



AN ROINN DLÍ AGUS CIRT AGUS COMHIONANNAIS  
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND EQUALITY



# **‘REVERSING THE PARADOX– PROMOTING GENDER-BALANCED LEADERSHIP’**

## **Conference REPORT**

Authors

Dr. Mary P. Murphy and Dr. Pauline Cullen

**Mansion House Round Room, Dublin Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015**

*Jointly organised by Ibec and the*  
**Department of Justice and Equality**  
*with the assistance of the*  
**European Commission**

*This conference has been supported by the European Union*

*Programme PROGRESS (2007-2013)*

## Reversing the Paradox – Promoting gender – balanced leadership

---



## Table of Contents

<b>Opening session</b> .....	5
Ms Frances Fitzgerald T.D., Minister for Justice and Equality .....	5
Mr Danny Mc Coy, CEO, Ibec .....	7
<b>Panel One: Gender economics and the contributions of gender balance</b> .....	8
Mr Peter Cosgrove, Director, CPL.....	8
Mr Jean-Michel Monnot, VP Group Diversity and Inclusion, Sodexo.....	10
Ms Maura Quinn, Chief Executive, Institute of Directors Ireland.....	11
Questions .....	13
<b>Panel Two: Power, bias and culture: the challenges facing gender balance</b> .....	15
Professor Ciarán O’ Boyle, Director Institute of Leadership, Royal College of Surgeons Ireland ..	15
Ms Rhona Murphy, (former) CEO, The Daily Beast .....	17
Ms Jean O’Sullivan, Programme Manager, Enterprise Ireland. ....	18
Ms Carina Furlong, Associate Director Talking Talent.....	20
Questions .....	22
<b>Panel Three: the way forward to success and reversing the paradox</b> .....	24
Ms Helen Tynan, Director of People Operations, Google.....	24
Ms Ann-Marie Holmes, Fab 24 Factory Manager, Intel.....	25
Dr Rhona Mahony, Master, National Maternity Hospital.....	27
Ms Melanie Sheppard, Finance Director, Pfizer Healthcare Ireland .....	28
Questions .....	29
<b>Panel Four: Using our resources for success engaging men</b> .....	30
Ms Alison Maitland, Author .....	30
Mr Dan Twomey, VP Finance and CFO EMEA, Dell .....	32
Mr Robert Baker, Senior Partner, Mercer.....	33
Questions .....	35
<b>Panel Five: Time, targets and quotas</b> .....	36
Mr Vitalijus Novikovas , DG Justice, European Commission.....	36

Ms. Rachel Hussey, 30% Club Steering Committee and Partner, Arthur Cox .....	38
Ms Sara Carey. Columnist and Broadcaster .....	39
Ms Claire McGing, Maynooth University .....	40
Ms Margot Slattery, MD, Sodexo .....	41
Ms Carolan Lennon, Managing Director, eircom Wholesale .....	42
Questions .....	43
<b>Closing session</b> .....	44
Mr Aodhán Ó Ríordáin T.D., Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality .....	44
Ms Mary Rose Burke, Director of Policy and Corporate Affairs , Ibec .....	45
<b>Key messages</b> .....	47



Ms Frances Fitzgerald, T.D., Minister for Justice and Equality and Mr Danny McCoy, CEO, Ibec

As a nation, Ireland has an excellent reputation for its attitude towards diversity and inclusion. Yet while the challenge of gender-balanced leadership has been addressed over the years, today in Ireland as in the rest of the world the lack of representative numbers of women in decision-making roles remains a very real issue. At the current pace of progress, female executive representation across Europe is unlikely to reach 20% until 2035. To address this issue, Ibec, along with the Department of Justice and Equality, with generous funding from the European Union under its PROGRESS programme (2007-2013) brought together 200 senior executives, CEOs and senior public sector officials to this conference aimed at showcasing better ways to promote gender-balanced leadership. The aim was not only to generate debate, but to encourage action by identifying practical ways to maximise the talent of both genders in senior decision-making roles.

The conference was moderated by Dearbhail McDonald, Legal Editor of the Irish Independent.

## Opening session

### Ms Frances Fitzgerald T.D., Minister for Justice and Equality



Minister for Justice and Equality, Frances Fitzgerald, T.D, opened the conference by acknowledging the conference theme as critical for the future of both individuals and the economy. The conference was an opportunity to examine various initiatives and the changes needed. She noted the paradox in the lack of progress on gender balanced leadership, despite overwhelming evidence that achieving critical mass in gender balance can make a difference in the nature of decision-making. She noted that “*something changes about decision-making when women are present and we are here to have a conversation about these issues*”. The paradox was clear when the number of women coming through third level is significant however they continue to be absent in senior management roles. The Minister suggested that some of the barriers lie in the interview

processes for promotion. Solutions need to focus on the goal of a gender inclusive society which recognises talent, opens the door to all and promotes equal opportunities. The Minister stressed the need to build on progress made at last November’s joint Department of Justice and Equality and Ibec conference ‘Investing in Talent – Promoting Gender Balanced Leadership’<sup>1</sup> where the focus was not **why** gender balance is important but on **how** to make it a reality.

The Minister highlighted a positive example of action to make gender balance a reality in an EU PROGRESS funded pilot mentoring and leadership programme currently underway for women in senior positions in the Irish Civil Service. She characterised the initiative as a very focused and precise approach that was focused at the competencies and skills required for specific grades and posts and in turn making women’s potential more visible to senior leaders. Whilst the international evidence for the importance of establishing such programmes is clear, best practice shows us that these programmes do not, if implemented in isolation, bring about the necessary sustainable change in terms of fostering greater gender balance. Rather, these programmes must be implemented in conjunction with changing organisational culture and mindsets and that such change has to be led by senior leadership who have to encourage and develop talent.

---

<sup>1</sup> Investing in Talent – Promoting Gender Balanced Leadership, conference report available at <http://www.genderequality.ie/en/GE/Investing%20in%20Talent%20-%20Conference%20Report.pdf/Files/Investing%20in%20Talent%20-%20Conference%20Report.pdf>



The Minister cited the Trinity College Dublin (TCD) Centre for Gender and Women's Studies report from 2008 on 'Women and Ambition in the Irish Civil Service' that analysed the barriers and facilitators to the career ambitions of women. The study showed that both genders were equally ambitious but that their ambition was perceived differently. Ambition in men was seen as a natural and positive trait while in women was often evaluated in a negative manner. The Minister then detailed how the report found that in senior management, 86% of men were married with children, 56% of senior women were married but only 53% had children. If successful women are not to sacrifice home life the Minister stressed the need to provide childcare supports, equalise domestic work and emphasise work life balance for parents, not just for mothers. The issue of combining work and family life is increasingly difficult for young women, and on this basis the Minister asked "will women stop having children?" 'Reversing the Paradox' refers to the challenge of turning equality of opportunity into real gender equality in numerical terms in our senior decision-making structures. *"Complacency is our greatest obstacle, the Minister said. We must not allow ourselves to believe that equality in law naturally transfers to equality in practice. Instead we must challenge why, over forty years after the removal of the marriage bar, women, who are the majority population and those with the higher educational attainment, are still significantly under-represented in senior management roles in business, on boards and in politics. As we work to reinforce and to grow our economic recovery we cannot afford to continue to under-utilise our highly educated female workforce."*

The Ministers own experience showed women supporting other women leading her to question the stereotype of women not supporting each other. There are examples of success here at the conference, these include Ibec initiatives and the '30% Club Ireland' which illustrate how gender balance can improve competitiveness. The Minister stressed the need to recognise progress but also noted the persistence of imbalances including among board chairpersons She welcomed the PROGRESS funding and acknowledged the contribution of EU policy in fostering greater gender balance. Finally, the Minister noted that the Government is taking steps to ensure that all State Boards have at least 40% of women. She continued outlining new measures to promote gender balance on State Boards, including the establishment by the Minister's own Department of a pilot Talent Bank of women qualified to serve on State Boards. This Talent Bank is being developed with the support of the Public Appointments Service. The Minister continued stating *"As I look around the room today and see so many accomplished and successful women, I would encourage you to consider lending your considerable talents to a State Board and to register your interest in future vacancies on the website [www.stateboards.ie](http://www.stateboards.ie)".* Today's conference would not be possible without the generous funding which we are receiving from the European Union's PROGRESS programme. She stated *"Later today, you will hear from a representative of the European Commission, which has contributed so much to the drive for equal treatment of women and men in Ireland and throughout the EU. As you know, the Commission has proposed legislation to address gender imbalance on the boards of the largest publicly listed companies in Europe. Some of you may have strong opinions as to whether a legislative or voluntary approach is the most desirable option. I would encourage you to listen with an open mind and to take the opportunity to dispel some of the myths around the proposal and*

*what it will mean for Ireland if implemented*". The Minister concluded by quoting from the National Women's Strategy 2007-2016 and its emphasis on the social and economic benefits of gender equality and the aspiration that this can help us towards a modern and inclusive twenty first century society.

---

*Leadership from the top matters*

---

**Mr Danny Mc Coy, CEO, Ibec**



Mr. McCoy was delighted to welcome everyone to the conference and remarked that as a nation Ireland has an excellent reputation for diversity but that the lack of women in decision making roles remains an outstanding issue. While in the past it was perceived as a

women's issue or an ethical issue this was no longer the case, it was now a strategic issue and a leadership challenge that only a naïve employer would ignore. Women were half of the educated talent on the planet, half of the consumers and end users. He argued that diversity is key to unlocking innovation and is a driver of growth and that more women on boards are key to enhancing economic performance. He remarked that greater gender balance can boost euro zone GDP by 13% and how significant this is when compared to the 2% growth target associated with the Trans Atlantic Trade Agreement.

