

# SPEAK OUT

## Ensuring Gender Equality in Science and Research: Obstacles and How to Overcome Them

Moderated by Startup Division

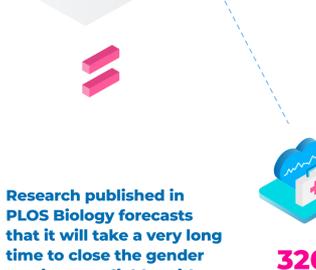
This Factsheet summarizes the inputs and opinions shared through HubIT's forum platform [HERE](#)



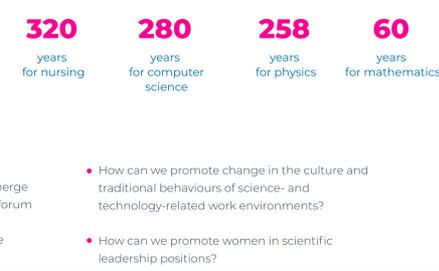
### Introduction to the topic:

Despite increasing numbers of solid indicators, extensive research, policy initiatives and wide awareness-raising on the issues linked to gender and science, in Europe, North America and elsewhere, women tend to disappear as we progress from lower to higher levels of scientific careers. In EU-member states, women hold fewer than 20% of all higher academic positions (grade A), even though they account for over 55% of all university students and nearly 60% of all graduates. Although increases in women's presence in highly qualified positions are regularly reported, their actual pace is slow (about a 2% increase in women's presence in grade A positions over 5 years).

Yet, women's participation in research is not the only issue at stake. It mirrors a broader and deeper lack of recognition of the gender dimension of science, affecting its contents, methods, and priorities. This has increasingly negative impacts on research quality, research policies and on the use of scientific results in economic and social terms.



**Research published in PLOS Biology forecasts that it will take a very long time to close the gender gap in some fields, with predictions of:**



For this reason, we aim to discuss the opportunities and challenges that could emerge at the societal and policy levels. During the forum discussion, we aim to collect opinions from experts of different walks of life to gauge the situation on the best and worst practices, frameworks, and methodologies.

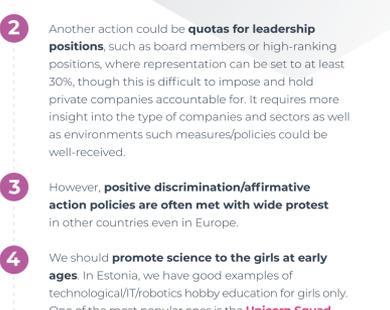
- How can we promote change in the culture and traditional behaviours of science- and technology-related work environments?
- How can we promote women in scientific leadership positions?
- What can be done on a governmental policy level in order to stimulate gender equality in science in education? How does this translate to societal action?

### Here's what was shared in our Forum regarding:

01. What can be done on a governmental policy level in order to stimulate gender equality in science in education?
02. How does the empowerment of women and the narrowing of the scope of such gendered discrepancy translate to societal action?
03. What are some best practices in your countries of female empowerment in terms of leadership, tech, research and science? Either governmental or other measures, e.g. private companies, women's associations?

## 01 What can be done on a governmental policy level in order to stimulate gender equality in science in education?

1. One of the main actions by the government would be **special scholarships and grants for female researchers at higher education institutions**, more so in the STEM field, where female representation is the most concerning.

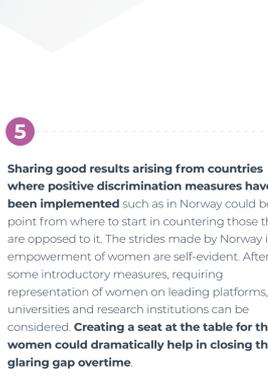


2. Another action could be **quotas for leadership positions**, such as board members or high-ranking positions, where representation can be set to at least 30%, though this is difficult to impose and hold private companies accountable for. It requires more insight into the type of companies and sectors as well as environments such measures/policies could be well-received.

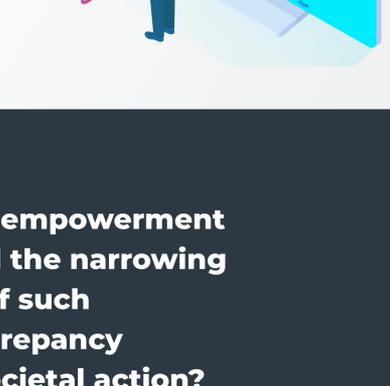
3. However, **positive discrimination/affirmative action policies are often met with wide protest** in other countries even in Europe.

4. We should **promote science to the girls at early ages**. In Estonia, we have good examples of technological/IT/robotics hobby education for girls only. One of the most popular ones is the **Unicorn Squad**.

The founder of the Unicorn Squad is the former Deputy Secretary-General of the Estonian Ministry of Economic Affairs and a very well known IT expert Taavi Kotka, they are operating as NGO and offer technology classes across the country for girls only and it is free for the participants. And they also have a summer camp for girls. The aim is to increase the number of women in ICT and the courses are extremely popular.



