



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



‘INVESTING IN TALENT – PROMOTING GENDER BALANCED LEADERSHIP’

Conference REPORT

Authors

Dr. Mary P. Murphy and Dr. Pauline Cullen

**Printworks Conference Centre, Dublin Castle
Tuesday, 25th November 2014**

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

*This conference has been supported by the European Union
Programme PROGRESS (2007-2013)*

INVESTING IN TALENT – PROMOTING GENDER BALANCED LEADERSHIP



Picture: conference speakers with Ministers Fitzgerald and Ó Ríordáin

Contents

Section One: Introduction and Conference Overview p.3

Section Two: The Conference Session by Session

- **Opening Session p. 5**
- **Session 1: 'Return on Investment' p. 7**
- **Keynote speech: "Seven Steps to Building Gender Balanced Businesses" p. 10**
- **Session 2: 'A Level Playing Field' p.14**
- **Session 3: 'Equality Champions' – leading cultural change p. 22**
- **Session 4: 'Winning the War for Talent' p. 26**
- **Closing Session p. 31**

Section Three: Conference Summary, Key Debates and Learning p. 33

‘INVESTING IN TALENT – PROMOTING GENDER BALANCED LEADERSHIP’

Section One: Introduction

Conference Aims and Overview: Why focus on gender balanced leadership?

A conceptual note prepared for the conference by the Gender Equality Division of the Department of Justice and Equality underscored the need to focus on the issue of gender balanced leadership. OECD¹ and European research shows tangible and measurable benefits from better gender-balance including: increased labour productivity; enhanced governance and performance; improved corporate image; higher return on investment; greater ability to attract and retain the best talent; increased workplace innovation; and a reduction in employee turnover. Women account for an important part of the global consumer market and make 70% of the household purchasing decisions in the EU and it is crucial that senior management in companies adequately reflect this consumer base.

Economic growth and sustained business investment requires a diverse and highly skilled workforce. Greater gender balance in senior decision making roles can contribute to this in important ways. The low numbers of women in senior decision-making positions in Ireland represent a vast pool of untapped potential and under-utilisation of talent. In April 2014, women accounted for only 10.5% of the board members of the largest publicly listed companies in Ireland, up only 2.1 percentage points from 2010 whereas, for the EU as a whole, the average share of women on the boards of the largest publicly listed companies had risen by 6.7 percentage points to reach 18.6%. Three in one hundred (3.3%) of the largest listed companies in Europe have a woman CEO (Chief Executive Officer), while in Ireland the figure is around 6%.

Despite efforts to address these issues in the public sector in Ireland, traditionally a key employer of women, the sector remains largely pyramidal with relatively few women compared to men rising to senior positions. More recently there have been a series of positive examples of female appointments to decision making positions traditionally held by men, particularly in the Justice area. The overall trends, however, tell us that women as a highly skilled source of leadership talent and potential are being largely overlooked to the detriment of business performance and the wider economy as a whole. For further details and links to a comprehensive set of electronic resources and reports see the *Concept Note* in the Conference Brochure [here](#).

Europe’s Policy on Gender Balance in Decision-Making Roles

The European Union has committed to a number of initiatives on gender equality including a [Strategy for Equality between Women and Men](#) that represents the European Commission's work programme on gender equality for the period 2010-2015. The [European Pact for Gender Equality for the period 2011 – 2020](#) and the [Women’s Charter](#) adopted in March 2010 also reaffirmed the Commission’s commitment to working to increase the percentage of women in positions of

¹ All references to data can be found in the concept note in the conference brochure [here](#).

responsibility. In March 2011, Commission Vice-President Viviane Reding encouraged publicly listed companies to sign the *"Women on the Board Pledge for Europe"* and to develop self-regulatory initiatives with a view to reaching 30% of women on the boards of publicly listed companies by 2015 and 40% by 2020. With limited progress achieved under this voluntary call for action, in November 2012, the European Commission proposed extending gender equality EU legislation with a [Directive](#) of 40% representation of the under-represented sex in non-executive board positions in publicly listed companies by 2020, and by 2018 for listed public undertakings. Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) would not come under the scope of the proposed Directive. Following strong endorsement by the [European Parliament in November 2013](#), the Commission's proposal is being discussed by the Council of the European Union at Working Party level.

What is Ireland doing?

A number of steps have been taken to address women's under-representation in decision-making in Ireland including commitments in the [Programme for Government 2011- 2016](#) to increase women's participation in political and public life. The [National Women's Strategy 2007 – 2016](#) (NWS), the Government's statement of priorities in relation to the advancement of women in all areas of Irish society, also includes support for the advancement of women into leadership roles. Funding from the European Commission under the [European PROGRESS Programme 2007 - 2013](#) is facilitating the implementation of a number of the key recommendations of the NWS Monitoring Committee report entitled ["Towards Gender parity in Decision-making in Ireland"](#), with a specific focus on increasing the number of women in decision-making roles in both the public and private sectors and on boards. The latter work will include measures such as the development and pilot of a **best practice model of a cross-departmental mentoring and leadership development programme for female Principal Officers in the Civil Service**, the establishment of a **talent bank of women suitably qualified for appointment to State boards**; and an **awareness raising campaign on unconscious gender bias** and its negative impact in decision making, as well as on **the economic and social benefits of gender balance in decision-making positions**. Additionally, a **number of conferences** will be held targeting both the public and private sectors. **This event was the first such conference.**

Conference Aims: Starting the Debate

With generous funding from the European Union under the EU PROGRESS programme (2007-2013), the Gender Equality Division of the Department of Justice and Equality organised this major conference for key decision-makers to encourage debate on the important issue of gender balanced leadership. The conference, organised with the assistance of Ibec, the national employer's organisation, brought together for the first time in Ireland senior personnel from both the public and the private sectors on this subject. The aim of the conference was to raise awareness of the **economic and social benefits** of gender balance in decision-making, and to **share knowledge and best practice of how we can proactively maximise the talent of our well-educated women and support their career advancement into senior decision-making roles to achieve gender balance** in leadership positions. The conference aimed to be a positive event focusing on practical and successful measures for implementing change within organisations and in maximising the human capital contribution of all employees, male and female.

The conference was moderated by Margaret E. Ward – entrepreneur, financial journalist and broadcaster. In 2010, Margaret founded ‘Women on Air’ – a community of like-minded women and men who want to hear more women on the airwaves.

Section Two: The Conference Session by Session

Opening Session



Ms. Barbara Nolan, Minister Frances Fitzgerald T.D. and Mr. Larry Murrin

Ms. Frances Fitzgerald T.D. – Minister for Justice and Equality

Frances Fitzgerald T.D, Minister for Justice and Equality, opened the conference, noting that despite the fact that we have come a long way towards securing gender equality, we still have many challenges to meet today. While women’s educational and employment attainment was positive, getting women into power positions was disappointingly slow.

A commitment to gender balance in decision making was critical because of the missed economic opportunities that accompanied the under-utilisation of talent and untapped potential that occurs when we have low numbers of women in senior decision making positions. However, she noted the progress that has been achieved in enhancing the participation of women on State boards referring to the 40% target and detailing the current progress made with an average of 36% of State board positions being held by women in 2013. The Minister acknowledged this as a success but cautioned that what was now needed was sector by sector analysis to see where more progress could be achieved. This conference marked an opportunity to dig deep, to go into micro detail and to discuss useful tools for achieving gender balance in leadership roles including the establishment of a Talent Bank of women suitably qualified for appointment to State boards.

Organisations such as the Public Appointments Service (PAS), the body responsible in Ireland for recruitment to the Civil Service and the wider Public Sector, and Ibec, the Irish national employer’s organisation, were key partners in achieving progress on the issue in the public and private sectors. The Minister, in addition, stressed that men have a central role to play in these efforts and welcomed this event as a unique opportunity to raise awareness of the business case for gender balanced leadership. She referenced the Government decision announced in July 2014, on the

implementation of new measures to promote gender balance on State boards. She continued outlining how in the Department of Justice and Equality, there will be a piloting of a Talent Bank of women suitably qualified to serve on State boards. This will be developed with the support of the Public Appointments Service. She concluded that ***“we will be asking senior leaders, the majority of whom are men to become gender equality champions and to actively support and promote cultural change within their organisations that facilitates all employees reaching their full potential”***.

Mr. Larry Murrin – Ibec President

Mr. Murrin began by pointing out that although progress has been made on the issue of women’s participation in senior decision making roles; greater gender balance in organisations remains an issue. Addressing gender imbalance is now of strategic importance rather than simply a rights or equality issue. An example of progress, he suggested, could be found in his own company in the food industry, where 14 out of 30 senior decision makers were women. Mr. Murrin commented that he would encourage more of his male colleagues to attend events such as this and he underlined that it makes sense to focus on this issue in statistical terms. He continued citing evidence that women’s participation in the economy has the potential, according to Goldman Sachs, to boost the Euro zone GDP by 13%.

Mr. Murrin also detailed how there has been important legislative change to remove explicit discrimination but that we now also needed to change the mind set and culture in organisations. However, there was no silver bullet or one size fits all solution. Instead strong CEO leadership and a corporate culture that supports gender balance, addresses unconscious stereotypes and gender bias was needed to harness the talent of this underutilized population. Mr. Murrin concluded that he hoped this event would help us towards decisive action to raise the bar and achieve success on achieving greater gender balance in economic decision making.