Mr Mc Coy noted that while explicit discrimination has been removed, what is needed now is to engage both men and women in removing norms and structures that maintain gender gaps. These structures and behaviours narrowed the talent pool and reduced the competitive advantage offered by greater gender balance. Mr McCoy concluded by calling for action from passionate leaders to bring this issue to the fore, to lead by example and to show



courage. He felt that it was imperative to take stock at the end of the day to move the issue forward as the prize was immense.

---

*Astute leaders know they can lead the way or be left behind*

---

## **Panel One: Gender economics and the contributions of gender balance**

The business case for gender balance in organisations and political life has been well researched and yet despite the tangible bottom line, innovation and governance benefits offered, the gender gap in decision-making roles remains. Panel one addressed what those business case benefits are and the costs of failing to harness the talents of 50% of our workforce. It is vital that business and policymakers work together to ensure that the right decisions are taken to deal with complex challenges.

### **Mr Peter Cosgrove, Director, CPL**



Mr Peter Cosgrove spoke on the theme of the future of work and of the disintermediation of work by technology, which he argued will not change ‘what we do’ but will change ‘how we do it’. He referenced examples such as the shift from car rental firms such as Hertz to Uber and hotel chains like the Hyatt to AirBnB. The challenge, he argued, is to engage people

to make them understand that gender balance is not a diversity issue but a business issue. He highlighted four key themes.

**Skill Shortage** – Mr Cosgrove outlined how demographic pressures would result in significant skills shortages across Europe. The median age in the EU is 44 years, this means

that we are facing skills changes and deficits and a global shortfall of college educated individuals. Quoting *McKinsey and Company* he stated that “*There will be a global shortfall of 16 –18 million college educated workers by 2020*”. As women were outpacing men in educational attainment they would be key to closing this gap.

**Millennials** – (born between 1980 and 2000) will comprise 50% of the work force in 5 years time and 75% within 10 years. Mr Cosgrave explained that this demographic group expect a diverse work force, multiculturalism, collaboration, and less group think. He argued that “*they expect more Lehman sisters than Lehman Brothers*”.

**Future Brand** – Social media is now the most important form of advertising, in the form of blogs and referrals from Twitter and Facebook. According to Glassdoor.com (Trip Advisor for business), 15% of buyers believe traditional advertisement and now customer referral through social media is growing in importance. This type of customer referral feedback/input on social media is dominated by women. He referenced the use of social media in the WREN company campaign which increased sales by 13,000. The power of social media to promote diversity in the work place is also an important issue. Mr Cosgrove gave the example of the forced resignation of Brendan Icke of Mozilla in response to employee feedback on social media after he publically supported Proposition 8 to reverse gay marriage in California.



*Two thirds of sharing is by women*



Women are 82% of US users



*8 of the top 10 to reach 10 million followers are women*

*Women and Social Media Use: CPL The Future of Work Institute (Mr Peter Cosgrave)*

**Flexibility** – In the future workplace, with Aetna as an example, 47% of employees are home working. Flexible working is about engaging people with fewer restrictions and focusing more on outputs than inputs. However, he stressed that there are issues about stigma attached to those working flexible hours and that management need to examine their responses to those who take flexible work options. Leaders need to be aware of their own proximity bias and the men who strive for work life balance can also be role models. Male leaders who value work life balance play an important role in normalising such choices and in effect leading by example.

Mr. Cosgrove continued by emphasising how when it comes to promotions it has been the case that “*Women do not apply or push themselves forward however this is changing but leaders need to look at high potential females and push them forward.*” The patterns of networking are gendered with women more likely to be “*miners than shiners*”. These gender differences in networking can be managed creatively with the use of women’s and gender or diversity networks such as Chevron’s Global Women’s Network and AT&T Sponsors for Female Leaders. He concluded that gender diversity is not a problem but instead is a solution citing the example of the virtual gaming network *Foldit*. This form of gender collaboration had generated significant solutions including the answer to a problem that had been stumping scientists for 10 years; the structure of the protein that causes AIDS in rhesus monkeys. Within 10 days the problem was solved by gaming scientists with the final breakthrough provided by a female science technician who had left the workforce due to sexism.

---

*Women are taking over the world and bring talent, innovation and creativity. Why would you not choose from 100% of the population?*

---

### **Mr Jean-Michel Monnot, Vice President Group Diversity and Inclusion, Sodexo**



Mr Monnot began with an insight into his organisation Sodexo who have 420,000 staff in 80 countries, with 54% female employees. However, only 42% of women are employed in senior management and there are regional gaps between countries especially in senior management. He argued that asking whether it is better to have more women in senior management is like asking “*is it better to be smart or stupid?*” He then outlined four steps Sodexo took in its own journey to realising the importance of gender balance for profitability.

When first exploring the issue of gender balance Sodexo reviewed literary evidence that more women are better for business but subsequently resisted this evidence as it was seen as non-transferable outside of the specific sectors in which the evidence had been collected. They then looked for evidence or proof that gender balance was not such a crucial factor. When this strategy inevitably proved a cul de sac Sodexo began to focus on measuring levels of engagement by means of a global annual engagement survey of 150,000 employees which asked specific questions on gender balance. It was already well accepted by managers that there is a link between engagement and performance and the survey gave examples of gendered non engagement which they could link to non performance. Finally, they compared different indicators across countries within the Sodexo company data about workers and clients. The bottom line results showed gender balanced teams delivered better results. This was not about being socially responsible, it was about satisfying clients.

He continued outlining how Sodexo then acted, identifying positive ways forward to address gender imbalance. These included moving from women-only networks to gender networks that include men; mentoring; tackling stereotypes; training; and role models. Mr Monnot concluded that it is about moving from being nice to having a strong business case. While Sodexo has long considered gender balance a strategic issue – now their internal study has provided them with an in-depth understanding of the range of this impact.

---

*Companies, if you are not achieving your targets look at your teams and ask if they are inclusive and well balanced*

---

### **Ms Maura Quinn, Chief Executive, Institute of Directors Ireland**



Ms Maura Quinn began by referring to the Institute of Directors' recently published *Women on Boards Report 2015* which drew from wide experience of Irish women on boards. The key findings show improved awareness about gender balance but with action and progress slower. While the issue is seen as

having greater priority (up from 37% in 2013 to 50% in 2015 ) and while 91% of women feel equal once they get to the boardroom, the numbers on boards in PLC's is still too low at 11% and the glass ceiling in particular is persistent.

Ms Quinn emphasised the presence of all boys' networks and a lack of contacts for women as specific obstacles. She highlighted some key findings of the report including that 75% of women say it is harder for women to become non executive directors due to obstacles such as the lack of access to information about positions, networks and connections. She also highlighted that women can be reluctant to join boards with 62% of women saying that they are reluctant to go forward (up 19% since 2013). This was a function of more regulation and scrutiny of boards' behaviour and greater reputational risks. However she also highlighted how two thirds of women had formal director training, which is much higher than men. The industries with the strongest glass ceiling were construction, the property sector and financial services.

## Key findings

- General awareness of the importance of gender diversity on boards in Ireland is improving
- The 'glass ceiling' continues to be an issue in certain sectors
- The 'old boys' network' and a lack of connections are significant barriers to women accessing the boardroom
- Women are increasingly more reluctant to put themselves forward for board positions
- Women themselves needs to take some responsibility for the low level of women on boards in Ireland
- There is a decreasing appetite for formal quotas
- Rotation of board members and greater transparency needed

*Women on Boards Report 2015 Institute of Directors Ireland (Ms Maura Quinn)*

Ms Quinn said that there was a need for greater board rotation and transparency and more openness in how board positions were advertised. She felt that interlocking directorships and exclusion from the networks of male dominated boards also acted as significant barriers for women. She concluded by noting that in her view there was a decreasing appetite for formal quotas with more preference for softer targets.





*Panel One: Mr Jean Michel Monnot, Ms Maura Quinn and Mr Peter Cosgrove*

## Questions

Mr Cosgrove addressed a question about the power of social media to create reputation. He stressed the degree to which social media feedback cannot be filtered so that companies cannot control branding. The lives of their workers now make their reputation. In effect, the brand values should be in line with the values of your workers.

Mr Monnot responded to a question as to whether companies should be rated on gender balance. He argued for an acceptable gender balance zone (40-60%), and that both staff and clients respond to the ranking of companies by gender balance. He noted how the French Ministry for Women's Rights now annually ranks companies on their gender balance. He noted that next year the chairperson for Sodexo is a woman and that this was important in symbolic terms particularly in attracting female talent. He welcomed much more openness and transparency on this issue.

Ms Maura Quinn responded to a question on gender quotas commenting that she hated quotas but liked what they achieved and that she understood that for women who have waited too long quotas can give impetus but that many women do not want to achieve by a quota. She suggested more use of nominations committees. She also clarified that greater regulation and corporate governance may be working as a barrier for men as well as women.

Responding to whether the experience in Ireland is an Irish issue, Mr Cosgrove suggested Irish progress needs a catalyst and suggests role models are very useful but that it is hard to find profile information about female role models (for example Melanie Lane CEO of Shell). He continued by stating that "*success begets success*" and that it was important to



communicate the good things that had been achieved. He noted that there are obstacles in communicating to men and advocated opening gender networks to men and women and stressing it is a business issue not a women's issue in Ireland. He concluded his answer by emphasizing the need to measure progress and not to rush through the process towards achieving certain percentages. Rather he stressed that it was important to begin with unconscious bias training.

