Debate-Conference: "Empower women to take ownership of the digital world"
Transcript

Viviane Reding

You see, we have a little advance, and these young women who finished university, they are going to work with a result that between the ages of 25 and 34 women are earning more than men in Luxembourg. It is a European exception as usually, it is the opposite. You all have already heard about the gender pay gap: the 16% European average that women are earning less than men. That's why I invented an equal pay day, the day from when women are not earning anything and are working for free. In 2017, it was the 3rd of November but it changes every year depending on statistics. It is to show you that here in Luxembourg, it is an exception to the rule, because, and it has to do with studies, women between 25 and 34 years old are at 51% graduated against only 37% of men. However, from 34 years old happiness is over, and Luxembourg joins the European average for the simple reason that pregnancy often interrupts the launch of women in their career.

So what is the specificity of women in Luxembourg besides the good news that I said? Well, they are overrepresented in the field of education with 64% of them, in the social service & health field 73%, part-time work concerns almost only women. The time spent on domestic tasks is on average 4 hours for women and 2 hours for men. But good news, men are starting to take their parental leave. More and more fathers are taking their parental leave. This number has been multiplied by 3. It means that a mentality change is happening slowly but surely. Men and women want to be equals and share the daily activities.

The situation is less bright when it comes to women leaders, women managers, women at high-levels of decision-making, women directors or women CEO, the Luxembourgish average is very low, one of the lowest in Europe with 24%. Management jobs are also pretty low, we are not really well positioned in regards to the European average of 36%. As for women in Executive Boards, the situation is totally awful : they are 12%. The European average is 25% and for French people in the room, in France, it is 43%, because they have a law on quotas. So here is approximately the situation. I think it is important to explain in general where women are, what they are doing, what their issues are because when we move on to the field of digital all these numbers are amplified.

First of all, digital in general, I once heard at a conference a very interesting sentence: "the digital will not support business; it will be business." It means that digital is not one, or two, or three, or five occupations with the engineers and the mathematicians, no. Digital will be found in horizontal everywhere. Each occupation will be influenced by digital and 90% of future jobs will require digital skills. Therefore without digital skills, it will be impossible to move forward. Yet, where are our women? 16% of the specialists in technologies and 17%

of the students in technologies. Thus, they are nowhere, and if we don't make huge efforts, we will see the impacts. The good numbers that I told you for our young women between the age of 25 and 33 will not stay as good and will not be able to reflect with the age if we don't solve this digital issue.

I don't actually understand why women are not taking digital in charge. I talked about this with Christiane Wickler because for us, it has always been difficult. When we started to work, we were the only women, there were structures established for hundreds and hundreds of years, thus it was very difficult to push. Nowadays, there are no structures; it is completely new, the burden of millennia is off our shoulders. We can invent, we can move forward, we can innovate, we can create. That is more or less the message that we have to spread. This is the reason why I am very glad that the director of WIDE (Women In Digital Empowerment) is with us to tell us how they insert themselves to help women to understand.

At the European Commission and European Parliament, we took on the case. There is the *digital skills and jobs coalition* with 300 members and 90 organisations. They are committed to formation and certification which is very important, and also to internships which is new. The Commissioner for ICT just launched a pilot project in order to make specific internships in cyber-security, artificial intelligence, and big data. There will be 6,000 positions in 2018. I already spoke with her to make sure that a special effort to help women in that way will be done. Then there is also the new Women in Digital strategy which is trying to break stereotypes but I won't talk so much about it as we have two specialists with us.

First of all, Mrs. Wickler, who sees it from a practical point of view, from the entrepreneur who perceives changes in the way we will be working in the future, jobs, the world of work, business world, how she looks in the future. This is the entrepreneur who is doing it in a concrete way, not in a modern way but a traditional one. However, she will also explain how this traditional will be impacted by digital. As I said all jobs will be impacted. Then the woman who is specifically dealing with digital. We will learn how to attract young women so they take in charge these new technologies and commit themselves in that sense. Here are the grounds for today's discussion and I would like to ask Christiane to take over.