Mr. Murrin stressed that promoting gender balance in senior leadership positions would be a priority for his Ibec Presidency and that he would be communicating this to Ibec members and encouraging action and progress on gender balanced leadership

Ms. Barbara Nolan – Head of the European Commission Representation in Ireland

Ms. Nolan began by stating how the European Commission was delighted to support this event as the EU had been instrumental in promoting gender balance in all walks of life for over 60 years. This was evidenced by a combined body of legislation in the shape of 13 Directives adopted since 1975 that had led to a new reality for men and women in Member States. A step by step approach through multiannual strategies, the most recent from 2010- 2015, that outlines the key actions planned for this period; acts a basis for the cooperation between the Commission and the other European institutions, Member States and other stakeholders, as part of the European Pact for equality between women and men. Its aims include progress on the economic independence of

women, equal pay, equality in decision making and an end to gender based violence.² This strategy alongside other EU commitments on gender equality are essential to, collecting important data to address the challenges and to promote opportunities to reconcile the gaps that still exist. Ms. Nolan commented that, across Europe 60% of college graduates were women but that 81% of board members were men. Nowadays women, she commented, have a choice. They can have a family and a career. She welcomed that Minister Fitzgerald and Ibec were taking the issue seriously.

Ms. Nolan then detailed the history of the EU Commission proposal for a directive on women on boards, explaining the process through which the then EU Commissioner Viviane Reding moved from a voluntary pledge towards proposing legislation in November 2012 that looked for a 40% target for non-executive members of boards in large publicly listed companies by 2020. The proposed directive is an example of a transparent and merit based target that would create clearer criteria and avoid rigid numerical quotas. She concluded by highlighting the success, where a quota law was established in France in 2011 that saw an increase of 18% in women in senior roles in the top 40 listed companies. She made comment on Ireland's poor relative performance in this regard citing the April 2014 EU data base ranking that places Ireland 20 out of 28 across the EU for gender balance in listed companies.³⁴

Session One: 'Return on Investment': realising the benefits of gender balance in decision-making

Mr. Niall Burgess – Secretary General, D/Foreign Affairs and Trade (D/FAT)



Mr Burgess detailed the unique profile of his Department with its diverse range of operations including Irish consulates, immigrant support programmes, development aid, and service provision for passport and travel documentation. He stressed his Department was in the business of communication and projecting an image and particular vision of Ireland. He outlined the importance of communicating the values of Ireland and the need to mirror the values we represent. This means realising the potential of people and enabling staff to function to their full potential. He emphasised the significant achievement of some notable women in the Department (including the remarkable career of Josephine McNeill, Ireland's first female diplomat to be appointed in a ministerial capacity to represent the Irish State abroad who was appointed Irish ambassador to the Netherlands in 1950).

Mr. Aongus Hegarty and Mr. Niall Burgess

²europa.eu/legislation_summaries/employment_and_social_policy/equality_between_men_and_women/em0037_en.htm

³<http://www.goldmansachs.com/our-thinking/outlook/womenomics4-folder/womenomics4-time-to-walk-the-talk.pdf>

⁴http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/business-finance/supervisory-board-board-directors/index_en.htm

However, he then noted poor historical gender balance in senior roles in his Department. In particular, he observed how the marriage bar⁵ in the public service had traditionally ensured that women played a minor role in the Department. In recognition of the Departments' significant gender imbalance, a 2011 initiative led by the former Secretary General made gender balance a priority.

This process focused on enabling staff to take a joint lead, and generated key learning and understanding about the difficulties in achieving work life balance in the Department, how career breaks had a negative impact on career progression and the role of unconscious bias in shaping the poor record of women attaining senior roles. He detailed some unintended but welcome impacts of these initiatives including more openness and frankness in discussion in the Department, more consciousness about bias, and the availability of more experience around the table. In the end, this resulted in better outcomes and a better working environment for all.

He outlined a number of important interim steps which, inter alia, included, conducting a gender equality evaluation/audit of the Department, expanding the senior management team, adding additional female members into the Management Advisory Committee (MAC); appointing women to a diverse range of 'feeder posts' that could enable them to gain sufficient experience to access more senior roles; establishing an active gender network; and promoting unconscious bias training. Mr. Burgess stressed the need to appoint women to diversified management roles. He noted three key positions in the service in Northern Ireland are held by women as are 22 Heads of Mission posts overseas. These positions include senior posts and those in challenging contexts such as Sierra Leone. Mr. Burgess highlighted that greater diversity in senior decision making roles led to a better working environment for all and in particular for those wishing for greater work life balance. In sum, he reiterated that these efforts took time and involved interim steps that created pipelines or a supply of good candidates supported in developing the skills and experience as well as initiatives to change the broader organisational culture. Mr. Burgess concluded with a call to consider the wider issue of diversity and challenged all senior management and decision makers in the public service to develop a public service that represents our society.

Mr. Aongus Hegarty – Dell EMEA President

Mr. Hegarty's contribution to the event emphasised, how in his experience with Dell diversity and inclusion in all respects was good for business performance and outcomes. In his own employment history at the Dell, he detailed how when placed in a leadership role he found that although his team had a wide cultural spread, there was only one woman in a senior role. Gender diversity is then a key element in allowing for a leverage of expertise. In practical terms Mr. Hegarty gave an account of how Dell uses employee engagement networks to gauge consumer sentiment, this works particularly well when these networks are diverse as they provide a reflection of the real marketplace.

He acknowledged the reality that the majority of senior leadership positions are held by men and that this needs to change beginning at the top and engaging men directly. Michael Dell has been

⁵ Up to 1972 the marriage bar required female civil and public servants to resign their position when married.

instrumental in this regard, supporting programmes like [MARC](#)⁶ 'Men Advocating Real Change'. Mr. Hegarty detailed that a commitment to gender diversity can exist in statements and in metrics but it only works if we take action, to be a role model, to educate and to make sure in all things you do there is a diversity lens. Constituting interview panels that are diverse is instrumental to achieving these goals. Through all of these efforts Dell has ensured that 30% of the senior leadership team are women. In the future they will aim to reach a target of 50%. He concluded that *"a business challenge leads to a leadership challenge and that we at Dell encourage you all to take it on board"*. As Mr Hegarty observed:

In the information technology industry a diverse and inclusive team is the best guarantee of innovation, better design, creativity and good outcomes for business.

Question time

Mr. Hegarty was asked for a specific example of how Dell increased the presence of women to 30% representation on the leadership team. Mr. Hegarty replied that this came about by working across areas, by educating himself and by connecting with women in organisations that were leaders, spending time with them at events and also consulting externally with leaders from companies who had good practices. Key elements included when recognising that mistakes were made, and correcting them and being proactive in encouraging specific women to apply when candidate lists were dominated by men. Fundamentally there was no single bullet and no simple solution, rather many elements that are worked across different areas.

A further question asked how to bring people along who are distrustful to secure more gender balance. Mr. Hegarty responded that while the answer was not simple the key lies in communicating that this is something that brings benefits for all people. He continued by suggesting that executive sponsors and males leadership in the employer network groups played an important part of Dell strategy.

Mistakes in the past included not presenting enough diversity to the organisation through the process of channelling potential candidates towards the promotional opportunities or 'pipelining candidates'. He commented that although the first attempts to appoint women had been difficult, over time, it had created a momentum. Finally, subsequent successes had helped to develop an understanding of the benefits of gender diversity to the organisation.

Mr. Burgess also responded suggesting that work life balance for all was a key objective when addressing issues of gender representation in the public service. He acknowledged that this was not recognised in the past and mistakes had been made in this regard.

⁶ Men Advocating Real Change (MARC) is an online community for men committed to achieving gender equality in the workplace. MARC is an initiative of [Catalyst](#).

A participant from the audience focused on care work and suggested that the statistics on women in leadership roles would not improve dramatically unless men ‘lean out’⁷ and take on additional caring responsibilities. In his response, Mr Hegarty stressed the ‘connected workplace’ programme at the Dell was open to all employees and facilitated work from home. Mr Burgess responded suggesting that in his Department, overseas assignments can be difficult for couples when one is required to ‘lean out’. He highlighted efforts now being taken to ease the transition in and out of overseas assignments. He added staff deployment and promotion is complex as you need to develop a range of skills and talents. It is essential to provide women with management experience, as well as overseas experience, however, in reality this is a complex balancing act.

Finally both panellists were asked to elaborate on the content and processes associated with unconscious bias training.

Mr Hegarty outlined how it is imperative to roll these initiatives out to management teams. Mr Burgess concluded by describing the value of unconscious bias training in public service promotion panels as *“being made aware of your own personality type so that you can check yourself when you meet other different personalities... it equips you to be thoughtful and deliberate in your decision making.”*

Keynote speech – “Seven Steps to Building Gender Balanced Businesses”



Ms. Avivah Wittenberg-Cox, CEO of 20-first Consulting – Building Gender-Balanced Businesses, delivered the keynote address to the conference and provided an overview of why better gender balance matters to companies and how companies can create better balance. She began with the statement that ***“The fact that 60% of global graduates are now female means that true meritocracies cannot justify the promotion of men in such unbalanced numbers”***.

