass employment and equality for most women.
What are the arguments you will use? or you think need better evidence to be used (but look promising)?

Is it that gender equality is not really a benefit but a burden that nonetheless it is necessary to bear on behalf social justice?

I would just like to repeat what I wrote in the end of the economic case discussion:

In my view to argue with the economic or business case is a strategy to address persons who otherwise will never ever listen to a gender equality discourse. To make person start to think about gender equality who would otherwise not do so. But I think at the same time it is important to link economic reasons with a normative approach: gender equality is and remains a human right. Often, this is conceptualised as a contradiction: either equality or efficiency. I don't think so...

43. Barbara Giovanna Bello | 25/04/2013, 18:44 EEST (+03:00)

Hi everyone, Barbara from Italy here (actually writing from Heidelberg right now).

What an insightful think-tank!

I would like to share this link about gender equality for sustainable business in the UN framework, which might provide inspirations in the European as well, since the Europe 2020 strategy fosters growth that is:

smart,

sustainable,

and inclusive.

http://www.unwomen.org/2012/03/strengthening-the-business-case-for-gender-equality-nearly-400-ceos-commit-to-womens-empowerment-principles/

I also would like to point out the Diversity Charters as a tool to promote gender equality in enterprises

http://www.diversity-charter.com/diversity-charter-french-charter-overview.php

Now my questions are:

1) isn’t non-discrimination (I refer here to the ban on gender-based discrimination) in the workplace an issue which could be approached also from a human security perspective, meaning that women are not harassed, not underpaid or overstressed? Recent
studies in Italy (2011, 2012) show that the rate of car incidents “in itinere” (on the way to work) have become higher, since they are in charge to take children to schools or to prepare breakfasts, etc… which means they are running faster or with added stress, they fear to be late, etc…. Unfortunately the webpages are available just in Italian: [www.Anmil.it](http://www.Anmil.it) and [www.inail.it](http://www.inail.it)

2) There are job places where women are overrepresented, but I am not sure that they can always be considered best practices in terms of women’s remuneration, life-work balance, enterprises’ Kindergarten, flexibility, etc… and personal questions about “have you got children?” and “how many children are you planning?” (that translated in economic terms means: how many maternal leaves will you have and how much will the enterprise pay/loose for that?), etc. are still present.

It appears to me that the norm is still “the male worker” and, speaking about a woman who is productive or efficient, the sexist speech is still there: “she works like a man” or other connotations…

44. Magdalena Gryszko | 25/04/2013, 18:59 EEST (+03:00)

[quote=priya alvarez]

I will go back to the initial questions:

what are the arguments for gender equality in private companies then?

Hello, My name is Magdalena. I'm the author of the first report on diversity management in Poland. [http://www.diversite-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/ReportPoland.pdf](http://www.diversite-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/ReportPoland.pdf). I was also involved in the Gender Index Project - which created the first Polish tool assessing a work place from the gender equality perspective. Replying to Priya's question - social justice and human rights of women is already a strong enough answer. But if we want to go for more - there are researches showing that gender equality in a work place brings economic benefits (“The Business Case for Diversity. Good Practices in the Workplace”, European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities 2005). The research I conducted in Poland showed 6 key motivations for implementing diversity management and equal treatment politics in the area of gender

1. Gaining New Recruitment Pools
2. Retaining the Talented and the Experienced
3. Reacting to the Stakeholders’ Expectations
4. Proper Image
5. Increased Work Effectiveness and Team Innovativeness
6. Better Atmosphere At Work