Mr Monnot agreed it was not a women's issue or an Irish issue, and advised don't fix women, fix the work place. He also stressed that quotas work: Norway and France show the strong commitment needed but also that there are steps before quotas to illustrate the business case and to put quotas in context. He advised that companies believe research about economic benefits, but that they also can dismiss the progress made when achieving better gender balance to a specific sector. Therefore, it was important to take the time to educate them on the general benefits. Credit Suisse research showed gender balance increased profit by 26%. Mr Monnot concluded his answer outlining how Sodexo are unusual in doing their own internal research and that Nestle are now keen to learn from Sodexo on how to conduct company specific research. Sodexo statisticians have encouraged others to do such research.

Asked to comment on the age and gender discrimination intersection, in the context of millennials, Mr Cosgrave advised there are massive biases against age, while Ms Quinn argued non executive directors need specific work experience and so are unlikely to be aged under 40. Mr Monnot argued that sexism crosses generations and that it is important to cross dimensions of diversity, race, class, age, disability and sexual orientation.

Ms Quinn was also asked to comment on the 'Opt Out revolution' where women are seen as more likely to opt out of board membership. She stressed enough women are interested in opting in and that the question is how to unlock barriers for those interested. She stressed that company reporting data should include the gender composition of boards.

In further questions the example of Mattel was offered. The toy store has a 99% female customer base and a 90% male board; they are challenged to bring millennials on board. Another audience member remarked that ICT skills are needed on boards which also have to reflect customer base as such age bias needs to be inclusive of young people.

## **Panel Two: Power, bias and culture: the challenges facing gender balance**

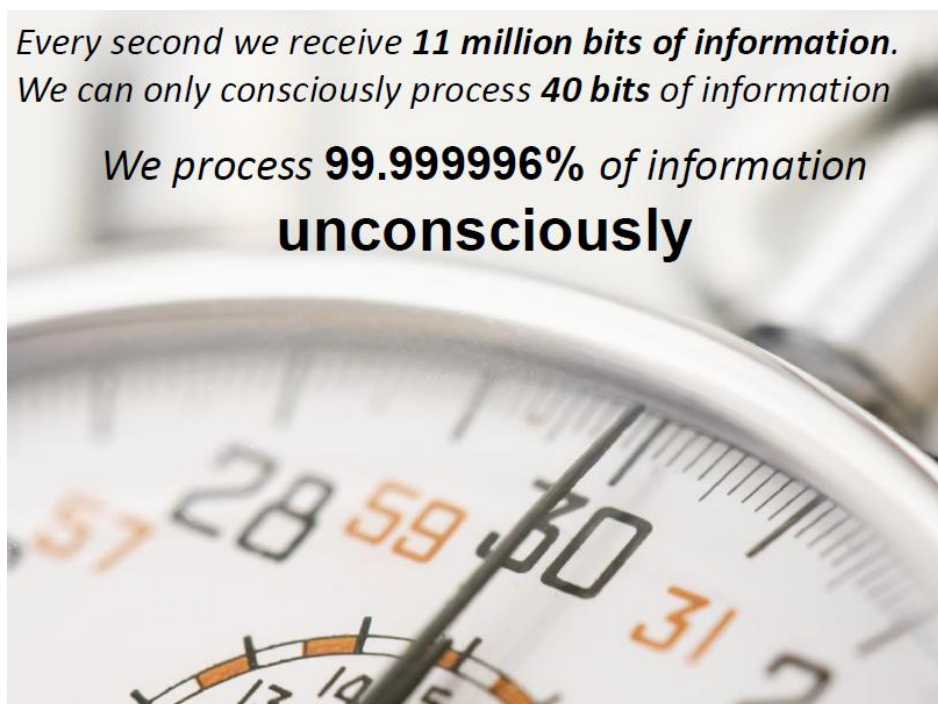
Companies and organisations harness the power of gender-balanced leadership as a means to understand the needs of their customers, to tackle complex business challenges and to turn insights into strategic advantages to differentiate themselves from their competitors. It has become a key success factor for companies of all kinds and can unlock innovation and growth. Yet we still have a significant gender gap and there are still major challenges offering obstacles to gender balance in organisations and systems today. This panel aimed to address what some of the remaining challenges are and why they are resistant given the business case arguments for change.

### **Professor Ciarán O'Boyle, Royal College of Surgeons Ireland**



Professor Ciarán O'Boyle and Dearbhail McDonald

Professor O'Boyle outlined the growing interest in and recognition of the need to increase the representation of women in corporate decision making. Highlighting a recent edition of the Financial Times entitled 'Sexism in the City' which discussed ways to increase the number of women interviewing for senior positions, Professor O'Boyle stated that this was not a simple objective to achieve because of the role of unconscious bias in the workplace. He explained how as the brain processes around eleven million pieces of information we inevitably take shortcuts in order to function and we use stereotypes that we are not always aware of. Professor O'Boyle then referenced the recent marriage equality referendum in Ireland as an example of how to challenge such bias; listening to real people talking about their experiences challenged unconscious bias regarding same sex marriage. For Professor O'Boyle the central issue from a clinical perspective is that *"We do not know how we think, we think we are rational, but we actually process irrationally and emotionally and then we look for information retrospectively to support this."*



Unconscious Bias (Professor Ciarán O'Boyle)

He challenged the audience to take what is termed the Harvard 'Implicit Association Test (IAT)' that measures implicit bias and assists us in recognising how unconscious our bias is. He suggested that even those who consider themselves unbiased operate with deep levels of unconscious bias. He detailed two examples of bias. In one experiment otherwise identical resumes with a male name had a 40% better chance of securing an interview than with a female name. Selectors who were women in this experiment made the same unconscious biased distinctions as men. In other research police chiefs unconscious bias led to criteria shifts within assessment processes; education was ranked as more important than street

experience for male candidates’ but the criteria shifted so that street experience was rated higher for female candidates. In an example of how to counter such effects, aspiring musicians were placed behind a screen in auditions for orchestras to obscure their gender during auditions. The outcome was a significantly increased number of women securing positions. Professor O’Boyle offered a number of steps to combat unconscious bias and stressed we need to:

- recognize that unconscious bias exists;
- aspire to standards of fair treatment and respect in all aspects of the employer lifecycle; and
- broaden our outlook on the kinds of leadership that operates in organizations.

*“Leadership should percolate right down through all levels of organization, not just at the top; leadership should be not purely transactional in the context of action and outcome but transformational leadership”*. He detailed how those in leadership roles need be the best role models they can be, inspire people intellectually with questions and, in the context of the knowledge economy, work to make jobs more fulfilling, help people to create meaning by giving special attention to individual attributes of the people that report to them, and work to understand employees as individuals rather than group collectives.

---

*‘Leaders of the future will be collaborative, will have less authority and power and will have deep integrity and intellectual openness’*

---

### **Ms Rhona Murphy, (former) CEO, The Daily Beast**



Ms Murphy began by outlining her career trajectory which involved living outside of Ireland for two decades, working in sales and marketing across a diverse range of contexts including London, Singapore and New York. In her most recent role in the *Daily Beast* she had come to understand the huge role that media plays in setting the cultural

agenda and the degree of gender imbalance in media industries, with the majority of media jobs held by men. This, she had realised, in turn influenced media content.

Gender imbalance translates to gender stereotyping in the representation of men and women; men were more likely featured in news and sports items while women were more likely depicted in terms of their physical appearance and defined by body parts. She noted the strategy of high profile women in political life including Angela Merkel, Hillary Clinton and most recently Nicola Sturgeon to avoid ‘comment’ by wearing subtle clothing which blended into the background. In her experience at the *Daily Beast* more female editors resulted in less stereotypical images as “*women are most likely to challenge female stereotypes and in turn offer a more complete picture of reality*”. While power was deeply engrained she found most men in the workplace are quite happy to support female colleagues but that the greatest problem was the absence of women in the leadership roles in media. This was a function of the ‘pipeline interruption’ when women have children as they experience “family guilt” and cultural norms that suggest one cannot be a good mother and a hard worker (despite the lack of research to support this assumption). This myth is reinforced by stock media images which stereotypically illustrate “*executive women with a briefcase in one hand and a sad baby in the other*”, a myth the Sheryl Sandberg’s ‘*Lean-In*’ foundation works to improve by supporting more representative pictures. The lack of role models for successful working mums and the culture of ‘presentism’ persist despite technological revolution. Better media portrayal would promote more flexible options and cultural change in companies where workplace culture is still restrictive. She concluded that “*Mr. Mom*” is still unusual but parental leave gives companies more options and that the media has a role to play in this debate.

