

# Improving Gender Balance in the Nuclear Sector

Cooperation through the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA) on Data and an International Policy Instrument

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# Why is gender balance important for the nuclear sector?



Dr Marie Skłodowska-Curie  
1867-1934



Dr Lise Meitner  
1878-1968



Dr Chien-Shiung Wu  
1912-1997

**Who is following these famous pioneers?**

## The Challenge:

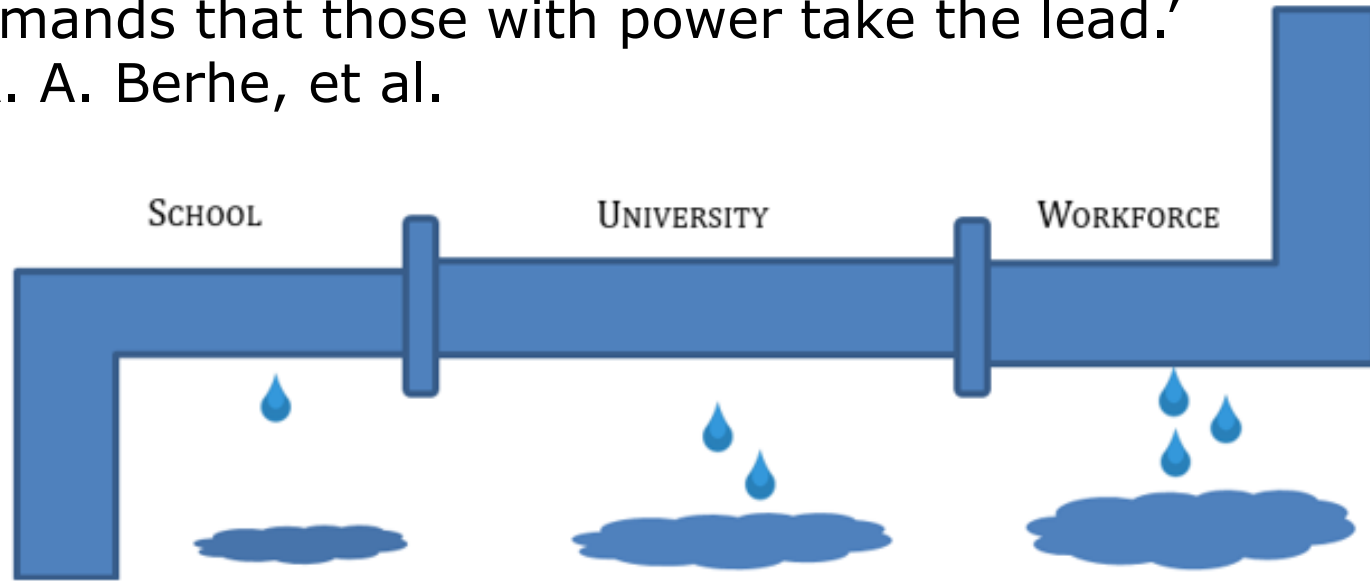
- Previous generations retiring, **small talent pipeline**
- Nuclear energy's potential contribution global effort to reach **net-zero** not fully realised
- Societal perceptions about '**masculine**' sector and **lack of social trust**

## The Opportunity:

- New investment = opportunity to **recruit new, diverse talent**
- Diversity = higher **innovation and performance**
- Diversity = **change nuclear culture & perceptions, improve trust**

# The 'Leaky Pipeline'/'Hostile Obstacle Course'

'Inclusive and equitable ...science requires identification and removal of structural barriers to participation. Replacing the leaky pipeline metaphor with that of a hostile obstacle course demands that those with power take the lead.'  
-A. A. Berhe, et al.



