

► Women in business: How employer and business membership organizations drive gender equality

Webinar summary

Overview

This summary brief shares the highlights of an event for employer and business membership organizations (EBMOs) held on 21 March 2024. The event covered the ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities (ILO-ACT/EMP) and the International Organisation of Employers' (IOE) latest report on EBMOs and gender equality. Nearly 140 people joined the event.

The aims of the event were to:

- **Inform** – share key insights from new evidence.
- **Empower** – equip EBMOs with the right tools and resources.
- **Inspire** – showcase success stories.
- **Motivate** – encourage EBMOs to act.

Throughout this summary, links to relevant tools and resources for EBMOs on gender equality are shared. For further information please see:

- The ILO and IOE's 2024 report on gender equality:
[Women in Business: How employer and business membership organizations drive gender equality](#) (in English, French and Spanish).
- The [press release](#) which captures the key findings of the joint ILO and IOE report.
- A [video](#) featuring the highlights of the event.

Key insights from the report on *Women in Business: How employer and business membership organizations drive gender equality*

The report is based on a survey with 95 EBMOs across 87 countries and in-depth interviews with over 20 EBMO representatives. It shows that EBMOs have made significant progress over the past six years when it comes to driving gender equality internally and among members. However, there is plenty of untapped potential, and progress has often been made starting from a low baseline.

Overall, women are now well-represented at EBMOs and many EBMOs have assigned staff to deliver on gender equality. More EBMO members represent women's interests too. Almost half (46 per cent) of EBMOs recognize the positive business outcomes of gender equality on their own organizations. These include increased income (43 per cent), enhanced organizational reputation (30 per cent), and a better ability to attract and retain talent (23 per cent).



Five recommendations for EBMOs

Five basic recommendations for EBMOs wishing to move ahead on gender equality flow from the report.

Mainstream gender equality

EBMOs should mainstream gender equality throughout their activities to achieve maximum impact and create fully inclusive workplaces.

Lead by example

EBMOs that achieve gender equality within their own organizations are in a better position to lead their business communities by example.

Broaden advocacy efforts

While 81% of EBMOs advocate on gender equality, many obstacles to gender equality mentioned by EBMOs are not covered by their advocacy efforts. This includes better access to care infrastructure services such as childcare and elderly care and better access to finance and entrepreneurship.

Track impact

More EBMOs need to track the impact of their initiatives on gender equality. Around half are not doing this and are therefore not aware of associated benefits or whether the initiatives need improvement. Importantly, what gets measured gets done!

Time to break glass ceilings

EBMOs need to ensure that more women access leadership positions within the organization. This includes more women on EBMO boards.



► **“We have ample evidence that having women participate in the labour market and top decision-making positions makes business sense. Our efforts need to match the urgency and needs of our time”.**

Anne Vauchez
International & European Social Affairs Director
Mouvement des Entreprises de France (MEDEF)



Agenda

Welcome

Anne Vauchez

International & European Social Affairs Director
Mouvement des Entreprises de France (MEDEF), and
Chair of the IOE policy working group on gender equality
and diversity.

Presentation of key report insights and their implications for EBMOs.

Jae-Hee Chang

Senior Relations Specialist
ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities

Akustina Morni

Director for Employment, Skills & Diversity
IOE

Panel session showcasing EBMO success stories on gender equality

Jelermína Abigail Roxas-Gorospe

Deputy-Director General
Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP)

Douglas Opio

Executive Director
Federation of Uganda Employers

Christos A. Ioannou

Advisor to the board
Federation of Enterprises (SEV)

Paola Buendía

Executive Vice President, Asociación Nacional de
Empresarios de Colombia (ANDI)

Mariska van der Linden (moderator)

Independent consultant and lead author

Next steps and close

Deborah France-Massin

Director
ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities

Roberto Suárez Santos

Secretary General
IOE

Sharing what works: the panel session

Presentations by the panellists focused on their organizations' gender equality success stories. This section outlines the key messages from each panellist for other EBMOs.

For more information on the success stories please see the video of the event's highlights and the case studies in the report (links shared above).

Jelmerina Abigail Roxas-Gorospe, Deputy-Director General, Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP)

Abigail focused on ECOP's relatively new but very active diversity and inclusion committee, as well as on the importance of support for women entrepreneurs. Key messages for EBMOs from her presentation are below.

1. Set up and run an active diversity & inclusion or gender equality committee

ECOP's diversity and inclusion member committee was set up in 2021 and has been incredibly active since then. This has resulted in a myriad of activities on gender equality, including training for members on communicating on gender equality, on legislative changes to maternity rights, designing a policy on violence and harassment in the workplace, and more.