---

*Leadership should percolate right down through all levels of organization, not just at top; leadership should be not purely transactional in the context of action and outcome but transformational leadership*

---

### Ms Jean O’Sullivan, Programme Manager, Enterprise Ireland



Ms Jean O’Sullivan introduced the role of Enterprise Ireland (EI) as the main State organization tasked with providing Irish industries with support and in helping them to expand overseas. In 2012, EI became aware that only 7% of the entire

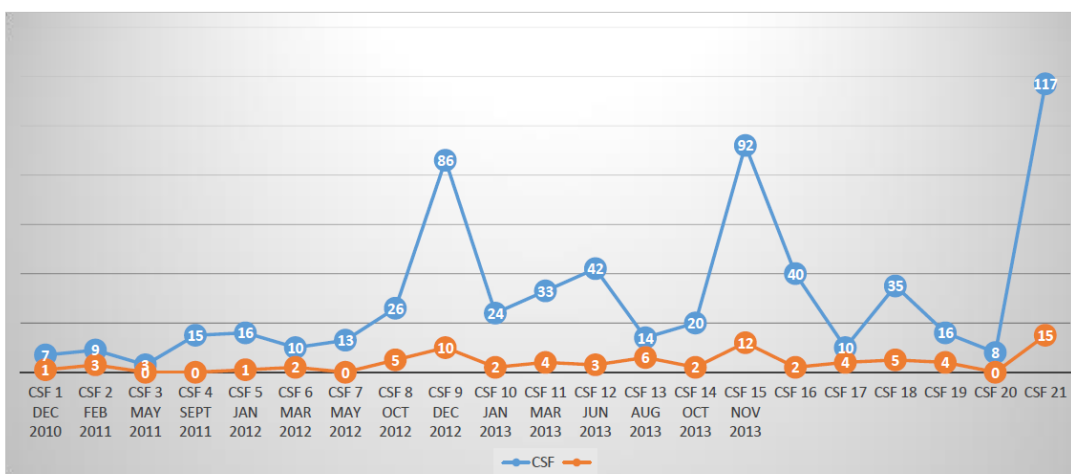
portfolio of investments went to female entrepreneurs. Despite the fact that there were many women entrepreneurs it was assumed by Enterprise Ireland that their businesses were not of a sufficient scale and were domestically focused. Ms O’Sullivan was asked to research Irish female entrepreneurs to explore this further and concluded that while seeming confident the women were not applying for the supports that are available. She found Irish women entrepreneurs experience to be consistent with international evidence on gender and access to finance, with less access to finance and lower levels of risk taking, technical expertise and self confidence. Women also had less access to female networking opportunities and lacked visible role models. She commented that *“It takes women longer to grow the business from seed, as men with broader networks to gain information from, move through that process of establishing a business more quickly”*.

## Female Development Programmes

Enterprise Ireland supported 94 female led businesses through female specific development programmes co-funded by Enterprise Ireland these include;

- Going for Growth,
- New Frontiers programmes.
- DCU Ryan Academy Female Propeller Programme,
- NDRC Female Founders Programme,
- CIT Female Excel Programme

## Impact of Female CSF



Enterprise Ireland Research (Ms Jean O’Sullivan)



Enterprise Ireland’s competitive start-up funds typically receive 140 applicants per open call but very few women apply. To increase applications from women a funding call was reframed as exclusively female and applications increased from between 0-3 to 87. Ms O’Sullivan concluded “*females were not applying to the funds when they were not seeing themselves in the fund*” and accepted there was a disconnect between EI and female clients. This was reflected by the language and enterprise examples used that were often of male dominated sectors such as the life sciences and construction. The new initiative did mean more females applying to the main fund but only 14 females applied to the main fund compared to 120 applying to female only funds. This is the case even though the funding criteria are exactly the same. She concluded that “*women are self selecting to apply to female funds as they assume competition is less in female funds – rather than being the same across both*”. EI’s experience was consistent with that of Rachel Lysaght, a television and film producer, who found women producers and film makers apply to smaller rather than larger funding competitions. Therefore, they receive less support and exposure with the longer term outcomes being that images and stories on TV remain unrepresentative.

EI had seen improvement from 7% investment in women in 2011 to 23% in 2015 but there is concern that women were still only applying to female only funds. Some evidence of progress, however, included high media profile ‘women in enterprise’ awards which now included women in senior positions putting themselves forward for competition rather than relying on others to encourage them to go forward for nomination . Ms O’Sullivan stressed that there was a need to take a multilayered approach including addressing unconscious bias and perceptions of what are female sectors. Female development programmes are necessary, especially at the early stages of development, and role models are key from high players like Sheryl Sandberg to role models from everyday life, for example the top 25 women entrepreneurs showcased in events including the Irish Tatler magazine awards.

---

*There are challenges but once you get momentum you get results*

---



### **Ms Carina Furlong, Associate Director, Talking Talent**

Ms Furlong’s contribution detailed research conducted by Talking Talent in 2012 ‘*Up, Out or Different: The Career Dilemma*’ that surveyed 2500 women across 17 sectors and diverse family types. Focused on barriers to promotion and progress in their career fields, the survey data revealed a number of career crossroads. She relayed the research

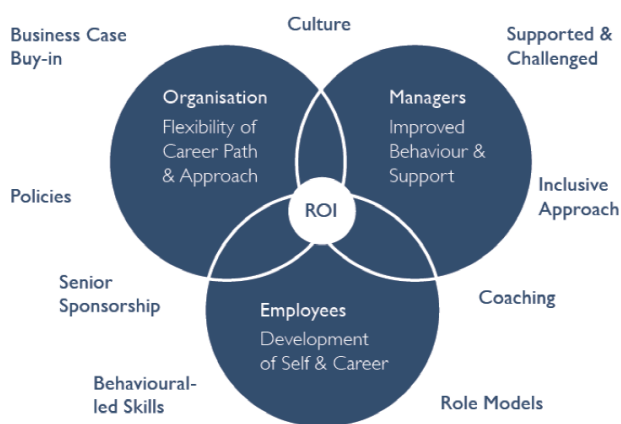
findings over four headings: pinch points; barriers; skills and organizational enablers.

Pinch points included career crossroads, maternity transition and crisis. Maternity transition is a specific issue and the single most important obstacle and barrier to progression, after 20 years of evidence “*organisations do realize that huge talent loss and loss of investment occurs at this critical juncture.*” She highlighted how appropriate interventions shifted retention rates from 80% to 94% and saved 16.1% of staff costs in avoiding staff attrition. Citi for example experienced retention rates rising by 13% after maternity leave.

Barriers impeding progress included inflexible’ hours (40%), rigid career options (40%) and line manager behaviour with senior men promoting others in their own image (35%). Line managers were often quite unaware of this and while organisational policy and procedures are necessary organisations also need to support line managers on the ‘how’ of implementation. 3) Skills according to the survey included self belief and confidence (55%) which were often presented as performance issues and needed to be managed by having more open conversation with line managers. She detailed how 54% of those surveyed indicated that networking was also a key issue. Engagement with the work of organizations such as the 30% Club and the Professional Women’s Network (PWN) is necessary but barriers may include the negative connotations about networking. Women also lacked profile building skills and did not like to talk about themselves in professional terms (40%). Ms Furlong argued that based on these results it was clear that strategic and individually oriented career planning needs to start with graduate recruitment. Building a profile and a brand was key but women have underdeveloped professional self communication and have real difficulty talking about where they add value.

## What can organisations do?

Sustainable progress requires collective engagement



Ms Furlong noted that ‘organisational enablers’ were key to achieving cultural change. Line managers needed to feel supported and challenged to work more creatively and flexibly and to develop staff over a period of time so that individuals can progress. Role models were also key, she stated, “*if you see it you believe it*” and it was imperative to have the story telling of the how behind it. She concluded it is essential to have forums in businesses to have these conversations happen and for their outcomes to be communicated broadly across the organisation.

*Up, Out or Different the Career Dilemma, Talking Talent Report (Carina Furlong)*

---

*While organisations have policies and procedures they also need to support line managers to realize and support the ambitions of women*

---



*Panel 2: Ms Carina Furlong, Prof Ciarán O'Boyle, Ms Jean O'Sullivan and Ms Rhona Murphy*

## Questions

The first question posed asked about what companies can do to eliminate unconscious bias. Professor O'Boyle recommended leadership values that were not only expressed but also lived. This was essential as there was often a gap between the values of equality and diversity and the reality of leadership. Transparent criteria in selection boards was also key and fundamentally education about unconscious bias.

Ms Murphy was asked whether it really does make such a difference when women are in the room at an editorial meeting. She answered that as her own role grew into positions of responsibility she became more aware of the gender stereotyping and how better gender balance led to different questions. She stressed the need for more female reporters and how social media has made young women more aware of gender stereotyping.

Ms O’Sullivan was asked how Enterprise Ireland had developed an awareness of the issue of low gender representation in programmes supporting entrepreneurship. She replied that the gender analysis data was a shock. Prior to her research EI did not think they had a problem but now the organisation had different insights on these issues.

Ms Furlong addressed a question about improving retention rates from maternity leave and argued that what gets measured gets done. Payroll savings were indicative of a more loyal and more engaged workforce that in turn was a function of retention measures. Key for her is that it is not just about maternity but about supporting working parents and in having fathers included.

One comment from the floor addressed women’s networks, and stressed that women will not attend networking sessions just for the sake of networking but rather they work better when linked to a purpose like additional training or work life balance coaching sessions. Women are more likely to come for content rather than just networking.

When asked how to help address the confidence gap, Ms Murphy argued that confidence was key in transitory moments and is often an in the moment thing about self-belief. She claimed negative self belief is endemic in early gender socialization. Expectations in schools result in men and women’s interpretation of confidence being totally different. There is often confusion between competence and confidence; women know what they are competent at, yet men are less self aware of this.

Professor O’Boyle also offered his assessment that confident women are often seen as aggressive and there needed to be a cultural change in such perceptions. He lamented that higher education produces highly connected and technical professional people but people with ‘hovering parents’ who lack street smartness and confidence, yet end up in management positions without having developed the competencies to be good leaders.

Ms Murphy, when asked about the role of social media and whether media is evolving as a female space, commented how consumers have taken control of content and that there are 50% more women consumers than men. Younger people do not exhibit the same loyalty to brands but are more interested in what their peer groups are referencing, 25% of all news media is viewed on Facebook and women share articles they approve of, for example Emma Watson’s speech to the United Nations on the *He for She* campaign. Sexism is called out now with videos and YouTube constantly illustrating how women are negatively portrayed in advertisements.

Ms O’Sullivan was asked what might stop women applying to female only funds and replied that in reality the female only fund is important and that individual women do not necessarily want to be the poster women for female entrepreneurs. She acknowledged she was not clear about the way forward, EI could discontinue a female only fund to encourage women to apply to the general fund but women do benefit from the female fund support early on. She remarked that for women the vision for their business lies in a validation of their idea rather than necessarily building an empire.

