

WOMEN IN EUROPROOFNET:
DISCUSSION ON GENDER-BALANCE ISSUES

JUNE 10, 2025 - TYPES'25

DISCLAIMERS

- * A **discussion**, not a lecture: share your ideas **respectfully** (and honestly).
- * We will mostly focus on women, but a lot of what is said applies to other underrepresented genders as well.
- * We are not experts, we don't have all the answers,
... but we have some experience and some answers.

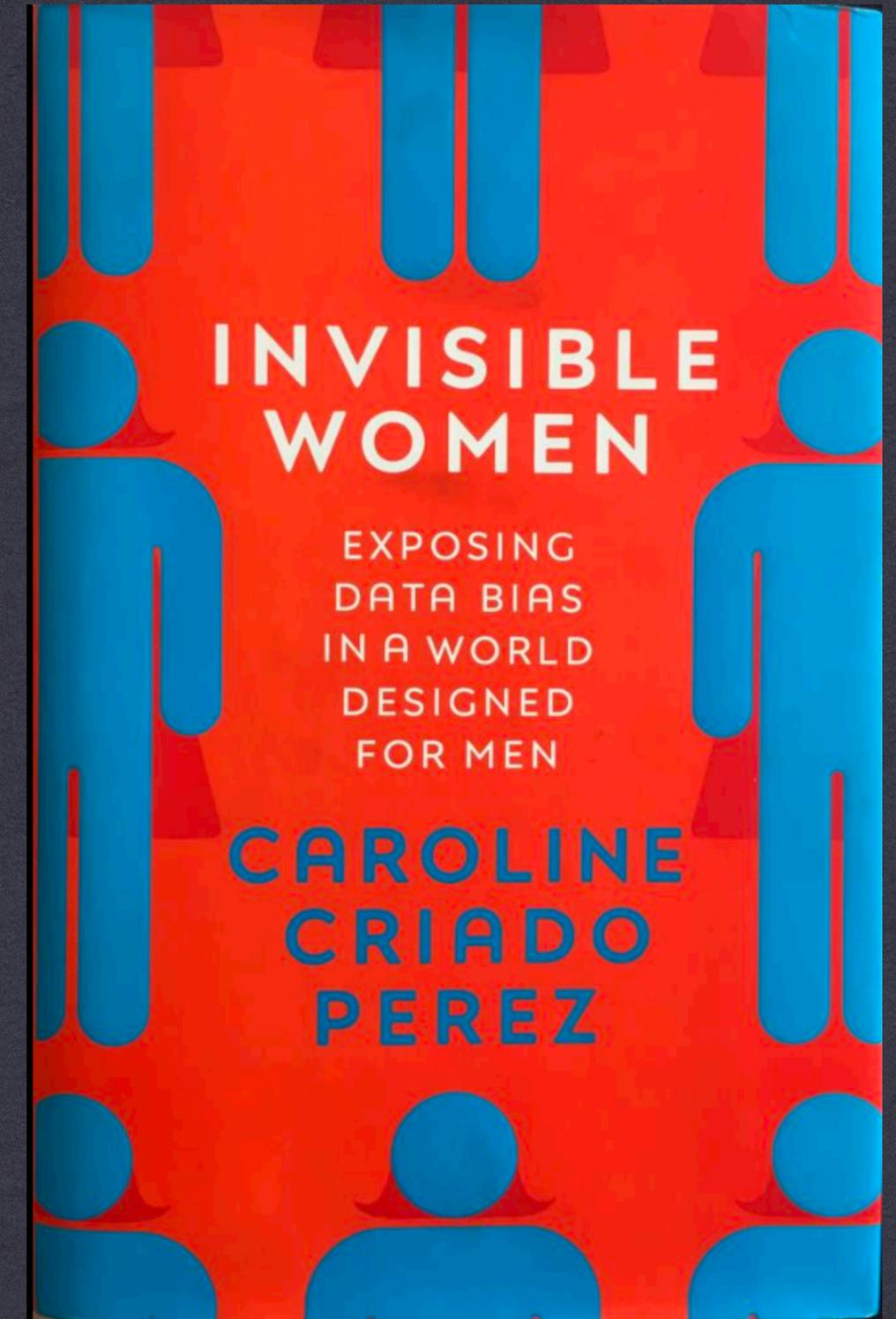
Why improve gender balance?

