

# Why gender diversity in research matters

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Despite making huge strides, women scientists seeking to climb the career ladder still face many barriers. Raising awareness of these issues within the scientific community is part of the steps needed to remove them - so that European research can attract the best minds to do science.

A team of EU-funded researchers got the ball rolling by launching a high-level dialogue on how [gender](#) impacts scientific excellence. They worked through the project GENSET ('Increasing capacity for implementing gender action plans in science'), which established a forum bringing together scientific leaders, gender specialists, decision-makers, and scientific institutions.

The forum allowed them to debate five priority areas they believe are keeping women from becoming full members of the [scientific community](#) - science knowledge-making, research processes, recruitment and retention, assessment and recognition of abilities, and the scientific excellence value system.

The GENSET team developed a range of capacity-building activities encouraging scientific leaders and gender specialists to discuss and determine the strategies required to implement gender action plans within the current institutional framework.

The activities included interactive workshops on topics such as 'advancing excellence in science through gender equality' as well as consensus seminars, in which 14 European science leaders - including university chancellors, institute directors and esteemed professors - shared their knowledge and experiences.

This led to identifying four areas in need of attention:

- science knowledge-making (addressing sex and gender analysis in [scientific research](#));
- management, organisation and promotion of human capital;
- institutional practices and processes, including assessment and recruitment;
- regulation and compliance with gender-related processes and practices.

The project team produced a list of 13 recommendations from the consultations. These address specific changes in research processes and methods and call on leaders to first accept the need to incorporate methods of sex and [gender analysis](#) into basic and applied research.

Those in positions of responsibility must then ensure research teams are

gender diverse. For this to happen, transparent hiring practices are essential.

Assessment procedures must also be reviewed, so that the focus is on the quality rather than the quantity of individuals' publications and research results. And to get more women applying for scientific positions in the first place, specific strategies are needed.

As part of the project, the first European summit on gender was organised to discuss gender in science. The summit discussed how to support and advance excellence and the effectiveness of research and innovation across the board through gender inclusion.

The event was an opportunity for research, industry and policy stakeholders to explore how initiatives on gender can stimulate innovation and advance scientific excellence.

Coordinated by the UK-based not-for-profit group Portia, which was established in 1997 by a group of women scientists at Imperial College in the UK, GENSET received more than EUR 1 million in EU funding.

Following the end of the project in 2012, Portia has continued to run GENSET as an independent programme.

**More information:** [www.genderinscience.org/](http://www.genderinscience.org/)

Provided by CORDIS

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