

Women at the TOP

What happens when women have more power and influence?



International Science Conference in Katowice

6 October, 2015 held at University of Silesia in Katowice, the conference “Women at the Top” was organized. It was the second of two planned events in a series of international meetings in Europe. The first one took place at Coventry University in Great Britain in May 2015. The conference was organized by Polish Association of Organizational Psychology (PSPO), International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP) - DIVISION 1: Work and Organizational Psychology, School of Management (University of Silesia) and Work And Organization Psychology Chair (Institute of Psychology at University of Silesia). The conference had a honorary patronage of Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment prof Małgorzata Fuszara and Rector of the University of Silesia prof Wiesław Banyś.



Prof Barbara Kożusznik (President of Polish Association of Organizational Psychology) opened the conference. Her speech was followed by three key speakers: **prof Virginia Schein** (Gettysburg College, USA), a world renowned expert in psychology and

management, who has been involved in research on women working in high managerial positions, **prof Rosalind Searle** (Coventry University, Great Britain) - director of Centre for Trust, Peace and Social relations and **Danuta Pieter** - director of Bernadette Chirac Hôpitaux de Paris - Hôpitaux de France foundation.

Prof Barbara Kożusznik stated that the age of innovations needs new competences, new ideas and diversity. Research shows that women in high managerial positions offer a great range of those needed values. Unfortunately, **there are still not enough women in those positions.**



During her lecture „Think manager, think male? Implication of Gender Balance” **prof Virginia Schein** said that the stereotypical perception of requirements for managerial positions still creates a psychological barrier for women’s promotion. Simultaneously, the representation of women in high managerial positions enhances the

functioning of an organization, but only if the strategy is truly directed towards innovation. In organizations that have a diverse composition in teams we can see



better financial results, provided that the teams have a structure that insures an authentic integration. **The participation of women in high managerial positions should constitute a critical mass.** It is worth to increase the number of women in these positions because the gender balance allows work that is based on individual competences and talents, not on stereotypes and gender prejudices.



Prof Rosalind Searle, during her lecture „*Women and trust: challenges for women, solutions for organisations*”, stated that trust is the condition for organizational effectiveness. Trust is understood as a positive expectation that others will perform in a way that will be beneficial or at least harmless. Professor underlined that **women are more willing to trust and be open to others** and that a higher level of “readiness for trust” can be found in

their psychological profile (McAlpine i in. 2014). Research also shows that women in high managerial positions take better care of their personnel, are less power-oriented, use more management styles that include the influence of others and apply a more egalitarian approach through which they try to get the most of the talents of all employees.



Danuta Pieter in her presentation underlined how important factor to develop her career and professional competences was trust. Danuta Pieter created her independence and professional strenght because **she was trusted and supported by Bernadette Chirac** who believed in Danuta potential and competences and helped her to use them in all her work.

At the conference there were 4 sessions lead by **dr Małgorzata Chrupała-Pniak** (Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology). During the business panel **Sonia Draga** (Director of Sonia Draga publishing house) pointed out that the number of women in an organization enhances its development. She also highlighted that **the support of men is much needed** - for women at work as well as for women who stay at home. Women also need men to believe in their success and pursuit of their career.



From the left: dr hab. Małgorzata Dobrowolska, prof. Mare Teichmann, dr Barbara Smorczevska, Iwona Przepióra, Sonia Draga i dr Małgorzata Chrupała-Pniak.

Prof Mare Teichmann (PE Konsult, Estonia) reminded that unfortunately **women still earn less than men**. For it to change, there is a need for systemic, institutional solutions. It may not be about gaining more power and influence but about showing that through allowing more space to others innovation can be achieved. **Iwona Przepióra** (Poczta Polska S.A.) shared her thought that organizations are managed by the generation of 40 - 50 year old people. It is those women who are fulfilled as mothers and wives that want something more. Their experience allows them to be **better organized and to show that “it is possible”**, that responsibilities can be merged. But the problem is that women are still lacking self-confidence - it takes a lot of effort to reveal their potential. **Małgorzata Dobrowolska** (University of Silesia, **R&D, SME**) said that the changes are promising. In her opinion, a few years ago only a few women were visible in business. Now

every third organization is “female” - in the composition of the board as well as in the type of decision made in it. **Women are reaching for more.**



From the left: prof. Ewa Syrek, dr Sławomira Kamińska-Berezowska, prof. Elżbieta Zipper i prof. Halina Rusek.



