



CSW 67 DELEGATE REPORT

What is your name?

Mrs Elisabeth Francis

What is your National Federation and Association or Independent Member country?

VAÖ Austria

What is the exact name and date of the session for which you are reporting?

Side Event - WOMEN IN DIGITAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR GENDER EQUALITY 1.15pm 7/03/2023

Please indicate the sponsors of the session you attended.

Austria, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Switzerland, UN Women, ITU

Please indicate how the session relates to the local, national and/or international advocacy work of your NFA.

The VAÖ in Austria has had various meetings / presentations on STEM / Issues of Digitisation. We use our 'Rose of Recognition' Award to highlight companies or individuals that are making a great contribution to progress. We support the Austrian Govt's efforts in this field.

Session Summary

Side Event Concept - 'To ensure that women and girls benefit equally from the opportunities that digitisation brings – rather than just bearing the weight of new risks and heightened inequalities – there is an urgent need to break down existing barriers and avoid creating new ones.

There are gender gaps in overall digital literacy and usage: STEM education and professions; research and innovation; 'leaky pipeline'; as well as in leadership positions in those sectors. Various initiatives illustrate the power of inspiring mentors and role models, an improved work-life balance, inclusive organisational cultures, and the breaking of gender stereotypes. Diversity and inclusion are essential to ensure that technological and digital innovations, such as AI are free from bias. There is a need to strengthen the full, equal and effective participation of women in shaping technologies – from R&D to design and application. Against this backdrop, this high-level side event explored the following questions:

How can we effectively shape digital and technological change in a way that contributes to the achievement of gender equality?



How can we create an enabling environment to promote women in R&I, STEM, ICT? What does this enabling environment look like?'

Opening :

H.E. Susanne Raab, Federal Minister for Women, Family, Integration and Media (Austria)

H.E. Manuel Frick, Minister of Social Affairs and Culture (Liechtenstein)

Panel :

Nyamekye Wilson, CEO "Black Sisters in STEM"

Samrah Kazmi, CEO Women in Sustainable Innovation

Maruša Gortnar, European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

Kate Brodock, W Fund

Closing:

H.E. Sima Sami Bahous, UN Women Executive Director

H.E. Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Secretary-General, ITU

Moderator - H.E. Alexander Marschik, Permanent Rep Austria to the UN

Very interesting discussion of the issues from an excellent Panel, with many recommendations as to what needs to be done. See below. The point was made strongly that this is not just an issue of fairness / equality. There are important negative consequences for women and our societies overall, if the existing situation is not radically improved.

Many recommendations were made that will benefit women in all countries / societies.

How can the session impact GWI members on local, national and/or international levels?

With Europe / many other countries of the world facing shortages of skilled workers in all fields, there is an urgent need to tap into the talent pool of women to ensure that women fully participate in, and benefit from, ongoing global digitisation, and in particular the development and application of Artificial Intelligence.

Next steps: What needs to be done? Collaboration opportunities?

We need to continue to advocate effectively on this theme. With so much hinging on the successful progression of women from the STEM educational environment into careers in Tech / AI, this is a subject where GWI collectively will have much expertise / authority.

As the Secretary General said, 'we cannot let the Silicon Valleys of our world become Death Valleys for women's rights.'

Some examples of actions taken include: Austria - a Foundation 'LEA' - Let's Empower Austria - has been created to take women STEM role models into schools; specific



programmes are in place for training women in digital skills; 'Basic Digital Education' is now a compulsory subject in secondary education.

Liechtenstein - PepperMINT - an experimental lab for kids and youth to 'discover, invent, experience' inside and outside school. 20.000 have participated since 2017.

Sima Sami Bahous made an excellent closing speech. She repeated her seven point plan - covering work in both public and private sectors. She urged governments and companies to examine their digital policies - to put women and girls at their centre.

She re-emphasised the dangers to women that come from gender bias in AI. These can lead to setbacks in gender equality, the unfair allocation of resources, the reinforcement of stereotypes. She gave two excellent examples:

- women's cardiovascular experience is different to men's - but most of the AI informing medical diagnosis, early response treatment is based on men's data. This means that women having heart attacks are much more likely to be misdiagnosed than men.
- the dummies used by auto makers to research car crashes, inform safety measures in cars have to date been based on men's bodies! This can help explain why women are 70% more likely to be severely damaged in car crashes than men....

Additional Comments

- excellent data is available at the European Institute for Gender Equality <https://eige.europa.eu/>
- it is clear that women are both missing out on the opportunities and are at risk from AI. This must change - risk of gender bias, perpetuation of stereotypes. e.g. algorithms in hiring tools may favour hiring men over women: many medical algorithms are based on men's medical histories not women's...
- risk of cyberbullying often prevents women from speaking out / expressing their opinions. Women and girls must feel safe, particularly at work...
- Excellent comments from Nyamekye Wilson, an inspirational speaker. We also need to consider race / socioeconomic background. Black women and girls are the fastest growing sector in the world's workforce and represent a huge talent pool. But the pipeline is leaky – too many black girls are dropping out. Need for role models, mentors, sense of belonging.
- structures must be established; measures - training, grants, scholarships - taken to ensure systemic / mindset change, ensure safe, inclusive, accessible, enabling environments. Need for better gender based data.
- all algorithms must be tested for gender bias; 'need to force diversity approach in AI'
- progress on women in Tech is too slow; need now for active measures.

Which Beijing Platform for Action 12 Critical Areas for Action were covered? (select all that apply)*

Women in power and decision-making



- x Women and the economy
- x Human rights of women
- x Education and training of women
- x Violence against women
- x Institutional mechanisms
- x Women and health

What Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) were covered? (Select all that apply)*

- x SDG3 - Good Health and Well-Being
- x SDG4 - Quality Education
- x SDG5 - Gender Equality

- x SDG8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth
- x SDG9 - Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- x SDG 10 - Reduced Inequality
- x SDG17 - Partnerships to achieve the Goal

What GWI Policy Resolution(s) could your attendance relate to? (select all that apply)*

- x Bullying (2016)
- x Harassment (2016)
- x Women and STEM (2019)
- x Sexual Harassment in Workplace (2019)
- x Securing increased Domestic Funding for Education to include equal and safe access to Digital Learning (2022)
- x Workplace Harassment (2022)