Christiane Wickler

Welcome to this beautiful House of Europe. I am, indeed, a "hands-on" entrepreneur, we sell peas and carrots among others. I believe that this is something which as long as the world survives won't change. We will eat, and we will try to eat three times a day, that's the good news. We are women and we continue to like clothes and shoes we take ownership of it and we are proud. And so this digital world in business gives us incredible opportunities. It is, especially, something that we shouldn't be scared of but we should develop ownership. Because the fact that there is light here is for us something totally normal although before it wasn't. Digitalisation is exactly the same, it is a tool.

Personally, I am sometimes a bit annoyed when I get in my car and my iPhone says 32 minutes to go back home. But I don't want to go home so what are you telling me? This

digitalisation everywhere is something that can seem really invasive sometimes. On the other hand, all you need is to not look at it and you won't see it.

In my job, digitalisation will allow me to give to the people I am working with, my staff, a new meaning in the company. The tasks that don't have a lot of meaning in abstraction will disappear with digitalisation. That is to say, to give you a concrete example, the cashier can become a salesperson again. As a cashier, you are not really in contact with customers although business is by definition a human act between two people. The cashier who has to do her 500 customers a day, who is controlled to not exceed one minute and three seconds to deal with one client. This cashier doesn't think that it is a human act to pass along lemonade, cola or toilette paper on the conveyor belt. So all of these tasks thanks to digitalisation we will be able to do them through a machine, which won't remove the quality of the products nor the after sale analyses of those products. However, the cashier can again become a salesperson in the shop, because we need them there for our customers.

Because who is our big competitor? [it is global players]. It is not e-business because we are going to have to get used to it, it is evident. In the specificity of the Luxembourgish market, a company like mine will never be a global actor. Local, regional, or close cross-border is more precious to me than becoming a global player. However, the global player is present, he doesn't need us anymore. We can, in our physical shops, become again real merchants. It means going outside as explorer to find new product and then sell them to customers.

Because if I analyse my business there are many products under pressure by the margin, selling them is equivalent to put my company in danger. So, all these products who are not, well, it is not sexy to buy toilet paper in a shop, all these services will be taken in charge by big global players. Especially in Luxembourg, where there are 50% of Luxembourgish people and 50% of foreigners, the potential is huge to do real business i.e. go looking for products that our customers need and offer them to them.

Digitalisation is the big opportunity for people working in my company. They have a new meaning in business, a meaning to be able to explain to the customer "if you take this...", "if you add this…". This is the added value. The added value of digitalisation can become a very human added value if we do this the right way. If we ask ourselves why I am here, who is my primary target with the respect for each customer entering the shop, in order to really understand customers' needs.

This is also where business is changing as before only the price mattered. For 2 francs (or 20 cents now) we would have traveled kilometers now the cost matters with the traffic jam, parking to look for… How much does it cost me to go and get this product in the shop and how much is it if I ask for a delivery van? So we surpass the price for the cost. In the past the product imposed the conditions, one special product was wanted, nowadays it is customers' need. So as merchants with digitalisation, we can yet again precisely ask ourselves what are the needs of our customers. Where can I take actions as a service provider and merchant?

In the past, it was also advertising. One thing annoys me deeply as a merchant, it is the "buy one, get one free." Free of charge doesn't exist. If I give someone the time, it is free, if I stop my car to let someone pass on the pedestrian crossing it is free but the second or third chicken that you get for free, someone pays it. As we saw again recently with the slaughterhouse in Bastogne, the producer is the person who pays. We pay taxes, which is absolutely normal, to pay for farmers' subventions because they can't live from their work in order for the mass distribution to push them in a corner and live from a free chicken. I do not agree. Therefore, the product doesn't matter, but customers' need does. The cost of this advertising is also the communication that we want to have with our customers. Communication needs to be clear and honest. Digitalisation forces us to be transparent as nowadys everything can be found online. Trade is again becoming something more honest and transparent. There is no such thing as being in communication with your clients as instead of being hidden somewhere to analyse stats you can get some field experience and listen to your customer.

Just as well with digitalisation, we have this global array, you can go see how Japanese are making sushi or how the Breton are using butter. All of this gives us a particular speed. We are speaking a lot about the dangers of digitalisation but before when you wanted an information you had to go to the library and find a book. Nowadays, once we don't have WiFi for two minutes we get angry. We became extremely fast, and we are eager to learn. Obviously, it also hides some traps. For example, when I see people crossing the street, there have been many accidents this winter with pedestrians, I think it is both pedestrians and drivers faults as they are both stuck on their iPhones. We will have to learn to deal with this.

Honestly for me, when I push a button and the light is on, it is all that matters, I don't care about the physical effects. In digitalisation, it is the same thing if I push on something and the information comes up, I don't care about the language or else. But I'm also not interested in knowing how the last seam of my shoe is done, so we are going to have to relativise. Above all, we need to learn to eradicate fear. We don't have to be afraid, it is our decision to make if the internet will become our master or our tool. It is up to us; it is our responsibility.

As women, I also believe that it is an opportunity because we are not really interested in knowing how it all comes together, we want to have the results because we have other things to do next. I can see there a great chance because the internet is no gender. It is not only addressed to men, or to 70% for men and 30% for women, it is for everyone. Especially young people, who were born with this tool, it gives them from the start all the possibilities to make their own business and to make use of 100% of their talent because information is here. Another benefit is that in schools, especially in Luxembourg, indeed, I know what it is as I have four children: two girls, and two boys. For my girls it was okay but for the boys it was more rock'n'roll. Nowadays classic traditional, technic traditional or modular traditional, the access to knowledge is the same. All this social discrimination will disappear thanks to digitalisation because kids will be able to focus on their real talent, not give all their energy to match their weaknesses but to arise their strength. It is thanks to this knowledge everywhere.

"Big brother is watching you" is something that I am not scared of. If someone wants to see my cellulite, he can, I have nothing to hide at my age. I have some, it is normal. So it is something else that we shouldn't fear. I personally think that in this room, no one wants to wage war to Russia so the rest is not important. I think that it is an absolute added-value to companies, digitalisation gives us the opportunity to be at the same level as big companies and at the same time remain local. As an entrepreneur, this optimisation is needed in its speed or else we will be left on the sidelines. It is thanks to these tools. As I said in the past, electricity is not discriminatory it is something that everyone has access to by just pushing a button. Security is something that keeps us from being creative, fear shouldn't take control.

Viviane Reding

Technology from a realism and everyday life point of view and now technology from a different perspective. In 2014, two young women created the association WIDE (Women In Digital Empowerment) since then they explain how female talent, female sensibility, the way to take things in charge can be a chance for women. They organised the conferences "women and fintech", they organise as well every year the 26-of -April-conferences named "Girls in ICT" to really encourage women to interest themselves in what is behind the iPhone. How it works, why it works, so not only pressing the button but make sure that they can have influence. It is a really important thing that has been said at the end of Christiane's speech, how can we make sure that technologies don't domine us but that we dominate it, make sure that they don't get independent but a tool. Marie-Adélaïde Gervis how do you explain to women that technology is for them?

Marie-Adélaïde Gervis

Thank you Mrs. Reding and good evening to all of you. Yesterday, you [Mrs. Reding] were at a conference «no to victimisation, yes to empowerment» and it actually is our credo. When we created WIDE, we realise that there was a huge lack of women. You gave the numbers earlier I will not go back on them. We wondered why there was such an absence so when creating the association give women the means to act, and get control over the numeric and digital. Therefore, increase the number of women seizing opportunities in what the economy and the digital society has to offer.

We decided to work on three concrete pillars. The first one is self-confidence, we noticed that sometimes women won't embark upon something because stereotypes or misunderstandings on technology exist. For the record, technology is not just raw coding, it is innovation. When we were talking about iPhones, we take an app this is technology, this is what innovate means. We work on self-confidence via the organisation of conferences where we invite women like you [Mrs. Reding] to speak. That is to say role models in order for women to identify with them because it is difficult to project into the future if we can't identify, if we only see men we might tell ourselves that it is not for us.

The second pillar is skills. The goal is not to make each of us a powerful developer, personally I have another job I work in communication but I am not a developer, but to demystify notions, to break down the barriers, to be able to talk with other departments in

the same company, to talk with the IT Department even if I don't work there. It means to demystify words like "cloud computing" what it is, "machine learning" what it is, "HTML" what it is, this is actually not rocket science.

