



AN END TO MANELS: CLOSING THE GENDER GAP AT EUROPE'S TOP POLICY EVENTS

OPEN SOCIETY
FOUNDATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

This brief looks at gender¹ and speaking roles at European high-level conferences.² It is the first in a series of Open Society Foundations studies looking at how different demographic groups are inadequately represented at agenda-setting discussions.

The number of women who speak at key policy-shaping conferences across Europe is far below that of their male peers. In this brief, we have quantified the gender gap by looking at 23 high-level conferences in Europe from 2012 until mid-2017. We hope the stark picture painted by the data will kick-start a dialogue about the overrepresentation of men at high-level conferences in Europe and encourage action to address it. The onus is now on conference organisers, governments, businesses, and other stakeholders to ensure they are sending and receiving representative delegations at these events.

We hope this report will encourage better monitoring of gender imbalance at conferences and accelerate some existing good practices aimed at ensuring women are better represented. Conference organizers are the gatekeepers to the stage. This is a big responsibility. They make decisions about who will have the opportunity to share their views with heads of state, policy-makers, and business leaders. Journalists report the statements of these speakers to audiences around the world. The dataset that accompanies this brief covers the 23 conferences on the following page and accounts for 12,600 speaking roles between 2012 and mid-2017. We argue that this data sample is large enough to highlight broader trends at high-level European conferences. Our findings show that if one takes the body of data as a whole from 2012 to mid-2017, men occupied 74 percent of these speaking roles and women only 26 percent.³

1 We recognize that gender is not a binary concept. For the purpose of this report, we are identifying as 'women' people whose name is identified with this gender in the culture they are from.

2 There is no uniform definition for this term. We use it to mean conferences at which policy-makers and opinion leaders interact.

3 If you factor out the 2017 data, the share of men and women occupying speaking roles at the 23 high-level conferences for 2012-2016 is very similar: 25 percent female and 75 percent male. Later in the analysis, we will refer to the 2012-2016 data, because we do not have a complete data set for 2017.

Conferences in our dataset

1. Belgrade Security Forum-Serbia
2. Berlin Foreign Policy Forum-Germany
3. Bled Strategic Forum-Slovenia
4. Bruegel Annual Meetings-Belgium
5. Center for European Policy Studies (CEPS) Ideas Lab-Belgium
6. Chatham House London Conference-United Kingdom
7. European Council on Foreign Relations' (ECFR) Annual Council Meeting-Italy (2014), Belgium (2015), The Netherlands (2016)
8. European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS) Annual Conference-Belgium
9. Forum 2000 Conference-Czech Republic
10. Freedom Games-Poland
11. German Marshall Fund's Brussels Forum-Belgium
12. Globsec Bratislava Forum-Slovakia
13. Human Dimension Implementation Meeting-Poland
14. Lennart Meri Conference-Estonia
15. Munich Security Conference-Germany
16. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Forum-France
17. Prague European Summit-Czech Republic
18. Tatra Summit-Slovakia
19. The Riga Conference-Latvia
20. Vision Europe Summit-Germany (2015), Portugal (2016), Italy (2017)
21. World Economic Forum Annual Meeting-Switzerland
22. World Forum for Democracy-France
23. Wroclaw Global Forum-Poland

Our analysis breaks down a conference to the number of speaking roles it contains. For example, a session with a moderator and four panel speakers contains five speaking roles. In this brief, we work with four typical types of speaking roles at conferences: keynote speakers, moderators (synonym: chairs), panelists, and others. The category 'others' could refer to an artistic performance or someone named in the agenda as responsible for communicating logistical information. Our data looks at each speaking role and whether it is occupied by a man or woman; not the number of men and the number of women on a given conference agenda, who may be allocated a speaking role more than once. This is because we think the best way to measure gender balance at conferences is to look at the number of speaking opportunities a conference offers and then to understand how many times a man or a woman is able to contribute to the discussion.

We collected the data for this report by downloading conference agendas from websites. We then verified the data manually. Although we did not select the venues by using a strict methodology, we made sure to include conferences from a range of countries, hosted by organisations from different sectors. We also ensured that the conferences we chose covered a range of topics. We see this brief as the beginning of a body of study.