## Panel Three: the way forward to success and reversing the paradox

Panel three was a solution focused discussion bringing together practitioners to discuss the challenges posed and highlighting strategies for nurturing gender-balanced leadership and proactively building the talent pipeline. This session drew on real life examples from across industry.

### Ms Helen Tynan, Director of People Operations, Google



Ms Helen Tynan opened with the refrain “*In god we trust, all others must bring data*” and explained that Google went public with their diversity data to learn and promote debate. McKinsey and Catalyst research shows why diversity matters and the business case for diversity is well proven; staying relevant to your users means making sure your staff reflect your users and you need to constantly ask are staff relevant to users of products/services you sell? She continued detailing how Google, Apple, Facebook and Twitter all published their data since 2014 recognising the need to be public about the “*problem you are trying to grapple with*”. Google’s approach shows the reality of searching for a solution. Of Google’s 55,000 staff, 30% are female, looking at non technical positions the percentage that are female, rises to 48%, while in the technical areas it is 17%. These statistics, she

noted, reflect that North America Computer Science graduates are 18% female and therefore the competition between high tech companies for skilled women.



*Google Diversity and People Operations (Ms Helen Tynan)*

Ms Tynan continued by emphasising how women comprise only 21% of leadership positions suggesting the need to focus on how to get women up through the ranks. There is a different practice of self-nomination for promotion, men and women are promoted at same rate; while more men self nominate, women who do so are more likely to meet the bar. This is consistent with other research which shows women are less likely to contribute but always on message when they do. She continued that the answer lies in making women aware that they need to self nominate and having regular prompts to encourage women. Ms Tynan suggested that these could include a combination of addressing unconscious bias and real time nudges along with monitoring data for trends. It also means increasing opportunity beyond Google and changing the eco system by expanding the pool of technologists through initiatives such as the ‘call to code’ competition among secondary schools and universities that are diverse. She concluded that this is also about helping teachers to teach technology to millennials.

*In God we trust, all others must bring data.*

### Ms Ann-Marie Holmes, Fab 24 Factory Manager, Intel



Ms Holmes began her contribution outlining how, in 2015, the CEO of Intel set a target for gender diversity across all grades by 2020 and invested \$300m towards achieving this target. This clear leadership should mean it is easier to implement strategies and have practical impacts.



There are four main actions in the Irish Intel strategy.

The first action detailed by Ms Holmes looked at how to attract females into STEM<sup>2</sup>. The initiatives put in place include Transition Year school promotion, 30 third level scholarships in technical degrees for women and 10 bursaries for two year degrees. These include mentorship and days on site for the scholars to show how viable and what a great career a technical profession can be for women.

Ms Holmes continued outlining the second element of the strategy: How to hire females from STEM. A core element of this objective is in targeted hiring above market availability. This means every hiring panel must have a woman and every requisition must have a female apply. She continued noting how, in 2014, 38% of college graduates entrants were female (PhD and masters). Ms Holmes then turned to the third and fourth strands of the Intel strategy, how to keep females in STEM professions and how to ensure females get promoted across the lifecycle of their career. Ms Holmes outlined the work of the 'WREN'<sup>3</sup> women's networking programme which is now four years old. In Ireland, Intel women only comprise 15% of their workforce, compared to Intel global with 24% female employees. This means often women are the only females on teams, therefore the women only network is needed to find other women in the workplace, to have role models and to show women how they can move careers at different transition points. She also noted that there is space for men struggling with similar issues. Intel also offers 7 outstanding awards for women; these awards have high visibility and a good level of open supports. Ms Holmes concluded that this required actively recruiting women to apply for progression internally and creating an environment where everyone can support these objectives. This is best achieved through taking a career life cycle approach where women are promoted throughout their careers with supports. Specifically this requires creating female technical pipelines supported by line managers that prompt women to apply and where coaching, classes and supports help them to succeed. This approach has resulted in concrete success with an increase from 5% female leadership to 12% over last four years.

---

*50% of the population is female – I am honour bound for my daughter to not to have to stand up here in 20 years time and talk about gender equality in any organization*

---

---

<sup>2</sup> STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

<sup>3</sup> WREN – Women's Referral Exchange Network

## Dr Rhona Mahony, Master, National Maternity Hospital

Dr Rhona Mahony opened by comparing Ireland's historic and equality enhancing Brehon law to the treatment of women in the Irish Free State which has not been so kind to women or their presence in the work place. Nonetheless she noted progress, with women now 60% of



college graduates and 55% of professionals. However, she asked why are boards 89% men? Dr. Mahony noted that the conversation has moved from being 'nice about it' to being evidence based in relation to the return for business. Reflecting on her own experience as the first female to apply for and get the position of 'master' of the national maternity hospital, she noted that

despite perceptions her work is not a male dominated workplace, 80% of staff and 100% of patients are women, and the diversity of women and their potential and talent is incredible.

Dr Mahony argued that there is potential to achieve so much more in terms of gender equality but not without recognising that the physiology of child birth is unequal with men not giving birth (she wryly noted the seahorse is ahead of us in this regard). She added that glass ceilings and invisible barriers particularly in early career continue to be significant. She noted how 80% of her students are female so it is not just about barriers but also choices. She asked why a group of people so well equipped are not getting into leadership roles. She advised that three key areas need addressing. The first related to what Dr Mahony referred to as **employment empowerment** which she argued is best advanced through regulated affordable early years preschool childcare, especially for lower socio economic groups. She offered An Cosán (a Tallaght based women's education and childcare project) as an example of best practice in enabling education and childcare. Another enabler is flexibility around working arrangements, noting this is in the top 5 employment drivers for men.

The second area related to **educational empowerment** which in her view is best advanced through examining the social construction of gender roles, gender stereotyping and gender equality in education to ensure it better equips children to deal with life, including sex education. She also stressed how access to education was unequal. The third area Dr Mahony referred to was that of **political empowerment** which she argued is best advanced by being more ambitious about increasing women in politics and encouraging women into political life, and being more aware how failure to do this is reflected in policy particularly in how maternity services continue to be neglected.

---

*I would love to see a country that promotes talent and potential and that achieves the best of their citizens regardless of whether they are men or women*

---

### **Ms Melanie Sheppard, Finance Director, Pfizer Healthcare Ireland**



Ms Sheppard began her contribution advocating that we should stop making gender balance an issue and make more of it as an opportunity. Most of Pfizer's customers and product buyers are female, with 60% of non-consultant GPs being female and women occupying the role of chief medical officer in the home. She stated that "*Men use Viagra but under women's direction.*" Her

role at Pfizer is to advance strategies for her company to improve gender balance and respond to the changing market. She detailed the strategies available for women in organisations including mentoring, success circles and talent development but she noted the importance of also looking at change in the general populace.

Ms Sheppard continued, stressing the case for practical strategies that promote the compelling business case and would engage all of the work force. She advocated a global roll out of unconscious bias training. Ms Sheppard then highlighted an initiative entitled Straight Talk that worked to create an environment that produced less bias in meeting structures creating a context where it was possible to listen to everyone in the room and ask for everyone's opinion. Ms Sheppard also outlined other ways to nurture female leadership giving examples of the 'raise your hand' campaign, which encourages women to 'nominate yourself' and offers company support to fill perceived gaps that might stop progression (barriers of child rearing and 'ageing parents', different transition stages). In these supports the focus is on trying to get all leaders to support staff throughout the life cycle. Ms Sheppard continued by stating the need for role models – not super heroes. She noted how she herself was nominated in the Top 25 Women Award by the Women's Executive Network (WYN) but had to be convinced that she had indeed been chosen. She suggested that these programmes can address the 'miner or shiner' cultural dilemma and make women feel okay

with the ‘spotlight’. She concluded by stating that female representation is growing all the time, and that there were now mainly female management in finance and human resource departments at Pfizer.



**Panel three: Ms Melanie Sheppard (podium), Ms Dearbhail Mc Donald, Ms Ann-Marie Holmes, Ms Helen Tynan and Dr Rhona Mahony**

### Questions

Asked how to implement unconscious bias training, Ms Sheppard advised that often US originated materials need to be localised to make them more relevant. She also added that it is important to have an open approach; we all have bias and need to think less about unconscious bias and more about conscious inclusion.

Ms Tynan was asked how to avoid backlash from diversity tick box bias. She advised you have to develop the business case for diversity so that people do not resent not being recruited when the best person chosen is a minority. Dr Mahony was asked about women’s role in supporting other women. She reflected that in her own experience women did support women and she welcomed the various networks evolving, arguing women need particular supports around child bearing, as women have babies often at a critical time where there is a steep curve in their careers. As such it is important to facilitate women coming back to the workplace. She noted society needs more doctors, retaining women doctors is good for everyone and society.

When asked how to translate training into proactive sponsorship Ms Sheppard offered the Pfizer experience of sponsorship with measurable diversity objectives for senior managers. Helen Tynan agreed arguing that if you want something to change, measure it and use indicators. A final question asked what happens after training helps to bring bias to the surface. Ms Sheppard responded on the importance of cascading leadership which allows diversity to be a central objective for each line manager.

---

*We need role models not super heroes*

---

## **Panel Four: Using our resources for success engaging men**

Creating a fairer and more inclusive work environment where everyone is valued will require the involvement and support of many people, at many levels, including men. However, men are an often untapped—yet critical—resource in diversity and inclusion (D&I) efforts aimed at eliminating gender bias. Panel four looked at ways in which this can be addressed.

