



Gender Forum

Wednesday, 31 October
Exchange 8, 9 & 10,
Manchester Central, Manchester

The Gender Forum - Women at the heart of the Co-operative Movement

The Gender Forum is a half-day conference that aims to discuss the gender imbalance at the core of business, especially co-operative organisations, and establish the role that co-operators can take to readdress this.

Entitled “Women at the heart of the co-operative movement”, this event runs **from 14:00 to 17:30, on Wednesday, 31st October, as part of [Co-operatives United](#)**. Co-operatives United closes the UN International Year of Co-operatives and will bring over 10,000 global and UK supporters of co-operative, Fair-trade and ethical businesses together, at the birthplace of the global co-operative movement. <http://www.manchester2012.coop/>

The Gender Forum is a key part of our **Women’s Challenge campaign**, looking to improve gender inequality in senior management and board level, and demonstrate the role co-operatives can play in empowering women. It is delivered by Co-operatives UK in partnership with the Co-operative Group.

This year’s event follows the successful launch event in Leeds during 2011, where over 300 delegates attended to set the agenda for the challenge. This conference looks to take the challenge forward, presenting best practice case studies and examples. Our audience will include UK and International delegates –we anticipate over 300 people.

For your information, I have included the programme and our speakers’ biographies.

You can also find more information about the Women’s Challenge campaign on www.uk.coop/womenschallenge

** If you need any assistance on the day, please, do not hesitate to contact Isabel Benitez on **07720 535024**.

THE VENUE

Manchester Central, Windmill Street, Petersfield, Manchester, M2 3GX





PROGRAMME

- 12:30-13:30 **Pre-event gathering - room Exchange 7**
An opportunity to *warm up*, talk about the event and meet other speakers.
Tea / coffee and food will be provided.
- 13.30-14.00 Registration desk opens
- 14.00-14.15 **Opening address** from the Chair and Housekeeping
Karin Christiansen, General Secretary, Co-operative Party
- 14.15-14.45 **Women's role in Society**
Polly Toynbee, Columnist, The Guardian
- 14.45-15.10 **Women at work**
Katrina Lidbetter, Deputy Head, Programmes and Policy, Government Equalities Office
- 15.10-15.35 **Women in the boardroom – the Norwegian Experience**
Agnes Bolsø, Associate Professor of Sociology, Norwegian University of Science and Technology
- 15.35-15.55 **Panel discussion**
- 15.55-16.10 Coffee break
- 16.10-16.15 **Welcome back** from the Chair
- 16.15-16.30 **Women's Challenge Europe**
Mags Bradbury, Representative, ICA Gender Equality Committee and Dora Iacobelli, representative of the Equal Opportunity Commissions, Alliance of the Italian Cooperatives.
- 16.30-16.35 **Q&A**
- 16:35-16:45 **A message from the ICA**
Maria Eugenia Perez, Chair of the ICA Gender Equality Committee.
- 16.45-17.25 **Looking forward – inspirational case studies from the next generation**
Saskia Neibig, Trustee, The Woodcraft Folk
Marloes Nicholls, Co-director, Move Your Money UK
Britta Werner, Managing Director, Unicorn Grocery
- 17.25-17.30 **Closing remarks** from the Chair



Chair



Karin Christiansen

General Secretary, Co-operative Party

Karin Christiansen is the General Secretary of the Co-operative Party and the first woman to hold the position in 95 years.

Karin's long career in international development includes as the founder and director of Publish What You Fund, Policy Manger with ONE and for many years a Research Fellow at the Overseas Development Institute.

She joined ODI having worked as an Economist at the Rwandan Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Agriculture. Prior to that, Karin worked for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Croatia.

She has Masters degrees in Development Economics and in Social and Political Thought.

In 2011 Karin was named as one of the Devex London 2011 40 Under 40 International Development Leaders. She is a board member of Maslaha and Publish What You Fund. Karin was also one of the founders the UK think tank transparency website Who Funds You and also of LabourValues.

Karin will be attending the Gender Forum at Co-operatives United, chairing the event. She will also deliver an opening address on the role women play in politics.

