

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)  
Interactive Presentations - IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (IP)

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LAUNCHPAD FOR CHANGE: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GENDER INCLUSIVENESS IN THE  
SPACE SECTOR

**Abstract**

According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2023, the average percentage of female researchers in STEM worldwide is a startlingly low of 29.2% . In addition, the percentage of women working in the aerospace sector has only grown from 20 to 25 during the last thirty years. In contrast to these trends, dynamic environments such as the space sector would benefit from having a broader diversity in terms of gender, but also education and set of soft skills, to be successful.

One of the key factors to consider in the upcoming future in the space sector is therefore the balance of analytical, technological, behavioural, and entrepreneurial talents within gender identities. An useful approach to favour this would be to set guidelines to follow and to adhere to, that can be presented in a “best practices” course for gender inclusiveness. The RESEARCH Team in the Diversity and Gender Equality Project Group of Space Generation Advisory Council researched this topic and studied methods that are being used by different space organisations, academic and industrial entities to create a diverse and equitable workforce. The work, presented here, highlights important measures aiming at eliminating structural barriers and fostering gender parity across various aspects of the space sector, including recruiting, engagement, leadership, culture, and policy. The results and recommendations are a synthesis of findings from organisational policies in academic and industrial context, as well as from direct ad-hoc interviews, whose questions were specifically developed by a thorough discussion of RESEARCH international team members to cover as many aspects as possible. Some interesting resulting recommendations of the research are, for example, how hiring guidelines and procedures have to be adjusted to produce an impartial workforce and how to develop some mature and complete space policies for leading to a higher diverse workforce within space-related companies.

In summary, the paper integrates analysis of current practices and perspectives from advocacy groups, private and public institutions, industry and academia to produce an initial set of guidelines and recommendations that aim at supporting organisations to advance inclusive practices and gender equality in the space industry. In addition, the value of action, collaboration and mentorship is demonstrated here towards creating an environment that promotes women’s and gender minorities’ full inclusion and career success in space-related disciplines. These findings will serve as an extremely powerful awareness tool for members of different organisations to be aware of their rights and opportunities.