

## Meet the women who inspire – 09.03.2012

Viviane Reding: "Gender equality remains a battlefield...I look forward to celebrating the victories yet to come."

### Photo gallery



Photo: Inspiring Woman of the Year 2012  
Inspiring Woman of the Year 2012 winners

An Associate Professor who took Luxembourg's university to court was among a handful of inspiring women to be honoured at a ceremony marking International Women's Day.

Last year Gudrun Ziegler won her case against the higher education institution for wrongful termination of contract.

While she waits for the UL to take the steps for her reintegration at the university, her work leading a programme called Learning and Development in Multilingual and Multicultural Contexts was recognised when she was crowned Inspiring Woman of the Year for her contributions to Science and Technology research.

The awards are the first-ever initiative to honour the best female role models in the country and were organised by Group Moraru sarl in partnership with ESSEC business school.

Altogether seven awards were issued to individuals and one to the Top Company for Gender Equality, which was bestowed to the Bank of New York Mellon. For full details on winners, read on.

The evening was a stirring show of solidarity as women and men gathered at the Hotel Royal to celebrate progress but also to encourage women to continue to achieve their full potential.

Viviane Reding did not disguise her disappointment at the lack of progress for gender equality made during the last 12 months. In a video speech relayed to guests, she mentioned a report which showed "almost no progress has been achieved since last year."

In response the commissioner has launched a public consultation into the matter. "Gender equality remains a battlefield...I look forward to celebrating the victories yet to come," she said.

Luxembourg City Mayor Xavier Bettel called for guests to draw strength in the progress made so far. He reminded them that 50 years ago women had to have permission from their husbands to open a bank account. He also called on the government to lead by example in encouraging more women to occupy board roles in departments.

## **Inspiring woman of the year winners by category:**

### **Education**

Founder of creche group Rockids Fatima Rivas accepted this honour on behalf of her family. The family company was set up in 2003 and will soon boast nine creches around Luxembourg, some of which are open at weekends.

"Educating children the right way is the most important thing. I hope that's what I do," she said.

### **Finance**

Françoise Thoma was honoured for her inspiring leadership at BCEE Luxembourg. "Leaders are leaders because they should dare to lead by example," she said, adding: "My thanks go to my team because they are the sounding board of this award. Without them I wouldn't be standing here today. I'm so happy to work with them."

### **Social and Community Service**

Sophie Molitor of SOS Village d'Enfants du Monde was honoured for her work in helping the poorest children in the world. She said: "Children are the most important thing we have in the world. We must all do our best to help them, especially those who are most in need."

### **Science and Technology research**

University Associate Professor Gudrun Ziegler was recognised for her contributions at the university of Luxembourg. She said: "In the past women didn't really have access to education and therefore didn't really have access to leadership. Nowadays 60% of graduate students are women. The ten best of each year across disciplines are women. But in leadership roles in Science and Technology women represent just 12%. I wonder where these people go. I'm sure the future will be better."

### **Arts**

Creator of urban metal sculptures Florence Hoffmann received the Inspiring woman of the year award for her contributions to art. In her acceptance speech she described her role models in the world of art, which include among others Mexican painter Frida Kahlo. "The inspiration of a moment is worth the experience of a lifetime," she said.

### **Corporate Business**

Marie-Béatrice Noble was honoured for her inspiring contribution to the world of corporate business, which is traditionally dominated by men. Having lived in Luxembourg for 20 years, she set up law firm MNKS Luxembourg in 2004. Today, she co-leads a team of 60 people and five out of the company's six associates are women. "It's not what counts but, nevertheless, it's something to be proud of," she said.

### **Entrepreneurship**

Rachel Treece was recognised for her work with recruiters and trainers at "fast recruitment" Luxembourg.

She said: "I'm a daughter, a wife, a mother and business woman and I think that these are the most important things in my life."

### **Top Company for Gender Equity**

The Bank of New York Mellon Luxembourg was given the ultimate accolade for its gender equity approach. Among senior management roles, 60% are occupied by women and a number of critical departments are run by women. Managing director Dave Micallef said: "What surprises me is the energy, compassion and creativity that comes from this group."

<http://www.wort.lu/wort/web/en/luxembourg/articles/2012/03/178859/index.php>