Speakers



Polly Toynbee

Journalist, The Guardian

After dropping out of her degree at Oxford, Polly worked in a factory and used this period, as well as time working 'undercover' as a nurse and an Army recruit, as the basis of her first book, *A Working Life*. She also started work at The Observer, before moving to The Guardian and then to the BBC as social affairs editor.

Polly returned to her 'undercover' research for her book *Hard Work: Life in Low-Pay Britain* over 30 years after *A Working Life* was published.

For a year she took up the challenge of living in one of the most neglected council estates in Britain and taking whatever minimum wage jobs were on offer at the job centre. In telesales and cake factories, as a hospital porter or a dinner-lady, she worked at a breakneck pace for cut-rate wages, alongside working mothers and struggling retirees.

Renown for her left-leaning, social democratic stance, Polly is loved and disliked in equal measures by Britain's political classes.

Polly will be speaking about the role women play in society.



Katrina Lidbetter

Deputy Head, Programmes and Policy, Government Equalities Office

Katrina Lidbetter was born and educated in Scotland at a comprehensive school before attending Oxford University where she graduated with a first class honours.

After a career as a Linguist and Researcher in the FCO, Katrina joined the Home Civil Service on marriage and has served in a wide range of policy areas in the Home Office, Ministry of Justice and Cabinet Office, as well as successfully studying for the public sector MBA at Imperial College.

Katrina is currently responsible for delivery of some specific programmes in the Government Equalities Office. They include *Think, Act, Report*, a voluntary initiative aimed at medium to large organisations which encourages them to think about gender equality, take steps to promote it and publish their progress. Katrina will be speaking about this campaign at the Gender Forum.



Agnes Bolsø

Associate Professor,

Department of Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies, Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Associate Professor, Department of Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Agnes Bolsø will deliver a keynote at the Gender forum, as part of Co-operatives United on 31 October 2012.

Agne Bolsø is also the Leader of the project 'Power and Privilege, Meaning and Management - Gender in the Boardroom', funded by the Research Council of Norway, as well as the Head of Gender Studies, Deputy in Department of Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies, former Editor of Norwegian Journal for Gender Studies.

Speaking at the 'Women in the boardroom' event - part of the Gender Forum - Agnes will look at the impact quotas have made in Norway and in Norwegian business.



Mags Bradbury

Representative, ICA Gender Equality Committee

As the lead for the Co-operative Group's National Projects Team, Mags leads The Co-operative's work on Co-operative School and Academies, the membership diversity programme and youth engagement programmes.

Mags joined The Co-operative in 2005 to develop a programme to address the lack of diversity within its membership. The work has included the launch of the Women's Challenge. Mags is also The Co-operative's representative on the ICA Gender Committee.

Mags has led The co-operative in developing its schools programme including the setting up of three secondary academies and a new Co-operative Primary Academy programme. Mags has also led The Co-operative's work with co-operative schools across the UK.

Prior to working at The co-operative, Mags worked at the University of Leeds and has worked in retail management. Mags has a Masters degree in International Studies.

With Dora Iacobelli, Mags will be speaking about how co-operatives could come together and set up a European Network of Women Cooperators to have more women involved in both the democratic and management roles in co-operative businesses.



Dora Iacobelli

Representative of the Alliance of the Italian Cooperatives

Dora Iacobelli is a member of the Legacoop Presidency and the President of Legacoop Equal Opportunities' Commission.

After graduating in History and Philosophy and then Economics (Cooperative and Non-profit Enterprise Economics), she did a Master course in Economics and Company Management at the 'Istituto Adriano Olivetti', a course at the London School of Economics in the Internationalization of European Economies, and the institutional course of AIFI (Italian Association of Financial Investment) in Investment Finance.

She is presently Project Manager in Coopfond (the mutualistic fund of Legacoop) which supports, through capital and financing projects, the start up and development of cooperative companies. Prior to this, she had had responsibilities in the study and economics area of Legacoop, as well as developing experiences in consultancy and training, both internally and externally to the organization.

She also teaches, as a member of the Scientific Committee and as a manager, in the Masters course in Cooperative Companies at the Universities of 'Roma 3' and Bologna. She is also under contract to the Faculty of Economics, 'Roma 3' University, teaching Company and Market Theory in the course on "Cooperatives as a Factor for Development".