From the left: Małgorzata Mańka-Szulik, prof. Halina Rusek, Joanna Figura.

During the panel dedicated to public sector institutions **Małgorzata Mańka - Szulik** (President of Zabrze City) noted that women who perform in public sphere have to, before they start any actions, think carefully about any consequences that those actions may have. One of them are potential losses that may happen in family life. Women, who have decided to take any public actions, treat their commitments very seriously and are really devoted to their jobs. Such an **attitude creates trust and stands as an example for others**. It is undoubtedly necessary to emphasize women's achievements, appreciate their activity and create platforms for exchanging experience. Active women activate other women. **Joanna Figura** (Director of Community Centre in Łędziny) underlined that **it is important to promote female leaders**, show their achievements and emphasize their position. She notices a fact, that men help one another and create support groups for themselves. That is the reason why women should also support and help other women. **Prof Halina Rusek** (Vice Rector of University of Silesia 2002-2005) brought attention to the meaning of education. She gave an example of commercials - some of them strongly support gender and social role stereotypes. According to **Prof Rusek**, this is why education plays an important role in the process of including women in social life. **Education should fight gender stereotypes** with reliable and objective knowledge.



From the left: Anna Kruczek, Anna Solińska.

Noticing the role of social organizations was a great introduction to the next panel, which was about third sector organizations. **Anna Kruczek** (President of Silesian Forum of Non-governmental Organizations KAFOS) said that, despite the female-dominated work environment of NGOs, **power is still too often held by men**. Female leaders usually can be found in organizations focused on social support and education. Those organizations are a place where great social initiatives are born and women in this field can be very creative and support one another. It is the cooperation and trust that can be experienced, that is the motivator for hard work for many female leaders. **Anna Solińska** (Zimbardo Center) observe, that many young women, at the stage of making decisions about their future professions, consider the consequences that those choices might bring to a potential role of mother and partner. Often the reconciliation of professional activity and family life seems to be difficult or even impossible. Thus **support from others, mutual respect and life partnership should not be forgotten**, as they create such organizational environment and conditions that make women's professional activity possible and effective. **Anna Solińska** has an opinion, that **teaching people equality and gender partnership is a very important task in the whole process**.



Katarzyna Twarowska

The fourth panel was focused on supporting future female leaders. **Katarzyna Twarowska** (President of Female Leaders in Business Foundation) talked about the mission in the Foundation that is to propagate the **idea of equality and diversity** in management and the equitable admission to high managerial positions. During the conference she presented the report *Kobiety we władzach spółek giełdowych w Polsce. Dlaczego nie ma zmiany?* (*Women in the top positions in companies. Why we have no change?*) You can read the report here:

http://www.fundacjaliderekbiznesu.pl/pliki/Raport_kobiety_w_spolkach_gieldowych.pdf



Agnieszka Marianowicz-Szczygieł (Znane Ekspertki) pointed out that Polish women, although they are ambitious and well-educated, are not often heard in the media. The aim of the initiative **Znane Ekspertki** (Known Experts) is to **increase the number of women** in different shows, especially those about economics, and in strategic economy-related conferences that are reported by Polish and foreign media.

More about the campaign:

<http://www.znaneekspertki.pl>



From the left: prof. Elżbieta Zipper, prof. Ewa Syrek, dr Sławomira Kamińska-Berezowska, prof. Joanna Czarnota-Bojarska i prof. Halina Rusek.

The academic panel was formed by **prof Joanna Czarnota-Bojarska** (University of Warsaw), **prof Halina Rusek** (Vice Rector of University of Silesia 2002-2005), **prof Ewa Syrek** (Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology), **prof Elżbieta Zipper** (Faculty of Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry) and **dr Sławomira Kamińska-Bezerowska** (Faculty of Social Sciences).



From the left: prof Rosalind Searle, prof Virginia Schein, prof Barbara Kożusznik, Danuta Pieter.

The goal of the conference was to discuss particular challenges of our times that require creativity, innovation and partnership. It is important to use the talents of women in high managerial positions and support them in solving current problems resulting from great commitment and dedication to their actions. All this entails that women who hold power are a particular group that, from one side, achieve great success and contribute to the development of economy and society, but from the other side, they encounter many problems, like the multiplicity of tasks, possible over-commitment to their duties and overcoming the barriers and stereotypes in fulfilling the role of a manager.

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