

The digital gender gap – MedaWomen 2018

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Maria Helena de Felipe Lehtonen, President AFAEMME - Federation of Businesswomen Organizations in the Mediterranean

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The 10th edition - Meda Women Entrepreneurs Forum, is focused in “Women in Tech the way ahead” and from AFAEMME (Federation of Organizations of Businesswomen in the Mediterranean area), more than 60 Business organizations are part of AFAEMME from 23 Mediterranean countries. Our main objective in this Forum is to reach as far as possible to the Governments, Institutions, and Businesses in order to sensitize the relevance of Digital gender gap in our European and Mediterranean Societies.

From the European Economic Social Committee, we have been working on this issue and as part of the Civil Society we have a common goal to develop together - promoting digitalization between our

businesswomen and its businesses, reaching all the working areas.

The causes of digital gender gap are multiple, and actions must therefore address different fields: the education system from childhood to adulthood, the labour market, work-life balance, public services and the digital divide in general. It is important to increase the number of women in STEM, but it is also essential to recognise the growing importance of soft skills in the digital age in all sectors. Interdisciplinary education and human-centred soft skills will be essential and education should take these aspects into consideration.

In education it is essential to ensure digital literacy and education for all, with a particular focus on girls to remove the digital gender gap at its roots, developing specific programmes for girls in these fields. It is important to give teachers and trainers at all levels the right tools to use ICT to teach, promoting a more inclusive and personalised education and training system.

Female entrepreneurship must be supported, removing barriers to women's access to self-employment. Smart working and teleworking should be monitored in order to avoid the risks of blurring of boundaries between care, work and private life.

In order to prevent the spiral of feminisation of poverty, fair working conditions and social protection, the social dialogue and collective bargaining have a fundamental role in this regard.

As Women Entrepreneurs Associations, we can contribute to encourage women's participation in technical and high-level jobs, overcoming educational and professional barriers and stereotypes as well as guaranteeing digital lifelong learning to prevent not only women's exclusion from the labour market but also from our businesses.

Maria Helena de Felipe Lehtonen

President FEPIME-Catalunya, Federation of Catalanian SME'S

Vice-Presidente CEPYME, Spanish Confederation of SME'S

Vice-President FOMENT DEL TREBALL, Federation of Bussines Owners in Catalonia

Vice-President UEAPME, Confederation of EUROPEAN SME'S and Chair of the Legal Affairs Committee

Member of the Board CEOE, Spanish Employers Confederation

Member of Board of the EESC-European Economic and Social Committee. Employers Group. Sections ECO, REX and President EUROMED-Follow-up Committee

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