- * Research shows diversity in teams increases productivity.
- * We are missing out on potential from excluded groups.
- * Other: _____

OUR RESEARCH SHAPES THE WORLD

“Imagine a world where **your phone is too big** for your hand, where your doctor prescribes a **drug that is** wrong for your body, where in a car accident **YOU** are 47% more likely to be **seriously** injured, where every week the countless hours of work you do are not recognised or valued.

If any of this sounds familiar,
chances are you're a women.”



OUR RESEARCH SHAPES THE WORLD

Choose a model to compare results

Stable Diffusion 1.4

Choose a first adjective (or leave this blank!)

intellectual

Choose a first group

aerospace engineer

Images



Are we
unconsciously
training
BIAS AI?

Choose a model to compare results

Stable Diffusion 1.4

Choose a first adjective (or leave this blank!)

sensitive

Choose a first group

aerospace engineer

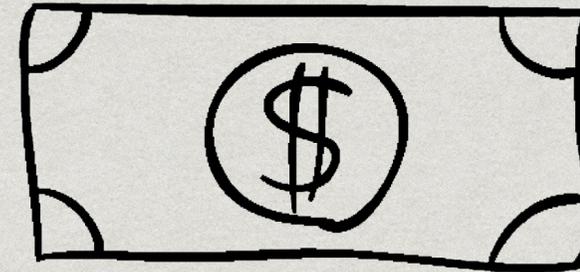
Images



The world according to Stable Diffusion is run by White male CEOs. Women are rarely doctors, lawyers or judges. Men with dark skin commit crimes, while women with dark skin flip burgers.

How to improve gender balance?

A million dollar question!

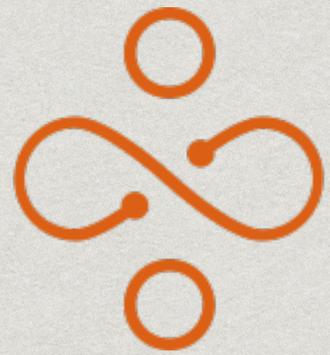


Find out **reasons** for the imbalance.



Address the reasons with **actions**.

REASONS?



EUGAIN

European Network For Gender Balance in Informatics

Addresses the drop of the percentage of women/underrepresented genders on the following levels:

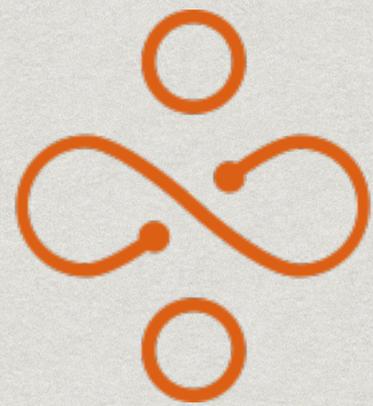
- ← kindergarten?*
- * From school to university.
 - * From university to PhD.
 - * From PhD to Professor.

*We are seeking new members/
collaborators.*

Consider joining!

(all genders welcome)

Booklet of best practices (from PhD to professor)

