**Empower women to lead EU industry: best practices and recommendations**

**The EESC has held a debate on women's representation and participation in the workforce. The event gathered insights, success stories and best practices from our CCMI members and delegates, and the conclusions drawn will make important contribution to the EESC's ongoing initiative on gender equality.**

The debate looked at gender equality in the workplace, focusing on the role of women in industrial change. The panellists discussed how the EU could eliminate gender stereotypes and provide equal opportunities and pay for all in the labour market.

**Monica Verzola**, a CCMI delegate from Category 3, explained the main challenges for women in the workplace today, focusing in particular on the fields of youth, education and vocational training. Data shows that, despite having on average higher level of education than men, women are employed in lower skilled roles. She cited the example of women in STEM, where the gender wage gap has reached 16% with women earning EUR 300 less than men on average. "Women in the EU have lower wages and fewer career opportunities for the same type of work. Gender stereotypes are endangering the progress and inclusivity of our society", she said, and stressed: "the gender equality dimension needs to be mainstreamed into EU policy at all levels".

**Lech Pilawski,** a CCMI member from Group I, drew on his experience working in the cosmetics industry: "The cosmetics and fashion industries are the ones doing the best in terms of achieving gender equality. Even so, it hasn't been so easy. Women have had to fight to take their places and now are often leaders in those sectors." In general, there are more women than men in higher education, but only 30% of those women advance to management positions. Particularly clear examples of this are seen in education and healthcare, where women make up a large portion of the workforce but hold very few leadership positions. "This is a consequence of stereotypes favouring men. The structures in the labour market are insufficient to support women. We need more sensitivity, meaning non-standard and better decisions for all."

**Hervé Jeannin**, a CCMI delegate from Category 2, presented the state of affairs in the computing sector, where achieving gender equality is a very difficult task given that, as it stands, only 20% of employees are women. He also offered suggestions for closing this gap: "Companies need to adapt to the needs of their workers, both men and women. During the pandemic, we saw a lot of working from home, which has allowed women to develop their careers without having to choose between working and starting a family. The key to success is to promote people internally to ensure that we retain that talent inside the company and show women that they do have an opportunity for success if they stay."

The best practices discussed also included programmes for digital inclusion of women in the workforce, upskilling initiatives, and leadership programmes. EESC members and delegates called for gender mainstreaming in EU policymaking as the first necessary step towards empowering women in the future of EU industry.

This debate was the part of a series of events organised by the EESC supporting the European Parliament's Gender Equality Week initiative. You can find the agenda [here](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/policies/in-focus/european-gender-equality-week/agenda).