Ms. Avivah Wittenberg-Cox

⁷ The phrase ‘lean in’ was popularised in [Sheryl Sandberg’s](#) 2013 book [Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead](#) where she argued women had to step up to corporate management roles. ‘Lean out’ as used here asks men to step into domestic and care roles.

Ms. Wittenberg-Cox welcomed the focus of the conference as in her view an emphasis on gender balance was now more appropriate than the language of women in business. She posed three simple questions that were imperative to answer:

Why gender balance matters?

How much it matters?

Who does it matter to?

WHY? Ms. Wittenberg-Cox argued that four 21st century discontinuities are crucial to understanding change and the future challenges for business: *web* (information technology), *weather* (climate change), *world* (globalisation), and *women*. The massive arrival of women into the world labour markets and consumer markets has created huge opportunities, a peaceful revolution and a massive redistribution of power. The degree of change has been unprecedented. Young women are now very different to previous generations of women and understanding this is key to understanding why gender balance is essential for business.

She continued by arguing that while fairness and ethics may be a motivating force for some individuals and corporations not much progress has been made using such arguments. Instead business arguments that gender balance impacts on leadership, talents, markets and innovation had proven to be much more powerful motivators.

She provided the example of the car market, outlining how women are involved in 66% of car purchases, but that car design innovation did not take women's needs into account as exemplified in the absence of a place for women's purses in most vehicles. On a broader scale, she commented how the Chinese and Indian markets, were now often viewed as the most important marketplaces globally but that in reality they are surpassed by female markets or what she referred to as the '**power of the purse**'. Companies needed to broaden their vision to become 'gender bilingual' or in other words be able to speak to both genders equally, as successful product design and innovation has managed to do in for example the case of the iphone. **The rise in the percentage of highly educated women also challenges the concept of meritocracy.**

She challenged the audience to understand the differences between genders and argued that what is needed **is not unconscious bias training but real gender awareness training**. This can enable a real appreciation of difference as well as the capacity to realise fake or stereotypical differences between men and women. Ms. Wittenberg-Cox referred to the work of Phillipa Roberts and Jane Cunningham to illustrate how the world of advertising understands gender differences and gender attributes with typical male and female attributes⁸

⁸ Male attributes included; belief in the 'machine', self-centred, improving the formula, being expert and impressive.
Female attributes included: belief in people, 'other' focused, reading the audience, and mirroring

Ms. Wittenberg-Cox continued by stressing the danger of the CEO assuming that because he/she is invested in greater gender balance that this will mean that their team will also prioritise this objective. The challenge from her perspective was to get senior executives to align on why gender balance in decision making matters. When this is achieved it is only then that one can ascertain whether there is sufficient understanding to get skilled people to lead and move towards the how and therefore implement policy to achieve change. In her experience most companies seek solutions and tend to skip the why it matters to pursue this goal in the first place. The bottom line is that **“we need to know and educate ourselves about the why or the how will not work”**.

Ms. Wittenberg-Cox acknowledged that although progress had been made, in reality the issue of ‘glass ceilings or ‘invisible barriers’ for women’s advancement were the minor problem. In her view the term “gender asbestos”, denoting a form of toxic element present in the structures of buildings, was better matched to describe how men and women have a 50/50 entry rate but that men are 80% of the leaders in senior decision making contexts. She detailed how the decline in women’s advancement began at the initial levels of promotion. The pipeline or channel towards senior posts was simply not flowing to the top levels of organisations. Ms. Wittenberg-Cox detailed a specific strategy which established an **annual gender balance score card** that can be used to facilitate companies to see where they are relative to others and to enable external benchmarking against other organisations. There was also a role, she argued, for comparative scorecards within and across multinational companies that can also highlight progress made and the challenges ahead.

HOW? Ms. Wittenberg-Cox continued outlining the routes towards achievement in this area arguing that most traditional approaches do not work and that **strategy needs to stop focusing on fixing women**. Indeed strategies focused on women are better practised outside the firm in external networks as internal company “women only” strategies can ghettoise women. She argued that a second strategy is to **reject the alignment of gender with diversity**; gender balance is not about diversity it is simply about gender balance. Rather the **debate needs to be reframed as a leadership issue and moved from human resources to business areas. The debate, she argued, should be aligned with CEO led strategic management goals like innovation and be included within senior management performance targets**. She stressed the crucial role played by the tactical use of data and the expertise to understand when and how to wield it for the greatest effect.

Tactical data is our best friend; we need to learn how to wield it

She stressed that leadership should not be punished in the public domain for mistakes around gender balance as this can lead to other male leaders becoming dissuaded. Rather **the challenge is to educate leaders and help them to reframe the debate as the ‘how’ starts at the top with top leadership providing an example of ‘walking the walk’ and leading other male leaders towards gender balanced teams**. While she argues targets or quotas are useful she stressed the need to be aware of the fact that quotas can sometimes be met by parachuting in non-executive directors instead of building up the pipeline or channel of available and qualified executive female directors.

Remove the focus on women; rather place the emphasis on the business case for gender balance and on the majority of employees and employers.

Endeavour to ensure that “managers get it, buy it, and sell it”

Ms. Wittenberg-Cox stressed that central to gender balanced leadership is the concept of 'bilingual talent management.' This is not simply about promoting women but about building balance in a way that requires **defining gender balance in gender neutral terms**. This can only be accomplished if accompanied **with a clear data strategy to measure the degree of progress towards this balance**. Ms. Wittenberg-Cox concluded by reinforcing the need for a long-term view to understand the nature of change that business is experiencing.

Question time

Questions focused on the challenges of redesigning structures, persuading people and implementing change. Ms. Wittenberg-Cox advised that it was important to refuse to accept unconscious bias training for middle management only, and to avoid 'off the shelf' or generic modules. She advised *“ask some hard questions and get to the senior leaders and ensure they also do training”*. Ms. Wittenberg-Cox continued stating that the unwritten rules of the game and company culture are much stronger than training programmes. **Unconscious bias training was most useful when it made its way into the senior executive team**. There also needed to be sufficient data to benchmark externally on what others were doing. She argued unconscious bias training can also deny real differences between men and women. Accommodating difference requires systemic change as the career cycles of men and women are not the same. Fundamentally there was a need for more flexibility in how corporations operated if both parents are to have an opportunity for 'hands on' parenting.

Questions were also asked about the career cycles of men and women, who diverge in the 30-35 age group career development phase as women become more engaged in parenting. Ms. Wittenberg-Cox suggested that there is now more awareness that women's progression is different and that companies have to respond to different pipeline or progression strategies.

Responding to a request for an example of a CEO managing to bring reluctant senior management on board, Ms. Wittenberg-Cox commented that in her experience most senior executive boards comprised one third 'progressives' committed to the objective, one third 'patients' who did not object but would not be proactive in achieving change, and one third 'plodders' who objected to measures aimed at addressing gender imbalance. She advised working on these issues at an appropriate, quiet and delicate pace, and to focus on 'progressives' who bring 'patients' along and not to worry about 'plodders' or reactionaries who will come along eventually or get left behind. **Language can be helpful in this regard, in helping to avoid backlash, by focusing on talent and customers and speaking in gender neutral or gender bilingual terms.**

In response to questions about particular challenges in the technological industries she stressed that women need to join internal networks and demand transparent and accountable benchmarking. If women are isolated within firms then they should organise and lobby in a smart and tactical manner through external gender networks. The bottom line in her view was to **ask for transparency in companies**.

Session Three: 'A Level Playing Field' – implementing change at organisational level



Ms. Bernice O Driscoll, Ms. Fiona Tierney, Mr. Mark Ryan, Ms. Avivah Wittenberg-Cox and Dr. Deirdre A. Anderson

Ms. Pamela Jeffery – founder Women's Executive Network (WXN) and the Canadian Board Diversity Council

Ms. Jeffery opened her remarks by outlining the work of her organisation the Women's Executive Network (WXN) established in 1998 in Canada with now over 20,000 women executive members. A branch of the organisation was opened in Ireland in 2008, and there is a current membership of 2,000. Ms. Jeffery told the participants that when she finished her Masters Degree in Business 26 years ago there were few women in senior executive roles. It was at that time that she decided to establish the WXN and has since become a member of the Canadian Board Diversity Council, an organisation dedicated to increasing diversity in corporations. The Canadian federal government was convinced that increasing diversity in senior economic decision making roles was an important economic issue and the failure to address these issues had resulted in lost opportunities to increase the success of Canadian businesses.



In 2008 there were 10% of senior executive positions held by women. As a result of the work of her organisation and the Canadian Board Diversity Council five years later they had achieved 17.1% with an expected rise to 25% by 2015. The strategies used to secure this level of progress included the collection of data derived in part from repeated surveying of every corporate director on their attitudes towards diversity and the extent diversity was a strategic priority in their respective organisations. The next step involved a series of roundtables reaching almost half of all top companies. These events she described as “*where open and frank debates were held and CEOs aired their fears of taking new people onto their boards*”. Notably, the survey is repeated annually and has illustrated a change in attitudes without risking a backlash from leaders.