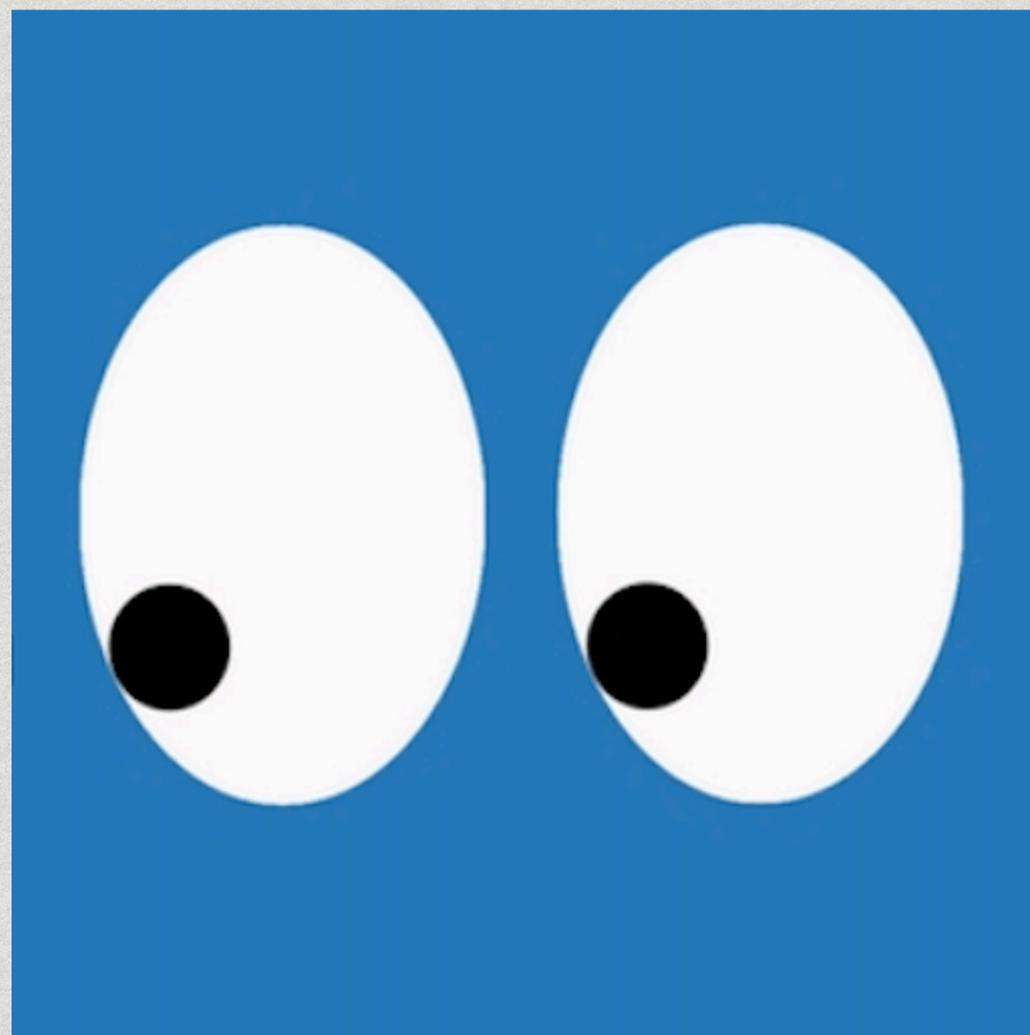


EUGAIN



Light night reading.

Overlooked



“I pitched an idea at a departmental meeting. It was ignored until my male colleague repeated it. Then it was a brilliant idea and it was attributed to him.”

– Anonymous, woman, researcher in mathematics and computer science

“I was ignored online when using my female Github and StackExchange profiles. I created a fake profile with a male name to be acknowledged and taken seriously.”

– *Anonymous, woman, software developer*



Dr Valeria dePaiva @valeriadepaiva · 29 Nov 2021



The patriarchy can be subtle: if you cite a woman using a number, but give a full name plus number to the other (male) person who did similar work, everyone will remember the male person. only. it works every time.

Overlooked: actions

- * Monitor numbers: committees, speakers, awards, ...
- * Database of invited speakers and PC members.
- * Pay attention to the unconscious biases.
- * Promote work done by people of underrepresented genders.



“When I organised a conference, I contacted 15 women and invited them to speak. None of them said yes. Despite my best efforts I ended up having an all-male invited speaker list.”

