



### ***WITS Action Manifesto***

Women in Technology and Science (WITS) would like to introduce their four-part action manifesto\*. These actions are vital to improving gender balance in science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM), and encouraging women to consider STEM careers.

#### **(1) Advance women's leadership and participation in decision making - local and national**

by supporting women in STEM careers to stay in industry and academia, and to progress to managerial and executive level. Women also need to be supported in research through gender fair review and evaluation processes. One mechanism that WITS suggests to achieve this is through women-only initiatives, such as the L'Oréal-UNESCO Women in Science Fellowships.

#### **(2) End the gender pay gap and deliver equal opportunities for women**

by ensuring that women have access to STEM education at all levels, which will help women out of poverty by pursuing STEM careers. Support of active strategies to recruit women into STEM is also needed. Female-led startups and companies need to be supported, and initiatives need to be introduced to encourage women to develop their own enterprises in the STEM sector. Actions to encourage women to stay in STEM and show them the breadth of opportunities available in these careers are important. The gender pay gap should be addressed by ensuring transparency of contracts at all levels in STEM, especially at the corporate level where the pay gap is largest.

#### **(3) Promote family friendly STEM workplaces**

by taking into account the impact of maternity leave, childcare, and elderly parent care for women in STEM careers. A maternity allowance for research grants and academic positions should be introduced by all institutions and grant bodies in Ireland. The culture of STEM across the board, both in industry and academia, needs to change to include family friendly policies. Policies need to be implemented to encourage women back to work after maternity leave and child rearing, and help manage work-life balance to make this transition easier. WITS supports shared parental leave, the sharing of maternity leave between both parents. Policies are needed so that researchers can have flexible working hours to fit in the care they may need to give to dependents, such as elderly parents or a disabled spouse.

#### **(4) Strengthen social protection, training and employment supports**

by supporting and encouraging mentoring projects such as REENTER and MinT, which are essential for women in STEM. Female-led enterprises have increased to 22% in 2015 but this is still low and more needs to be done to improve this area, especially in the STEM sector. Family friendly policies in STEM are needed to retain women. Support including networking, and events, is needed for women completing PhDs and postdocs in male-dominated STEM areas. More programmes such as the SFI Advanced Award Programme are vital to support women after career breaks. More training days and events, such as those offered by WITS, are vital for women in STEM to reach their full potential.

***See [witsireland.com](http://witsireland.com) or follow [@WITSireland](https://twitter.com/WITSireland) for information, events, and resources.***

*\*Inspired by the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWC) [Election Manifesto](#).*