5. **Sharing good results arising from countries where positive discrimination measures have been implemented** such as in Norway could be a point from where to start in countering those that are opposed to it. The strides made by Norway in the empowerment of women are self-evident. After some introductory measures, requiring representation of women on leading platforms, universities and research institutions can be considered. **Creating a seat at the table for the women could dramatically help in closing the glaring gap overtime.**



## 02 How does the empowerment of women and the narrowing of the scope of such gendered discrepancy translate to societal action?

• Increasing awareness about possibilities in technology and research fields. Women are often discouraged by the widely held societal preconceptions—which is due to the environment they have grown up in or are working in—but this does not always hold true. **Connecting women with women leaders by holding symposiums, conferences, mentorships, etc. would enable women to feel more empowered.**

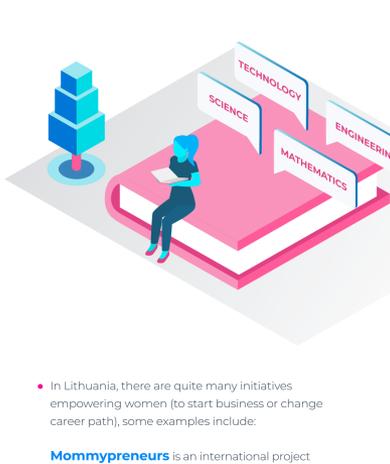
• Only one in four Lithuanian startups were established by women, according to a press release by the state Agency for Science, Innovation and Technology (MITA). **Investors tend to ask male candidates promotional questions focused on achievement, progress and ideals, while women are more likely to be asked about safety, security, and responsibilities.** The prevailing professional stereotypes about men and women are still influential, according to Roberta Rudokiene, head of state agency Startup Lithuania.

It was also found that in Lithuania, while female-founded startups receive significantly less funding, paradoxically, their payback and generated income per dollar invested is twice as high as that of male-led startups, according to a study by Mass Challenge and BCG. Perhaps this is due to women's generally more empathetic, careful, and socially sensitive approach to business. Especially in the complex and fluid environment of startups certain leadership qualities are extremely valuable.



## 03 What are some best practices in your countries of female empowerment in terms of leadership, tech, research and science? Either governmental or other measures, e.g. private companies, women's associations?

• Girls tend to avoid Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education because of outdated misconceptions. These are often reinforced by parents and teachers, cementing a flawed understanding of what the field is actually about. The full list of some good examples is here.



• In Lithuania, there are quite many initiatives empowering women (to start business or change career path), some examples include:

**Mommypreneurs** is an international project which aims to strengthen skills of young inactive women on maternity leave or caring for children, to equip them with new digital and/or entrepreneurship skills to improve their potential in re-entering the labour market or start their own business.

**WomenGoTech**

**Women Global Challenges**

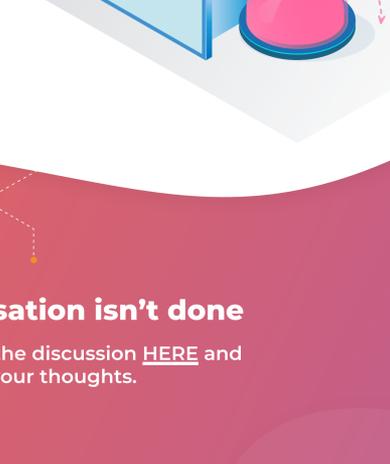
**GoForward**

They mostly focus on providing mentorship, support, some training for women on business, tech, etc.

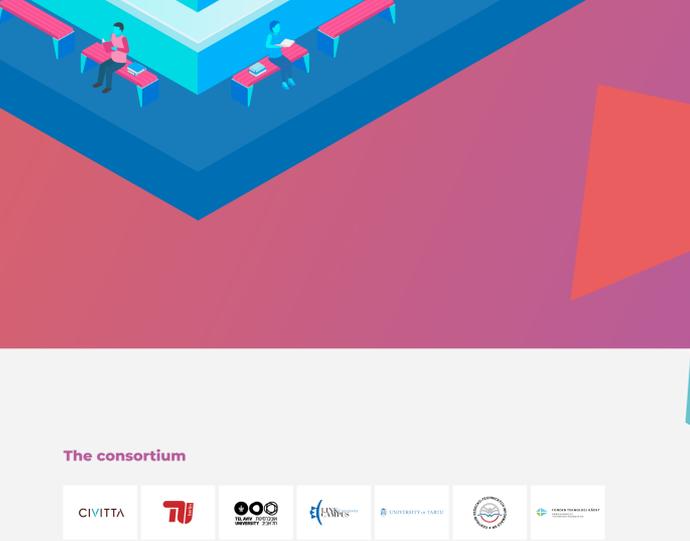


• The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic produced a **National Strategy for Gender Equality** in 2014 which has been used as a policy document to inform the discussion on the above topic.

The major gap usually borders on the speed of implementation of these measures that have been put on paper. If these policies were rolled out and implemented in the same breadth, it would be a different story/discussion altogether.



**The conversation isn't done**  
you can still join the discussion [HERE](#) and leave your thoughts.



### The Consortium

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