



# *Incorporating gender into research on COVID-19*

Saskia Fischer and Nelli Kambouri

Iceland  
Liechtenstein  
Norway grants

## ProGender

A Digital Hub on Gender,  
the COVID-19 Crisis and its Aftermath

The project is implemented by:  
 Panteon  
UNIVERSITY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

 NTNU  
Norwegian University of  
Science and Technology

 RIKK  
RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR  
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# *Women in science during COVID-19: Challenging gender inequality in research teams and evaluations*

18.00-18.20 Welcome, introductions, and short presentations of participants

18.20-18.40: Women and Gender in Science during COVID-19: An introduction by Saskia Fischer and Nelli Kambouri

18.40-19.00: Interactive session in small groups: How can we make research feminist?

19.00-19.15: Break

19.15-19.45: Reporting of small group discussions and debate

# *The socioeconomic impact of COVID-19*

- The COVID-19 crisis has gendered intersectional impacts on European labour markets. **Young, low educated and migrant women** are affected disproportionately by the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of employment levels and unemployment as they are working in precarious sectors.
- However, **there are also sectors which require high educational level and are considered to be more privileged that are deeply impacted by COVID-19**

EIGE (2021) “Covid-19 and gender equality”

<https://eige.europa.eu/topics/health/covid-19-and-gender-equality>.

# *Gender inequalities in research during COVID-19*

- Soon after the start of the lock downs several top ranking journals reported that female researchers' productivity has dropped significantly, whereas male researchers productivity increased.
- The hardest hit appeared to be the so-called "**early career researchers**", younger scholars who are just starting their careers in a highly competitive environment
- Nature reported:  
*"And female authors have accounted for only one-third of all authors on published COVID-19 papers since January 2020. As a consequence of the pandemic, female researchers' positions might be at risk. For example, a May report found that female scientists in Australia, who are 1.5 times more likely to be in casual or short-term contract jobs, are more likely to lose jobs, paid hours and career opportunities than are their male counterparts".*

Gewin V. (2020) "The career cost of COVID-19 to female researchers, and how science should respond"  
<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-02183-x>

# *Higher education and research institutions that take care of carers*

- recruit, select, retain, and promote women
- paid parental leave and resources to support caregiving
- women researchers receive adequate funding to mitigate any longer-term impacts of the COVID-19
- proactively address workplace gender bias and sexual harassment.

Salles A. and Jagsi R. (2021) “Institutional imperatives for the advancement of women in medicine and science through the COVID-19 pandemic”

# *Is “good science” gender neutral?*

- News of this type use statistical data to evaluate the quality and volume of research in ways that appear to be **objective and scientific**.
- **Good science** is measured on the basis of the number of publications and its quality which is in turn based on the ranking of journals. These appear to be **gender neutral criteria**. But are they?
- There are scholars who argue that in order to follow the patterns of productivity required in contemporary scientific communities, one needs to be free of care responsibilities. One needs to have time to work for hours without stop and devote oneself to science rather than to a personal or family life. In other words, one needs to adopt the work-life patterns of male scientists in male breadwinner families.

# *Precarious research*

- Especially young people starting in the academia are entering scientific sectors in larger numbers than in the past, but most importantly in highly competitive environments, in which precarity is the norm.
- Low payment, short term contracts, unclear working times, absence or limited access to working spaces, limited access to welfare.
- High educational qualifications do not seem to provide access to good jobs neither do they provide access to good science. Under pressure to constantly produce new funding opportunities, precarious researchers who struggle with uncertainty have very little time to do good science

# *Gender, age and intersectionality*

- In this context, it is important to rethink statistics of gender in research and innovation. **The SHE Figures** show that we have improved percentages of female scientists entering the labour market.
- “Women are close to reaching gender parity among doctoral graduates 48,1%
- “Women are still under-represented in technical professions 24,9% of self-employed professionals in Science and Engineering (S&E) and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

BUT

- +1,3% more women work under precarious contracts
- Women are under-represented at highest academic levels and only 26,3% of heads of higher education institutions are women
- SHE Figures 2018 [https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/she-figures-2018\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/she-figures-2018_en)