2. Understand the gender equality landscape

In ECOP's case, this meant carrying out a survey on gender equality in the private sector, with results broken down by sector. The survey looked at gender representation, as well as company awareness of and initiatives on diversity and inclusion. ECOP used the survey results to better tailor support for members.

3. Support and empower women entrepreneurs

ECOP used the ILO's Women's Entrepreneurship self-check tool to assess its responsiveness to women entrepreneurs. It used the results to improve support.

Tools and resources shared

- [The business case for women in business and management in the Philippines](#) (ECOP, ILO and Investing in Women, 2020).
- The [ILO's Women's Entrepreneurship Self-Check \(WE-Check\)](#) tool.
- The ILO brief "[How to maximize the business benefits of diversity and inclusion](#)" (also available in French and Spanish). The brief can be adapted by EBMOs for their own use. It outlines the business case for D&I and explains what full inclusion is, why it leads to the most impressive business outcomes, and how to achieve it.
- For further information on ECOP's success story, please see p.12 of the English version of the report.

Douglas Opio, Executive Director, Federation of Uganda Employers (FUE)

Douglas focused on the FUE's Female Future programme, a commercially viable leadership training programme for women. As of 2023, around 150 women had been trained, with 88 per cent subsequently receiving promotions and 40 per cent joining company boards. The programme was inspired by the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise's (NHO) pioneer Female Future programme and is now being run by seven EBMOs in different countries.

Key messages for other EBMOs from the presentation are that:

1. Where EBMOs learn from each other they can leap ahead

In this case the FUE learned from the NHO, as well as receiving support and training from the NHO to set up and run the programme.

2. Members are keen to access support on gender equality and to pay for it

While the FUE's Female Future programme was originally considered expensive by members, word of its positive outcomes spread quickly. There is now a waiting list for the 2024 intake of the programme.

3. EBMOs should act on the results of member surveys on gender equality

The FUE decided to set up the Female Future programme following a member survey which showed less than

12 per cent of the women working for their 600+ member companies were in leadership positions. EBMOs need the right information to inform their gender equality activities.

Tools and resources shared

- For more information on the Female Future programme please see [this ILO web page](#) (also in French and Spanish).
- [Video testimonials](#) of women who participated in the FUE's Female Future programme.
- The Female Future programme was originally set up by the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprises (NHO). See [here](#) for more information.
- For further information on FUE's success story, please see p.21 of the English version of the report.

Christos A. Ioannou, Advisor to the board, Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV)

This presentation was about how the SEV used the ILO's Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) to drive gender equality and diversity across the private sector, but also more widely across Greek society. Key lessons for other EBMOs from the SEV experience are that:

- 1. EBMOs should take deliberate action to advance gender equality**
Gender equality will not happen by itself overnight. A concerted effort is needed, and it starts by measuring gender equality internally and among members.
- 2. New legislation is important, but it needs bottom-up action to drive change**
For EBMOs, this means support for members on gender equality through training, guides, mentoring and more.
- 3. Sometimes EBMOs need to look beyond the private sector to drive change**
The SEV determined that obstacles to gender equality in the private sector stemmed partially from wider, cultural attitudes to gender. The EBMO commissioned a public opinion survey and used the results to raise awareness of gender equality among the wider public.

Tools and resources shared

- [The ILO's Violence and harassment at work: a practical guide for employers](#) (In English, French and Spanish)
- The ILO has developed a [campaign toolkit on Convention 190](#) with videos, social media materials, posters, animations and more (in English, French and Spanish). All campaign materials are easy to access and free to use.
- The [SEV Guide on policy for violence and harassment at workplace](#) (in Greek)
- The [SEV Q&A on violence and harassment at workplace](#) (in Greek)
- [The Embrave project - Greece and Cyprus](#) (in English)
- The [Equality in workplace survey for Greece](#) (in Greek)
- For further information on the SEV's success story, please see p.29 of the English version of the report.

Paola Buendía, Executive Vice President, Asociación Nacional de Empresarios de Colombia (ANDI)

Paola's presentation illustrated how an EBMO can mainstream gender equality across all its activities, including training, monitoring, mentoring and more. Key take-aways from ANDI's gender equality journey are below.

- 1. EBMOs should lead by example**
This means achieving gender equality internally, including by ensuring leadership positions have an equal share of women and men, and creating additional positions if necessary.

2. Measure, measure, measure

Echoing other presentations, Paola underlined the importance of monitoring gender equality among members. Once the right information has been obtained, the EBMO can put in place the right initiatives. In ANDI's case, this included setting up a successful toolkit called Closing the Gaps. It provides tools and guidance to help enterprises assess their practices and policies from a gendered lens and design a gender equality strategy.

