

Mobilizing female entrepreneurs and start-ups



How to bridge the gender gap in our accelerator and entrepreneurship programmes

Foreword

This new benchmarking study from EIT Climate-KIC “Mobilizing female entrepreneurs and start-ups. How to bridge the gender gap in our accelerator and entrepreneurship programmes” is a timely and necessary piece of work. Men still outpace women in entrepreneurship. Not just in our programmes, but globally. We therefore need more information and more dedication to encourage women to start companies and support them whilst they grow and scale. In order to combat climate change, we need all innovative minds engaged and pushing new solutions onto the market and into the decision-making processes. Although this report points to many areas where we can improve our efforts, it has also been a great joy to conduct the research and produce the findings. Firstly because we now have a solid snapshot of the gender aspect of the Climate-KIC accelerator, and with insight relevant actions can follow; secondly, it has been a wonderful opportunity to gauge input and recommendations from more than 140 Climate-KIC supported startups on how they see the Climate-KIC accelerator programmes and how we can improve our work to make it more supportive of female entrepreneurs. We are grateful for the constructive and honest reflections these entrepreneurs and innovators have provided – both male and female.

Based on the findings, we have been able to formulate seven initial recommendations to take forward:

1. Make it a priority;
2. Recruit more female role models;
3. Build bridges;
4. Put in place consistent gender tracking;
5. Drive progression;
6. Be aligned;
7. Engage with the communities and ecosystems.

The recommendations are the first step towards bridging the gap. They are basic and universal for everyone running a startup programme. The next step is to translate the insights and recommendations into actual principles and actions. With this report, Climate-KIC has a stronger and more aware platform from which to overhaul our programmes and support instruments, and put in place targeted actions that can encourage many more women to take the leap and become a climate change innovator. We want to thank the two companies The Nordic Web and Lærke Ullerup, who have worked with us in producing this report.



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1. Introduction

Underrepresentation of women in entrepreneurship, economic leadership, and amongst investors is recognised as a significant international problem. Women constitute 52% of the European population but only 30% of Europe's entrepreneurs - and in some countries even less. Women possess the largest untapped entrepreneurial and leadership potential in Europe.

EIT Climate-KIC (hereafter referred to as Climate-KIC), a large public-private partnership funded by the European Institute of Technology and Innovation, is dedicated to further support and attract women in its programmes and to discuss gender diversity. Therefore Climate-KIC has initiated a benchmark study which aims to address the topic of gender diversity and female entrepreneurship in its programmes resulting in recommendations for their entrepreneurship work.

Climate-KIC runs Europe's largest cleantech accelerator from 32 locations across Europe. As in many other accelerator programmes and startup ecosystems there is a lack of gender diversity within the community. With this annual benchmarking study and following recommendations Climate-KIC is dedicated to drive the conversation on how to bridge the gap.

Gender diversity is not a new thing - thus making it even more important to dive into. It is long recognized that the lack of women in startup programmes and entrepreneurship at large is an issue to society, culture and growth. Gender equality benefits not only women but also men, families, and broader society, through faster economic growth, societal cohesion, and prosperity. Research shows that more equal countries are more prosperous and more trusting (Klasen & Lamanna, 2009; Cho, 2016)

Over the recent years more and more organisations have addressed this topic and started to implement policies, principles and activities in order to empower diverse and inclusive communities. There is a rise in female networks, investor funds targeted at women, female founder activities and diversity is a frequent topic at conferences.

There is a clear business benefit for both Climate-KIC but also for the teams that go through the programme. For the startups it is also an important topic to be aware of since research shows that there are clear innovation and business benefits as a result of working in a diverse team (McKinsey, 2018a).

For Climate-KIC it is important to speak with a clear voice when it comes to creating awareness and marketing of the programme and its activities. We live in a time where all organisations need to take a stand on gender diversity and do their best to improve the status quo to bring more talent to the table.

Talent is one of the most essential factors for growth and competitiveness. To build future economies that are both dynamic and inclusive, we must ensure that everyone has equal opportunity. When women and girls are not integrated—as both beneficiary and shaper—the global community loses out on skills, ideas and perspectives that are critical for addressing global challenges and harnessing new opportunities. (McKinsey, 2018a)

Through our analysis we uncovered a number of key findings including the number of female founders involved in Climate-KIC programmes, the number of females involved in running the programmes, whether female founders in Climate-KIC perform better or worse within the programme (based on the stages of the programme) as well as the opinion of participants within the programme of how sufficiently they believe Climate-KIC addresses gender dimensions and how important gender diversity is of a topic to them.

2. The scope of the study

With this study Climate-KIC is mapping the status quo of the accelerator programme in regard to gender diversity. Furthermore, the study will discuss the findings across data points and look for correlations and point towards interesting insights. Finally, the study is suggesting recommendations in order to improve gender diversity.

A part of the study also looks into what drives female entrepreneurship, what some of the obstacles are and what helps and motivates women in entrepreneurship communities.

The overall question we are trying to answer is *how can Climate-KIC better support and attract women to its programmes and how can Climate-KIC foster an inclusive and diverse community?*

The findings from the report will give management teams and everybody who is working with accelerator programmes a starting point for a conversation and a set of recommendations that can be activated right away.

This study is not looking for explanations or reasons for why the results show up as they do. That calls for a much bigger and deeper study. Neither do we say anything specific for each country in the programme. This study does not take the cultural context of the different European countries into consideration but looks at Europe in a more homogeneous way thus acknowledging that there are huge differences in the entrepreneurship ecosystems across Europe.

The study could have also looked at a semantic or textual analysis of the communication and marketing materials being produced in the programme. This has already been started and is not part of this study. With this study there is a strong focus on the female perspectives and their underrepresented role in the community. For another study it could also be interesting to look into the male perspectives on this topic and interview more men.

Since this is the first of an annual benchmarking study, a lot of value will show up over time as Climate-KIC continue working with these topics and implement activities, instruments and drivers of diversity.

2.1 About Climate-KIC

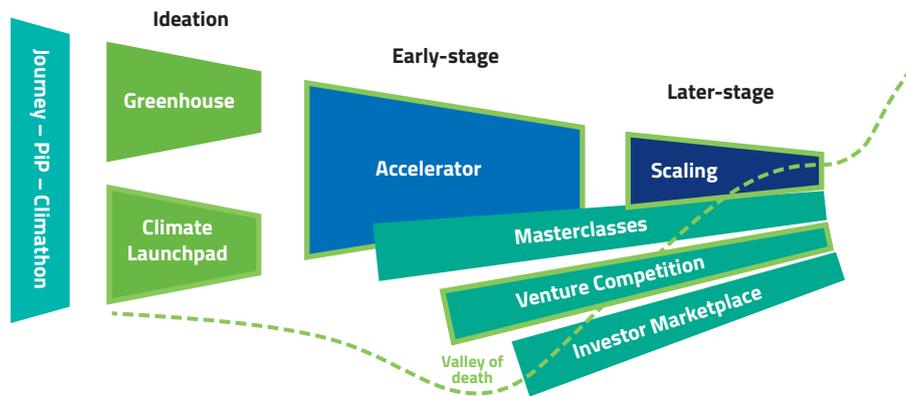
Climate-KIC runs one of Europe's largest clean-tech accelerators. Since its inception, they've supported over 1400 startups from more than 32 Climate-KIC support locations spread across Europe.