Our results show that there is a clear and urgent need for organisations hosting high-level conferences in Europe to ensure more women are able to speak at these conferences. Such a wide gender gap is problematic because it overrepresents the opinions of a cohort of people who share similar characteristics. Policy is being informed and designed without adequate input from groups that it affects. There is a risk of forming echo chambers. High speaker homogeneity risks discussions that are out of touch with the wider views of the diverse and sometimes polarized societies found in Europe. Although in this report we only focus on gender, we are in the process of compiling data for further studies on speakers' country of origin and the diversity of topics at high-level conferences.

For me it was coming back from maternity leave and realising I was treated very differently than before, then observing what happened to younger colleagues around me who wanted to move on. I often heard—‘She’s good at her work, but she lacks experience’.

I discovered my own unconscious bias—I didn’t know how many women were working in think-tanks on policy-related subject areas—I never saw them, I never heard from them. It was men sitting on the panels and men writing—or at least being credited with authoring policy briefs.

We realized as women in the policy world, we were at times disadvantaged, we wouldn’t get an opportunity to speak, we were told you don’t have the right titles, you have not written enough yet. Some of the women regularly contributed to research and writing drafts, but were not being mentioned as authors. You have the male heads of think-tanks being put on panels, but asking their younger female colleagues to provide speaking notes. You may as well have had the female colleague on the panel. Being visible at a conference leads to being further visible in your career and being able to develop a profile and be recognized—being denied speaking opportunities because of a lack of seniority holds you back in your career, which prevents you getting speaking opportunities—it’s a vicious circle.

Many of the policy debates are incredibly boring—it’s often the same people, saying the same thing and agreeing with each other. It’s time to have different perspectives and a more vibrant debate. If you have a homogenous group talking about policy challenges and proposing policy solutions—how can they speak for people who are different from them? The people who are observing and analyzing the policy context, challenges and finding policy solutions need to be as diverse as the societies in which these policies are applied.

Policy-makers need to hear what women need, what men need, what younger people need, what elderly people need, what immigrants need. If they don’t, the policies don’t work—or work for some people and not for others. Asking for greater gender diversity is only the beginning—we need to go on to look at age, religion, politics, regional, and ethnic diversity.

Corinna Horst

Senior Fellow and Deputy Director, Brussels Office of the German Marshall Fund of the United States. Co-founder of the Brussels Binder, a directory of female policy experts.

A GIGANTIC GENDER GAP AT HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCES IN EUROPE

Conferences can compound existing gender inequality

The European Institute for Gender Equality tracks seven categories in which men and women are on average unequal in EU Member States. These areas are: work, money, knowledge, time, power, health, and violence. The most current data in the index is for 2015, which gives the European Union in aggregate a score of 66 percent equality between men and women.⁴ At 100 percent, men and women would be equal; the score shows that men are significantly privileged over women in the European Union.

However, if one looks at the gender composition of individuals completing tertiary education in the European Union, we see a nearly balanced gender picture. The share of both highly educated men and highly educated women was around 24 percent across the European Union. Although this indicator is imperfect (there are other ways to gather the kind of social, political, economic, and other insights sought by conference hosts), it does show that at the base of the 'talent pyramid', gender equality is nearly perfect in aggregate in the European Union. The gender gap emerges very clearly, however, in paid leadership positions in Europe and it is clearly visible in the circles of people to whom hosts give a voice at high-level conferences.

When we look at the fields from which conference organisers recruit speakers, such as politics, we can see how men are overrepresented in the European Union in many areas. We also see how easy it would be for a conference organiser to compound gender inequality without the targeted recruitment of female speakers. For example, the percentage of women who hold office in ministries, parliaments, and regional assemblies is under 30 percent for all three levels of government.

⁴ European Institute for Gender Equality, Gender Equality Index 2015, <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index>

Economics is another area for which conference organizers in our sample often recruit speakers. Again, we see that women are underrepresented at the highest levels in this sector; just over 20 percent of board members in the EU's largest companies are female, and just under 20 percent of the central banks in EU member states have female board members.

