

International Conference on Empowering Women

12 June 2010 • Instituto Cervantes, Tokyo



The challenges and opportunities of empowering women: An insight into current political, legal, economic, and cultural aspects in Europe and Japan.

Instituto Cervantes, 2-9 Rokubancho, Chiyoda-ku. Ichigaya – Yotsuya.
All Sessions will take place in the Instituto Cervantes Auditorium FB1
Simultaneous interpretation in Japanese, English and Spanish

To mark the occasion of Spain's Presidency of the European Union, this seminar emphasizes the opportunity for a dialogue between Europe and Japan in the area of women empowerment. More than 10 speakers from Japan and four European countries, Spain, the Netherlands, Norway and Germany, with backgrounds ranging from academia, advocacy and policy making, to media, consultancy and CEO management, will present and discuss propositions and experiences fostering women empowerment. Three levels of society: government, private sector and individuals, will be examined. The aim of the seminar is to bring together a range of insights and opinions and discuss the outcomes and possibilities of recent initiatives across these countries and find ways in which they are brought into closer contact. Women's empowerment has in this context a dual meaning: it refers to women's access to opportunities and decision making processes and also signifies a reevaluation of the contribution of women and men to society in general.

Of the many changes taking place in our societies, the change in women's status is among the most striking. Women's educational level is rising and their talents are viewed as valuable assets for employers and thus, for national development. This has placed high stakes on education and innovation as growth drivers. In the private sector, employment of women is increasing. Data now shows that women's contribution to company strategy and management enhances productivity and profits. In recent years, Europe and Japan have taken a number of initiatives in many areas to empower women. These initiatives are understood to not only enhance women's welfare, but are part of a broader commitment to social sustainability and quality of life. At government level, legal reforms and policies are tackling longstanding barriers for gender equality. Norway and Spain have passed laws that guarantee equal participation by men and women in company boardrooms. This has ignited debate around the world. In the Netherlands the legal framework offers good provisions for full- and part-time workers regarding pension, social security, and equal rights. In Japan, rising efforts are more visible in the professional arena. Large employers have started to set up a variety of development programmes to increase women's participation in management. Additionally, companies are establishing on-site childcare facilities and the number of women accessing management roles and continuing to work after child birth gradually increases. Recently, the new government of Japan approved new laws on child benefits. Both in Europe and Japan, initiatives led by individuals outside of the political and professional fields are also making a contribution. These include everyday support from friends and family members. All of these initiatives are beginning to have an effect, nonetheless, the challenges ahead are paramount.

A joint collaboration between Instituto Cervantes and Japan Foundation, in partnership with the Spanish Embassy, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Royal Norwegian Embassy, Friedrich-Ebert Foundation, 85 Broads and Nikkei Inc.

With support from the Association for Corporate Support of the Arts.

Programme

08:30 - 09:30 Registration Instituto Cervantes, Auditorium FB1
All Sessions will take place in the Instituto Cervantes Auditorium FB1

09:30 - 10:10 Welcome Remarks

10:10 - 11:15 Panel I: Equality through Reform

More and more countries are placing women's empowerment and equality at the centre of national development policies. The key issues are the rights and opportunities of women to participate in national and local government as well as in society in general on an equal footing, gaining legal, economic and social independence. This session will present examples of gender-sensitive reforms, both recent and projected, in Europe and Japan, incorporating views from the political, legal and human rights frameworks. Panellist will address the incentives to make such reforms, their content and their effectiveness, while reflecting on how the processes set in motion by these reforms could inspire local circumstances elsewhere.

11:15 - 11:45 Coffee Break

**11:45 - 13:00 Panel II:
The Economic Case of Empowering Women**

To view diversity and equality as a productive investment opportunity, a wider number of decision makers must be convinced of the benefits. This requires persuasion, effective leadership, and awareness-raising activities. In this session panelists will discuss challenges and opportunities for individuals, businesses and governments. The discussion will focus on areas such as creating opportunities for women in the workforce, competitive advantages for companies and society, as well as demographic trends such as aging populations and declining birth rates.

13:00 - 14:30 Lunch Break

**14:30 - 15:45 Panel III:
Empowering Women, Empowering Society**

Greater participation in the labor force by women requires social environments that are supportive of working families. This includes facilitating the conditions and opportunities for men and women to be active participants at home, at work, in communities, in the classroom, and in society at large. This session brings together international experts on child-care, education and community development to discuss innovative ideas to empower society by maximizing collaboration by both men and women to achieve social progress and personal fulfillment.

15:45 - 17:00 Round Table Discussion

In the final discussion all speakers are invited to address challenges for the promotion of gender equality and women emancipation. In addition, the speakers are offered an opportunity to comment on issues discussed in other panels.

17:00 - 17:10 Closing remarks

17:00 - 19:00 Reception Instituto Cervantes, Mesón F7