The strength of the Climate-KIC Entrepreneurship programme portfolio is that it covers the whole value chain: from ideation programme including the Greenhouse and Climate Launch Pad, through to 18-months Accelerators, followed by later-stage scaling activities. (See programme-figure below).

The long-term objective is to develop a fertile and self-sustaining ecosystem for climate-focused startups in Europe. We pursue this by nurturing a pool of relevant and viable business ideas, by empowering, connecting, and inspiring entrepreneurs, and by fostering impact infrastructures that enable innovation de-risking, market entry, and scale-up.

So far, Climate-KIC has focused on supporting early stage startups and has built up a large asset of startups. The next phase for Climate-KIC is to move towards wider-scale impact, mobilising investments, and building strategic cooperation with European industries, public organisations and key innovation actors and networks.

Overview Entrepreneur Programmes



The Accelerator Programme – their early-stage support programme, is organised around 3 stages, running for up to 18 months. Selected startups benefit from up to €95,000 in seed funding.

3. Methodology

The study is structured around multiple data sources, that together cover the accelerator programme from various perspectives. The main data and insight gathering has been through desk research, data analysis, survey and qualitative interviews. Since this is the first benchmarking study overall, the data collection strategy has been to work with what is available, while at the same time recognizing that the data could be and will be improved moving forward. A first step on this annual benchmarking journey is to flesh out what is there and what is missing. We elaborate on this in Appendix 3.

3.1. Desk Research

We have used desk research to understand the broader topic of diversity and female entrepreneurship and we have looked into some of the previous studies Climate-KIC has carried out (primarily in the UK). Furthermore, there has been a big mapping of female related events all across Europe - this also informs the analysis.

A part of the desk research has also been covered by looking into the reports coming from EIT, OECD, World Economic Forum, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor and other institutional sources. Furthermore, we looked into a lot of articles, blogs and papers on the subject.

3.2. Data

Climate-KIC collect information about the startups in a shared CRM tool - salesforce. For this study we had access to an anonymized dataset that covered a lot of information about the startups. including Gender, Job title, Climate-KIC Geography and more.

Today the data collection and reporting in Salesforce is done in different ways by different people in different roles, thus making room for improvement regarding the quality of the data. In Appendix 3

we elaborate on some of the challenges and methodological choices we have been forced to take in order to make the best of this data.

For this study we largely looked at data from 2017 but included a mix of 2017/2018 data for the instruments and support system analyses.

3.3. Survey

Sending out a survey gave us the opportunity to get a closer look at the chosen topic and get more insights than we have available in the raw data. We designed a survey that looks into the perception of gender diversity and asked for suggestions and recommendations for what Climate-KIC can do to foster a diverse and inclusive community. The survey was anonymous and was sent to participants (both male and female) in the programme. See the survey design in Appendix 1.

We received 136 responses to this survey. Interestingly, 72.79% (99) of the 136 survey respondents were male, meaning 27.21% (37) were female. This is actually in-line with the startups involved in 2017, with 24.34% having a female on the core team, therefore we feel that this split is reflective of those involved in the programme.

The highest amount of responses collected were from The Netherlands, Hungary, Italy, and Switzerland, interestingly, Hungary have a stronger female representation than other locations in 2017.

3.4. Qualitative Interviews

Additionally, we have chosen to do exploratory qualitative interviews. The purpose of the interviews has been to better understand the obstacles and the motivation of female entrepreneurs and the system surrounding them. Furthermore, the aim of the interviews has been to get perspectives on gender diversity and what that means to the women in the programme. Finally, we asked them for recommendations and suggestions to how Climate-KIC can foster an inclusive and diverse community.

We conducted three interviews with female founders in the programme (Natalia TomiYama, Florence Gschwend and Naomi MacKenzie). We also conducted interviews with two staff members from the accelerator team (Arianna Cecchi and Aimee Apel) and one coach (Wiebke Weichert). The interview guides cover many of the same aspects, however they vary a bit depending on the role. See the full interview guide in Appendix 2.

All respondents have been asked if they are comfortable with having their names featured in the report. Since this was not carried out anonymously there is a risk that people say nicer things than they would otherwise. All of the respondents have been excited to talk about this theme though and have not had any hesitation to speak up about the issues and challenges they consider in relation to gender diversity and female entrepreneurship.

We decided to only interview women, but for future studies it would be interesting to also interview men and get male perspectives on similar topics.

3.5. Data process

We processed all the data by first looking at the data to identify patterns, trends, and different categories. We have read all survey answers, all interviews and looked into the numbers from the CRM-tool.

Out of the patterns seven different core themes emerged:

1. Lack of female founders
2. Gender stereotypes and bias
3. Community and communications
4. Support system and selection process
5. Speaking up
6. Funding, female investors and making it through the funnel
7. Role models

They guide the analysis, following that we created a list of recommendations to guide and inform future conversations on the topic.

3.6. Data Disclaimer

As stated above, the dataset was not a complete one and therefore this analysis is based on the data we had available. For further detail on what data was analysed, please refer to Appendix 3.

4. Key Findings



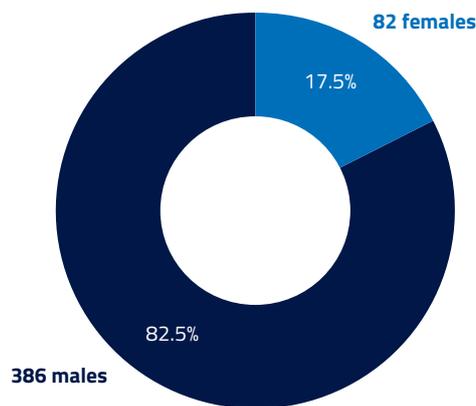
5. Analysis structured around seven themes

We structured the analysis around seven themes where data from CRM, survey and interviews are combined to create insights. The themes overlap and are connected in many ways - however they provide a structure and a mental framework to think about the key findings.

5.1 Lack of female founders

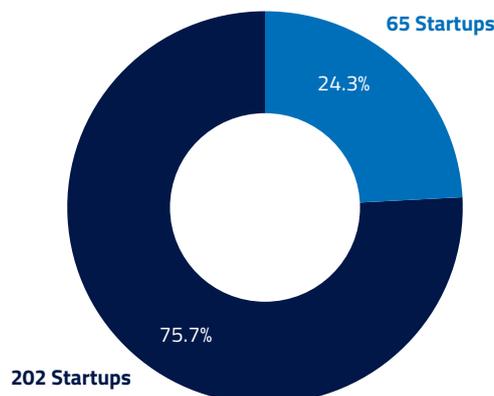
Of the 468 individuals listed as contact representatives of the teams that participated in Climate KIC programmes in 2017, 82 of these were female (17.52%).