Current recruitment strategies in these sectors appear to reinforce the massive gender inequalities that are already present within them. Targeted recruitment is needed to ensure that high-level conferences do not over represent the opinions of cohorts that are already dramatically overrepresented.

One might argue that gender alone cannot remedy the problem of homogeneity at conferences. We recognize the need for other types of diversity as well. Yet, there are some issues on which more gender diversity alone would likely change the conversation significantly. In their article, 'Are Disagreements among Male and Female Economists Marginal at Best?', Ann Mari May, Mary G. McGarvey, and Robert Whaples demonstrated that there can be significant opinion gaps between male and female economists on average, at least in the United States of America.⁵ For example, the authors found that:

*Important differences exist in the views of male and female economists on issues including the minimum wage, views on labor standards, health insurance, and especially on explanations for the gender wage gap and issues of equal opportunity in the labor market and the economics profession itself. These results lend support to the notion that gender diversity in policy-making circles may be an important aspect in broadening the menu of public policy choices.*⁶

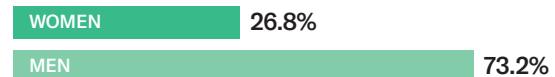
The survey was of economists in the United States holding membership in the American Economic Association.⁷

FIGURE 1
Graduates of tertiary education

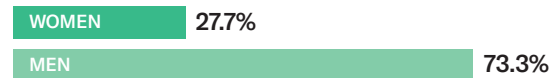


Source: European Institute for Gender Equality, Gender Equality Index 2015, <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2015/domain/knowledge>

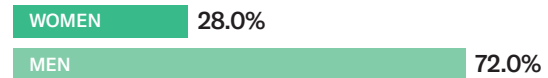
FIGURE 2
Share of ministers



Share of members of parliament



Share of members of regional assemblies



Source: European Institute for Gender Equality, Gender Equality Index 2015, <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2015/domain/power>

FIGURE 3
Share of members of boards in largest quoted companies, supervisory board or board of directors



Share of Board members of Central Bank



Source: European Institute for Gender Equality, Gender Equality Index 2015, <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2015/domain/power>

FIGURE 4
Aggregate share of men and women at 23 conferences in Europe from 2012-2016



Source: Open Society Foundations, calculated from conference agendas

5 Ann Mari May, Mary G. McGarvey, and Robert Whaples, 'Are Disagreements Among Male and Female Economists Marginal at Best?: A Survey of AEA Members and Their Views on Economics and Economic Policy', *Contemporary Economic Policy* (ISSN 1465-7287) Vol. 32, No. 1, January 2014, pp. 111-132, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/coep.12004/full>

6 *ibid*

7 *ibid*

There are various fields that are particularly male dominated—foreign policy and security, for instance. No one is going to explicitly tell you no, it's more of a structural thing—a combination of gender and age. Being a young researcher it's usually more difficult to be heard.

The conference network sees me as someone who administrates or coordinates things, people are sometimes surprised to hear that I am a Mandarin speaker, and that I have lived in China and written policy briefs.

There was a time when a male colleague agreed to talk on issues beyond his expertise, instead of referring the matter to the in-house female expert. I doubt he would have done that with a male colleague.

When organising conferences, I encountered a lot of difficulties bringing female colleagues to speak on Asia at my events, or even European female experts on Asia. I was sure there were women in the field but my networks were constantly leading me back to men.

I realized it would be so helpful if there was a tool to help find a female expert on energy or economics.

We have all these extremely talented women on policy, graduates from top universities. We must have them talking about all these issues that affect society as a whole including women—it should be so self-evident. I've been in discussions where there are 10 men on a panel—it's such a bad example for younger women in the field.

We need to rethink how you define an expert. We know that the highest echelons of companies are still male dominated, but there are people behind the scenes who have done the work that CEOs present, and these teams are very diverse. I do a lot of the background checking for women who want to be included in the Brussels Binder. I'm amazed by how many women in all sorts of fields are out there. They are really highly qualified experts.

