



The Women Entrepreneurship Platform Our advocacy agenda for 2018

❖ **An EU strategy for Women Entrepreneurs**

Dismantling the obstacles for women entrepreneurs necessitates creating a level playing field with men. First, there is still a lot to be done in terms of education of young girls, and ensuring that girls are not discouraged from careers in business and tech., Entrepreneurial learning for girls and women should be enforced through a strategic framework of national and European policies. Secondly, access to finance remains one of the main obstacles for women entrepreneurs. Venture capital is male dominated and oriented, and several studies on the interactions between venture capitalists and women entrepreneurs have found a divergent approach for men and women entrepreneurs, with the latter being asked mostly risk prevention questions. Alternative means of financing such as business angels must be encouraged through targeted programs and support for the creation of communities of women business angels.

❖ **Closing the digital gap – more women entrepreneurs in digital**

The role of women in the tech sector must be challenged, both at the EU and national levels. Policies should focus on challenging stereotypes and the inherent misogyny of the sector. As shown in a study by the European Commission¹ in 2013, cultural traditions and stereotypes about women's roles are one of the factors preventing women from fully participating in the sector. Furthermore, there should also be actions promoting digital skills and education, and these same policies should advocate for more women entrepreneurs. The environment is still very male-dominated and women in tech often have difficulties balancing personal and professional life, and acutely lack role models.

❖ **Entrepreneurship education**

Entrepreneurship education prepares people to be responsible and enterprising individuals. It helps them develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to achieve the goals they set out for themselves. It has been shown that young people with entrepreneurship education are more likely to set up their own companies. To improve entrepreneurship education in the EU, a good strategy at policy level is needed and teachers should receive the appropriate training. There is a need to make entrepreneurship education a basic feature in educational systems.

¹<https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/bfa34291-3dd5-4e2a-a977-0b659f593a4d/language-en>



❖ **Work- Life Balance – improving gender equality in all aspects of life**

It is no surprise that the unfavourable work-life balance is particularly alarming for women. Nowadays, women are better qualified than ever before, and obtain better results than men in terms of educational attainment. Yet, they are frequently overqualified for the jobs they do, and are underrepresented in the labour market (only 63,5% are employed). The main factors behind this unfavourable situation are low pay (16,5% lower), an overall tendency to seek part-time occupations, and the interruptions they take more often than man throughout their careers in order to care for children, older family members, or family members with disabilities. After having children, the absence of work-life balance provisions has pushed mostly women to look for part-time work arrangements, or to leave the labour market altogether. WEP supports an 'equal earner/equal carer' model, and welcomes the proposal of a new Directive on work life balance, repealing the EU Directive on Parental leave 2010/18/EU. Balancing domestic and business life remains a struggle for women entrepreneurs across Europe. Women's choices and behaviours are influenced and constrained by institutional structures and normative environment. If a society mainly defines women through roles connected with family and household responsibilities, contextual values implicitly interpret women's entrepreneurship as less desirable and as a result provide lower normative supports. The Directive should apply not only to workers who have an employment contract or other employment relationships (such as part-timers, fixed term contract workers, temporary agency workers) but also to atypical workers, such as self-employed and domestic workers. Full enforcement of the provisions of the Directive are needed in all companies, irrespective of their size while MSMEs are protected from administrative, financial and legal constraints by incentives that facilitate the transition process in each Member State².

❖ **Breaching the glass ceiling – more women on company boards/managerial positions**

There should be more effort at the EU level to improve the gender balance in Europe's company boardrooms. Although the share of women on boards across the EU has been on the rise for the past years and is around the 17% across Europe, it is still very low. Small and medium-sized enterprises should be supported and incentivized to improve the gender balance at all levels of management and on boards. These policies do not require women to get jobs on the boards because they are women. They are put in place to make sure that no woman will be denied a job because of their gender. The focus of the policies should be on qualification.

²http://www.womenentrepreneurshipplatform.org/uploads/1/0/9/4/109400817/position_paper_reconciliation_of_work_and_family_life_directive.pdf