Gender split of contact representatives of the teams that participated in Climate-KIC programmes in 2017



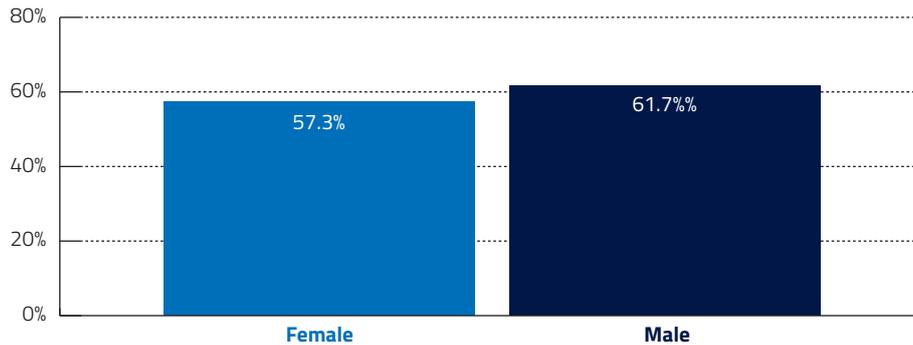
These 468 individuals were represented across 267 different startups and if we look at it from a team perspective then female representation is slightly improved, with 65 of these startups having at least one female team member listed (24.34%).

Gender split of teams with min. 1 female team member vs. all male teams



The female team members were just as likely to be a founder or C-level executive as a male was, with 57.3% of females listed adjudged to be in one of these roles compared to 61.68% of the males listed. It should be noted that the main reason for this relatively low percentage is largely due to the fact that some data on job titles was missing. It's more than fair to assume that this percentage was much higher for both genders in reality and also fair to assume that they would have stayed at similar percentages meaning there is no apparent divide between genders in this respect.

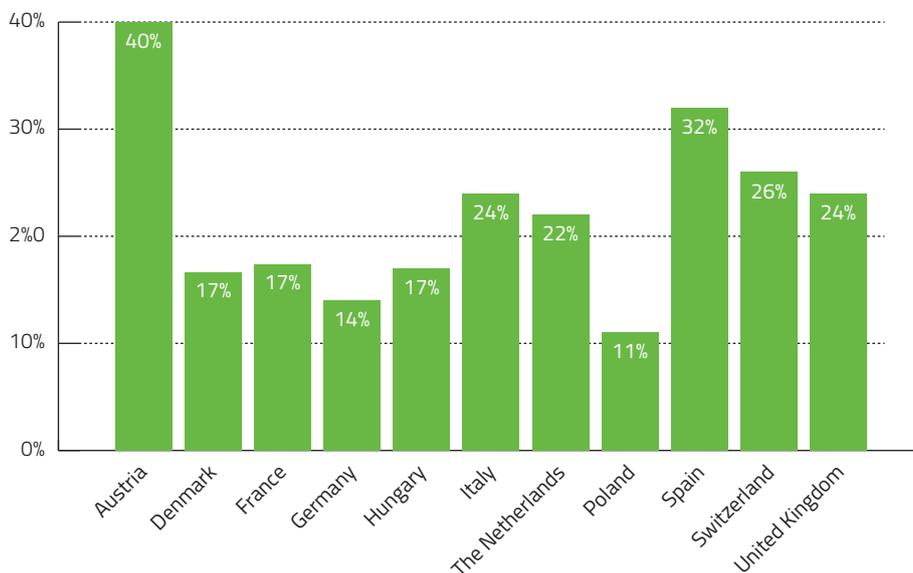
C-level roles of Males vs. Females



Despite 1 in 4 teams having a minimum of one female on the team, it's fair to say that this is a number that could still significantly improve, especially when some locations are performing better than others in this regard, meaning the average would increase if some locations could improve in their ability to attract female participants while other locations maintained their performance.

For example, using the average of 24.34% of teams including at least one female team member across the programme, then only Austria (admittedly with a low sample), Spain and Switzerland are performing above this. Italy, UK and The Netherlands are close to it. Poland is significantly below this average, whereas other locations could clearly improve as well as demonstrated by the recent German intake.

% of teams with a minimum of 1 female per location

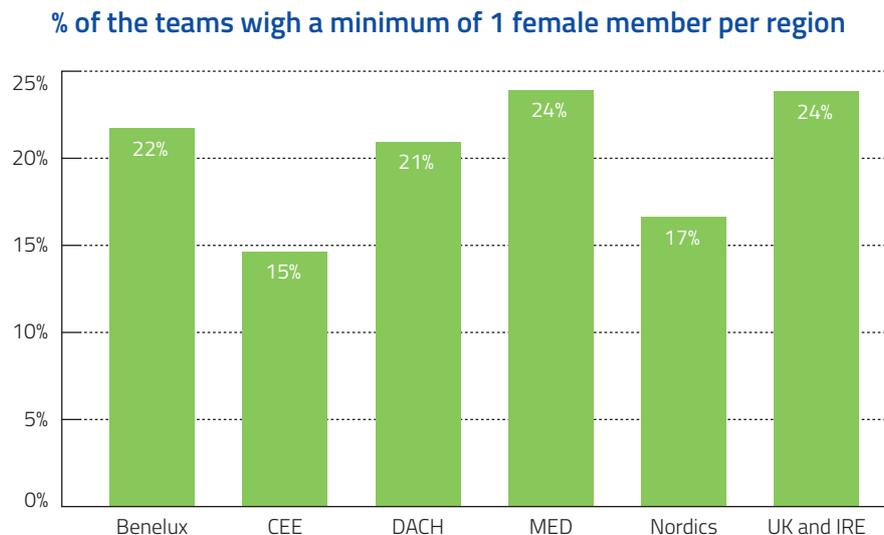


This year we had no female co-founders in the batch. I have addressed this topic to the team, but the management is not really thinking or reflecting deeply on this topic. (Wiebke).

I think it's not very good. I often go to pitching events and there are few females. Even though I work in cleantech - maybe it's different in social entrepreneurship - maybe there are more women there. There is usually 10 % show up of women. (Florence).

There was not a lot of women in the programme. I don't know if it is an issue - you shouldn't fill a quota. It would create a bigger uproar. I'm happy with any human - gender doesn't matter. (Naomi).

On a regional level CEE and The Nordics score lowest, with the UK and IRE and MED performing best.



It is also fair to note though, that a lack of female founders is a problem much wider than Climate KIC and is a fair accusation levelled across the wider industry and in fact Climate KIC's own performance will also be directly influenced by this therefore it is fairer to put this in a context of other accelerators to demonstrate the true quality of performance in regard to gender diversity. In fact, Europe reports the lowest female involvement in early-stage entrepreneurial activity (6.1%). The lowest levels of gender parity are in the African region (0.59) and Europe (0.60), followed by North America (0.65) – women in those regions are only two-thirds or less as likely to be engaged in TEA as their male counterparts. (GEM 2017/2018 report).

In general, there is a long way to go in terms of gender diversity with the startups - it's a long-term issue in technology. We have the same issues - it's very imbalanced - it's very male dominated. (Aimee).

I don't feel like the programme is more welcoming to either gender. But maybe that is easy to say as a male... I think that wanting to fix the gender imbalance in terms of presence in the programme, is best solved by incentivising females more in the early stage of ideation to form companies. (Participant in anonymous survey)

There's also compelling evidence that having a gender diverse team can improve the ultimate performance of a company, meaning that this is something that everybody within the industry should care about as everyone would stand to benefit from it.

In a recent McKinsey study entitled Delivering through Diversity (McKinsey, 2018) their research demonstrated that gender diversity in management positions actually increases profitability more

than previously thought. In the firm's previous analysis, companies in the top 25th percentile for gender diversity on their executive teams were 15% more likely to experience above-average profits. The latest data shows that likelihood has grown to 21%.