Virginia Marantidou

Co-founder of the Brussels Binder and former Asia program coordinator at the German Marshall Fund

In order for high-level conferences in Europe to be more inclusive and reflective of wider societal views and standpoints, we have to understand which perspectives are underrepresented (or completely absent) at these venues. There is little point to holding high-level conferences if they only lend a voice to those people who are already in positions which give their opinions gravitas. This is especially true because Europe has experienced several crises in the past decade, from the financial crisis to the influx of people seeking protection from ongoing conflict, to terror attacks. In Europe, elections and public opinion polls have often shown the fanning-out and sometimes the pluralization of opinions in European societies.⁸ High-level conferences in Europe need to help bring diverse perspectives into a constructive conversation about policy options to guide Europe's future.

Quantifying the Gender Gap at High-Level Conferences in Europe

We have collected data for 23 conferences from 2012 until mid-2017. We acknowledge that organisations have more than one conference per year, but we limited the number of venues we could include in this exploratory report for practical reasons. The data collection deadline for this report closed before the year's end in 2017, so our analysis draws conclusions from the five years of data for which we have full data sets: 2012-2016. This brief also includes an incomplete dataset for 2017; it includes data from the 23 conferences that was publicly available during our data collection phase.

From an 'aggregate' view

In this brief we have referred so far only to what we call the 'aggregate view', looking at the share of speaking roles occupied by women at all conferences together as one dataset for all years (2012-2016). We calculated the share of speaking roles held women and men as a percentage from the total amount of possible speaking opportunities. This approach provides us with a big picture of who is given a voice across Europe and demonstrates that women were only given a quarter

(25 percent) of all the opportunities to present at conferences from 2012 to 2016.

It is important to acknowledge that the data available for each of the 23 conferences varied from 2012 to 2016. For example, some conferences are more recently established than others, or have a limited number of past agendas available online, leaving gaps in our dataset (see Table 1 below to view data sets per years of information). We note that by using this 'aggregate view' the data from longer-running conferences carries more weight. It is also important to note that the 23 conferences do not have the same number of speaking roles per conference. Larger conferences with more speaking roles weigh in heavier on the aggregate picture. Although this way of looking at the data gives us an idea of the share of speaking roles occupied by men and women at European conferences in the five years between 2012 and 2016, we can learn more by using a second analytical frame: a 'per conference' framework.

From a 'per conference, per year' view

Table 1 takes a 'per conference, per year' view, displaying the share of female-occupied speaking roles. This approach allows us to show the data gaps in our set and shows both annual changes per conference. It also contains the average shares of speaking roles occupied by women over the number of years the conference had publicly available data.

Regardless of which view you choose to look at high-level conferences around Europe, there can only be one conclusion: men are overrepresented in speaking roles across Europe and women are underrepresented. In most cases, we can see little progress toward more gender-balanced high-level conferences. Looking at the period 2012 to 2016 on average, the share of women who occupied speaking roles has increased only slightly.

Acknowledging the data gaps and weighting issues, this data set encompassing 23 conferences and 12,600 speaking roles reveals a very clear picture of the deep gender gap at high-level conferences. Our data shows that women did not represent more than 28 percent of all invited speakers in 2016. From our

⁸ Christal Morehouse and Yann-Sven Rittelmeyer, 'The "New Pact for Europe"-Project: Debating the European Crises', in *Solidarity in the European Union: Challenges and Perspectives*, pp. 124-129, <https://dacenter.tau.ac.il/sites/abraham.tau.ac.il/files/Solidarity%20Book.pdf>

TABLE 1. Share of speaking roles occupied by women per conferences and year, 2012 to mid-2017