Other initiatives included training 50 potential leaders from diverse backgrounds to be ‘**leadership ready**’ and constructing a database with searchable fields to enable identification of potential diversity candidates. This programme has resulted in 12 appointments from the database to senior roles in the past three years. A central element of these achievements was the recruitment of 12 progressive CEOs who signed up to targets that made specific sense for their companies. These CEOs then acted as role models for the argument that gender diversity made for better candidates and ultimately an increase in shareholder value. Ms. Jeffery stressed that for change to occur the talent pool must be made visible. She congratulated the Irish branch of WXN for creating an awards process to champion and make visible women who are outstanding leaders who had demonstrated their credentials, experience and capacity to add value to their organisations.

Ms. Bernice O’Driscoll – Senior HR Business Partner, Operations and Technology, Citi

Ms. O’Driscoll, began her contribution outlining how at Citi 46% of employees are female but that this was not reflected in the gender composition of leadership teams. She continued detailing two specific programmes that Citi had initiated to deal with this challenge. ‘Coaching for success’, a programme for emerging female talent, aiming to improve retention and increase promotion and internal mobility among participants, and therefore strategic development of greater gender balance; and the ‘Women’s Leadership development programme’, a New York based initiative to help female talent better manage their career development and advancement as leaders, which had proved being particularly helpful to women in taking on new roles. Despite investing in such supports, Ms. O’ Driscoll acknowledged that the company realised that it needed to do more to encourage gender diversity.

In 2010, Citi developed unconscious bias training for senior leaders, middle managers and employees. These strategies are detailed in Figure 1 below and underpin Citi’s approach to this training. This was followed, in 2012, with training on stereotypes and perceptions to see how these processes shaped team building culture. In 2014, an inclusive leadership scheme was launched that profiled role models in the organisation to challenge aspects of practice at Citi that was incompatible with the organisations’ diversity agenda. She concluded *that “**Inclusive leaders get the best out of all their people, helping their organisations to succeed in today’s complex, diverse national and global environment. By building strong relationships and diverse teams, inclusive leaders are able to increase productivity, performance, innovation and engagement with staff and customers.**”*

Fig 1. How to deal with unconscious bias in the work place (Bernice O Driscoll)

1. Recognize that you have biases and understand that it is absolutely normal to be biased.
2. Identify what your biases are (some can be positive and some can be negative). We are all biased and becoming aware of our own biases will help us mitigate them in the workplace.
3. Dissect your biases: Explore the significance and unconscious effect of early messages you received as you grew up about different people, e.g. men, women, gender, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, religions, etc.
4. Decide which biases you will address first. Review every aspect of the employment life cycle for hidden bias – screening resumes, interviews, on boarding, assignment process, mentoring programs, performance evaluation, identifying high performers, promotion and termination.
5. Support projects that encourage positive images of persons of colour, GLBT and women. Distribute stories and pictures widely that portray stereotype-busting images – posters, newsletters, annual reports, speaker series, podcasts. Many studies show that the mere positive image of specific groups of people can combat our hidden bias.
6. Identify, support and collaborate with effective programs that increase diversity in the pipeline. Reward employees who volunteer with these groups, create internships and other bridges, and celebrate the stories of those who successfully overcome obstacles.
7. Lead by example - the behaviour of leaders is by far the biggest influence on how others will behave and, therefore, a critical driver of the change to a more inclusive culture.

Mr. Mark Ryan – (former) Managing Director, Accenture Ireland

Mr. Ryan had responsibility for increasing gender diversity at Accenture, a corporation where 1600 people are employed in Ireland with most employees hired directly from college. Although Accenture hired an even split of 50% men and women, the attrition rate for female employees was 2.5 times greater than that of male employees.

Mr. Ryan commented that *“we have invested in them and then we were losing them, we wanted to analyse it, we ran workshops and did the analysis and we found that men were surprised that many women didn’t see long-term career prospects at Accenture”*. The bottom line was that many women did not see the company as a good fit for having a family, that promotion decisions were shaped by unconscious bias, and that there were no role models for younger women of women in senior roles that had families and careers.

Mr. Ryan detailed a number of initiatives aimed at addressing these issues. These included an internal women careers network that supports, coaches and encourages women from graduates to more senior employees to talk about their concerns; and an awareness campaign that also involved

men “to get them to see what women felt and the way they see them”. The main objectives of these programmes were to encourage women to seek senior positions. The central element in the success of these efforts was the support of the senior management team. The result, Mr. Ryan suggested, was an incredible flow of female talent into the senior levels of the organisation and an increase in the role models available for younger women. These developments in turn created momentum for further changes. These initial programmes have been extended and there are now also strong supports in place for women returning from maternity leave.

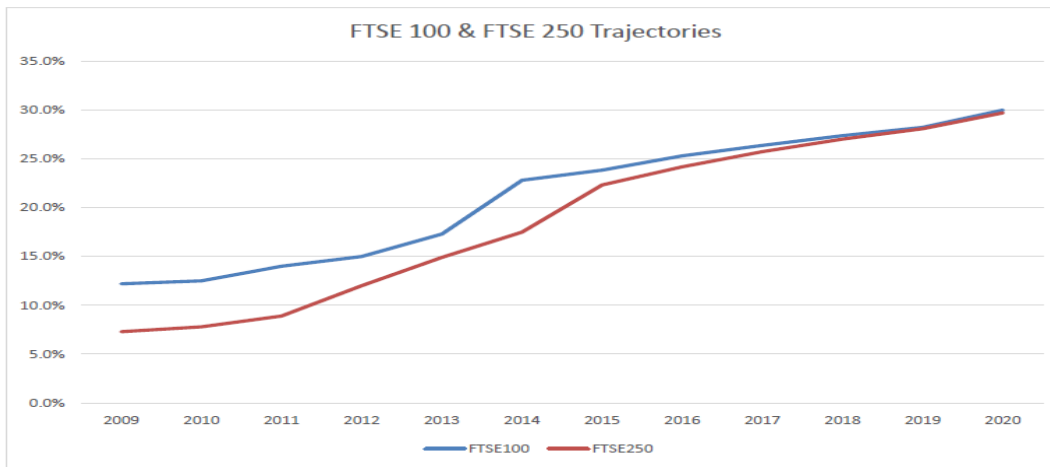
The end result is that **in Ireland over 40% of senior executives at Accenture are female and in the last round of promotions at the senior level 4 out of 5 positions were awarded to women, one of whom had just returned from maternity leave.** In concluding, Mr. Ryan stressed that men are crucial to achieve this level of transformational change.

men are crucial to achieve this level of transformational change

Dr. Deirdre A. Anderson – International Centre for Women Leaders, Cranfield School of Management, Cranfield University

Dr. Anderson began her input detailing how Cranfield University had been monitoring women on boards in the United Kingdom (UK) since 1993. She referred to [Lord Davies](#)' challenge to UK companies in 2010 to increase women on boards (as did Ms. Reardon-Bond in Session 5). Lord Davies was the political sponsor of a voluntary business led approach which led to adoption of a 25% target for the FTSE 100 and which stressed the importance of transparent and accountable periodic reporting. As Fig 2 below shows in 2004, FTSE 100 female representation was 9% and this had risen to only 12.5% by 2011. Following Lord Davies Women on boards review published in February 2011, and with business and academia on board, the above referred female representation has risen to 21% in 2014, and it is projected that a 25% target for 2015 will be attained. There is now no male only board in FTSE 100 in the UK. The slogan behind this successful campaign was 'think, act, report' and while a difficult journey with only 10 companies on board in the early days it now has 260 companies representing a 2.5 million workforce.

Fig 2. UK progress in gender balance and projected UK 25% target in 2015 for FTSE 100



The recommendations sponsored by Lord Davies allowed an assessment of progress, but also highlighted that at the executive level the situation remained stagnant. The Lord Davies requirement to report progress did increase awareness and promote good practice and also allowed for the setting of measurable objectives to invest in diversifying the pipeline. The **central issue** for Dr. Anderson was that of **transparency**. Interestingly she detailed how when the data was made available it revealed that the percentage of women in the workforce in senior roles in traditional male dominated industries compared favourably with women in the workforce more generally.

Aside from these steps, Cranfield University also researched the issue of the pipeline⁹ employing qualitative methods to interview organisations about their approach to talent management. She stressed the extent to which the traits associated with talent and leadership were male constructs. In her view **progress can be achieved with cultural change and moving beyond the stereotypes**. According to Dr Andersen companies that are doing well are working to figure out what potential means and are using targets and gender metrics to identify leaks in the pipeline. Crucially Dr. Anderson emphasised that **gender balance in decision making required tackling unconscious bias across all business processes not just in recruitment and promotion**. She concluded that what was required for significant change was a holistic approach to management, with corporations committed to quotas that would allow for 1 in 3 appointments to directorships be given to a female. In addition all companies should commit to a 25% target for senior roles and continued measurement, monitoring, reporting and engagement in proactive succession planning.

