

In 2018, the WIA-E board has appointed **Paola Belingheri** as Director of Research. The Director will provide the European aerospace community with insights on gender inequalities and gaps in the workforce, the contributing factors and effective solutions to improve women's representation at all levels.

In each newsletter, we will therefore have a spotlight on an issue with women in the workforce and a discussion of what has been discovered by researchers. In the next few newsletters, we will tackle what it takes to create and maintain a healthy pipeline of women in the aerospace sector.

## THE MYTH OF THE PIPELINE: JOB ADVERTISEMENT & APPLICATION

In the last newsletter, I examined the different aspects of a firm's "pipeline" which is a big part of the equation for companies to hire a diverse cohort of candidates to support their success:

*STEM and higher education*  
*Job advertisement and application*  
*Hiring*  
*Retention*  
*Appraisal and promotion*

In the past issue I talked about the gender-equality paradox in STEM and higher education, whereas in this issue I focus on the step of job advertisement and promotion.

Most companies perform the recruitment of their staff through two channels. First is by method of referral, which is quite popular in many countries. It allows employees to recommend those candidates from their existing networks, which they deem to be a good fit for the company. The other way is through publishing public vacancy notices, which requires a proactive application of candidates. The first type of recruitment is often cheaper and less time-consuming for companies. However, it is known to suffer from bias, as employees tend to recommend candidates that share similar beliefs, backgrounds and traits as them. This can therefore hinder diversity. On the other hand, vacancy notices should reach a broader and therefore more diverse public and are generally considered a less biased instrument for recruitment.

Research has proven that language can often be gender-specific, and that people from different genders may ascribe different meanings or connotations to certain words. If these words are included in vacancy notices, often due to unconscious biases from the individuals writing the text, these vacancy notices may be less appealing to women and other diverse candidates.

Extensive research by Gaucher, Friesen and Kay (2011) has indeed uncovered that in vacancy notices for jobs in sectors dominated by men, there is more masculine wording than in those from female-dominated sectors. Indeed, the presence of more males in a field is a strong predictor of masculine wording in the vacancy notices. When women are confronted with a vacancy notice that has stronger male wording, they find the job less appealing and they experience a feeling of non-belonging to the corresponding sector. Therefore, they may be discouraged from applying not only to that particular vacancy but also to other jobs in the same sector. The same doesn't happen for men: they are not discouraged from applying if they come across a job vacancy with strongly female wording.

The company Mya (see below) rightfully claims that "you cannot hire someone who doesn't apply". Therefore, it is paramount to write vacancy notices that can appeal to a broad range of candidates in terms of gender, cultural and religious background or minority status. What

are some tools that can help? The first is ensuring that vacancy notices are written by committees with a balanced gender representation. This should help to mitigate unconscious bias of participants. Moreover, the field of data science is offering new tools to help businesses improve their vacancy notices. Here are a few examples:

<http://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/> identifies gendered language bias in texts, based on the male and female wording identified in the above-mentioned paper by Gaucher, Friesen & Kay

<https://textio.com/> This is a paid "augmented writing" tool to identify and eliminate biases. It includes a bias meter with one-click replacement suggestions.

<https://www.mya.com/> This is a paid suite of tools to support companies on the job market, powered by Artificial Intelligence.

### References:

Gaucher, D., Friesen, J. and Kay, A.C., 2011. Evidence that gendered wording in job advertisements exists and sustains gender inequality. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 101(1), p.109.

Are you interested in volunteering to contribute to our original research? Please contact [research@wia-europe.org](mailto:research@wia-europe.org)



If you want to learn more about Women In Aerospace Europe, please do not hesitate to contact us at

[info@wia-europe.org](mailto:info@wia-europe.org)

or take a look at our website

[www.wia-europe.org](http://www.wia-europe.org)

Please fill in our registration form or visit:

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Women in Aerospace Europe Space

Business Park

Huygensstraat 44a

2201 BB Noordwijk

The Netherlands