I don't think I really care about having 30% women in my team because each member in our team recruited based on his or her expertise, motivation and personal fit. However, I'd love to see more women in my team. It makes the team more complete and provides more perspectives.

As a female founder, I can see a clear difference between women in a founder team and women in extended team. Having a woman in a founder team can only be beneficial for a startup. (Natalia).

I like having both men and women in a team as it improves the atmosphere, and both bring a certain kind of thinking to the table, which is valuable. However, I think enforcing a 50/50 division or any kind of quota are extremely counterproductive. Nobody wins in such a scenario. (Participant in anonymous survey)

And it's not exclusively one way either, this sentiment is shared by all female teams as well:

With 3 female founders we think adding male team members would be good for the diversity in our team (Participant in anonymous survey)

The overwhelming point here is that gender diversity in a team is a beneficial dynamic regardless of which way you are looking at it, therefore it could be argued that the focus here should actually be on improving diversity in teams rather than improving the number of all female founder teams.

5.2 Gender stereotypes & Bias

While there is very little difference between the male and female participants within the programme, not just in regards to their job title as we covered in the previous section but also in terms of what they are working on (male and females were working on the same ratio of digital vs. non-digital products and mitigation vs. adaptation products) in regards to the staff and support system, there is a marked difference, particularly when it comes to roles and job titles.

Men are heard more, men are respected more...It's such a deep-rooted issue - the way people treat others may often be very sub-conscious. So that's why it's so difficult. It's so subtle. It just adds up. I see 10-20 years of conditioning that need to be stripped away from the professional world. (Aimee).

The tasks that need to be done are done by women and the decisions are made by men. The men are deciding who will get in. The feedback coming from women is not heard. (Wiebke).

This can in turn have an impact on gender stereotypes and biases the participants experience:

During one of the pitches for an all-male jury, it was questioned whether I possess enough knowledge and skills to co-found a technology-oriented business. I thought it was very insulting. (Participant in anonymous survey)

There's also a discussion around stereotypes when it comes to gender expectations:

I don't know anyone who has kids or are pregnant - I can't imagine doing both. So, I see that it would be relevant with some kind of support on this. It's very difficult for me to see how you would do this because I'm not in that situation. The more that I'm into it the more I think it doesn't matter - it is an entrepreneurship skill set we have to learn. However, I do acknowledge that there is a lack of women - so we need to encourage more women to show up. (Naomi).

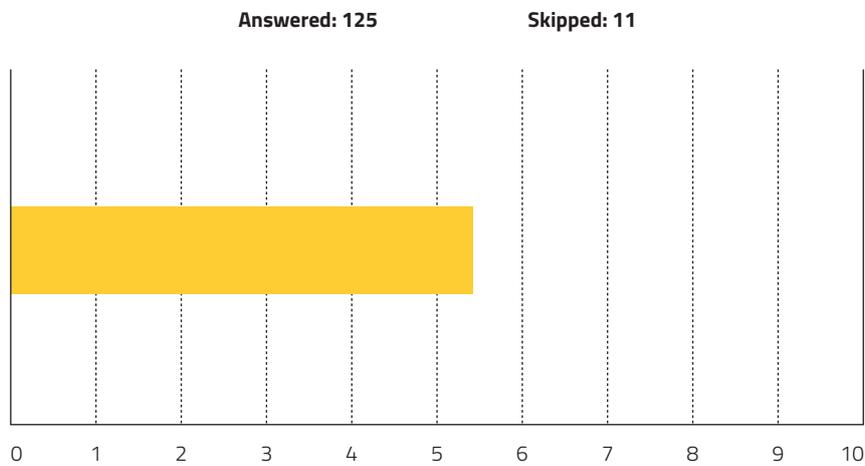
While these gender stereotypes go broader than Climate-KIC's responsibilities, there are clearly some actions that the organisation could take itself in order to address these, or to show how seriously

they take them. Based on the input from the participants, by looking inwards at itself and how the gender balance looks across various roles within the organisation could be a good start and a way to fight gender stereotypes and bias right at the core of the programme.

5.3 Community and communications

In the survey, the question “Do you feel that Climate-KIC addresses gender dimensions (female issues, concerns, priorities) sufficiently in the current programme?” scored an average of 5 out of 10 across the 136 respondents suggesting that there is ample room for improvement.

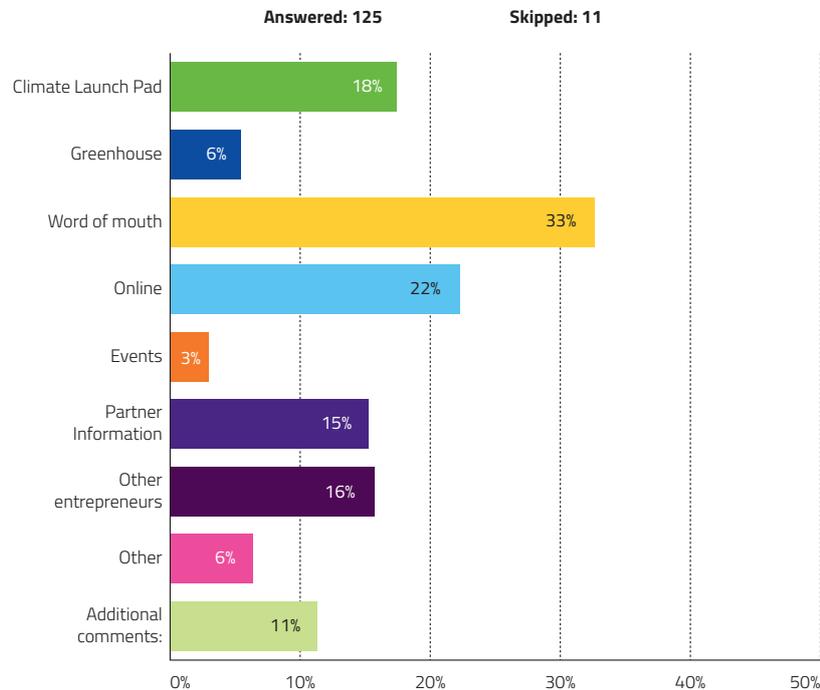
Q8 Do you feel that Climate-KIC addresses gender dimensions (female issues, concerns, priorities) sufficiently in the current program (1.10)?



Interestingly, males felt Climate KIC was performing more strongly in this respect than females did, with an average score of 5.33 from males and 4.6 from females based on a sample of the survey results. As it is likely that females are affected by gender dimensions more than males, then it would be worth interpreting the scores with a heavier weight on the females scoring.

With 70% of the respondents hearing about the programme through word of mouth, online or Climate Launch Pad, it’s fair to say that these are the most important marketing channels for Climate KIC and often the wider communities first interaction with them, meaning it is important to communicate as a female founder-friendly organisation with a focus on improving messaging in these core channels.

Q5 How did you hear about programme?



Our interviewees had specific ideas on how to do this:

If you push a marketing campaign with diversity then people can see that all genders, age, ethnicity join and participate in the programme. (Naomi).

Make the diversity more visible - for the posters, the website and maybe also have success stories from entrepreneurial women - and at least for the Climate Launch Pad they did it. That poster campaign was pretty balanced in terms of gender. (Florence).