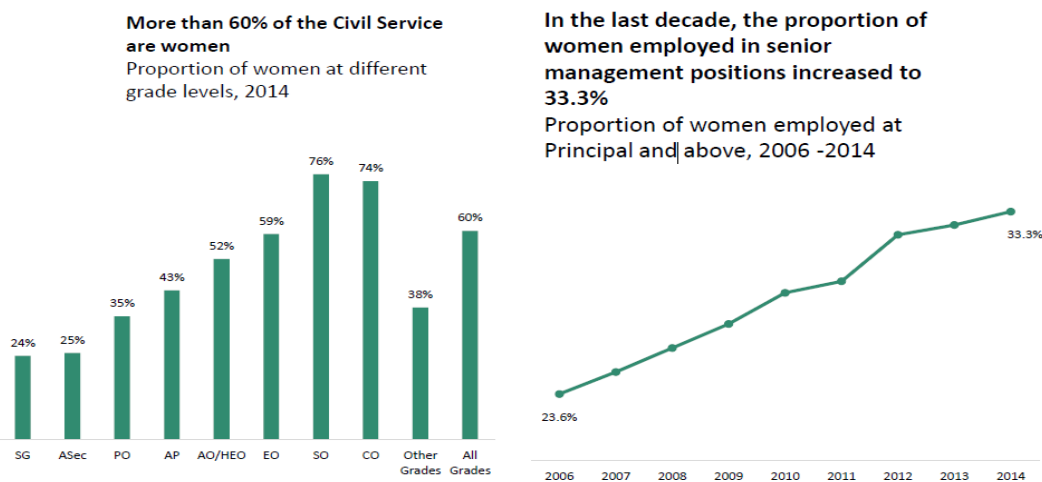
⁹ The pipeline theory suggests that increasing the number of women in male-dominated fields should lead to more equality in the labour market.

Ms. Fiona Tierney – CEO, Public Appointments Service

Ms. Tierney offered a series of statistics in her opening remarks aimed at illustrating the breadth and scope of employment offered by the public service in Ireland. The Civil Service employs 35,000 people across 17 Government Departments aimed at delivering 53 billion euro worth of services. Fig 3 below records good progress in the last decade but also shows that overall women comprise 33% of the senior management and 60% of the overall staff.

Fig 3. Women 33% of the senior management and 60% of overall staff

60% of staff, but only 33% of senior managers in the Civil Service are women



She acknowledged that a moratorium on filling all but essential vacancies, enacted as part of austerity measures in response to the financial crisis in 2008, had implications for progress on gender balance. Any progress that had been made was as a result of open, fair, transparent, merit based recruitment and proactive family friendly policies. Ms. Tierney was of the view that other austerity related measures including salary cuts, pension related deductions and public criticism of senior public servants in Irish society had contributed to a reluctance by women to compete for senior roles. This was disappointing as in the current context there were significant supports available including mentoring, coaching and educational opportunities for women throughout their career in the public service.

Commenting on the performance of female candidates for senior public service positions Ms. Tierney referred to Fig 4 overleaf from the Public Accounts Committee annual report. This figure illustrates the gender breakdown of applications for Top Level Appointments received in the public appointments system. This data indicates that **1 in 4 applicants were female; however, when they proceeded from the application stage females outperformed males receiving 40% of the final appointments**, see Fig 5. For Ms. Tierney **there is a crucial need for a championing of role models, an investment in best practice in recruitment and promotion policies and a general commitment as part of civil service renewal to encourage talented women to apply for senior roles.**

Fig 4. Applications received for the most senior roles (by gender)

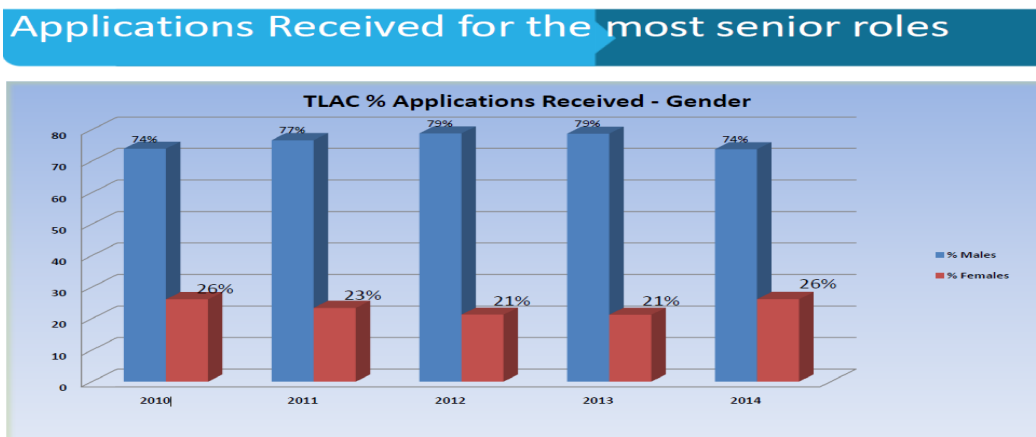
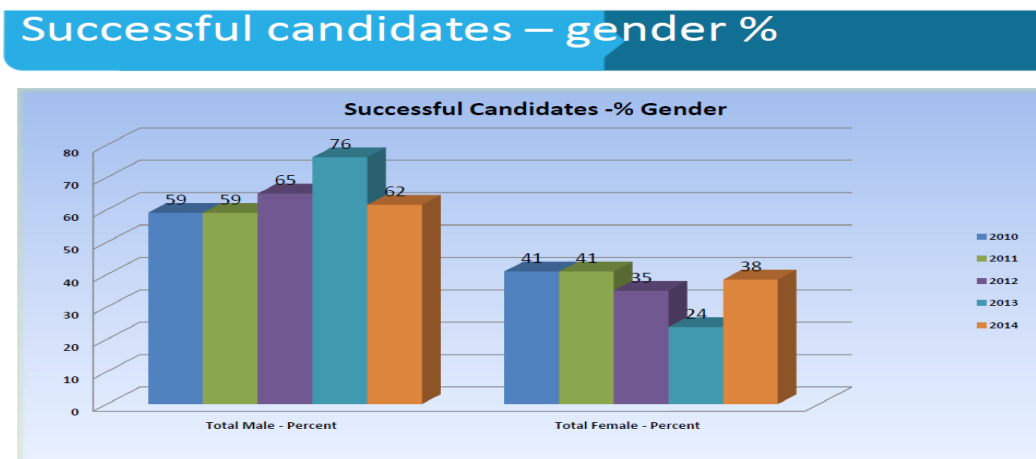


Fig 5. Women 40% of successful senior PAC recruits



Question time

Ms. Wittenberg-Cox was asked what metrics or data should be collected to advance gender balance. Ms. Wittenberg-Cox responded that she would like people to stop measuring just the percentage of women and rather collect and make public data on men and women. This data should not just capture the top tiers of management but also three levels of managerial posts below that of the CEO positions. This is key in getting men involved in the debate.

A question posed to Mr. Ryan asked how he dealt with any backlash to his initiatives. He responded that there were *'what about us?'* responses but that the most effective strategy was to show data, and make the case for lost talent and that in the end the arguments against gender balance faded away. He noted that some women were uncomfortable with an internal women's network but in his organisation they could pick and choose what they got involved in and these networks were central to getting women advanced.

In response to a question about the efficacy of quotas or targets, Mr. Ryan responded that they did not use quotas as they did not want to cast aspersions on how meritocracy was working for them, but acknowledged nonetheless “*we had to address the attrition rate as we needed to get the right numbers promoted.*”

Mr. Ryan also answered a question on the impact of maternity leave. He explained that Accenture policy enables a person performing at a certain level over a number of years to get promoted. However, gaps in the career path as a result of child rearing had to be accommodated along with support in transitioning from maternity leave. For the latter, a buddy system had been instituted at Accenture to provide role models to help with the transition back from maternity leave.

Dr. Anderson was asked to detail what, in practical terms, she felt needed to happen for change to be brought about. She replied that, from her perspective, change was about going out to work in organisations and talking to people about the need to achieve cultural change in working practices like long hours. It meant examining how organisational processes are gendered and how processes impact one gender differently from another.

Ms. Wittenberg- Cox was pressed to address ‘in real terms how do we bring about change’, should we focus on the majority or rely on women themselves to push for greater gender balance? She responded stating that “*Women are already leaning in and there were generations of successful women, but while women hold the keys to gender balance men still hold the locks.*” The talent is already available, leaders are imperative. Women themselves need to lobby and call companies to account in monetary terms using their ‘mouths and purses’. In other words, women can choose to work in and support through consumption the companies who do best on gender balance.

The final question asked about implementing changes in different sectors. All contributors agreed there is a shift in the technology sector albeit different companies were at different stages in their progress on gender balance. What is key is sharing best practice. Ms. Wittenberg-Cox concluded the question and answer session commenting that it was our duty as consumers and employees to compare companies and state policy on their record on gender equality and to make our decisions based on this information.

Session Four 'Equality Champions' – leading cultural change



Mr. Mark McLane, Ms. Joesphine Feehily, Ms. Margaret E Ward, Mr. Stephen Frost and Commandant Jayne Lawlor

Commandant Jayne Lawlor – Personnel Support Services, Gender, Equality and Diversity Officer in the Irish Defence Forces

Commandant Lawlor began by detailing her appointment in 2012 to a new office seeking to address gender balance in the Irish Defence Forces. Up to the 1980's, women were barred from tactical training, and required to enrol in dress and comportment courses. A gradual evolution between 1980 and 1995, witnessed women assuming a number of different roles and after 1995 a cultural change was clear when all appointments were opened up to females. Currently there are 562 women in the defence forces (6.2% of the overall force). Commandant Lawlor noted that the organisation is a hierarchical one, however, in some ways this has helped enforce change. A fundamental fault line for progress has been the position of women serving overseas. The organisation needed to change and allow women with children to be promoted, and a requirement of promotion includes overseas mission experience. Research suggests that gender balance in the military improves mission force protection. Nordic teams in Afghanistan have women in their teams and their engagement in communities with Muslim women enables intelligence gathering to locate explosives and improve safety.