– *Anonymous, man, senior researcher in mathematics*

Don't be discouraged :)

Don't invite the same women over and over!

Encouragement / confidence

Research shows



- * To apply for a position/grant, there are certain requirements. If a woman does not tick off at least 80% of the requirements, she will not apply. Men tend to apply after fulfilling 30%.
- * If women fail, they blame themselves, instead of finding other (actual) external reasons.



“I was just starting a new postdoc position and my university offered a course on how to write project proposals. The course administrators explained that the ideal participant has a good research idea for the proposal, is willing to invest a lot of work and absolutely has to attend all the sessions. I just switched to a new field and had to travel to a conference on the last two days of the course, so I didn’t tick off all the boxes and I decided not to apply. Luckily, my colleague convinced me to apply anyway. It was one of the most useful courses I ever attended and I ended up writing one of the few proposals that would obtain funding.”

– Anonymous, junior researcher in mathematics and computer science

“When my department advertised a call for promotions for people at my current position, I felt discouraged to apply because I did not fill one of the criteria for absolute merit stated in the call for applications. My (male) head of department was surprised by my hesitation and encouraged me to apply anyway, suggesting that I should write a justification for not filling that particular criteria.”

–Anonymous, senior lecturer in computer science

Encouragement: actions

- * **Encourage** women to apply (at all stages: school, uni, PhD, postdoc, professor).
- * Take action if too few suitable women apply for a position. (For example, extend the deadline for applications and re-advertise the position (inter)nationally. Actively search for applicants of underrepresented genders.)



Stereotypes



“A female senior researcher was preparing a submission for a prestigious grant, when she was told by a colleague that there was no point in her applying, since a male colleague was also doing it. She applied anyway and they both were awarded the grant.”

–Anonymous, junior researcher in mathematics and computer science

“People learn from seeing or not seeing themselves that maybe they don’t belong”

– Heather Hiles, chair of Black Girls Code

Stereotypes: actions

- * Inclusive language.

*Especially promoting
in schools!*

- * Role models. 

- * A new Netflix series? :)



Family care

- * Caring for children/elderly influences all genders, but not equally.
- * During the pandemic the research output for male academics increased, but not for female academics.
- * Women tend to have children at earlier stages of their career due to biological factors.
- * Some institutions do not encourage parental leave or even parental care.



Child care: actions

- * Help parents with finding/ensuring childcare at the conferences, workshops, research visits, new job.
- * State that the university/department/institute is committed to facilitating the combination of work and childcare in the recruiting media and in job descriptions.
- * Take into account career breaks (maternity leave, parental leave) with explicit identifications and rules.