The third pillar is networking. It is often something not well absorbed by women who often separate a lot the private life from the work life, men have more ease to do so. However, networking is a real leverage on career development. This is the reason why all the events that we organise are followed by a cocktail in order for women and men, who are always invited to our events, can work together.

More and more, we shift our actions towards the youth as we noticed, in the numbers that you said, by the way, Mrs. Reding, that there is a small percentage of women in the technological positions as well as in the students, which is I think of 17%. It is very low, and it is scary. Indeed, we observe that it is linked to stereotypes that are making girls reluctant to launch themselves into these careers. It is also linked to the coaching, with teachers who have often no idea on how to deal with diversity within their classes depending on the subject, either way, it is for STEM subjects.

As we are at the House of the European Union, I am going to talk to you about programs that we carry on at a European scale in this theme. Marina, with who I created the association, is, by the way, currently in Brussels at a meeting of the *EU Code Week Ambassador* at the European Commission to present these projects.

The first program is called *Gender4STEM,* and we are working in partnership with the LIST (Luxembourg Institute of Science and Technology) as well as with four other countries. The goal is to develop sensibilisation and education platform for educational professionals to give them concrete tools, so you can imagine testimonies, quizzes, videos... To give them tools on stereotypes and gender bias in the teaching of STEM in order to better handle classes where they have young girls as we sometimes notice that they give up the academic career in the middle of things. To better handle diversity within their classes, this tool will then be available to every teacher. It is not ready yet, it will take a few months to develop.

The second project is named *WowCode2Confidence.* We started it at the end of 2016 for a period of 20 months. It is an exchange project of good practices around coding initiation for women. At WIDE, we have been organising coding classes for four years, since our creation, actually, we started like that. Not to make everyone of us a developer, as I told you earlier, but to light the flame and broaden the outlook, to realise that it is not as complicated as thought. You can't become a developer in a few hours, that's for sure. Once a year, we organise *Rails Girls* for girls in high-schools. It is a coding training and it is obvious that in one day they won't become a developer. However, we can see a translation and a direct impact on self-confidence and the desire to learn something new and eventually even discover something else on technology. We have seen, and it is what is rewarding in this type of actions that we conduct because we really are in the real. We were talking about tangible and virtual but in the end, we are also in the tangible with young women who already created their company, who change their path, who are starting

complementary training to reorient their career. And this is really rewarding, we can actually measure the impact.

A third program is called *eSkills4All*, it started at the end of last year and will be conducted until 2020. We are working with less qualified women, who are often unemployed, often a long-term one, and who have employability which needs help. Often their contact move away from technology, often when we move away from the world of work we also move away from technology even in practice to not be able anymore to use a computer. Thus, we are working on it with the UK, Romania, Cyprus and Greece for these women.

At WIDE, we take care of, I obviously less developed the programs that we are carrying in Luxembourg, I let you go on our website, you will see the different workshops and we have some each month, if you are interested, to understand a bit more what it is. We work with private partners but also with the government, the European Commission, and it is really significant for us to have local support and European support because what is really important for us is to share our experience. It is what we are doing in the different programs that I listed, we exchange good practices with different countries because we all face the same problems. The statistics will change depending on the country but the problem remains the same. We want to make young women in our respective countries keen to launch themselves and to give them the courage to realise that they have their hand on their career, that they are the only ones, that it is only up to them.

Question from the audience "Is Girls Day your initiative?"

No, it is at a European level, it is a more global initiative. However, we do organise events on that day, so the 26th of April, at the high school of "Arts et Métiers". There will be workshops for girls from the high school during the day and in the evening a conference with testimonials of the experience of ICT professionals, where others will be able to join. If you want to, you are welcome to join; you can sign up on our website.

The next event that we are organising, as we organise them quite often, is next Tuesday [the 12th of March] on FinTech, another word that we need to demystify. And I join you [Christiane Wickler] when you said that digital is everywhere, tomorrow's business is by nature digital, we are going to redesign industries and traditional business.