### **Ms Alison Maitland, Author**



First and foremost Ms Maitland stressed the degree to which the issue is one of business strategy, not of fixing women; of men and women driving change together. She outlined a range of active interventions, which included measuring, reporting, and stories as well as data about women. She also stressed the issue of reframing around the issue of

flexibility and the debate as one that concerns 50:50 of men and women together. Ms Maitland also noted the importance of unexpected allies and referenced Matt Damon as a supporter of the ‘HeForShe’ UN campaign and how this helped reframe the issue of gender inequality from an unexpected quarter. She offered three useful examples of strategic interventions one of which, MARC (Men Advocating for Real Change), was later outlined by Mr Dan Twomey.



# What works

- ✓ Business strategy, not “fixing the women”
- ✓ Active interventions: targets, addressing bias
- ✓ Measuring and reporting
- ✓ Stories as well as numbers
- ✓ Reframing the conversation: Why not 50/50? Why not make all jobs flexible?
- ✓ Men and women driving change together

*Accelerating change: The role of men (Ms Alison Maitland)*

From Australia she illustrated the role of male champions with the campaign ‘it starts with us’ and initiatives which focused on inviting men into the conversation. Ms Maitland then outlined how Liz Broderick (the Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner) started ‘Talk and Act’ which meets 4 times annually and seeks to disrupt the status quo with a focus on treating every role as a flexible role. She continued outlining a Plus One Pledge that commits line managers to increase women and to directly report on this. She also detailed pledges made by CEOs to not participate on public panels without women. In addition, she recommended that companies report on gender pay gaps and provide analysis, then act on this analysis and in turn publish the results. Finally CEO’s and male leaders should also commit to reflecting on their own leadership styles and how they should change and she argued that this in itself opens the way to frank conversations that can move people forward. She highlighted how these initiatives required all actors to name and discuss openly in particular how men are straight jacketed into inflexible roles in terms of work-life balance.

Ms Maitland concluded with an overview of other programmes, including from the UK the 30% Club which works as a peer pressure voluntary initiative and has, along with the Lord Davies report, resulted in zero companies in the FTSE100 being without a woman on the board and an overall increase of women on boards from 11% in 2011 to 23.5%, with the 2015 target of 25% likely to be reached. She also emphasised the role of programmes including MARC. She concluded by detailing how in an interview for the Conference Board magazine Michel Landel CEO Sodexo stressed three key messages; the gender balance initiatives must report directly to the CEO and the CEO must be accountable and lead it; that we must keep investing in it as results take time; and the objective must be 50/50.



# Three messages – from a male CEO

1. Gender must report to the CEO
2. Keep investing in it – results take time
3. The objective must be at least 50/50

*Michel Landel, CEO Sodexo,  
Interview for The Conference Board*

**The Conference Board (Ms Alison Maitland)**

## **Mr Dan Twomey, VP Finance and CFO EMEA, Dell**



Mr Twomey focused on an example of a successful strategy for engaging men from Dell. This was the MARC programme (Men Advocating for Real Change) which was an initiative of Catalyst, the non-profit body supporting women in business. He noted that while this programme is important at Dell it is not a panacea, rather it builds a foundation of ingredients for cultural change. Mr

Twomey continued by detailing the four key ingredients to cultural and organisational change. First, it is crucial to make the case for change. This means developing a burning platform, holding on to it quite firmly and constantly reiterating the core message. Second, top down sponsorship must be used, for example the CEO of Dell leads the ‘global diversity council’, and by merging the chief Human Resources and Diversity Officer into one role. Third, it is essential to invest in and build the mechanics of change, through policies and talent acquisition. Fourth, it was important to drive change through initiatives such as what Dell called Employee Resource Groups – 8 voluntary staff groups with a sense of purpose to drive change in key diversity areas. These included Women in Search of Excellence (WISE), PRIDE, Conexus (for isolated home workers) and GenNext, for young professionals.

However, despite all of these programmes, Dell was still not getting the progress they desired. In response to this, MARC, a Catalyst initiative, was implemented for male employees to experience diversity within different areas of Dell which was followed up with a volunteer residential programme that focused on raising awareness at a personal level. This included processes to enable understanding obstacles to change, such as gender conditioning, subordinate and dominant groups, and enabling awareness of the privilege men take for granted. Mr Twomey stressed that the residential programme was a powerful experience and that it was not diversity training but personal development. The next step planned is to invite 40 male volunteers to participate in a similar 'programme'. The aim is to spark a desire to become a driver and not just a supporter of diversity. He continued by stating that the programme is aimed at producing an "aha moment" where participants light 'a fuse' one person at a time. He concluded that the Dell approach is based on the principle that culture is about people and that people change one person at a time through voluntary action.

---

*Something magical happens when diversity is about inclusion as it is related to so many people in so many ways*

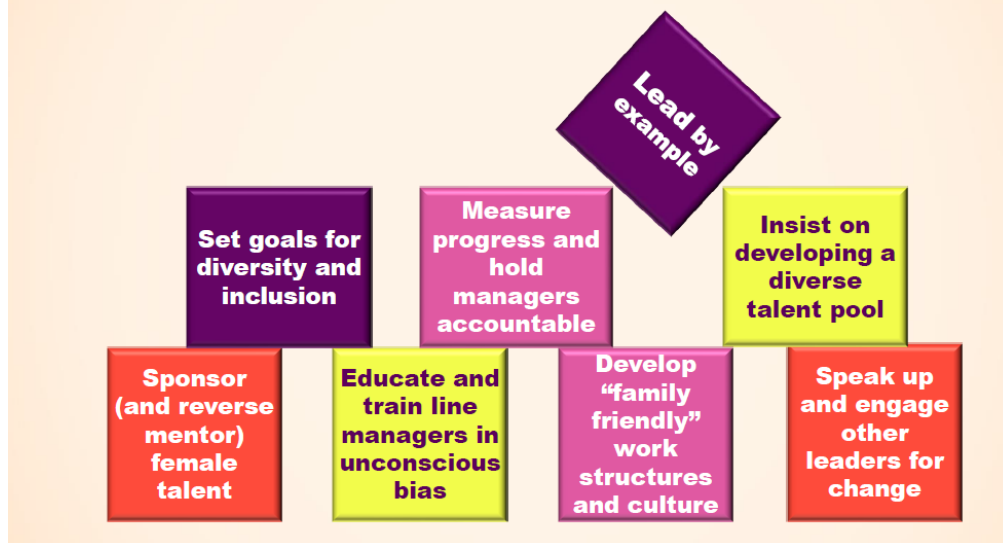
---

#### **Mr Robert Baker, Senior Partner, Mercer**



Mr Baker focused on his experience of helping to get men engaged in the Professional Women's Network (PWN) and engaging men as advocates of change 'to move the needle'. This involved working with executive men and leadership teams where power lies, while including line managers and colleagues. Mr Baker emphasised how it was essential to target line managers as if they do not get the message then nothing will change. However, overall, the aim is to create a network of male allies and to highlight the benefits of men and women working together. Mr Baker continued by suggesting that some men are nearer change than others, millennial men for example may already have moved on a little and have different gendered expectations.

## WHAT DO WE WANT LEADERS TO DO?



*Professional Women's Network (PWN) Mercer Global (Mr Robert Baker)*

He acknowledged that men have diverse profiles and it was essential to figure out what drives men to engage. He illustrated the power of intervention with the example of the Oxford University Rugby team anti misogyny work shop. Asking men about their motivations to engage resulted in a range of interesting answers ranging from men having daughters; having respect for female leaders; to a sense of fairness and doing right for society; to it being good for business; and to simply having been a directive from the boss. He argued it was essential to support men in their journey from being sceptical to being a convert and then to being a strong advocate.

Mr Baker continued his contribution outlining the barriers to involvement and engagement of men which include:

- apathy;
- a sense that they cannot gain personally;
- lack of awareness;
- fear of critique of other men (locker room mentality);
- a lack of accountability;
- a sense there are no consequences for non engagement; and
- a sense that engagement is not linked to business performance.

Mercer UK took these barriers seriously and had moved from 10% to 58% female representation. This was an example of the rewards of male engagement. Male engagement can be increased through gender neutral discussion forums. For example, Mercer had rebranded their women's network calling it 'The Vine' and focussing it on business issues. Men were invited to attend. Issues raised included "how has leadership changed?" and rebranding gender unconscious bias training to training in inclusive leadership. This was

matched by leaders driving participation in the schemes from the top and stressing that recruitment and promotion was about all of the talent. Mr Baker emphasised how essential it was to have CEO's involved. Leaders should lead by example in their personal life (bring your kids to school), take paternity leave and in professional terms they should set goals and measure progress. He continued, that leaders should also insist on developing a diverse talent pool and to send recruiters back until they find qualified women. Other strategies included sponsoring and reverse mentoring female talent, educating and training line managers, developing family friendly work structures and culture, speaking up and engaging other leaders for change. He concluded that men need to adapt to this new world.

---

*It is about making the most of talent, investors are looking for gender diversity, government and peer pressure can accelerate change, what are you going to do?*

---



**Panel Four Mr Robert Baker, Ms Alison Maitland and Mr Dan Twomey**

### **Questions**

In response to a question about participation of young male millennials in MARC, Mr Twomey stressed how age diversity was very important in MARC as it is based on personal testimony and talking about diversity person by person.

Mr Baker, when asked about reactions of other men who ‘chose’ women’s work and whether there was any perceived lack of status, stressed the need for a critical mass of men and that pioneers always have it toughest but that change would only happen one person at a time. He continued by stressing that recession had perhaps caused some cultural change with more men at the school gate. Ms Maitland suggested men can feel excluded at the school gate and that language needed to change as had been suggested in a question to the panel from ‘mother and baby’ to ‘parent and baby’.