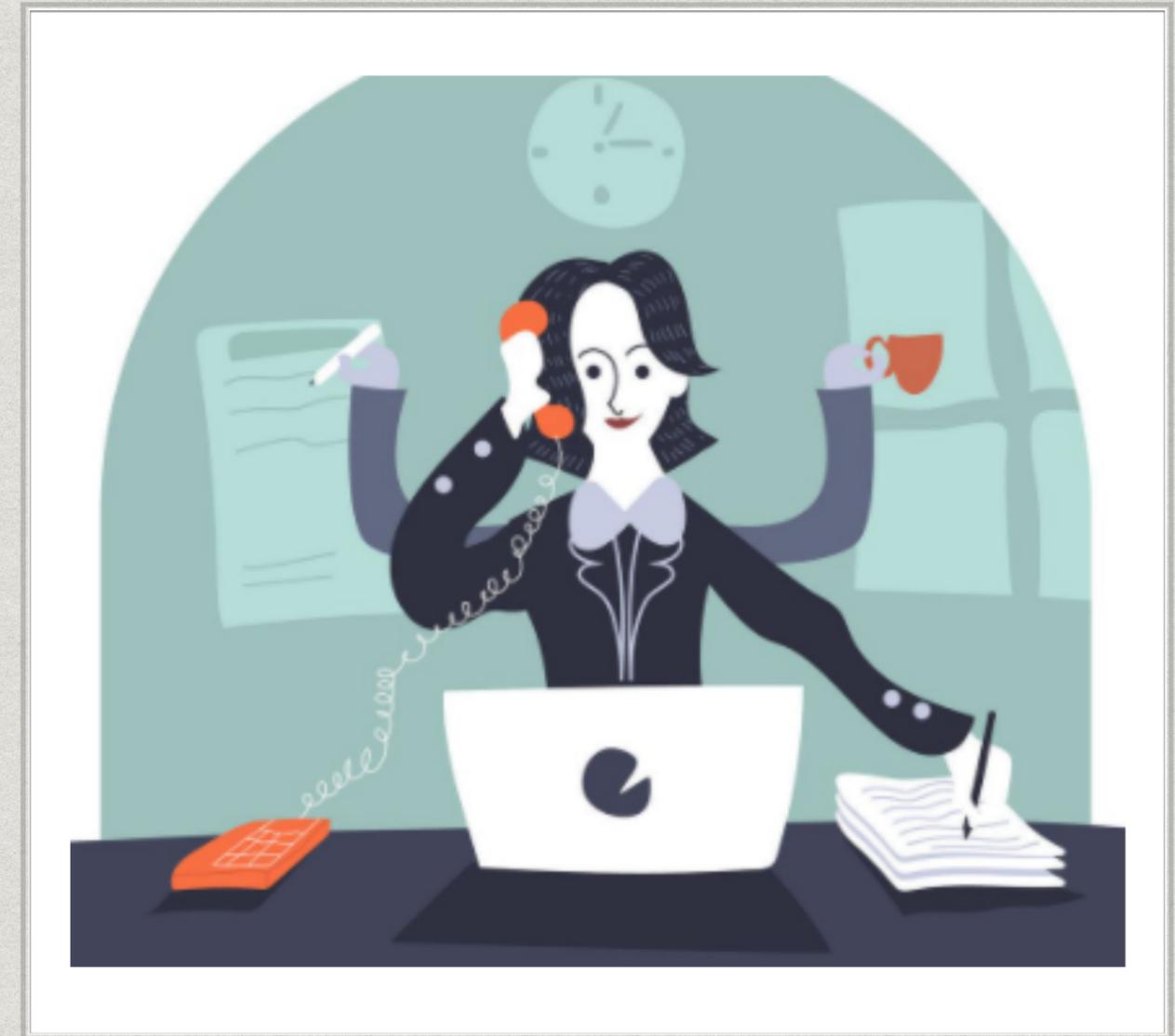
Child care: actions

- * Provide help with solving the “two body problem”, that is helping to find a position for the applicant’s partner.
- * Schedule meetings between 09:30 and 16:30, so carers of young children are able to deal with commuting and childcare.
- * Be supportive of male colleagues taking time for child care.



Secretary

- * Drowning in administrative work: thesis committees, organisation of seminars, conferences, events, catering,...
- * Too many committees.
- * It shaves off time for research.



“In my country, there are less than 10 female full professors, and only one of which is in my area of research. I feel very discouraged to ever becoming a full professor, because this would imply an enormous amount of bureaucratic tasks.”

–Anonymous, senior lecturer in computer science

“I didn’t think there is a gender bias in my community. Until I read about the unconscious biases and realised that I am doing most of the administrative work, I was always the secretary, seminar organiser, expected to clean up the catering after an event, when the other researchers were networking, ...”

