

Opening speech by Rector of Mykolas Romeris University assoc.prof.dr. Algirdas Monkevičius given on 25 May 2017 at 1st ASEM Conference on *Women's Economic Empowerment*

Your Excellencies,
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Linas Linkevičius,
Minister of State for External Affairs of India, Mr. Akbar,
Minister of Social Security and Labour, Mr. Linas Kukuraitis,
Honourable Ministers of the Esteemed (ASEM) member countries,
Delegates, Participants,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentleman,

On behalf of Mykolas Romeris University academic community, it is my great pleasure and privilege to welcome you to this ASEM International Conference, organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and academic partner - Mykolas Romeris University.

I am delighted to thank you for accepting the proposal to be here from the worldwide network of ASEM Coordinators. You have travelled from all regions of the world; represent various national ministries, and NGOs, international and national women's commissions, universities and research institutions, to share knowledge and ideas.

Today's meeting demonstrates that we all have a common interest when it comes to policies and legal provisions, which provides the economic viability of women's work and personal life. Empowerment of women through harmonisation policies and development of new technologies to deal occupational segregation, improvement of education system and sharing of the work at home are some of steps taken to cooperate and actively being responsible for the implementation of equality between women and men in the European Union and the rest of the world.

Why do the equality matter?

It is no doubt that economy cannot achieve its potential if women are not treated equally with men. Great strides towards enabling women to achieve greater gender equality could increase the overall economic efficiency and well-being of our societies. Inclusive societies, where individuals' productive capacity are valued, ensures that marginalization of specific groups (subjected to exploitation) are minimized.

The experience of many countries indicates that women with equal access to education, facilitated to realize their potential and talents in the labour market, also make a positive impact on their children as well by passing them of the model of effective economic behaviour. Equality of opportunity should allow women to make the choices that are best for them, their families and their communities.

Understanding the importance and value of women's economic empowerment to the labour market needs, Mykolas Romeris University established a Gender Studies Laboratory, to unite professionals into the researchers' network.

Most recent studies of Gender Studies Laboratory investigate economic and social aspects of gender equality, very close to the main topic and the Conceptual Framework of this Conference. Using the possibility, I want to thank Dr. Eglė Krinickienė, Head of Gender Studies Laboratory and her team, who coordinated and successfully managed the preparations that led our university to be a host institution of this event.

Dear colleagues,

With this ASEM International Conference, we now have the possibility to take this initiative one-step forward. Through listening to each other, collaborate and share our perspectives, discuss the challenges faced towards enabling the right policies and legislation, effective institutional mechanisms that can enhance women's potential; as well, ensure that our societies support the harmonized approach towards gender.

In this comfortable environment, today leaders, experts and smart friendly people surround us. I am fully confident that together our knowledge, experience and expertise will provide key and important insights on women's economic empowerment on closing gender gaps and promotion gender equality *de facto*.

Welcome to Lithuania, Vilnius and Mykolas Romeris University.

Thank You!