SHARE OF SPEAKING ROLES OCCUPIED BY WOMEN	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	AVERAGE OF THE EVENT	EVOLUTION	2017
Belgrade Security Forum	29%	35%	31%	28%	36%	32%		—
Berlin Foreign Policy Forum	16%	14%	28%	28%	38%	25%		—
Bled Strategic Forum	14%	19%	21%	31%	22%	21%		—
Bruegel Annual Meetings	0%	11%	22%	26%	27%	17%		28%
Center for European Policy Studies and Ideas Lab	—	—	—	23%	22%	22%		28%
Chatham House London Conference	—	—	24%	28%	44%	32%		—
European Council on Foreign Relations' Annual Council Meeting	—	—	27%	25%	28%	27%		—
European Strategy and Policy Analysis System Annual Conference	—	—	—	41%	27%	34%		—
Forum 2000 Conference	26%	22%	14%	19%	21%	20%		—
Freedom Games	—	—	19%	27%	25%	24%		—
German Marshal Fund's Brussels Forum	24%	17%	22%	31%	36%	26%		33%
Globsec Bratislava Forum	10%	11%	13%	10%	17%	12%		20%
Human Dimension Implementing Meeting	45%	54%	51%	56%	46%	51%		—
Lennart Meri Conference	11%	15%	11%	18%	20%	15%		21%
Munich Security Conference	9%	15%	14%	18%	17%	15%		23%
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Forum	35%	27%	25%	43%	40%	34%		36%
Prague European Summit	—	—	—	21%	19%	20%		24%
Tatra Summit	—	5%	10%	12%	29%	14%		—
The Riga Conference	7%	25%	20%	27%	17%	19%		—
Vision European Summit	—	—	—	26%	31%	29%		17%
World Economic Forum Annual Meeting	—	—	20%	19%	23%	20%		29%
World Forum for Democracy	26%	34%	41%	41%	44%	37%		40%
Wroclaw Global Forum	17%	14%	15%	22%	24%	18%		18%
AVERAGE OF THE YEAR	19%	21%	22%	27%	28%	—		26%

Source: Open Society Foundations, calculated from conference agendas

LOWEST %

HIGHEST %

own attendance of several of these conferences, we were concerned to see that all male panels ('manels') still occur regularly in Europe.

From a 'speaking role' view

Our dataset allows one to disaggregate the roles female and male speakers occupy. In general, the majority of conference speakers (both male and female) in our dataset have been panel speakers: 74 percent. Moderators make up about 17 percent, followed by 8 percent keynote speakers and 1 percent for other types of contributions, such as cartoonist.

Since panel speakers form the largest cohort of speakers (7,899 speaking roles in total), panels are of particular importance for efforts at diversifying conferences as well as keynote speaker roles that tend to give a speaker more prominence. These roles are slotted into agendas at peak-hours of high attendance and they are often longer and are more like a monologue. Keynote roles carry a lot of weight and should be closely checked for over- and underrepresentation. Moderator roles tend to be less vocal roles, meaning that moderators are generally asked not to take sides, present a particular argument or take up a lot of time speaking. Moderators are usually expected to keep conversations flowing; to keep speakers on subject

and on time; and to engage the audience. In our view, moderator roles are important for conferences to function overall, but it would be a mistake to concentrate women in these roles to make the overall conference speaker role statistics look more balanced. We do not consider the 'other' category (1 percent of speaking roles) as an effective measure to address underrepresentation and overrepresentation at conferences.

Later in 2018, we plan to produce a brief that looks at trends matching gender and topics at these 23 conferences. Another brief we are working on will analyze geographic diversity at high-level conferences. However, our current hypothesis is that women's voices are not distributed evenly across topics at these conferences. We have found initial evidence that female speakers are overrepresented on certain topics while underrepresented on others. One example of this overrepresentation is at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. This conference does well overall on gender balance. However, when we look closer, we see that women have dominated conversations on gender. For example, in 2014, 2015, and 2016 all speakers on gender were women.

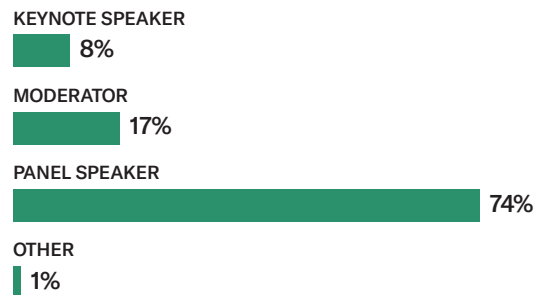
The sessions in question focused on tolerance and nondiscrimination and had similar titles in various years; they included gender equality issues. We think the issues of gender and conference topics deserve more investigation.