While these suggestions are largely based around outward communication, there was also an interesting contribution from one of the founders in the survey in regard to general communication and culture.

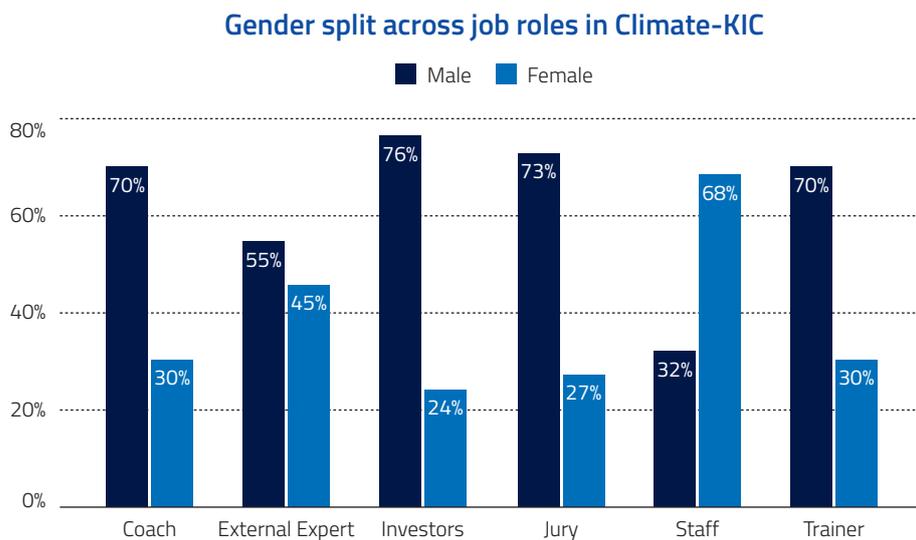
Train all staff in using inclusive language. I would think "they" is much better than "he or she". At least alternating between "he" and "she" would be a step up. I know it's difficult to change people, but not doing so comes at the cost of perpetrating inequality and disengaging minorities. It's not a small cost! (Participant in anonymous survey)

While these concerns around communication can appear to be minor issues when it comes to improving gender diversity within the organisation, they are in fact low effort-high impact tasks that would likely significantly improve the opinion of both participants and future participants on how serious they felt Climate-KIC were taking gender dimensions.

5.4 Support system and selection process

If we look across all roles in the support system of Climate KIC we can see that 34.49% of the individuals involved are female. However, if we dig deeper into which roles they hold within the support system then a slightly more complicated position emerges.

I know that more women have a coordinator role - it is maybe more a caretaker role. From what I see, in the coordination side there are more women. While in the startup side I see a majority of men. (Arianna).



While as many as 7 in 10 (68%) staff members are female, only 27.24% of jury members are and 24% of investors. If we look at this through the lens of who is having the greatest impact on what happens to the founders and teams that participate and go through the programme, then females are significantly less represented in this regard.

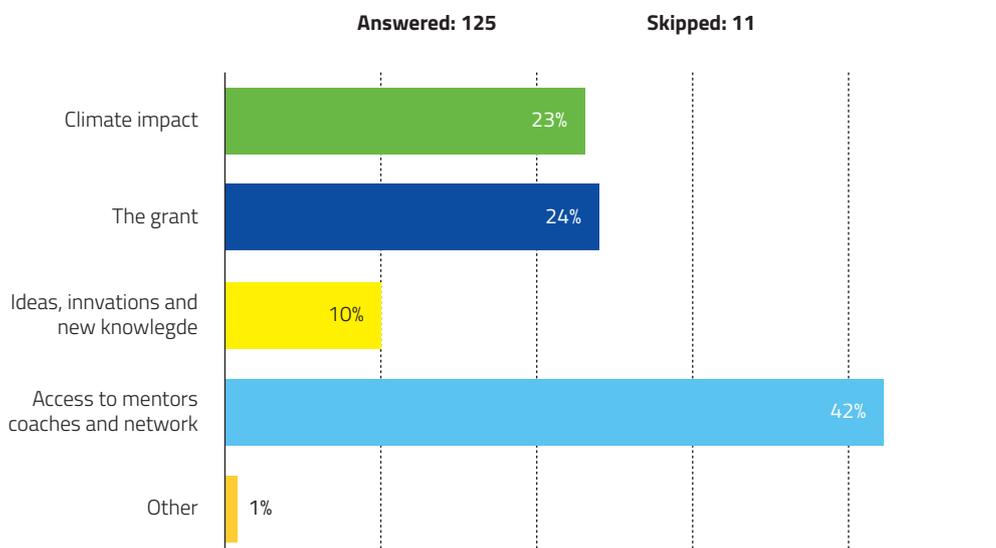
Interestingly 45.45% of the external experts are female. Through speaking to staff, we ascertained that most of the time these experts came through their networks which to some extent could prove the importance of having a more diverse staff, as this is clearly having a knock-on effect throughout the organisation.

Because I am a woman I also call up other women. But it is not the gender that is most important. We also look for skills. In any case this has never been an obstacle and we succeed to end up with quite a balanced and competent jury for the selection. (Arianna).

As for the coaches and trainers, 30% of both of these are female. While it is hard to draw any correlation between the gender diversity of the support system and the effect that has on gender diversity with the programme itself, we can support the importance of who these individuals are through the survey results.

Access to mentors, coaches and network was very important for why people joined the programme, easily scoring the highest for "Why did you want to join Climate-KIC?" (42.40%).

Q4 What was your main motivation for participation in the programme?



Therefore, if increased female role models and investors are important for participants then it's likely that this is also the case for the mentors and coaches and as we can see, this has a dramatic impact on whether Climate-KIC is considered a good option by teams, in many cases it is the overwhelming factor for why they would consider Climate-KIC.

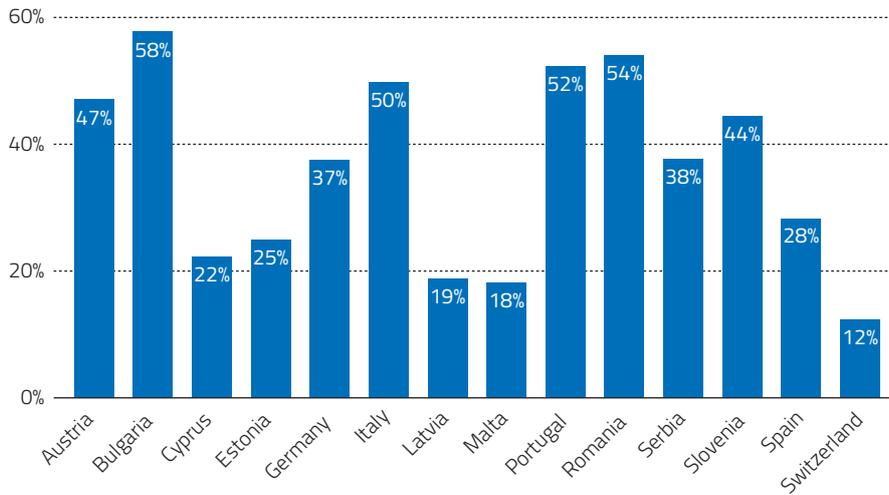
There is therefore no way of underplaying the importance of having a diverse support system, particularly in the coaches, mentors, jury members and investors in the programme.

All coaches are men, but also are speakers for startup stories and expert talks are men. It shouldn't be too hard to find a female Climate-KIC graduate, as there are (partly) female groups? (Participant in anonymous survey)

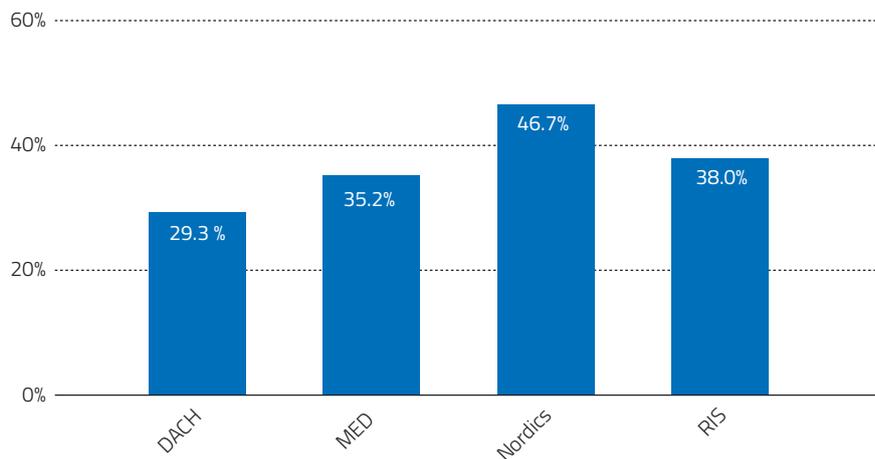
Especially during pitches, I have noticed that jury members are generally males only. The questions they ask are exclusively from their own (male) perspective. They all seem to have a very masculine view of the role of founder. (Participant in anonymous survey)

On a broader level, gender balance of staff varied greatly depending on locations. Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Malta, Spain and Switzerland have a lower than average (34.49%) female ratio involved in their support system while Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia performed above average in this regard.

Female % of Climate-KIC staff per location



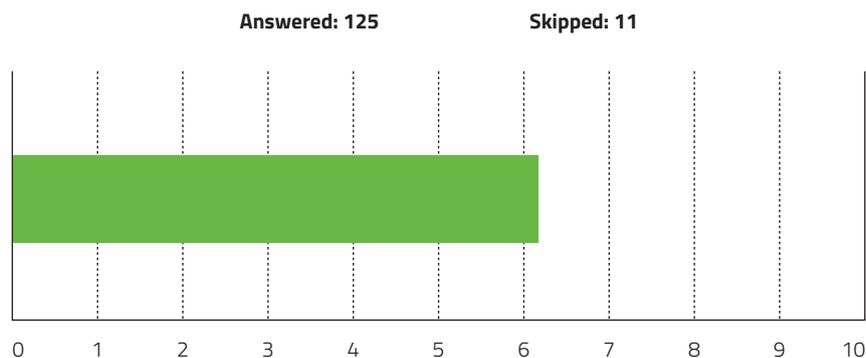
Female % of Climate-KIC staff per region



5.5. Speaking up

In the survey we included the question “Is gender diversity a topic you think about?” and allowed people to respond on a scale of 1-10. The average score came back as 6, suggesting that this is a topic considered to be of reasonable importance and interest to participants in Climate KIC, which in turn validates the need for this topic to be taken seriously and inherently increases the value of this study.

Q6 Gender diversity is a topic I think about (1-10)



Delving deeper into the survey responses, it's clear to see that female participants have stronger concerns over this topic than the male participants, with it considered of much higher importance on average for females than males. In fact, based on a sample of the survey, on average the females in our sample actually scored this as important as 8.07, whereas the males in the sample scored it as low as 4.66. As we've already established that females feel that Climate-KIC are not performing as well as they'd expect when it comes to gender dimensions, now we can see just how important it is to females participating in the programme, it is a striking reminder of how seriously Climate-KIC should be focusing on improving their performance in this area.

One of the interesting points that arose when we conducted the interviews was the paradox between the suggestion of "women only" initiatives and also just wanting to be treated as an individual and being accepted disregarding gender.

I'm not in any of the female clubs but I would definitely go to events targeting female founders. There are not that many female entrepreneurs, so it is good to know them. Because we are experiencing the same things - career development, business challenges etc. The challenges I experience are not related to gender but are rather those generally faced by entrepreneurs. I don't have any specific topics. (Natalia).

Also, Natalia:

I'm against the startup competition that are only for women. I think the organisers should rather invite more good women-speakers who can share their stories and experiences relevant to both female and male founders. There are already many good female mentors at the Climate Accelerator (Natalia).

Interestingly, the feedback from participants was that creating a female entrepreneurial network would be a welcome initiative from Climate KIC, with this scoring highly across the survey, however, this sentiment provoked mixed feelings amongst staff members who could see both positives and negatives of a female focused initiatives:

Female events are a good idea - I think it is all about creating a community. Create a community of women entrepreneurs and business angels or investors helps to generate more confidence. The aim is not to work in isolation and be inspirational for other women. (Arianna).

To focus too much on gender is not the answer. It shouldn't be like this. If it was the same for men it would be obnoxious. We should rather look at what have we accomplished - the separation will grow if we keep talking about gender and we split up in groups and specific events. Women don't want to go to female events - they want to get accepted in the broader community. (Naomi).

I'm not a massive fan of running things for women - it feels like we had to create a new category for them. I know people mean it very well, but it often ends up sending the wrong message. They try to do the right thing. (Florence).

There it is again, that struggle between increasing initiatives that help and support females without alienating anyone else or without focusing specifically on female founders.

This ultimately plays into the issue of this being a rather taboo topic with both men and women feeling uncomfortable speaking about the gender issue publically and not wanting to address the elephant in the room.

Sometimes the Germans are weird in a way - men feel offended when this topic comes up. You find yourself uncomfortable having the conversation. I don't know how to talk about it - how can I talk about it in a way that helps everyone. It's not about blame - it's about making improvement. One of the other coaches is aware of the topic, but it's not a conversation that is taking place when we select the coaches. (Wiebke).

5.6 Funding, female investors and making it through the funnel

One of the most striking differences between teams that had at least one female member on the team and all males teams was what stage of the accelerator they had participated in.

With each stage of the programme representing the potential and maturity of the startup, the higher the stage, the more promising the startup is deemed to be by Climate-KIC.

- **Stage 1, Fundamentals** - Help entrepreneurs translate pro-climate inventions into viable business models. Startups will work developing and testing a business model using an appropriate business model assessment framework and present a plan for validating that business model by real-world customers. Stage 1 maximum duration of 6 months.
- **Stage 2 - Validation** - Help entrepreneurs translate business plans into concrete value propositions. Provide evidence of the validation of the business model by real-world customers and develop and present a plan for developing products/services to market-readiness and achieving market entry. Stage 2 maximum duration of 6 months.
- **Stage 3 – Delivery** - Help entrepreneurs translate validated business models into first transactions with first customers/ beneficiaries and/ or investors. Startups will pursue market entry with core product/service in beachhead markets and achieve a meaningful number of commercial transactions that validate the core value proposition and/ or attract capital to progress into the next stage in the business development. Stage 3 average duration of 6 months.

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Startup Alumni
Teams w/min. 1 female member	95.38%	58.46%	18.46%	30.77%
Teams w/ no female member	92.27%	69.33%	29.12%	34.28%

Aside from Stage 1, where in fact, some teams are able to skip through to Stage 2 due to their maturity (which is interesting in itself in this regard when we compare the two categories of teams), teams with a minimum of one female member did not progress through the funnel as successfully as all male teams.

While there could be many reasons for this and reasons not necessarily ascertaining to gender, it's still an interesting data point in regard to the ability of female founders to move through the funnel and to ultimately raise money. This is also evident in the fact that there is a better gender split in the earlier stages of Climate-KIC's entrepreneurial activities such as Climate Launch Pad.

There's also no denying that there is less female representation within the jury members than there is across the wider organisation and while it is impossible to say whether this is having an effect on who is being selected to move through the stages, it's equally impossible to say it isn't. Therefore, it would certainly be interesting to see if more teams with female members were able to move through the stages with more female jury members.

Where eventual investment comes from was also raised as important both in the survey and the interviews.

"Working with more female investors" scored the 2nd highest weighted average in our survey to past

participants on what tangible measures Climate-KIC could take when it comes to improving diversity performance.

However, compared to the wider tech ecosystem where approximately 1 in 10 investors are women (Harris, 2018), 1 in 4 investors (24%) involved across the programme were actually female, meaning Climate KIC is already performing above the wider industry average. Despite this, it appears working with even more female investors would be a wish of the participants in the programme. It remains to be seen whether this would increase the number of female teams moving through the funnel.

5.7 Role models

In the survey that was sent out to participants in the programme in regard to Climate-KIC's diversity performance one of the final questions was:

What can Climate-KIC accelerator do to create a more inclusive and gender diverse community?

Both in terms of the weighted average and the one that scored the highest on a scale of 1-5, "Use female role models or female alumni in the accelerator programme" was comfortably the suggestion that was the most popular.

	1 - I don't see any value in this		3 - Sounds like a good idea		5 - The perfect solution!	Total	Weighted average
Introduce more female coaches in the program	20.8% 22	6.6% 7	42.5% 45	21.7% 23	8.5% 9	106	2.91
Work with more female investors	14.2% 15	7.6% 8	37.7% 40	30.2% 32	10.4% 11	106	3.15
Include gender topics in the masterclasses or in the other programs	27.4% 29	18.0% 19	27.4% 29	18.9% 20	8.5% 9	106	2.63
Adress gender issues and styles in "the good pitch"	26.4% 28	19.8% 21	28.3% 30	15.1% 16	10.4% 11	106	2.63
More support or information regarding maternity	14.2% 15	24.5% 26	31.1% 33	14.2% 15	16.0% 17	106	2.93
Use female role models or female alumni in the accelerator program	7.6% 8	9.4% 10	30.2% 32	26.4% 28	28.4% 28	106	3.55
Create a female entrepreneur network	20.8% 22	18.9% 20	30.2% 32	13.2% 14	17.0% 18	106	2.87
Address gender more specifically in written communication in website, application process, social media etc.	13.1% 33	16.0% 17	34.0% 36	13.2% 14	5.7% 6	106	2.46

And it's not just the participants who believe this would be a good solution, this sentiment was also echoed loudly by the staff and female founders involved in the various programmes:

Where do the issues actually come from? I think it is about societal issues. it's how we raise young women. Self-esteem means something in how we develop as professionals. I think the challenge is how we educate our kids. Things like confidence and relationships. (Aimee).

In general, all startup events should have women on stage or in panels. There are always a few women on stage, however I sometimes struggle to identify myself with them. Most of them share experiences which are not relevant for female-founders, others come from corporate or investors side and some are just not good in story-telling. There are good women speakers, but they are not necessarily role models for future female founders. (Natalia).

It is good to hear women talk about success stories - but the same goes for men. (Naomi).

Increasing the number of female role models around the programmes is a very tangible potential solution to improving Climate KIC's participation in increasing gender diversity, both in terms of attracting more female founders but also supporting those already within the programme.

There's also an important link with communication and marketing of the programme too, with there being some room for role models to participate in this aspect too. Florence had a strong suggestion in this regard:

Make it more visible - for the posters, the website and maybe also have success stories from women. (Florence).

The key to this is of course engaging with the female founders past and present in the programme and ensuring their buy-in to be the role models that the programme can put forward. This in turn leads to ensuring female founders are attracted to and participating in the programme in the first place, which brings us full circle.



6. Recommendations

Based on the findings, themes and latest trends, these will be the recommendations to take forward. They can also serve as recommendations for other startup programmes and initiatives that focus on inclusion, diversity and female entrepreneurship.

1. Make it a priority

Anyone who wants to drive inclusion and diversity should speak up and make it a priority on a strategic level. Diversity doesn't happen overnight, and it doesn't happen if we keep repeating the same behaviour. Sometimes a starting point can be to say something like: "we are dedicated to this agenda and we intend to figure out how we might best drive the conversation further". That is a starting point - just like this analysis is a starting point for implementing new activities.

2. Recruit more female role models

It is clear from the analysis that there is a strong preference for more bright and talented female role models - both on stages, as trainers, coaches, fellow entrepreneurs and investors. With this in mind there is a good opportunity for Climate-KIC to put spotlight on the women who succeed and bring them into their events and activities.

3. Build bridges

A community is made up by the people who participate and join. And Climate-KIC is also part of a broader entrepreneurship community with many sub-communities. A lot of them are focused on female circles, female networks, Ladies First, Female Clubs etc. If Climate-KIC manage to connect and build bridges between the communities by engaging in a genuine way the road is paved for more inclusion and awareness about the opportunity Climate-KIC has to offer with its programme and activities.

4. Consistent gender tracking.

Change begins with awareness and focus. In order to address status quo and move the needle it is good to track gender in a consistent way - both for startup teams but also internally with staff and collaboration partners. It seems somewhat basic but is an important first step towards having an informed conversation.

5. Drive progression

It is important to assess what kind of support women need in different stages when moving through the different stages in the funnel in startup programmes. From the findings in the analysis it stands out that women don't progress to the very end, which should be addressed through the design of the programme and the support system.

6. Be aligned

When delivering a programme in collaboration with partners it is important to make sure the partners are aligned with the gender diversity mission and follow the same recommendations and principles to make sure the message comes across through all touch points. Basically, you and your partners mission should be the same in order to deliver a consistent and holistic approach.

7. Engage with other communities

Gender diversity and inclusion happens in all corners and areas of an entrepreneurship ecosystem. Also outside the startup programme. Everybody who runs a startup programme have a responsibility to play a role in the ecosystem and society at large and contribute to the conversation. This means being active in activities outside your own programmes. E.g. by participating in events, putting female role models on stages and engaging with the startup community at large.

Final remarks

The recommendations are the first step towards bridging the gap. They are basic and universal for everyone running a startup programme. The next step is translating the insights and recommendations into actual guidelines and principles for the Climate-KIC programme. The hard part is operationalizing and implementing recommendations, so it is important to assess and prioritize which initiatives to start with. The low hanging fruits are the recommendations that point to engagement in other communities and participation in female circles and events, just as putting more female role models on different panels and stages is something everybody can easily get started with. Tracking gender data in a consistent way, working with different support instruments through the stages and the strategic priority are recommendations that calls for broader buy-in at different levels in the organisation, so those recommendations might take up more time and resources to implement but will be worthwhile in the long run.