A key initiative that Commandant Lawlor has championed is educating young women about the diverse career options available in the defence forces, through school visits and social media. She outlined the pressures that ensured that women leave the defence forces. To address these pressures she argued for initiatives including job sharing for overseas posts that would limit tours to 3 months rather than 6 months duration. She also indicated how further education was crucial to advancement and argued for the possibility of modularised master degree programmes rather than residential based options. Working with input from female soldiers had already resulted in new maternity policies around breastfeeding (officers are not deployed overseas until a child is 2 years old and women are excused from fitness tests until one year after birth). These initiatives were only possible with support from the general staff at senior levels and driven by the post 1995 generation of female soldiers.

Mr. Stephen Frost – UK Head of Diversity & Inclusion, KPMG LLP

Mr. Frost emphasised how the trilogy of understanding, leadership and delivery underpin the diversity agenda at KPMG. For Mr. Frost understanding diversity is key. He provided examples from his own leadership and management education and training of how women's inclusive leadership style recognises teamwork and cooperation and produces results that can also advance our own self-interest. He stressed in particular how the business case for gender balance was clear when leaders referred to the issue of diversity as a way to 'grow the pie'. Mr Frost stressed that leadership is a key element for KPMG with CEO Simon Collins making public statements on gender equality that had important resonance across the company and with partners. He **stressed the need to lead from the heart on gender equality in commercial business and for male leaders to take personal responsibility to talk about personal issues as a way of promoting cultural change.** The third plank, **delivery**, was **also essential, firm deadlines force some interesting tactical responses.** Behavioural economics shows we choose diversity in bundles but homogeneity by single selection. From his perspective, *"diversity is the reality and inclusion is a choice"*.

Mr. Frost gave a very practical example of changing the outcomes of recruitment through the use of group interviews. This allows a more diverse group of candidates and ensures a more diverse selection outcome and is a simple but effective way to achieve more diversity in the workforce selection. He gave the inspirational example of Emily Pankhurst the suffragette activist whom he reminded us was jailed nine times and force fed 49 times in pursuit of her goal of gender equality. Referencing her sacrifice he stated *"leadership requires deeds not words"*.

"diversity is the reality, inclusion is a choice"

"leadership requires deeds not words"

Ms. Josephine Feehily – Chairman of the Irish Revenue Commissioners

Ms. Josephine Feehily, Chairman of the Revenue Commissioners and newly appointed chair of the Policing Authority described how historically the Revenue Commissioners was a late starter in developing gender balanced recruitment policy. She recounted then some of the strategies used to develop a more gender balanced Revenue Commissioners. The challenge of making gender balance 'discussable', was achieved in the *Delivering Better Government programme* (1996) which made the business argument for gender equality in the Irish Civil Service. Advancing gender equality in the Civil Service required an understanding of women's trajectory from the mid ranking Executive Officer Civil Service grade where women comprised 50% of recruitment. She detailed how new policy and an action plan in 2001, consciously adopted targets and affirmative action with an goal to achieve 33% women at Assistant Principal grade within five years. This occasioned a backlash from senior management and even trade unions who did not want to move too far from the status quo. However, one senior leader was instrumental arguing ***"I want targets and I wanted to be haunted by them."*** Ms. Feehily advised that top management backlash is a problem that will take care of itself, women need to apply and ignore the reality that the management cohort is all men.

Fig 6. Women and promotion in public service: Progress but Plateauing

Grade	1997	2007	2010	2013	2014 (30/06/14)	Increases since 1997
Secretary General	5%	17%	18%	18%	17%	12%
Deputy & Assistant Secretary	10%	12%	16%	20%	19%	9%
Principal Officer	12%	24%	30%	33%	33%	21%
Assistant Principal	24%	33%	37%	41%	42%	18%
Administrative Officer	37%	55%	59%	56%	54%	17%
Higher Executive Officer	39%	49%	50%	56%	56%	17%
Executive Officer	54%	65%	65%	65%	64%	10%
Staff Officer	N/A	77%	78%	77%	77%	(No change since 2007)
Clerical Officer	N/A	76%	76%	76%	75%	-1% (since 2007)
Females as % of Total serving in all above grades combined	N/A	64%	65%	66%	65%	

Reviewing progress in Fig 6 above she noted that while targets have been reached women's progression is now plateauing. Ms. Feehily noted two key strategies, the decision to place women in positions not traditionally held by women (heading up units like customs services and the criminal services investigation committee) and a focus on enabling participation in family friendly measures. While aware that work life balance options come with 'ghetto dangers', it is still imperative to be 'an employer of choice'. From her perspective, there is a clear democratic driver for the public service. When public service leadership roles have gender balance there are positive implications in this for the broader community. Finally, she stressed that **it is not only the business case that drives gender balance but also "because it is the right thing to do"**.

Mr. Mark McLane – Global Head of Diversity and Inclusion, Barclays Bank PLC

Mr. McLane focused on the need to bring the business case for gender balance in business 'alive' and to find ways to give it impact. Crucially he identified that in Barclays Bank those responsible for diversity strategy did not report into Human Resources but into business line management structures. He argued **"it is crucial to be clear about whom you influence and who you report out to."** **The strategy to improve gender balance has to include a focus on process and product and has to have indicators to measure success.**

Mr. McLane stressed that in Barclays gender is treated the same as for any other diversity target including multi-generational, LGBT, disability and multicultural targets. Feedback and information is valued and captured through diversity networks and 'listening groups' of customers who happen to

be employees. Examples of product innovation through ‘diversity listening groups’ included an automated teller machine (ATM) card with a ‘notch’ for the visually impaired, along with rainbow colouring of ATM cards to celebrate Pride. There is a clear strategy to measure the business impact of diversity. For example the marketing section at Barclay's Bank measures the impact of the diversity strategy on the brand. He concluded that Barclays Bank had developed a ‘**leadership index**’, that enabled people to invest in those companies outpacing the market that in fact were also those companies investing in diversity. As Mr. McLane stressed

“You need a CEO who understands that the customer base is 50% female, and employees and consumers need to know what the gender balance is and use the power of the purse to discipline corporations accordingly

Question Time

A key question gave rise to significant discussion about the challenges that accompany family friendly policies. While deemed good for society, such policies can have negative impacts on women’s career, pay and pensions. Such policies can be ‘seductive’, and ‘dangerous’ for women who at times get trapped by the accommodations provided with ‘flexible or family friendly policies’. Such policies can in turn complicate women's efforts to get back to the work place. This is why increased efforts should be made to encourage men to avail of family friendly policies and improve the share of caring responsibility between women and men.

The Accenture ‘Buddy’ system was highlighted as a way to help women on maternity leave stay in touch with the work place. Another way to support a family friendly financial institution was the **active discouragement of the ‘long hours’ culture**. Mr. Frost responded that “**working best is working smart, not working long.**” Ms. Feehily contributed that gender balanced leadership means enabling women to manage work-balance to suit themselves and that this **is particularly important for women on family related leave who wish to stay connected to the workplace.**

Commandant Lawlor explained that the Irish army experience of gender-informed recruitment strategies had revealed that girls appeared to be making more holistic long term decisions about their career options. She concluded that one needs to be careful about recruitment material and language messaging. **It is imperative to ensure that women are visible** and, she said, that in the past the army had underestimated the significance of role models particularly in its promotional publications.

Asked about the dearth of women in senior roles in Irish banks, Mr. McLane stressed **the importance of CEO leadership, of using metrics to report on gender diversity alongside other business outputs and making gender balance part of the business strategy.** Barclays Bank leadership team has three women in those roles because, he said, the CEO was committed to gender balance.

Responding to questions about gendered leadership styles Mr. Frost stressed the **need to avoid ‘one form of leadership’ and ‘one way of doing it’**, he stated **“leadership is a verb not a noun, depending not on time or resources but on talent”**. Mr. Frost described KPMG as a partnership that offers an alternative form of leadership. It ensures its board is above the 25% target and its executive committee has bought in to all of the range of processes available to support diversity. Mr. Frost offered an action point for male leadership; that **men should never accept an invitation to talk at a conference where there are no female speakers**. Commandant Lawlor ended the question and answer session by saying that the Defence Force’s experience supports the reality that different leadership styles can achieve different results in different ways.