Maria Eugenia Perez Zea

Chair of the ICA Gender Equality Committee

María Eugenia Pérez Zea is the current Chairperson of the ICA Gender Equality Committee as well as secretary of the Board of Directors of ICA Americas and president of the ICA Americas Committee on Gender Equity.

Maria Eugenia is a specialist in fiscal control and auditing, administrative law, socioeconomic assessments, and co-operatives. She studied Law at the University of Medellín (Colombia) where she graduated as a lawyer. She then went on to complete her postgraduate studies at the Pontifical Bolivarian University and the University of Antioquia.

Since 2010, María Eugenia is president of the Board of Directors of one of the largest co-operatives in Colombia, Grupo Empresarial COOMEVA, which gathers 265,000 professionals and 16 companies in the health, finance, recreation and protection sectors.

For 14 years, she has also been a National Assembly Delegate for regional Coomeva, although she has held other positions in the organisation. Maria Eugenia was President of the National Monitoring Board between 2000 and 2004. She participated in the National Coordinating Committee of Corporate Finance and was a member of the National Committee of Corporate Human Resources.

Maria Eugenia Pérez will give a presentation on the ICA Gender Committee. She will be reflecting on its role, main achievements and future goals.



Saskia Neibig

Trustee, The Woodcraft Folk

Saskia Neibig is the Group Leader and Trustee of the Woodcraft Folk, as well as a Member of the Worker Co-operative Council of Co-operatives UK.

Saskia was born in Germany, and grew up in Newcastle, and has recently completed her A-levels. Saskia now works in Westminster, London. Always a political activist, Saskia protested against the Iraq War at the age of 9; helped to run a Climate Change conference alongside The Co-operative in her early teens; and occupied Newcastle University during the student fees protests.

Saskia grew up in the Woodcraft Folk, where, since the age of five she learned about the environment, social justice and about co-operation. Engaging with the younger generation, Saskia has been a group leader for children and young people, the Training Co-ordinator for 16-21 year old members for the last two years, and a trustee of the charity.

Last year Saskia helped to run Cocamp, the Woodcraft Folk's international festival of co-operation, which was democratically run by people of all ages. Saskia works with the Woodcraft Folk as she can't see another organisation that is as passionate about delivering such an exciting political and social education.

Saskia will offer an overview of how the Woodcraft Folk works and help to build a fairer society and how it specifically contributes to promote gender equality through education and social activism.

Marloes Nicholls

Co-director, Move Your Money UK

Co-founder of the UK national campaign, Move Your Money UK, Marloes Nicholls will speak at the Gender Forum on the 31 October, as part of Co-operatives United.

Graduating as an Economist from Nuffield College, University of Oxford, Marloes is passionate about environmental and social issues and today, acts as the Global Campaign Assistant at Oxfam.

Alongside fellow speaker, Danielle Paffard, Marloes also acts as the Co-Director at Move Your Money UK is a national campaign to spread the message that individuals can help to build a better banking system by banking with ethical providers such as The Co-operative Bank, Credit Unions and Mutuels.

She will offer a presentation on Move your Money UK campaign as example of the role women are currently playing in business and social activism.





Britta Werner

Managing Director, Unicorn Grocery

Britta Werner is Company Secretary, and part of the HR team of the Manchester-based worker co-operative Unicorn Grocery. Britta is also a Board member of Co-operatives UK, and has recently received a distinction for MSc in Human Resource Management, through training provided by the co-operative.

Britta was born in Germany and moved to Manchester, England, to complete her BA (Hons) and MA in Linguistics in 2000.

In 2004 Britta started to work at Unicorn Grocery based in Chorlton, Manchester. Starting as a casual worker, Britta realised that there was no hierarchy and people actually listened and everyone cared about each other, but also the business. Today, Britta is part of the HR team, but also gets satisfaction from working on the shop floor, stocking shelves, and speaking with the customers.

Through Unicorn, Britta has become involved in the wider co-operative movement, involved in projects such as the Co-operative Women's Challenge 2020, aiming over the next ten years to ensure that women are fairly represented at all levels within co-operative businesses.

She has been invited to the Gender Forum as an example of the key role women are currently playing in co-operative enterprises and how the co-operative model helps women to progress in business. She will focus on what Unicorn has done and is currently doing to promote gender balance.