

Fellow panelists

Ladies and Gentlemen

Research and innovation are the engines of more sustainable economic growth and productivity. Future investment in research and innovation must, however, have an even stronger impact in terms of growth and job creation and in terms of social and environmental returns. One of the prime social concerns, in this respect, is that of equity between the genders.

Glass Ceiling and Progress

Although women, in recent years, have made considerable progress in breaking through the glass ceiling or in entering the world of work much still remains to be done.

I shall concentrate on the domain that I know best, which is the position of women in the world of science, research and innovation. Let me give you some figures found in the SHE figures on Gender Equality in Science – published by the EU Commission:

In the EU-27, 45% of all PhD graduates were women in 2006; *they equal or outnumber men in all broad fields of study, except for science, mathematics and computing (41%), and engineering, manufacturing and construction (25%).*

Between 2002 and 2006, there was an increase in the overall number of female researchers in almost all fields of science in the EU-27: the most positive growth figures characterised the fields of the medical sciences , the humanities, engineering and technology and the social sciences.

However, this positive state of affairs should be balanced against the barriers that must still be overcome. For instance, the SHE figures indicate that:

- * Women in scientific research remain a minority, accounting for 30% of researchers in the EU in 2006.

- ▲ the proportion of female students (55%) and graduates(59%) exceeds that of male students, but men outnumber women among PhD students and post-graduates (the proportion of female students drops back to 48%and that of post-graduates to 45%).

- * Furthermore, women represent only 44% of grade C academic staff, 36% of grade B academic staff and 18% of grade A academic staff.

- * More generally, on average in the EU-27, women represent 37% of all researchers in the Higher Education Sector, 39% in the Government Sector and 19% in the Business Enterprise Sector,

This being said, there are clear signs that things are changing for the better. In the EU, the proportion of women among scientists and engineers is growing faster than that of men (6.2% annually compared

with 3.7% for men). Similarly in the all three fields mentioned above – Higher education, government and business - there is a move towards a more gender-balanced research population.

Participation of Women in Science, Research and Engineering.

Given that much, nevertheless, remains to be done, the question is how are we to encourage the greater participation of women in science, research and engineering. There are two quite concrete and practical measures that can be taken, in this respect.

* The first is to ensure that girls as well as boys are introduced to science subjects at an early age. It is important that schools, but also museums and other public bodies associated with the world of science, play their role in promoting science as a subject that is exciting and stimulating for girls as for boys.

* The second is to foster an attitude in the media – including the media with a traditionally feminine bent – to the effect that science is something that girls can actively contribute to. There should be a general feeling that girls and young women will find working in a scientific domain rewarding and invigorating. In this respect, it is important that the media provides young people with positive, female role models in the world of science.

We need to break down a culture in which educational choices, traditional views and stereotypes about women all impact on the amount of women

choosing a career in the field of science. Finally, it also strikes me that were we to develop a culture of scientific investigation in which the particular perspective of women were valued this would contribute considerably to the diversity and depth of research.

Encouraging Entrepreneurship

As for the position of women in the world of business, there are two aspects that I should like to stress. The first is the “glass ceiling”, something that still manifestly exists. The second is the ability of women to set up their own companies but, beyond this, the ability to grow the company beyond the level of a “one woman band” or an SME with only a handful of employees at best.

It has been shown that gender parity in top positions helps to improve performance and competitiveness of business, with clear economic gains. In a report by Mc Kinsey, it appears, for example, that companies that have adopted parity between men and women make an operating profit 56% higher than those of companies that employ only men.

Nevertheless, a report published by the European Commission on March 5, 2012 shows that the number of women on boards of companies has not increased significantly. Only one in seven members of the boards of major European companies are women (13.7%). Only 6% of managers of companies in my home country of Portugal are women, less than half the EU average and far from the goals that the European Commission has outlined for 2020. Although there has been a slight improvement compared to 11.8% in 2010, if things continue at this rate, it

will take more than 40 years to achieve an acceptable gender parity (at least 40% of both sexes). The

As for entrepreneurship, whilst Europe does not have enough entrepreneurs in general here are, disproportionately, even fewer women than men entrepreneurs. As was the case in research and science, roughly speaking, only women entrepreneurs in Europe are only 30% of all entrepreneurs.

For many reasons, not enough Europeans see running a small business as sufficiently more attractive than working as an employee of a firm, large or small, or in a public organisation. These reasons apply as much to women as to men, but there are certain additional factors which make entrepreneurship an even less attractive or viable option for women.

The Commission is working with Member States to find ways to overcome the factors which particularly discourage women from taking up the option of entrepreneurship.

* Firstly It is important that negative stereotypes used to discourage women from adventuring into the business world – for example that women are less financially credible – be broken down.

* Secondly, funding is a particularly difficult problem and the Commission has set out to support networking amongst women entrepreneurs, amongst potential women entrepreneurs, and amongst government agencies and other support organisations which can play a role in encouraging women entrepreneurs.

Often this is a matter of simply being able to access useful information. The Inauguration of the European Network of Mentors for Women Entrepreneurs is certainly a step in the right direction. The Mentors Network provides advice and support to women entrepreneurs on the start-up, running and growth of their enterprises in the early phase of their life (from the second to the fourth year of existence of a new woman-run and owned enterprise).

Finally, the Small Business Act of 2008 aims to encourage the setting up of small businesses and this also includes a mentoring scheme and other steps to promote entrepreneurship among women graduates. One element that is particularly useful, here, is the provision that allows a given state to allocate up to 1 million euros for new, women-led companies.

These measures all represent progress but they amount, by an large, to offering women better access to information and to support networks. To finish on an interrogative note: can we not go further than this and if so how are we best to proceed?

Thank-you very much.