Session 5: ‘Winning the War for Talent’ – empowering and supporting women leaders of the future



Mr. Joe Duffy, Ms. Johanna Fullerton, Ms. Helene Reardon-Bond, Ms. Carolan Lennon and Ms. Margaret E. Ward

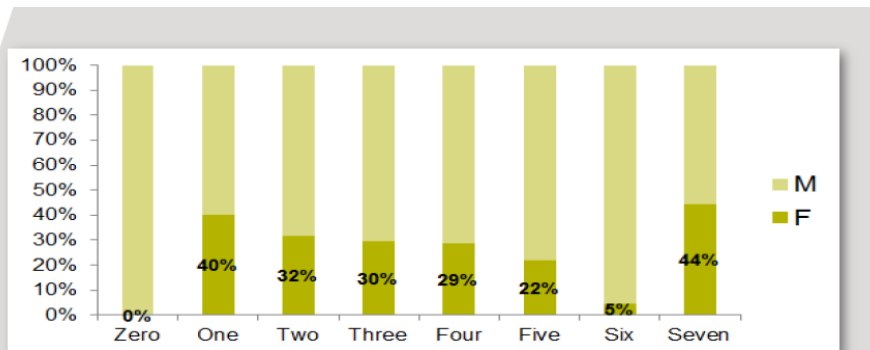
Ms. Carolan Lennon – Managing Director of Eircom Wholesale

Ms. Lennon focused her presentation on gender balanced leadership in the telecommunications firm Eircom Wholesale. Recounting her personal story about an early return from maternity leave to pursue a promotion, she recalled the positive role of constructive male leadership and also the varying and ambiguous attitudes towards women’s progression while on maternity leave. While Eircom has an 83:17 employment ratio in favour of male employees, Fig 8 overleaf shows that 40% of level one management are women and 30% of more senior level 2 and 3 management are women. In addition, the Central Technical Office and Director of the Fixed Access Network are good examples of women in male dominated technology areas.

Ms. Lennon emphasised examples of good practice in the ‘Eircom network’ that support female senior leaders. These included *mentoring* programmes which focus on career development and visibility, *coaching* programmes concerning performance and development, and *sponsoring* that entails a more significant personal and loyal relationship with a senior sponsor (usually your boss) in which you deliver for them but are in return provided feedback and advice. She concluded by

advising about the need to be proactive in searching out and using opportunities for support.

Fig 8. Women in management in Eircom



Manager levels in Eircom are measured in terms of the number of degrees that an employee is distant from the CEO. The CEO is level zero on this chart.

FEMALES MAKE UP 40% OF THE LEVEL ONES AND 30% OF THE LEVEL 2,3 AND 4'S.

The focus was not on fixing women, but on changing business culture and business focus.

Ms. Helene Reardon-Bond – UK Government Equalities Office

Ms. Reardon-Bond described one mission of her Office as maximising women's opportunities for economic contribution. In pursuit of this goal, her Office works hard to secure an evidence base with Cranfield University. Both Cranfield University and the UK Government Equalities Office have used the space opened up by the Lord Davies targets for gender balanced corporate boards to advance evidence, transparency and accountability in this area (discussed earlier on p.17). In her view, data is crucial. **The media also has a role to play to publicly track progress on gender balance and on the degree to which companies are transparent with regard to their practices in this area. A policy that supports the release of data, and progress reports are essential.** She reported that 85% of FTSE 100 companies now have a clear gender policy (up 20% year on year).

Ms. Reardon-Bond also detailed how the media in the UK are supportive and are also tracking progress with PR events held almost every week and the publication of good news around increasing gender balance is now a top priority for many businesses.

CEO led organisations like the 30% Club, discussed below, promote and encourage women on boards alongside initiatives like the 'Women's Business Council' initiative which promotes more women in senior roles. She noted a generational dynamic at play, where younger women are

moving into STEM¹⁰ industries while older women are still more likely to be tracked into government and business. Ms. Reardon-Bond stressed the importance of strategies being underpinned by government policy that enables and extends the right to **flexible work**. In a more general sense she argued for **better care policy, parental leave**, etc. as well as a **50% target for women in public appointments**. At present, in the UK, 37% of senior civil servant appointments are women.

Women's representation on boards needs to be moved from being a gender issue to a business issue

Ms. Johanna Fullerton – founder of SEVEN, Psychology at Work

Ms. Fullerton focused on the strategies required to empower and support women leaders of the future. Her presentation focused on managing maternity to engage, reintegrate, and retain women in the workforce. In research commissioned by her organisation it was found that 60% of Irish women felt maternity impacts on promotion negatively and only 11% felt that their maternity leave was handled well. This is not a short term operational problem to be solved, but reflects how we think in a skewed fashion where we need to think holistically. **We should think of the challenge of maternity leave as a strategic talent management opportunity, not a gender issue.**

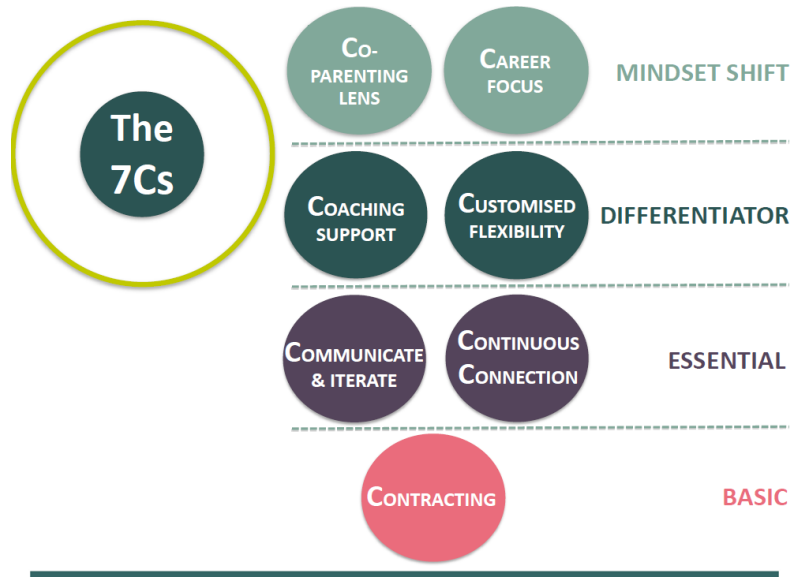
Ms. Fullerton continued stating that “*the task is equipping managers to think about and facilitate a career focused co-parenting lens.*” Maternity interrupts the steepest point of incline of women's progression in work, and in her view, we need a clearer understanding of what derails women during post maternity leave. She finds there is a narrow focus around the point of exit with little attention to the unique transition back to work. **Surveys found the more visibly pregnant the woman becomes the more invisible she is with some managers stopping communication altogether with their pregnant employee.**

Ms. Fullerton's research also found little to no contact from employers during maternity leave, no return contact and little in the way of phased re-entry or flexible working options. In addition, research suggests that there are many assumptions made about women's career aspirations on return and little workload management other than menial work assignments. The survey also acknowledged women can create their own barriers in terms of being too short term, over diligent, blinkered to other opportunities and failing to do 'reverse handover' at home. Ms. Fullerton identified that “*best practice is not difficult it is just not happening and argued for*”.

Best practice in three broad areas included: line manager relationship and support for the idea of an open career trajectory, access to flexibility and adaptation in work place arrangements and maternity supports, before, during and after pregnancy. Fig 9 overleaf illustrates the Seven C's to capture what is needed at different levels in each company to advance best practice.

¹⁰ STEM; Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

Fig 9. The Seven C's Model for Managing Maternity Leave



Mr. Joe Duffy – BNY Mellon Ireland Country Executive and Managing Director

Mr. Duffy is from BNY Mellon, a 230 year old New York bank that is a company grounded in inclusiveness, whose Chairman chairs an inclusion council, and who employ influential women in banking. Key features of policy include mandatory unconscious bias training for all, a global women’s resource network and a regional senior leader mentoring programme. Even so, while women comprise 55% of the overall workforce, at senior grades women comprise less than 40%. BNY Mellon is part of and honoured to introduce the 30% Club initiative in Ireland.

Ms. Marie O’Connor, Pricewaterhouse Cooper – 30% Club Ireland

Pricewaterhouse Cooper (PWC) partner Ms. O’Connor is the senior lead for the 30% Club Ireland. **She commented that gender equality on boards will only occur when senior ‘men’, CEO’s and chairs believe in better gender balance.** The 30% Club was established to drive this initiative. The organisation does not support quotas, rather they believe a voluntary 30% can be achieved through leadership and volunteering the time of staff to invest in this objective. In addition, an emphasis on the relationship between gender balance and ‘the bottom line’ was crucial as was tracking the relationship between women on boards and the impact on business.



Ms. Marie O’Connor

Ms. O'Connor stressed the role of universities in educating undergraduates in unconscious bias training, as well as promoting the principles of responsible management education. The 30% Club was launched in 2010 in the UK with 120 chairs and chief executives and focused on the FTSE while offering good example to other companies. The Irish 30% Club will launch formally in early 2015 and has set a target of women to occupy 30% of executive leadership roles in 'leading companies'. It had already enlisted support from 50 chairs/CEOs.

Question Time

One question focused on the role for the universities in supporting these initiatives. Dr. Anderson suggested a focus on an ethical approach to the issue of business gender and diversity and that business schools should be part of that agenda. The financial crises highlighted, from her perspective, the dangers of having a homogenous male cohort of decision makers with little diversity in thinking and consequently no challenges to group think. There was clearly a need for more diverse educational backgrounds and diversity in a more general sense in the financial sector.

In questions, the issue of maternity leave was the focus of discussion with one observer arguing no woman's career should have to go on hold because of maternity leave. Ms. Fullerton agreed stressing there is no need for any plateau, that we needed to offer choice and that women's careers should not go on hold. With dialogue and communication women can have choice and can be appointed to senior roles even while on maternity leave.

