



THE BRUSSELS BINDER

The Brussels Binder's **TOOLKIT**

A practical guide to improving gender balance at conferences

WHEN YOU OR YOUR COLLEAGUES ARE **ORGANISING** AN EVENT

- Establish the rule to organise a panel with 50-50 gender balance. Ask yourself – if you do not have gender balance, why not?
 - Book speakers early and consider starting by inviting more women than men (or even only women!). This will help you secure at least a few women early on, and leave you enough time to change your approach in case it is difficult to ensure gender balance.
 - Build the event around one woman keynote speaker. Make sure you do not just stop at securing one woman speaker. Cancellations are possible, and in fact happen frequently. Plan to make sure that last-minute changes do not affect your results.
 - Do some research, and apply yourself: Women can be found! Search the Brussels Binder, consult specialist women organisations in your policy area, or simply look for past conferences' speakers on similar topics.
- Ensure that the event format and speaker criteria are not inadvertently biased. For example: limiting panel participation to CEOs or ministers can sometimes leave you with very few women. Consider that positions are not the only indicator of influence, expertise, or “celebrity” in any given field.
- Diversify panel topics so that women's voices are heard on “hard” topics, like security, not just “soft” topics, like development (and vice-versa).
- Track gender balance at your events. Unfortunate situations happen; therefore, it is important to identify patterns. Statistics and figures speak volumes in the management of your organisation, and they will also show the speed at which you are progressing, helping you fine-tune the organisation's strategy.

WHEN YOU ARE INVITED TO **SPEAK** AT AN EVENT

- Request confirmation of who the other panellists are, and how gender balance will be achieved.
- Make women's participation a requirement if they want to secure your participation.
- Reserve the right to withdraw from the event, even at the last minute, should this not be the case when the speaker list is finalised.
- Suggest names of women from within your organisation or network and, point them to the Brussels Binder for support in finding women.

WHEN YOU WANT TO **COUNTER THE MAIN EXCUSES** THAT
EVENT ORGANISERS LIST WHEN THEY ARE CHALLENGED
ABOUT A LACK OF WOMEN SPEAKERS

EXCUSE “We do not know any women whom we could invite. Could you please send us some names?”

ANSWER “This, from the organization that has the largest list on the planet of knowledgeable people on your issue?”

– *Place responsibility.* –

EXCUSE “I tried, but a lot of women were unavailable.”

ANSWER “Try harder. And next time consider ways to make your event more welcoming.”

– *Make the point that extra effort and looking beyond the “usual suspects” will result in better panels.* –

EXCUSE “I cannot believe I did not notice. How embarrassing.”

ANSWER “Yes, I was surprised. I appreciate your acknowledgement and am hopeful that this will not happen again on your watch.”

– *Establish expectations.* –

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.* –

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 expert, so they are no substitute for women listed as experts.* –

The Brussels Binder is a European
database of women speakers.



Find your speaker at
brusselsbinder.org