Interesting practices

By comparing the gender balance at the 23 conferences in Table 1, we can see that by 2016 some conference hosts had achieved a better gender balance than others. Yet, we have been able to engage in dialogue with only a few of the 23 conference hosts at the time of publication of this brief. Our interaction with a limited number of hosts has constrained our knowledge of this field, and we hope that the publication of this data will generate more opportunities for dialogue. Our goal is to find out more about good practice in achieving gender balance at high-level conferences. In the conversations we have had so far, we have come across practices that we think could be useful to organisations hosting high-level conferences.

FIGURE 5

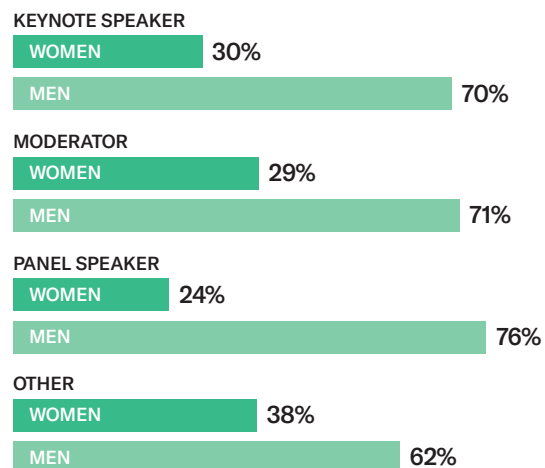
Share of speaking roles for all conferences 2012-2016



Source: Open Society Foundations, calculated from conference agendas

FIGURE 6

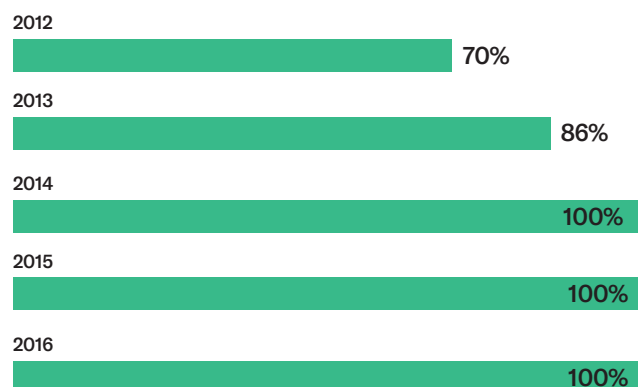
Share of women and men for all conferences, by speaking roles 2012-2016



Source: Open Society Foundations, calculated from conference agendas

FIGURE 7

Share of gender panels made up by female speakers at the HDIM conference



Source: Open Society Foundations, calculated from conference agendas

Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs

Chatham House is a London-based think tank and its annual London Conference looks at international affairs through a global lens. Its mission is to help build a sustainably secure, prosperous, and just world. Chatham House's 2016 London Conference was nearly gender-balanced. Women made up

44 percent of speaking roles in 2016. Chatham House achieved this near-gender-balance despite the London Conference's focus on topics such as politics and economics. These are areas that are statistically more likely to feature a male speaker. We asked Chatham House to share with us how they achieved near gender equality among their conference speakers.

Chatham House has been exploring the intersection of gender, international relations and think tanks as part of its commitment to the Institute's mission to create a sustainably secure, prosperous and just world for all. Research at Chatham House has explored issues such as gender equality and economic growth, women's rights, violence against women and girls, and the role of women in peace and security. To underpin this research and in recognition of how a gendered lens can inform research practices and strengthen analytical work, Chatham House has recently launched an internal gender awareness action plan. Covering three strands of Chatham House's activities, the work will aim to build a toolkit for think tanks operating within international affairs. The plan sets out objectives across research and analysis; convening and debate; publications and outreach.

Specifically on convening and debate, Chatham House is committed to no all-male speaker panels at events and encouraging staff to uphold this commitment when speaking externally. Chatham House places equal importance on creating a greater mix of gender representation in participants, as well as ensuring events and workshops are designed to facilitate and encourage inputs and contributions from all participants. Some areas of improvement can already be seen, particularly with Chatham House's flagship annual London Conference where there has been a year on year increase in both female speakers and participants. This will be an on-going process that will involve careful staff training and accurate monitoring of statistics in the coming years.

Laura Dunkley

Research Partnerships Assistant, Director's Office, Chatham House

GUIDELINES FOR OECD STAFF

Gender balance in conferences and events around the world remains persistently poor. The consequences for women are that they:

- a. are not in a position to express their views and impact policy choices;
- b. do not benefit from the possibility to develop their networks, one of the key recommendations of the OECD in terms of overcoming gender gaps in entrepreneurship and employment.

This also reinforces the bias that men are the most important decision-makers, and does not help young women identify with strong role models.

A number of high-profile initiatives have emerged in order to make gender inequality more visible, which now keep close track of all-male panels. Many ask for support and signatures for their pledges. For example, @EUPanelWatch monitors and highlights all-male panels in Brussels with pictures and tweets to put pressure on event organisers, as well as speakers from government, business, and other stakeholders who take part in panel debates, while GenderAvenger asks men to sign a pledge: 'I will not serve as a panelist at a public conference when there are no women on the panel'.

- Aim for 50% women speakers or contributors in fora, conferences, meetings and publications organised by the OECD. This involves including women, from the earliest preparatory stages, in the draft lists of targeted speakers, meeting participants, and potential authors.
- Encourage delegations to propose an equal number of men and women speakers and/or participants amongst national experts for OECD conferences, meetings, and as potential authors for publications.
- Only accept to speak on panels that include at least one woman speaker.
- If no women speakers are included in conference panels, seminars, or as contributing authors to publications to which OECD staff is asked to contribute, propose that key OECD female colleagues be invited instead, and suggest additional experts in governments, or wider society.

GABRIELA RAMOS
Chief of Staff and Sherpa, OECD

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also makes a concerted effort to ensure gender balance at the events they host, as well as those attended by OECD staff. Gabriela Ramos, chief of staff and sherpa at the OECD, oversees this work and has circulated internal guidelines on gender equality. An excerpt is above.

Bruegel

Bruegel is a think tank specialising in economics, an area in which people who reach top posts are predominately men. Statistically and practically speaking, if Bruegel were to search for speakers relying on addressing the top hierarchal posts at economic institutions, their conferences would almost certainly be rounds of men speaking to men. This is a challenge that Bruegel has actively highlighted within the organisation. We asked Bruegel to share their approach.

At Bruegel, the gender ratio is regularly monitored for every single event we organise. Female-male speaker ratios at all Bruegel events in Q1 and Q2 of 2017 were 23% and 8% higher than the 2015 figures, which was when we first started tracking these ratios. Besides constant monitoring and dissemination of results between our teams, we regularly recommend female speakers to our fellows who are in charge of different events. Bruegel is also an active supporter of The Brussels Binder, an initiative aimed at creating a database of female policy experts. Fair gender representation on panels is an absolute priority for Bruegel.

Scarlett Varga

Partnerships Manager, Bruegel

BRUSSELS FORUM 2018 PARTICIPANT AND SPEAKER CRITERIA

- Ensure that participants and speakers are interested in the transatlantic relationship.
- Think about invitees who will bring a different perspective/ an innovative view/ challenge to the discussions.
- Make sure participants and speakers are experts in their respective field.
- Make sure they are comfortable with the interactive and informal formats at Brussels Forum.
- Submit a diverse list of invitees that includes:
 - at least 50% women
 - balance between 60% participants and 40% speaker suggestions.
 - at least 30% new participants (meaning they have never attended Brussels Forum before).
 - different sectors

GERMAN MARSHALL FUND OF THE UNITED STATES

German Marshall Fund of the United States

The German Marshall Fund of the United States makes a concerted, institution-wide effort to ensure diversity at its conferences. This has sometimes resulted in good gender balance at their venues.

We asked them about their practice, which includes strong efforts to feature diverse voices at conferences. The German Marshall Fund aspires to have 50 percent male-female speakers at its conferences.

THE BRUSSELS BINDER

Excuses and Answers

EXCUSE:

'They were not on the speaker list but there were a lot of women present in the audience'.

ANSWER:

'Present is not the same as "presenting"'.
Stress that featuring women on stage is a measure of how much an organization values women's voices and understands that broadening the perspectives enriches the conversation.

Stress that featuring women on stage is a measure of how much an organization values women's voices and understands that broadening the perspectives enriches the conversation.

EXCUSE:

'Look how many of our moderators are women'.

ANSWER:

'Good, now put them on panels, too'.

This is a common excuse. Make the point that moderators are important and can steer the discussion; however, they will not really have a chance to voice their opinions and establish themselves as experts, so they are no substitute for women listed as experts.

Brussels Binder

Although we did not include a conference hosted by this organisation in our study, its work is relevant to closing the gender gap at high-level conferences in Europe. The Brussels Binder is a network of women working in think tanks and its website hosts a database of female experts based in Europe. You can click on 'find an expert' on their website: <https://brusselsbinder.org>. You can search for female experts by name, sector (public, private, NGO, etc.), areas of expertise, regions of expertise, languages spoken, and country of residence.

The Brussels Binder has also produced a toolkit that sets out guidelines for conference organizers. The guidelines aim to achieve gender-balanced conferences. The kit includes guidelines for conference speakers, who can use their interaction with conference hosts to point out gender imbalances. One example is: 'Request confirmation of who the other panelists are, and how gender balance will be achieved'.⁹ The tool kit also includes some ideas of how to challenge a conference organiser, when he or she is trying to justify why allowing men to be overrepresented at a conference is (or was) the only option.

⁹ The Brussels Binder, Toolkit, <https://brusselsbinder.org/toolkit/>

The policy environment here in Brussels covers a great variety of issues—from banking to climate policy, EU-Asia relations to transatlantic cooperation—but when these issues are discussed in conferences, these conferences almost always fail to really represent 50 percent of the global population: women. I'm wondering how long this disconnect can continue.

In my experience, if you have a panel that is gender balanced and age balanced, it really makes policy debates refreshing, much more lively and more fruitful. From that point of view, the big think tanks that organise conferences should have an interest in inviting as many women as men and to encourage young voices. In my opinion men and women are different, they share life but have different lives, experiences, points of view. Representing these complementary perspectives is beneficial to all of us.

Ironically, many conference organisers are female. Yet for many conferences the seniority of speakers is seen as more important than gender-equality, so the inequality on panels is often also a mirror of gender-inequality within institutions.

We need a change in awareness; women have to start consciously working together, recommending each other, backing each other up in their different institutions—the Brussels Binder helps achieve that. Beyond that, the Brussels Binder is a concrete tool that prevents the old excuse—‘Oh I couldn't find a female expert,’—now that definitely won't be true, open the Brussels Binder and you will find hundreds.

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The views expressed here are made in a private capacity, and do not necessarily represent those of Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

We have quantified the gender gap at 23 conferences in Europe. The results indicate that there is plenty of room for improvement. Conference organisers can begin to make a difference by implementing the following changes:

1. Targeted Speaker Recruitment

Conference organisers must find ways to counteract, rather than reinforce gender inequalities that have resulted in patriarchal structures at many organisations. Statistics show that men most often occupy the top positions at many policy organisations. To achieve greater gender balance at conferences, organisers have to look beyond the 'protocols' of past decades. They must look not just at industry leaders, but recruit talented thinkers and speakers (both male and female) who do not overrepresent a particular gender or cohort.

2. Monitoring

Conference organisers should be aware of the overall composition of their speaker panels. If men occupy three out of four speaking roles at a conference, a cohort dominates the conversation. Thus, conference organisers should collect data on the share of speaking roles they give to men and women and evaluate the results. They should aim to have diverse conversations that do not over represent the views of a particular gender or cohort.

3. No 'Manels' or 'Fanel's'

Speakers also have responsibilities, especially panel speakers and moderators. These participants need to be aware of the gender composition of their panels. If the panel contains only men ('manel'), or only women ('fanel'), speakers should draw the conference organiser's attention to this and ask to be on a balanced panel.

4. More Fresh Voices

Prospective speakers should make it easier for conference organisers to understand their area of expertise, their speaking style (via a video clip), and where they draw their insights from (such as publications, community organizing, etc.). Joining a network like the Brussels Binder can help. There are other national, regional, and commercial networks.

5. Independent Assessment

An independent group should document the levels of representation at a large cross-section of conferences in Europe and regularly publish data on overrepresented and underrepresented groups.

ANNEX

You can view the report online and download the full dataset here:

<https://osf.to/endmanels>