The discussion also pointed to the difficult question of language and etiquette during maternity leave and a culture of hesitancy about maternity related conversations. Ms. Fullerton argued this necessitated a set of standards around maternity with indicators for each stage or transition into and back from maternity leave. Managers were too often hesitant to tackle the subject and had a fear of saying the wrong thing. This in turn closes down communication. Instead managers needed support and coaching in how to have these conversations.

Other questions focused on the issue of Women in Film and Television where women comprise only 17% of narrators/writers/story creators (2013 figures). Ibec has a role in monitoring this, and was asked about the creation of a new online audio and visual report form to capture data and evidence. The participant stressed the presence of women in film and television was not simply one of good business strategy. Rather equality in the creation of representations of life, culture and society is important for our understanding of society and of ourselves.

Following discussion on the gender pay gap and confirmation that it exists in Ireland and elsewhere, Ms. Reardon-Bond confirmed the extent of the gender pay gap in the UK, and the complex reasons why it varies across different EU Member States. She emphasised the importance of data and evidence and lauded the UK legislation that bans secrecy concerning remuneration. She ended her contribution by welcoming the European Commission's data and tools that had enabled companies to analyse the gender pay gap from a comparative perspective.

Closing Session:



Ms. Mary Rose Burke and Minister Aodhán Ó Ríordáin T.D.

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

Ms. Burke in summing up the debates and learning from the conference began by underlining the reality that women are still under represented in economic and political life. She noted that there was now a consensus underlined by the speakers at today's event of the global importance of improving gender balance in decision making. She added that this was clearly a strategic business issue. **This event was notable in that we had moved on from seeking to fix women or blame men towards understanding how to use practical steps to unleash the talent that is in our organisations.** Ms. Burke pointed to initiatives including the talent bank as the solution focused path that was now needed.

We have heard from forward thinking organisations about what they are doing, and we have heard a lot about making ourselves aware of unconscious bias, but the bottom line is that more diverse viewpoints will bring better decision making.

However, she also commented that there exist challenges to embedding gender equality, and that this requires leadership from the front. She added that more transparency and publication of gender disaggregated data will also work to remove mystique, such as in the example of the initiatives and data outlined by the Public Appointments Service. She noted that we are on a journey, and there is a need for specific Irish data and a need for sponsorship if women are going to successfully navigate the path of gender leadership. Ms. Burke commented that striving for gender balanced leadership was not a zero sum game but that it benefits everyone. Ms. Burke referenced a number of the day's speakers in providing food for thought and confirming that there was no simple solution, a multi-pronged approach was now required. She concluded by acknowledging that the momentum for change was present and by congratulating the Ibec President as an important male champion in pursuit of greater gender balance in decision making.

Mr. Aodhán Ó Ríordáin T.D. – Minister of State with responsibility for New Communities, Culture and Equality

In making the conference closing remarks, Minister Ó Ríordáin thanked his own staff in the Department of Justice and Equality for their organisation of the conference and Ibec for their assistance. He also thanked the European Union for its generous support of the event.

Referring to the historical trajectory of Ireland he **acknowledged significant progress had been made for women's rights, but that new challenges presented themselves**. He reminded the commercial world that although greater gender balance on boards was an important goal, there were other important obligations regarding the messaging that young women and girls receive about their place in the world. The Minister also confirmed that the gender pay gap was indeed real and acknowledged arguments for gender proofing of budgets and legislation. The Minister also highlighted the need to address the reality that a large proportion of low paid workers are women and hoped that the new Low Pay Commission would address this reality and empower this vulnerable group of women.

The Minister noted that many areas of decision making and power remain male dominated, including the legal profession. More positively he noted the progress made in the Irish context on gender quotas for political candidates. He remarked that it is clear that legislation and policies are more balanced and fair when there is gender balance in the makeup of those in charge of decisions. He suggested that legislation like the upcoming Family Leave Bill presented opportunities to think differently about work life balance and equality. As quoted below the Minister stressed that although much of today's discussions had been around the business benefits of gender balance, we cannot forget the ethical, social and democratic aspects of gender equality. He concluded that decision making structures need to be representative of society.

Equality is not something that we do after we count the money but must be
at the centre of what we do

Section Three: Conference Summary Key Debates and Learning

Important themes and suggestions emerged from the event. There was consensus that there are no simple or quick solutions to improving gender balance in economic decision making. The diverse experience and expertise of the participants confirmed a wide range of complementary measures are required. These included, inter alia, cultural change, leadership development programmes; mentoring opportunities; unconscious bias training for all starting from the top levels; internal and external networking; talent banks; and family friendly policies for all and the promotion of equal sharing of care responsibilities between women and men.

Key learning and issues for future debate are presented below:

- A key debate rests on whether or not gender should be included as part of the broader objective of diversity. Given gender is not a minority issue it can be argued that it needs to be separated from broader diversity goals with its own distinct targets, monitoring and leadership campaigns.
 - There is consensus that the focus needs to be placed on the business case for gender balance and the adaptation of business culture, process and practice, rather than fixing the supply of women.
 - The role of the senior leaders is imperative to success and the role of men in promoting gender balance in business leadership is crucial. A particular challenge is to gain traction when gender balance is simply resisted at leadership level. As evidenced by the 30% Club, Cranfield University Research, the Women's Executive Network (WXN) and the Canadian Board Diversity Council, the tactical use of comparative scoreboard data and external lobbying networks are core and effective strategies in such cases.
 - The use of unconscious bias training is now a common practice and was cited as very useful in both the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and by Citi. It appears to be most beneficial when provided to top levels of management and also extended downwards to all levels of employees. It was seen as most effective when complemented with additional training that focuses on awareness about how to manage gender difference in career paths.
 - There is a lack of consensus about the use of quotas on corporate boards. Some jurisdictions have opted for voluntary targets that businesses are comfortable with using soft mechanisms (UK, Canada), while others have adopted a quota driven approach (France, Norway). In either case, meaningful quotas and targets require pipelines so they can be reached through the filling of executive director roles rather than through the more symbolic practice of parachuting in non executive directors. In order to grow the pipeline, the necessary structures and supports must be put in place.
-
-

- Rather than seeing gender equality objectives as part of the human resources strategy there is a need to integrate gender equality goals and key measurable targets into the main business objectives and reporting systems.
 - Internal gender networks or mechanisms need to be carefully designed to avoid ghettoising women within them. To be most effective they need to strategically communicate with internal male actors. The main focus of such mechanisms should be to fix company culture and attitudes rather than to fix women.
 - There is a clear consensus about the role of external gender networks and the importance of lobbying. These measures have crucial agenda setting roles to play and are a key way to demand transparency and to liaise with media, unions, and civil society. Talent banks are also crucial in increasing the visibility of women and enabling companies to attract the best talent.
 - The availability of gender disaggregated data and its publication is key to providing an evidence base for the need for gender balance in decision making and for raising awareness about the benefits.
 - International experience suggests the value of pressuring companies for transparency and accountability regarding their practices on pay, diversity and gender balance. Comparative data, score boards and published information about recruitment and selection processes can provide the evidence base for the lobbying of companies and states on the issue of gender balance and decision making.
 - Legislation can require companies to publicly quote information and so enable comparative benchmarking and company scoreboards. The transparency of the Public Appointments Service recruitment and selection data offers best practice in this regard.
 - Work life balance and family friendly policy practice needs to be promoted for both parents. However, it should be carefully mediated to avoid creating 'ghettos' and motherhood traps at the expense of facilitating co-parenting and flexible transition in and out of employment. Promoting non transferable paternity and parental leaves and other measures encouraging men's involvement in caring activities, as well as affordable care services are seen as crucial. Management of maternity leave is a core test of retention and promotion of women in business.
-
-

- While there is much clarity that gender balance and/or an equality or diversity focus on boards is an instrumental way to achieve better business outcomes in the private sector it is less clear whether more social and equality goals are still relevant in shaping the debate.
- There appears to be some differentiation between public and private sectors, the public sector has an added dimension of democratic representation and inclusion that aspires to mirror society in the composition of decision making groups. This could be a dimension of corporate social responsibility but appears to be less of a focus for companies in the private sector.
- Businesses that invest in gender balance and diversity goals should aim to be consistent in ensuring that their marketing, pay and labour management practices do not unintentionally mitigate against gender balance objectives.
- Public discourse is crucial to changing attitudes. Conference participation was also encouraged through the hashtag #genderbalance which recorded a significant volume of activity. The conference also attracted a significant degree of press and Television coverage including a Prime Time TV debate on gender balance on the evening of the conference and wide coverage across print and online media¹¹

[http://www.thejournal.ie/readme/gender-in-business-1793218-Nov2014/;](http://www.thejournal.ie/readme/gender-in-business-1793218-Nov2014/)
http://www.thejournal.ie/minister-frances-fitzgerald-gender-diversity-1797017-Nov2014/?utm_source=shortlink;
[http://www.thejournal.ie/gender-diversity-aodhan-o-riordain-1796910-Nov2014/;](http://www.thejournal.ie/gender-diversity-aodhan-o-riordain-1796910-Nov2014/)
<http://www.independent.ie/opinion/columnists/lise-hand/frances-secures-a-victory-in-ongoing-gender-battle-30775594.html>; <http://www.irishexaminer.com/viewpoints/analysis/working-together-to-champion-equality-between-the-sexes-299350.html>;

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