

Women Leadership in the Greater Region – Success stories to tell

By Clara Moraru

Wednesday, 6 October 2010, 18h30, Chamber of Commerce Luxembourg

Introduction by Clara Moraru, author and editor of “Women Leadership in the Greater Region.”

This evening is dedicated to the launch of my new book. The main subject is Gender Balance. Gender Balance and Equal Chances are a strategic issue for our society. My book is a unique project and also a private project. I interviewed more than 100 women over the past 2 years and wrote down their success stories with the aim to show their lives and to give us the opportunity to imitate them. The objective is to de-mystify management and leadership, which are mostly male domains. The book is about gender balance, equal chances and social responsibility.

Round Table with the participation of:

H.E. Marja Lehto, Finnish Ambassador for Luxembourg

Monica Jonsson, CoachDynamix, she founded this first Coaching Company in Luxembourg in 2002

David Micallef, Bank of New York Mellon S.A., Managing Director & General Manager. He has 25 years of experience in Funds, at 35 years he got Managing Director, he is Board of ABBL. He is married to one of the women from the book

Christopher Bowman, International School of Luxembourg, Director, Trainer of DISC, Seven Habits and many more qualifications

C. Moraru: How does gender balance differ from feminism?

M. Letho: Feminism is a means to achieve gender balance. Feminism is not a negative notion. 60% of school graduates in Europe, USA and Asia are female. 60% of the decision makers in car purchases are female. More than 60% of food purchase decisions are made by females

M. Jonsson: The war for talent is so big in Luxembourg

If women represent 60% of school graduates and also represent +- 50% of the population, companies with more women are better positioned. Companies with more women on the Management Board are out-performing. If women decide more than 60% of purchase decisions, the decision makers in Marketing, Sales, ... should be female.

There is a business case of a famous company that implemented a marketing strategy, which turned out to be a flop because there were only men on the marketing team, who were making decisions for women purchasers.

D. Micallef: I look young, indeed, for being General Manager. I have no degree, I left school at 18. I was a manager by 19.

Luxembourg has lessons to learn in gender balance.

At Bank New York Mellon we employ 300 people, and as I am General Manager, 50% of the management is female, also in the technical management positions. I am convinced that women are better critical thinkers, better controllers, have a better ability to emphasize and of course are multi-taskers, which I am not.

C. Bowman: As an example: there are many female teachers. In my opinion, men and women should both be in decision making positions.

C. Moraru: There is a study from the USA showing that women do succeed at the expense of men. Is this the death of men?

D. Micallaf: This is nonsense. I can give you an example of one of my female employees. She is in her early 40s, in management and she is the mother of 7 children.

I think we will see more changes in our society in the future.

I think that the question should be: how important is education? In my opinion, balance starts not with leadership, but with education.

C. Moraru: The reality-check in Luxembourg

M. Jonsson: What are the challenges women face and compare them to the challenges, men face.

From a company's point of view:

It is still a boys' club!

It is very difficult for a woman to enter these boys' clubs.

Most women think: if they do their job well, they will be promoted. But this is not true. It is more important to be visible, to be at networking occasions, to have support.

And there are many unwritten rules.

The biggest issue is that a woman has to choose between children or a career, therefore birth rates have been declining.

There is some progress in Luxembourg, but it is slow.

If within a couple, both parties want to work, having an au-pair is a necessity, not a luxury, but there are no au-pairs in Luxembourg. There is no legislation for au-pairs and officially they are not allowed.

M. Lehto: two points: reconciling family and work is very difficult

The other big issue is the violence against women.

C. Moraru: What qualities do women have to improve to have more chances?

C. Bowman: There are no specific qualities for women or men.

The most important is the personality of the person, independent from the gender.

It is about:

- integrity,
- honesty,

- trust,
- consistency in work,
- self-confidence,
- accepting who I am,
- standing up for what I think,
- speaking up,
- getting to know the people I work with.

Some skills are delegation.

You have to be able to hire people who are better than you.

The most important questions are: what motivates you? what are my ambitions?

Yes, there is a lot of imbalance, inequality, injustice!

D. Micallef: When I was young, I was overdoing things.

I absolutely wanted to be a General Manager by the age of 19 and I didn't understand why I hadn't succeeded.

M. Jonsson: The biggest issue for women is finding self-confidence and assertiveness.

Women must say what they think and what they want.

C. Moraru: This is a wake-up call: What can be done to make this subject important to women and men?

M. Jonsson: If we don't invest into Gender Balance, it will take 60 years to achieve gender balance. It is about talent and leadership. It is not just a subject for the women in HR who will discuss it.

D. Micallef: In my opinion, we should legislate the subject: We have to tell the politicians to make it mandatory for a couple having a child, the parental leave has to be split: 3 months the women, 3 months the man: mandatory. So the men will understand, what it means to break their careers and take care of their newborn.

C. Bowman: We have a huge task in education. As parents we have enormous responsibility. We must give hands-on opportunities to our young people. We have to provide the right education, a caring education, a good education.

The Networking Cocktail was served after the Conference, with a good glass of Champagne and nice dishes to eat.