

# Positive action to improve gender balance in science

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Despite their increasing participation in higher education and research, women are still significantly underrepresented in certain scientific and technical disciplines and remarkably few women remain in top jobs in science.

Obviously, the benefits of [innovative research](#) cannot be maximised if one half of the population is excluded from full participation. Action to ensure gender fairness in research is therefore vital for European competitiveness, and essential for the success of the European Research Area.

The EU-funded project GENDERA ('Gender debate in the European Research Area'), which ran from 2009 to 2012, was aimed at increasing the participation of women in leading-edge science on both national and European levels.

Project partners, led by the Hungarian Science and Technology Foundation, represented countries with experience in supporting females in research, but also some countries that are still struggling to address [gender imbalance](#) in science.

The project invited a wide array of [decision makers](#) and other [stakeholders](#) to take part in networking activities and a series of workshops. The participants included scientists and academics.

The events addressed a range of gender-related issues, including factors that limit the numbers of women in specific scientific fields and in decision-making positions.

The goal was to identify good practices for improving gender balance. The project team analysed the best available data and statistics, along with real-life examples where scientific institutions have implemented gender-related actions.

At the end of the exercise, GENDERA published a series of key recommendations, based on the outcomes of all of the discussions. For example, the project pointed out that, because funding ultimately leverages action in the research world, research grants and gender

equality action plans should be linked.

That means, for example, that grant conditions should require grant applicants - whether an individual project or a research group or an entire institution - to achieve specific gender-balance targets.

Quotas are another measure that could boost the employment and promotion of female researchers, the project recommends.

These and other measures, if fairly applied, could help to encourage improvements in the representation of women in research, ensuring that everyone, regardless of their [gender](#), is allowed to make his or her best contribution to science and society.

**More information:** Project factsheet  
[cordis.europa.eu/projects/rcn/93105\\_en.html](https://cordis.europa.eu/projects/rcn/93105_en.html)

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