Appendix 1. Survey guide

- **Q1.** Are you male or female?
- **Q2.** In which location did you attend the programme?
- **Q3.** What's the composition of your founding team? (Number of female founders and number of male founders)
- **Q4.** What was your main motivation for participating in the programme?
 - Climate impact,
 - The grant
 - Ideas, innovations and new knowledge
 - Access to mentors, coaches and network
 - Other
- **Q5.** How did you hear about the programme?
 - Climate Launch Pad
 - Greenhouse
 - Word of mouth
 - Online
 - Events
 - Partner information
 - Other entrepreneurs
 - Other
- **Q6.** Gender diversity is a topic I think about (Scored 1-10, with 10 the maximum)
- **Q7.** Please specify (related to Q6)
- **Q8.** Do you feel that Climate-KIC addresses gender dimensions (female issues, concerns, priorities) sufficiently in the current programme (Scored 1-10, with 10 the maximum)?
- **Q9.** Please specify (belongs to Q8)
- **Q10.** What was the worst thing you got from the programme, in terms of not addressing, supporting or promoting gender issue? (Be as concrete as possible)
- **Q11.** What can Climate-KIC accelerator do to create a more inclusive and gender diverse community? (Be as concrete as possible)
- **Q12.** Please rate the following gender inclusiveness: (from 1-5, with 1 "I don't see any value in this" and 5 "The perfect solution")
 - Introduce more female coaches in the programme
 - Work with more female investors
 - Include gender topics in the masterclasses or in the other programmes
 - Address gender issues and styles in "the good pitch"
 - More support on information regarding maternity
 - Use female role models or female alumni in the accelerator programme
 - Create a female entrepreneur network
 - Address gender more specifically in written communication in website application process, social media etc

Appendix 2. Interview guide

Purpose with interviews

The purpose of the interviews is to explore and learn more about what drives female entrepreneurship, what matters to them and how Climate-KIC can support diversity and improve the programme.

The interviews are explorative and focused on getting rich descriptions and stories about gender, diversity and female entrepreneurship. The interviews are conducted on phone – 30 minutes.

Data collection: write up notes and selects specific quotes. No full transcription due to scope of analysis.

Who will we talk with:

Interview respondent	Criteria for selection	Focus for the interview	Number of interviews
Female Entrepreneurship Expert	Someone who has been working intensively with women, female entrepreneurship, accelerator programmes	What matters for women? Do we know what makes up for a thriving diverse startup ecosystem	1
Accelerator Staff	Staff members who has been with the programme for some time, have direct ownership of the services provided and has reflections and thoughts on the agenda	Understand how staff members look at diversity and female entrepreneurship and get their perspective on how to change the system and offers.	2
Female founder	Female founders who are in stage three spread out on geography	Uncover what drives them as entrepreneurs and how Climate-KIC is supporting women.	3

The respondents are:

Arianna Cecchi, Climate-KIC Italy, Innovation Lead, Startup Accelerator Lead

Aimee Apel, Climate-KIC Germany, Accelerator manager

Wiebke Weichert, Climate-KIC Germany, Coach

Florence Gschwend, CEO & Co-founder, Chrysalix Technologies

Naomi MacKenzie, Co-founder KITRO

Natalia Tomiyama, Co-founder, NÜWIEL GmbH

Interview guides:

Interview guide for Expert

Briefing: Set the scene for the interview and tell what it is about and how it will work.

- How would you describe the current state of gender diversity in the entrepreneurship scene?

- Why is it important?
- What do we know about what drives female entrepreneurship and gender diversity? In general, and in accelerator programmes?
- What are the biggest obstacles for professional entrepreneurship communities, accelerators etc. to support and drive female entrepreneurship and gender diversity?
- Do you know of any initiatives, examples, ideas, networks, organisations you can highlight who are making progress in terms of fostering female entrepreneurs and creating gender diverse communities?
- If you were the manager of an accelerator what would you recommend or do?
- Final thoughts ... Is there anything I haven't asked you about?

Debriefing: What will happen next. How will we use the input? When will they see it?

2. Interview guide for Staff

Briefing: Set the scene for the interview and tell what it is about and how it will work.

- What is your current view on the state of diversity on gender in the Climate-KIC entrepreneurship communities?
- How is diversity and inclusion adding value to Climate-KIC?
- What are some of the issues you can think of in terms of female entrepreneurship in Climate-KIC?
- What are some of the positive stories you will highlight from Climate-KIC?
- How do you select coaches, jury and speakers for trainings and masterclass?
- Do you consider diversity and gender in the design of the programme and its services?
- How do you work with partners on the agenda of diversity and gender?
- What could you do better in terms of sourcing and supporting female entrepreneurs?
- What are you inspired by from the broader entrepreneurship scene? Can you give examples?
- What does it take to create a system that stimulates a thriving and diverse community?
- How could Climate-KIC remove the obstacles preventing a thriving and diverse community?
- Final thoughts ... Is there anything I haven't asked you about?

Debriefing: What will happen next. How will we use the input? When will they see it?

3. Interview guide for Female Founder

Briefing: Set the scene for the interview and tell what it is about and how it will work.

- What is your current view on the state of diversity on gender in the entrepreneurship community?
- Is it something you think about/care about? - Why?
- What are some of the issues or obstacles in relation to diversity and gender you can think of in the Climate-KIC programme?
- What are some of the things that work really well in relation to diversity and gender in Climate-KIC?
- What are some of the initiatives you know about from the broader global entrepreneurship scene?

that address this topic?

- What could Climate-KIC do more of to source and support female entrepreneurs?
- How can Climate-KIC build a thriving and diverse community?
- What would you do differently if you were the manager of the accelerator programme in terms of gender diversity?
- Final thoughts ... Is there anything I haven't asked you about?

Debriefing: What will happen next. How will we use the input? When will they see it?

Appendix 3. Data disclaimers

- We were unable to include France's support system in our analysis, despite them appearing to have a high female involvement due to the fact we were not provided the male statistics therefore we couldn't put it into context. We were also missing data from other locations, meaning the dataset is not complete in this regard.
- Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia were included in the instrument dataset but not in the participant dataset meaning it was not possible for us to draw any type of correlation in these locations.
- Therefore, in the country specific analysis, we only include countries where we had the full picture.
- We didn't get any responses from 6 of the 15 locations on the participant survey, meaning over 1/3rd of locations remain underrepresented in this data.
- For the support system/instrument analysis we used a combination of 2017 and 2018 data, whereas in the participant data we only looked at 2017.
- In the participant data, a lot of the job titles were undefined or undisclosed, meaning it is likely that the founder ratio is higher for both females and males than we were able to state in our analysis.
- We used office location rather than physical location in this analysis, although it should be noted that these are largely the same.

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EIT Climate-KIC is a European knowledge and innovation community, working to accelerate the transition to a zero-carbon economy. Supported by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), we identify and support innovation that helps society mitigate and adapt to climate change. We believe that a decarbonised, sustainable economy is not only necessary to prevent catastrophic climate change, but presents a wealth of opportunities for business and society.

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