

## Workplace diversity 'vital to economic growth' says Women in Business



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Ahead of International Women's Day this Saturday (8 March), Women in Business NI (WIBNI) has voiced its support for recommendations made by the World Bank Group's 'Gender at Work' Report (February 2014) which calls for bold, innovative measures to level the playing field and unleash women's economic potential. This subject will feature as one of the central debates in the first International Business Women's Conference (IBWC 2014) to be held in Belfast between 12-15th May. A panel discussion on 'The Real Business Case for Diversity', will take place with panelists Dr Ruth Sealy, City of London University & Cranfield University and Danish born global futurist [Anna Lise Kjaer](#), Kjaer Global, leading the debate.

Trends identified in the World Bank report suggest women's workforce participation worldwide has stagnated over the past 30 years, dropping from 57 to 55 percent globally, despite accumulating evidence that jobs benefit women, families, businesses, and communities.

Chief Executive of WIBNI Roseann Kelly said, "The Gender at Work Report from the World Bank Group draws focus to the huge gender gaps that women face globally and points towards the steps organisations and governments must take to address these. "There is a large body of evidence to prove that companies and economies will be most competitive and successful if they empower individuals with the best talent; both male and female. Therefore a holistic, inclusive approach in business is vital to unleash the full potential of the workforce and drive the economy forward," said Roseann.

"WIBNI believes there are valuable lessons to be learned from other countries leading

the way in terms of diversity in business. The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report measures the relative gaps between women and men in over 100 countries across health, education, economy and politics.

"In the 2013 Global Gender Gap Report, Ireland is ranked 6<sup>th</sup>; the United Kingdom ranked 18<sup>th</sup>; whilst Nordic countries continue to lead the way, with Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden ranking in the top four places. Notably, these countries have adopted policies aimed at promoting women in leadership and placed a focus on education and flexibility in the workplace.

"It is the responsibility of business leaders across all sectors to shift their mindset towards encouraging diversity and government must do as much as possible to encourage individual entrepreneurship," said Roseann.

Kate Marshall, Chair of WIBNI adds, "We have taken the step of hosting our first international conference to bring together a global audience to address and explore core business issues which have impact upon individuals, organisations and economies. Our ultimate aim is to empower and inspire individuals to unlock their own potential and that of their employees. We also hope that we can encourage policymakers locally and further afield to create a more supportive environment to allow that to happen."

Full information on the International Business Women's Conference 2014 is available at [www.ibwc2014.com](http://www.ibwc2014.com) or on Twitter @IBWC2014

[women in business](#)



## **Emma Cowan**

Emma Cowan has worked as a copywriter, editor, designer and business consultant for the last 20 years.

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