

K2.1. Women in science – in Europe and Hungary

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In accordance with the strategy of the European Union, the share of women in research and development (R+D) has been growing since the millennium; however, the gender gap is only very slowly decreasing. Women accounted for only one-third of the European R+D sector in 2012, and the share of women was even lower in the field of technology (28 per cent) in spite of a substantial labour shortage. One of the main reasons for the low presence is the significant disadvantages that female researchers face during their career. A lower proportion of them is able to obtain a job in research or in a field corresponding to their qualifications and a higher proportion of them work under precarious employment contracts, especially in higher education. Although the gender wage gap has decreased since the millennium in R+D, women still received 18 per cent lower wages for the same job in 2012 – which was larger than the wage gap seen in the economy overall. Vertical segregation (the glass ceiling) remained strong, particularly in male dominated professions, despite the fact that the proportion of female heads of higher education institutions and the share of women in decision making bodies significantly improved in that period. Nevertheless, the proportion of female professors in the field of technology did not exceed 13 per cent in 2012 (*EC, 2013, 2015*).

The situation of Hungarian female researchers is worse than that of their European colleagues or their male counterparts. Their headcount has increased more slowly than that of men in R+D since the millennium, thus their proportion has been continuously decreasing – currently it does not even reach one-third. Horizontal segregation across sectors (the so-called glass wall) forces women into the low-paid public sector and only one-fifth of them holds a job in the better paid private sector. Although the largest increase in the headcounts of women was seen in technology, their proportion is the lowest in this field (22 per cent) and there is intense movement between the sectors: women typically move from the private to the public sector (*EC, 2012, 2015*). The trend is partly due to striving for a better work-life balance (*Paksi et al, 2016*). However, the high salaries of knowledge-intensive professions increasingly attract women, in addition to men, to the private sector, which often offers more family friendly conditions than the public sector. Hungarian society still considers work-life balance as a responsibility of the individual, which they are unable to tackle alone. The career of female researchers with young children thus slows down in both sectors because the crucial elements of a successful career (international mobility, networking or undertaking decision-making roles) are difficult for them to accomplish. There is often a professional and personal crisis behind moving from one sector to another but researchers' investment into achieving their PhD degree does not necessarily pay off in the private sector (*Paksi et al, 2018*).

Despite the two-decades-long strategy of the European Union, the above disparities still designate a less advantageous career in science for women. In order to reduce disparities, an integrated approach to the problem as well as a targeted policy and social support are needed (*Pető, 2018, Nagy–Paksi, 2014*). Good practices aiming for such an outcome are found in three fields in Hungary. Firstly, the Association of Women in Science has been working in the civil sector for ten years in cooperation with research and development institutions and experts and it supports the scientific career of young girls through several projects (Girls' Day, Women in Science Excellence Award). Secondly, the aims of the Women in Science Presidential Committee established by the President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences are to increase the number of female academics, support female researchers at all levels of their academic career and make a research career more attractive. Thirdly, although it is not obligatory, an increasing number of institutions in the private R+D sector develop and use practical workplace gender equality and diversity plans (*Paksi et al, 2018*).

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