

Initial project duration – 42 months – starting from 3 March 2019, 30 September 2022
extended due to COVID-19

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Entrepreneurship, Gender, Innovation, Technology

Overview

Women are underrepresented in successful entrepreneurial ecosystems and a persistent gender bias continues to exist in entrepreneurship discourse and practice. GENRE aims to address this, by providing a nuanced understanding of how gender is a decisive factor, i.e. how women and men are influenced by and, in turn, influence entrepreneurial ecosystems differently. In other words, our objective is to investigate the extent to which entrepreneurship ecosystems support or hinder women's technology entrepreneurship. In order to achieve this, we focus on a specific facet of gender in entrepreneurship: namely women's technology entrepreneurship and how this relates to accepted femininity and masculinity norms in different contexts.

GENRE will focus on the cultural embeddedness and interactions of gender, technology, entrepreneurship, and innovation ecosystems. Our comparison between Ireland, Sweden, Norway, and Israel will help to explain variations and similarities with regard to gender in technology entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem frameworks. The findings generated will inform policy development aimed at inclusivity and sustainability, thus benefiting both women and men.

Progress to date

Overall, GENRE has been successful in reaching its milestones to date (e.g reports, data collection and dissemination activities), despite specific challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic regarding data collection, data analysis, and team meetings.

Impact of COVID-19

Specific challenges included difficulties in getting time commitments/agreements by the interviewees to be interviewed. Our target interviewees for the GENRE project are entrepreneurs, incubators managers, and Investors; a cohort particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, once organised, our interviews had to take place on an online forum (i.e. zoom) due to national and international government restrictions. Given the comparative nature of our project, our comparative analysis of our rich data set was due to take place collaboratively in Bodo, Norway in April 2020. This meeting was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We had to resort to doing our analysis online, which was more time-consuming, but effectively completed.

Team members

	Woman	Man	Other
Gender balance in the whole consortium	8 (73%)	3 (27%)	0 (0%)
Presence of women as lead researchers/PIs	6 (85%)	1 (15%)	0 (0%)
Gender Experts in the team	6 (75%)	2 (25%)	0 (0%)
Subsequent team members trained (Gender equality and/or IGAR)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)



Contribution to the achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Underlying most regional entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem frameworks is the assumption that all entrepreneurs have equal access to resources, participation, and support, as well as an equal chance of a successful outcome (i.e. venture start-up). However, women are underrepresented in successful entrepreneurial ecosystems and a persistent gender bias continues to exist in entrepreneurship discourse and practice. So for example, UN SDG 5 (Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all women) states that women suffer from “disadvantages in education [which] translate into lack of access to skills and limited opportunities in the labour market”. We aim to address this, by providing a nuanced understanding of how gender is a decisive factor, i.e. how women and men are influenced by and, in turn, influence entrepreneurial ecosystems differently. Our cross-cultural comparison between Ireland, Sweden, Norway, and Israel will thus help to explain variations and similarities with regard to gender in entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem frameworks. The findings generated will inform policy development aimed at inclusivity and sustainability, thus benefiting both women and men. In so doing, we align with SDG 5, as already mentioned, but also with SDG 9 (Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialization and foster innovation).

Differences/inequalities between women and men highlighted by the project

To date, difference and inequalities between women and men have been highlighted in our WP1, WP2 and WP3 reports, key deliverables from the GENRE project. The aim of WP1 was to provide contextual information concerning the technological entrepreneurial ecosystems in the four countries participating in the GENRE in order to enable a better understanding of the persistent under-representation of women and to provide a foundation on which to base further empirical investigation. This report argues that women are still under-represented in the entrepreneurial arena in general and in successful entrepreneurial ecosystems in particular, and a persistent gender bias continues to exist in entrepreneurship discourse and practice. In fact, the desk-based research as a result of WP1 found that in the average global ecosystem only 14.1% of tech founders are women. WP2 and WP3 reports provide rich detailed empirical evidence related to women’s experiences of technology incubation and of the funding process. Although challenges facing all entrepreneurs were revealed, nuances challenges facing women were unearthed related to work life balances, risk adversity and gender discrimination.

Positive impact of the project on gender equality/scientific evidence on gender in the field

The research carried out in GENRE is resulting in de-novo knowledge that is of relevance to a variety of end-users across several stakeholder groups:

- Policy community: increased awareness leading to new policy developments, including more focused gender equality and gender awareness measures.
- Business and in particular, the entrepreneurial community: promotion of existing practical tools and techniques to address gender bias, enhanced gender equality in the different national ecosystems in order to enhance women entrepreneurs access to and participation in such ecosystems.
- The academic community: it is anticipated that the new knowledge generated by the GENRE will be adopted by the academic institutions, incorporating it into their own culture and systems and providing training to the next generation of future leaders, entrepreneurs and academics.
- Society at large: it will contribute to the removal of gender biases in the entrepreneurial ecosystem which will enhance access to equal opportunities for all society citizens.

Socio-economic impact; involvement of policy makers/civil society

The report from WP1 has been disseminated to the four Enterprise agencies in the participating countries and a webinar took place in Dec 2020 with representatives from the four Enterprises agencies which helped with the dissemination of the results of this report and in so doing ignited further exciting conversations. DCU (the lead PI’s University) launched a press release to coincide with the launch of this report, thus stimulating wider societal engagement with the results of the GENRE project. Similar type of webinars are planned for the first quarters of 2022 to disseminate the findings from WP2 and WP3 reports. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the findings from WP4 will be disseminated at the Impact Day of the 16th International Diana Women’s Entrepreneurship Conference to be held in Dublin June 2022.

