

gender@sustainability

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WIDE Switzerland Conference
Friday, 31st October 2014 in Bern

Contexts: Social Sustainability in Times of Deregulation

Panel session with Ulla Björnberg, Ursula Keller, Paula Rodríguez Modroño,
Nina Schneider (Facilitation)

In this panel session feminist experts from Sweden, Spain and Switzerland gave an insight into gender situation in their countries in the context of social austerity measures taken by their states, as well as on poverty reduction strategies and in development cooperation and the inclusion of gender.

Ulla Björnberg presented her concerns about budget cuts undertaken by the Swedish government, which strongly enhances precarity of the parts of population who already live at the border of poverty and social exclusion, especially single mothers and older women employed at low paid jobs. She stressed that the strengthening of neoliberal economics in Sweden increases pressure on all strata of the Swedish society, and results in more stress, longer working hours and in risks for health and living standard of women, but also in general.

Paula Rodríguez Modroño gave us the insight into the worsening of the situation of women – with a true backlash of gender inequality wave and deepening of social injustice - in Spain in the current severe economic crisis that the country is going through. She presented a plethora of economic data. The impacts can be seen clearly at the level of unemployment, which has gone back very slightly, but only for men, and the precarity of care economy including the shift of the paid to unpaid care providers, mainly women. However, all this is being ignored in the official government reports and the media where, ironically, gender equality and the situation of women in Spain is pictured as ‘improving’.

Ursula Keller depicted the position of gender in the poverty reduction strategies of Swiss development cooperation policy, as a part of the pursuit of both sustainable and social- and gender-just policy. She commented on its firm inclusion in all policy measures and on the other hand on the hardships of the effective implementation.

Report: Jelena Lenggenhager, WIDE Switzerland