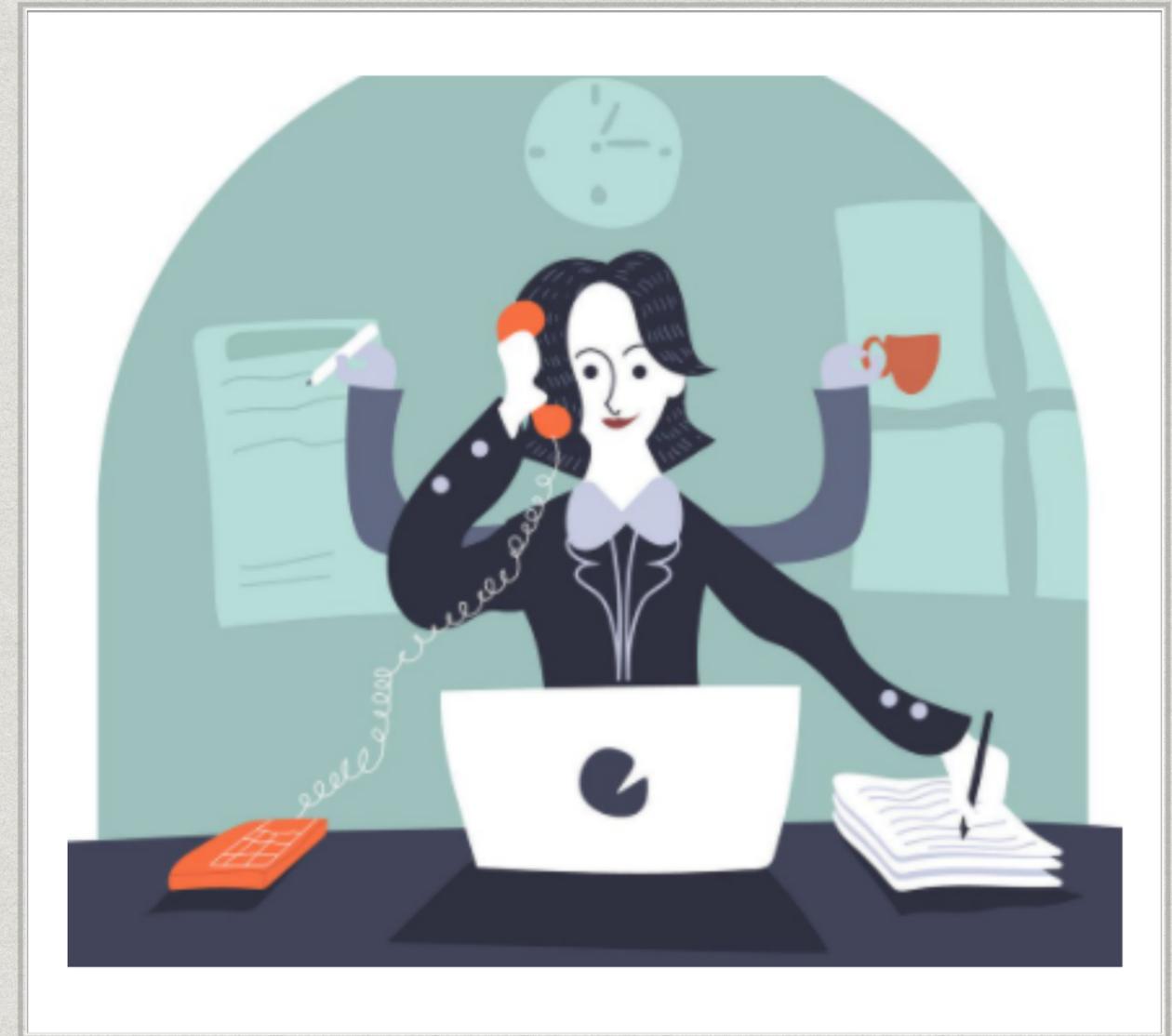
– *Anonymous, woman, senior researcher*

Secretary: actions

- * Monitor distribution of administrative work.
- * Gender-balance efforts should count towards “administrative workload”.



Join us in the efforts!
We need all genders!



Positive change is happening...

- * TU Wien has implemented a series of practices to promote gender equality and parenthood
- * All women postdocs are invited to a mentoring program
- * All major events that happen after 15:00 have organised childcare
- * TU Wien organises activities for school children during the school holidays
- * They have a "bring your daughter to TU Wien" day, to promote STEM to girls
- * among other policies...



WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS?