

Cross Mentoring Project for women in leading positions

Project in the framework of the program for positive actions
of the Ministry for Equal Opportunities

Luxembourg, 16.10.2006

Speech of Ms Marie-Josée Jacobs

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

With this conference, the first phase of positive actions for the Cross Mentoring Project for women in leading positions is coming to an end.

First of all, I would like to congratulate the 12 mentees and their mentors for their commitment they have demonstrated during this year. Knowing myself what an overloaded agenda means, the time these persons have dedicated to this project is remarkable and very well appreciated.

Mesdames Mentees,

I have the honour to hand you out the certificate confirming that you participated in this Cross Mentoring Programme.

Mesdames Mentees, Mesdames and Messieurs Mentors,

You had the chance to participate on an exceptional project. The first one of this type in Luxembourg. Indeed, you have shared your experience and know-how with somebody else, in a time which is more and more characterized by individualism and competition. You entered into a relationship with a person you did not know before and you have worked together with this person. The six organisations that participated allowed their employees to work across borders with other organisations. The project has demonstrated well that it is even possible to bypass mental boundaries.

- Women and men from different hierarchical levels could work together.
- Young, dynamic and innovative organisations, like IEE, could work together with traditional organisations, like Deutsche Bank.
- Small entities from the financial sector, like BDO and Banque Hapoalim could work together with big organisations like DuPont de Nemours and Good Year.

The evaluation shows that both parties, mentee and mentor, could profit from this approach. As Ms Knott, who is leading the project together with Ms Klapper, highlighted all the time, this approach is a win-win situation as both parties are winning and profiting. And I can only confirm this!

The evaluation shows that this programme allowed the **mentees** to reach their professional goals in a better way. For 81% of the mentees the topic 'how to deal with conflicts' has been particularly important. 63% found possibilities to co-ordinate their professional life with their private life better. 63% found that the subject about their career development has been one of the most important ones.

Even so mentoring is first of all a tool to support the mentees – and they knew how to benefit from it - 71% of the **mentors** could improve their qualities as a manager. 57% of the mentors mentioned that they now have noticed women with high potential under their colleagues at work. All realised how important the topic of a work-life balance between the private and professional life is.

These results underline the eligibility of such a Cross Mentoring Project.

The six companies that participated could refer to some motivated women with the high potential to go up the career ladder.

The Ministry for Equal Opportunities has gone a step further in choosing a thematic approach in its programme for positive actions. It is working in a pragmatic way with a pool of different companies. This experience will be useful for the future.

A subject for 2007 will be the equality in salaries. I can imagine that organisations that are ready to invest in this topic will meet with other organisations to ensure an approach of best practice. I will support all organisations that will participate with the Ministry for Equal Opportunities in the project about equality in salaries

This project is linked to a survey done in the United States. The study compares the salaries of women and men who are taking decisions at a very high hierarchical level. If you compare women in the same position of « Senior Manager » with men, there is a difference in salary of 9% up to 19% in favour for men.

I am very pleased to see that a number of companies want to continue with this Cross Mentoring Project in the framework of the programme for positive actions. In addition, a certain number of organisations expressed their wish to join this project.

This shows us that this is a project that opens the borders between different countries.

Originally, we could benefit from the experience of a German project. Now we are at the stage where we can bring together organisations from Germany, Switzerland, Israel and Luxembourg. This is not the first time that one of our projects with positive actions moves to an international level.

- The project with positive actions from Price Waterhouse Coopers has had an influence at a European level. The sensitisation about the topic of equal opportunity for women and men for the entire European network is a newly created mission.
- For the Dexia group a survey about the role of women within the Dexia group has been done that resulted in an action plan, followed by the programme of positive actions in Luxembourg.
- The project run by Hilton Luxembourg had an impact on the international level. The management of "Hilton International" recommended to all Hilton hotels in Europe and North Africa to elaborate an action plan for the programme of Gender Diversity.

Coming back to the situation here in Luxembourg, so far 56 projects with positive actions have been taken place. 17'488 people or 6,12% of employees work in an organisation being aware that equal opportunity between men and women counts as a factor for success.

This Cross Mentoring Project shows that besides the quantitative figures the qualitative aspect is very important.

«Only » twelve mentees together with their mentors participated directly in this project. Nevertheless, this will probably have a strong snowball effect. If we quickly have a look in the future, I could imagine the following scenarios:

- In a couple of years some of these mentees will have taken on more responsibilities in different organizations.
- In future teams, mentees and mentors will see that women and men will work equally together taking into account that private and professional obligations are a normality.
- In organizations that participated in this Cross Mentoring Project, women with high potential will be regularly discovered and supported in a systematic way in their career development.
- It will be normal to integrate these strategic reflections in the development of an organisation and the equal opportunity for women and men will be normality.

Mesdames, Messieurs, I count on you to realise this vision!