In response to a question which probed the role of public policy and policy makers and which asked whether Ireland needed a Lord Davies report, Ms Maitland asked why the issue could not be reframed as 50:50 and that there was a need to move away from women blaming themselves, as well as a move from the language of diversity to the talk about profitability. She believed quotas were necessary and should have been in place 25 years ago. She also argued that while flexibility was highly prized there was a double standard when it came to care with women increasingly choosing career over care. One solution to this was to create a scheme that makes a fixed portion of paid parental leave available to fathers as a part of a broader set of maternity leave and parental leave initiatives as is the case in some Scandinavian countries.

Mr Baker concluded the session arguing that we need to be more cognisant of the power of investors. He said the debate was not just about economics and had to also include happiness and wellbeing and that wellness was a fundamental aspect of productivity.

## **Panel Five: Time, targets and quotas**

Panel five explored some of the potential routes to gender-balanced leadership being proposed or explored globally and got real insights from thought leaders as to how they see this prevailing.

### **Mr Vitalijus Novikovas, DG Justice, European Commission**



Mr Vitalijus Novikovas first outlined the European Union’s efforts to support gender equality over the past fifty years and provided background on the European Commission’s 2010 ‘Strategy on equality between women and men’ which identified issues including women’s low levels of representation in economic decision making. As a response to poor voluntary progress on this issue, in November 2012, the Commission proposed a draft EU Directive aimed at



supporting increased gender balance on the boards of the largest publicly listed companies across the EU<sup>4</sup>.



## Promoting better gender balance

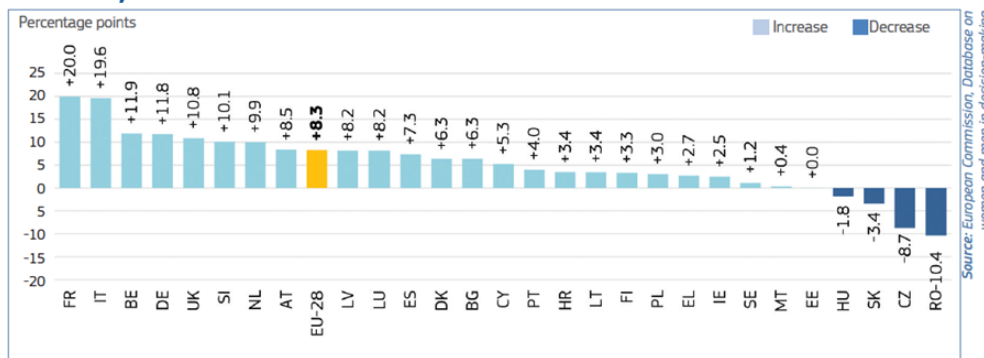
- With its Strategy for Equality between Women and Men, the EC put the issue of women on boards high on the political agenda already in 2010.
- In 2011 it called for credible self-regulation by companies to ensure better gender balance in companies' supervisory boards.
- One year later it became clear that progress was not visible, which is why in November 2012 the EC put forward a directive aiming to accelerate the progress



*European Commission (Directorate General Justice and Consumers) (Mr. Vitalijus Novikovas)*

Mr. Novikovas showed evidence highlighting how Member States, including Italy and Belgium, with quota legislation in place had made the most progress on gender balance on boards whereas progress in Member States with voluntary quotas had stagnated. He highlighted how Norway had achieved 40% representation of women by 2006; Iceland had done likewise by 2013 and France was on target to do the same by 2017. Progress was slow in Member States where soft measures existed.

### Change in the share of women on boards, EU-28, October 2010 – October 2014



Most of the significant improvements took place in countries that have taken or considered legislative action or had an intensive public debate on the issue

<sup>4</sup> Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures (COM 2012) 614 final



Outlining the main features of the proposed EU directive he stressed that this was not a quota directive; rather the legislation addressed the lack of transparency in selection criteria while allowing Member States to decide the level they could achieve. He suggested that in the Irish case where the percentages of women on boards remained low, a 33% objective might be appropriate. The directive will detail how to make appointments on the basis of comparative analysis of merit and qualification using clear gender neutral and unambiguous criteria. Where candidates are equally qualified, there would be a requirement to give the job to the candidate of the under represented sex. The directive would cover listed companies, with SMEs excluded in order to avoid a disproportionate burden; the proposed legislation would potentially cover approx. 60 companies in Ireland. The directive is not a prescriptive one size fits all solution but offers considerable flexibility for companies to establish their own criteria. Member States can also exclude companies where the under represented sex makes up less than 10% of the workforce. Flexibility is considered a key element and the directive allows Member States to use their own national measures to improve gender balance if these are as effective as the Commission proposal. The proposed Directive also includes a sunset clause to expire by 2028. Member States are free to decide on the nature of proportionate and persuasive sanctions and these apply not for failing to reach the 40% or 33% objective but rather for not following procedural obligations including reporting and monitoring by companies to Member States on their progress.

### **Ms. Rachel Hussey 30% Club Steering Committee and Partner Arthur Cox**



Ms. Rachel Hussey outlined how Lord Davies' work in the United Kingdom on better gender balance at board and leadership level had inspired the establishment of the 30% Club in Ireland, which now has over 100 Chairs and CEOs committed to gender balance targets in non executive and executive roles. The 30% Club was also focused on securing the pipeline of female talent by assessing what was happening below the senior levels. Initiatives included MARC (described on p. 32) and collaborations with the Smurfit Graduate School of Business and Dublin City University (DCU) with programmes that support women from education through to employment in seeking out leadership roles. She argued for an early focus on improving young women and girls engagement with STEM subjects including Maths and Accounting and that exposing young children to female role models was essential.

Ms Hussey suggested that quotas may kick start some progress but do not change the DNA or culture of an organization and could also have deleterious effects (as in the case of Norway where many businesses resisted quota legislation by delisting to avoid them and where the skilled female cohort was absorbed into positions to fill quotas). She stressed the Lord Davies voluntary strategy focused on this issue as a business issue not a women's issue and that this targeted voluntary approach worked best, concluding "*quotas were a sticking plaster, in the end we need a collaborative approach to sustain real change.*"

### Ms Sara Carey, Columnist and Broadcaster



Ms Carey outlined her experience as a minority female presenter on radio where she experienced misogyny but found that gender power imbalance was rarely discussed. She argued that many men internalized misogyny and welcomed the action of Oxford Rugby Club to

challenge sexism. She quoted Christine Lagarde (Director of the IMF) on how female dominated corporations including those in Iceland had weathered the financial crisis more successfully. She argued gender quotas were risky in that they created the possibility that men would resent women and might create backlash (as in the example of the Norwegian companies that delisted rather than accept the quota).

She speculated on how Irish political gender candidate quotas created problems where some political parties seem prepared to "*to ruin their own party candidates as a way to reject quotas*". She was not convinced that having a woman in the board room would change the behaviour of board members as, from her perspective; successful women were often those who had bent to the system and would not be a fresh thinker if they have already proven they are able to stay on the same wavelength as men. Her solutions to these issues were to "*raise sons to make them do the house work, to support paternity leave and make it mandatory*". She suggested that having a career is not the only valid option to make and staying at home with a baby should be valued. She concluded that women who take time out "*should not be rendered unemployable for the rest of their lives*".

## Ms Claire McGing, Maynooth University



Ms Claire McGing, Maynooth University, opened her contribution referring to her experience with the 50/50 campaign that worked to secure legislation for political party candidate selection quotas in Ireland. She stated how “*quotas represent a shift in power, power that is predominantly in the hands of men*”. She asserted that without quotas we would be waiting until her own grand-daughters time for significant progress. Ms McGing continued that economic arguments for gender balance were important but that this was also a social issue. Despite massive public debate and political pressure gender balance initiatives remain fragmented with some countries choosing legal routes and others a voluntary approach.

For those who choose the legalized route to change, databases provided useful evidence of a significant number of board ready women. For example Linked In provided a database of 8,000 board ready women and female board pools in Denmark and Belgium provided similar sources of information. While she strongly supported gender quotas she also outlined a range of additional initiatives that were essential in ensuring progress. These included training in unconscious bias; adapting appointment processes; and supporting talented women from an early level when they were middle managers in preparing for senior roles. Ms McGing continued detailing the merits of working with advocacy groups and women only networks and emphasized how men also needed to be involved. This latter point has been a key lesson in the wider campaign for election quotas. Commitment has to come from the top with mentoring, indicators, targets, monitoring and measures to reconcile family and work life. From her perspective the legislative route was preferential as voluntary or soft targets were not enough. In the Irish case the use of soft targets had provided some progress but there were still horizontal and vertical forms of segregation in State boards. She concluded by referencing the work of the National Women’s Council of Ireland<sup>5</sup> that looked for a 40% quota for publicly listed corporate boards with a sunset clause once a corporation had reached the quota.

---

<sup>5</sup> “Better Boards, Better Business, Better Society”, NWCi 2015

## Ms Margot Slattery, Managing Director, Sodexo



Ms. Margot Slattery championed the use of targets. Quoting work from Sodexo's experience she stated that we need targets and ultimately we need to have progress that gets measured. Citing the former EU Commissioner Viviane Redding, who said "*I may not like quotas – but I like what they achieve*", she underlined her support for quotas to improve gender representation on corporate boards. She outlined the

experience with Sodexo where the CEO established a programme called SWIFT dedicated to achieving gender balance targets of 35% in 2020 and then on to 50%. This programme had achieved 25% as of the end of 2014. Sodexo is a global corporation with a diverse workforce and is dedicated to developing targets and a process of reporting on progress back to the top of the company.