3. Partnerships are key

EBMOs should work with partners to access expertise and other resources to drive gender equality in the workplace. In ANDI's case, valuable partnerships were developed with organizations such as the ILO, the EU, the OECD, Deloitte, as well as with national partners.

Tools and resources shared

- [Information on ANDI's equality, diversity and inclusion strategy](#) (in Spanish)
- ANDI's [Closing the Gaps toolkit](#) ("Cerrando Brechas", in Spanish)
- For further information on ANDI's success story, please see p.32 of the English version of the report.

Feedback from the audience

All EBMO representatives in the audience were asked to complete a quick poll to determine how useful the event and report were to them, and what future support they might require to further advance gender equality. A total of 27 members of the audience replied, with feedback overall being positive.

- **Most EBMO respondents are ready to do more on gender equality**

A total of 80 per cent of respondents said that their EBMO would be interested in developing concrete initiatives to deepen their gender equality agenda.

- **Most respondents would like support to develop new services for members**

Almost two-thirds (65 per cent) of EBMO respondents said they would like support from the ILO and/or the IOE to develop new services for members, such as support with training provision or developing guidance materials. A third (30 per cent) would like support to better advocate for gender equality, for example by sharing policy briefs that EBMOs can tailor to their context. Finally, a fifth (20 per cent) said they would like support to better build the business case, for example through the ILO and/or the IOE carrying out and sharing research.

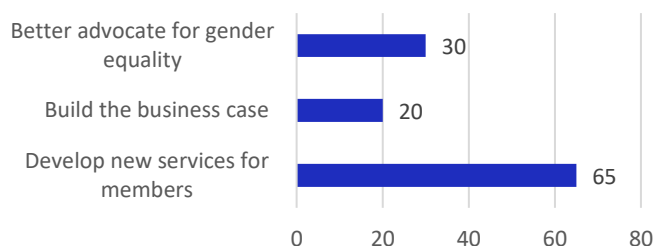
- **The event and the report increased EBMO motivation to drive gender equality**

A total of 85 per cent of respondents was feeling more motivated to promote gender equality at their employers' organization after hearing the findings of the report and the panellists. This includes 63 per cent who were feeling much more motivated. No one felt less motivated.

- **Nearly all respondents will share the report's key messages internally**

Almost all respondents (96 per cent) said that they would share the report's key messages with their EBMO secretariat and board.

What support from the IOE and ILO-ACT/EMP would help your employers' organizations drive gender equality internally and among your members? (%)



Next steps

The webinar ended with closing remarks by Deborah France-Massin, Director of the ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities, and Roberto Suárez Santos, Secretary General of the IOE. In addition to underlining the importance to, and benefits of, gender equality for EBMOs and their members they also outlined next steps for the ILO-ACT/EMP and the IOE on gender equality.

The ILO-ACT/EMP would like to carry out research similar to that discussed at the event and covered by the report. This would be another six-year progress update on EBMOs and gender equality, scheduled for 2029, one year before the target

date of the Sustainable Development Goals. The ILO-ACT/EMP will also look closely at the poll results to determine what support to provide EBMOs on gender equality from this point onwards.

The IOE's Gender Equality and Diversity Policy Working Group is planning on evaluating progress of its members on gender equality in two years, using the report as a baseline.

Other tools and resources

In addition to the resources shared by panellists, the following were shared during the event.

- More information on the IOE's Gender Equality and Diversity Policy Working Group and its activities can be found [here](#).
- More information on the [B20 Indonesia launch of the One Global Women Empowerment initiative \(OGWE\)](#) is available online. See also the B20-IOE OGWE High-level Conference in 2023 [Less talk, more action](#) and the [International Women's Day Statement](#) by OGWE Signatories.
- The IOE and Deloitte [G20 Monitoring Report](#) assesses the advances G20 nations have made on commitments to women's empowerment.
- More information on ILO ACT/EMP's work on Women in Business and Management can be found [here](#).
- The ILO ACT/EMP's 2019 global report on [Women in Business in Management](#) offers insights into how gender diversity at the top improves organizational performance and is based on a survey of nearly 13,000 enterprises across the globe.
- This [ILO video](#) outlines the benefits of women's inclusion in the labour market.
- The ILO's International Training Centre has a useful online course for women managers looking to climb the ladder – the [Malkia programme](#). It includes mentoring and coaching.



► **"The gender equality agenda is a business priority..."**

This means follow up, proper implementation, and tracking impact".

Roberto Suárez Santos
Secretary General
International Organisation of Employers (IOE)



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