The key to their success has been internal networks that were more women focused, less male oriented and more gender balanced. These networks were accompanied by leadership development. SWIFT achieved a measurable impact of 26%; the numbers of women engaging in mentoring increased from 90 to 260 and 11 out of 80 countries were now led by women. A key element of the Sodexo strategy was employee engagement, employing a quality of life index and taking brand recognition seriously. She concluded that Sodexo also committed to publishing information on equal pay and signing up to government service pledges and supports through the WOMEN WORK network.

## Carolán Lennon, Managing Director, Eircom Wholesale



Ms Lennon adopted a clear pro-quota position arguing quotas are *“one of the tools needed to address the chronic under-representation of women in business and politics”*.

In this regard she argued *“the ends justify the means, and we need more women in politics and government to produce better decision making”*. Referencing an earlier remark she suggested that

she had never felt as if she had *“bent to the system”* even if she had not taken a lengthy maternity leave. Ms Lennon argued she brings a different perspective in her participation in management structures and that continuing to rely on soft measures would mean waiting over thirty years for gender parity. This, in her view, would be too long hence a game changer is needed. She accepted that while Norway did not get it completely right women were still better off than before the Norwegian initiative - arguing that if Norwegian corporations de-listed to avoid legislative quotas then they would for sure ignore soft targets.

Ms Lennon commented that quotas were not without controversy but evidence suggests they work and provide a momentum. Quotas require recruiters to look harder and broaden their search but not to appoint less qualified people. In her own experience she is often presented with all-male candidate lists and requires recruiters to go back and find women to add to the list, in her most recent experience the best candidate was such a woman which raises the question of why she was not on the list the first time around. She continued stating that women are well educated and it is not the case that there are not enough qualified women. Commenting on whether women support her promotion of gender quotas she finds women in middle management were extremely supportive and much more so than women in more senior positions while more junior women *“feel as if they cannot raise the issue”*. To conclude she left the message, *“we need to manage the bad side of quotas to get the good side of quotas”*.

---

*We need a game changer. Quotas do provide a momentum. They will require recruiters to look harder and broaden their search but they are not about appointing less qualified people*

---

## Questions

In responding to a comment from the audience about the importance of language in the gender quota discussion and the need for example to talk about ‘a 70% quota for men’, Ms McGing agreed it is useful to refer to men’s over representation rather than women’s under representation and how it was essential to reframe the debate. A second commentator from the audience noted she had been listening to similar commentary and assessment for the last twenty five years and agreed with Ms Lennon that it was now time for quotas, arguing that they could be a game changer as they give a strong message that the door is wide open for women to progress. Another remark centred on the ongoing use of exclusive language and referred to Ms Carey’s contribution which had highlighted the need to be careful about the validity of different choices and how women receive social messages about where they should be either at home or at work. Mr. Novikovas offered his opinion stating that quotas had an important role to play at EU level and although the directive discussed earlier was not explicitly about justice, it was an important consideration. This session ended with the chair Ms McDonald asking for a show of hands from the audience in support of quotas. She recorded that quotas had won the day.



## Closing session

### Mr Aodhán Ó Ríordáin T.D., Minister of State for Equality at the Department of Justice and Equality



Minister Aodhán Ó Ríordáin T.D. thanked his staff at the Department of Justice and Equality and Ibec for their work in organizing the event and the European Union for its generous funding. He continued by suggesting that the recent successful referendum on marriage equality in Ireland had created a logic of empowerment that begged the question of what is next?

Referencing the venue of the conference, the Round Room at the Mansion House, he recalled that this was the site where Countess Markievicz the first female elected to the Irish Free State Government had read the Irish proclamation, including the statement that Irish men and women were equal. He lamented that in the time that passed since that day, events had taken place where gender equality had receded as an objective. The Minister then turned to the issue of gender quotas in politics as one which is now accepted. He stated, *“My own party has gotten used to gender quotas internally a long time ago but other political parties now have to grow up and embrace them.”* He then turned to the broadcast media and described how he had often been invited to participate on panels that included no women. One example included an all-male panel discussing the issue of abortion, where, when he drew attention to this imbalance, he had not received a supportive response.

The Minister continued by drawing attention to his experience as a primary school principal in the north inner city of Dublin. This work led him to value the power that female voices in public life hold for young women from disadvantaged backgrounds, young women who suffered double disadvantage due to their gender and social and economic status. He noted that while Ireland has made some progress, other countries have made more considerable progress and that we need targets and quotas to provide fresh impetus. Minister Ó Ríordáin continued by suggesting that gender segregated education also had a role to play in reinforcing gender stereotyping through restricted subject choice that led in the end to children not viewing themselves as equals. As a parental choice this may seem valid but from his perspective gender based schooling did not stand up to scrutiny.

## Ms Mary Rose Burke, Director of Policy and Corporate Affairs, Ibec



Ms Mary Rose Burke, Director of Policy and Corporate Affairs at Ibec provided the final contribution of the closing session. She began by thanking the attendees and acknowledging the sponsorship of Ibec for a “great day but also a frustrating one.”

She continued noting that there was no real evidence of massive change and this

meant there was a need to get people engaged. We know it is essential to work from the evidence that is there and that good ideas can help support the social revolution that is required to see progress on the issues raised. She referred to the contribution of Mr Twomey earlier in the day that the actions of one person at a time were powerful. Ms Burke also drew attention to the comment made by Ms Maitland that powerful men should refuse to go on all male panels and that female colleagues should demand male colleagues also attend diversity fora. The price to be paid for ignoring these issues and ignoring the female consumer base would be high for corporations. It was now time to look to the future.

Referencing again the successful marriage equality referendum she stated “*we can deliver real and meaningful change, we can be leaders on gender equality*”. Mr Twomey’s experience at Dell where he moved through unconscious gender bias training from being a gender supporter to a gender driver was evidence of this. Ms Slattery’s work at Sodexo in securing equal pay commitments should not be revolutionary as legislatively they should be guaranteed. However such equal pay commitments did not always exist in practice and her work was also evidence of the kind of progress that can be made. However, Ms Burke also commented that “*Unless men get out and step up to lead this change from the most senior level it won’t happen*”. She concluded by stating that the assumption that we have a meritocracy was false, that we need to be open to quotas and what happens in the future needs to be different.

---

*The assumption that we have a meritocracy is false; we need to be open to quotas and what happens in the future needs to be different*

---

## *Wrap Up*

The conference moderator, Ms Dearbhail Mc Donald, provided a number of key take-aways from the conference proceedings including:

- The business case is clear but supporting better gender representation on boards is also the right thing to do;
- Data is key as is transparency and accountability;
- Individual stories from unexpected quarters can have a powerful effect in cascading key messages throughout a company, creating change;
- Role models and social media were both key elements as are training and recognising and addressing our unconscious bias in our approach to gender and other forms of diversity.

Ms McDonald concluded that a core message from the day, emphasized by both Minister Ó Ríordáin and Dr Mahony had been the need to instil confidence in young women from the earliest age and the role of family friendly policies in particular around maternity in reversing the paradox of poor levels of female representation on boards. Other central messages included the role of networking and inclusive leadership and the engagement with and participation of men. Ms McDonald then closed the conference on behalf of Ibec and the Department of Justice and Equality thanking the participants and attendees for a fascinating and productive day.

## Key messages

1. The importance of challenging stereotypes, for example in affirming the practice of women supporting other women in political and business life.
2. The power of company research that links bottom line profits with greater female participation and engagement in company leadership.
3. While the business case for gender balance is strong, it is clear that supporting better gender representation on boards is also the right thing to do from the perspective of a better future for all and for a representative society.
4. Data is key. There is a consensus that what matters gets counted and that what gets counted matters and that consumers expect greater transparency and accountability on gender balance in the brands they consume.
5. In order to convince employees and employers of the case for greater gender representation there is a need to complement statistics with stories. Individual stories from unexpected quarters can have a powerful effect in cascading key messages throughout a company, creating change.
6. There was broad agreement of the importance of male and female role models, and of being aware of the gender stereotyping that can accompany measures to support work life balance and family friendly policies. There is a need to ensure that these are seen as supports for parents and not just for mothers.
7. There is a need to focus on inclusive training and of recognising and addressing our unconscious bias in our approach to gender and other forms of diversity.
8. The need to instil confidence in young women from the earliest age, to avoid gender segregation in schooling and avoid perpetuating gender stereotypes in young girls which lead to gender segregation in occupational roles contributing to the persisting gender pay gap and gender pensions gap in later life.
9. The importance of family friendly policies and paternity leave, in particular to support families through the early stages of parenthood and the importance of initiatives to enable flexible forms of transition from maternity leave back into the labour market.
10. Networking has a role to play. The importance of women-only networks and spaces was highlighted. Such networks and gender equality networks open to both male and female participation each have a place.

11. The importance of men advocating and leading change, particularly through inclusive leadership and the engagement of and training of line managers to report progress to supportive male leaders.
12. In countries that had already achieved some momentum and progress on gender balance on company boards, quotas were seen to make a difference. However, for quotas to have a positive impact and for improvements to be sustainable, quotas need to be accompanied by a range of other measures.



Mr Danny McCoy, Ms Dearbhail Mc Donald, Minister Aodhán Ó Ríordáin and Ms Mary Rose Burke



This conference was supported by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity – PROGRESS (2007-2013). This programme is implemented by the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment, social affairs and equal opportunities area, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Europe 2020 Strategy goals in these fields. The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU countries, EFTA-EEA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries. For more information see <http://ec.europa.eu/progress>

**The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission nor the opinion of the Department of Justice and Equality**