Low enrolment of adolescent girls in STEM



Insufficient knowledge of nuclear careers and support

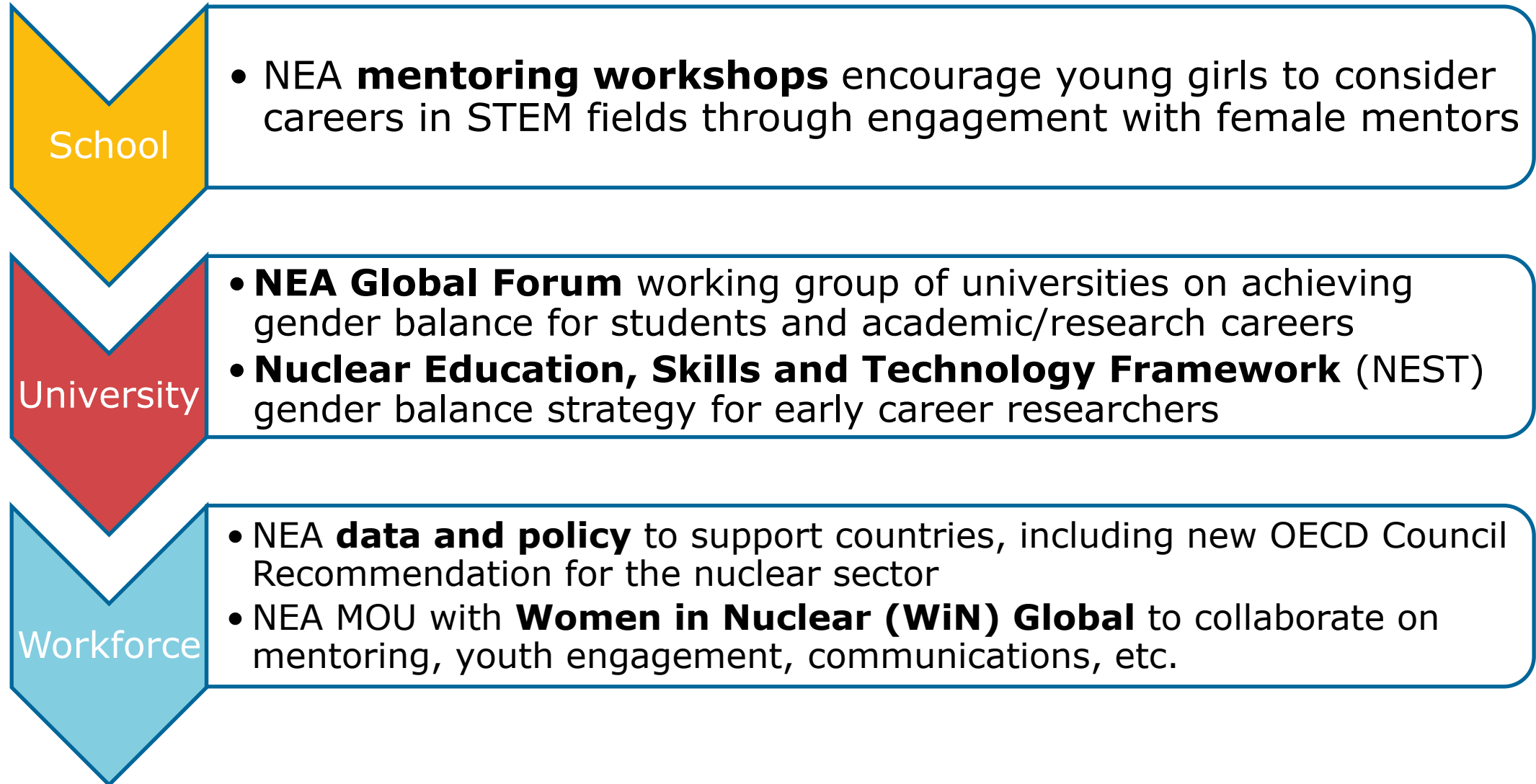


Lack of women in nuclear, incl. leaders & STEM



Illustration inspired by Emanu's Equality hurdles. Credit: Mvmet.

# NEA Gender Balance Activities



# NEA Task Group on Improving the Gender Balance in the Nuclear Sector (GB-TG)

## CHAIR:

Dr Fiona Rayment, OBE  
*Vice Chair, NEA Steering Committee*  
*Chief Science and Technology Officer*  
*UK National Nuclear Laboratory*



## Members are:

- Country representatives with policy-level responsibilities or recognised expertise

## Mandated by Steering Committee for Nuclear Energy to:

- Collect and analyse data
- Formulate international policy
- Develop communications, engagement, and educational activities

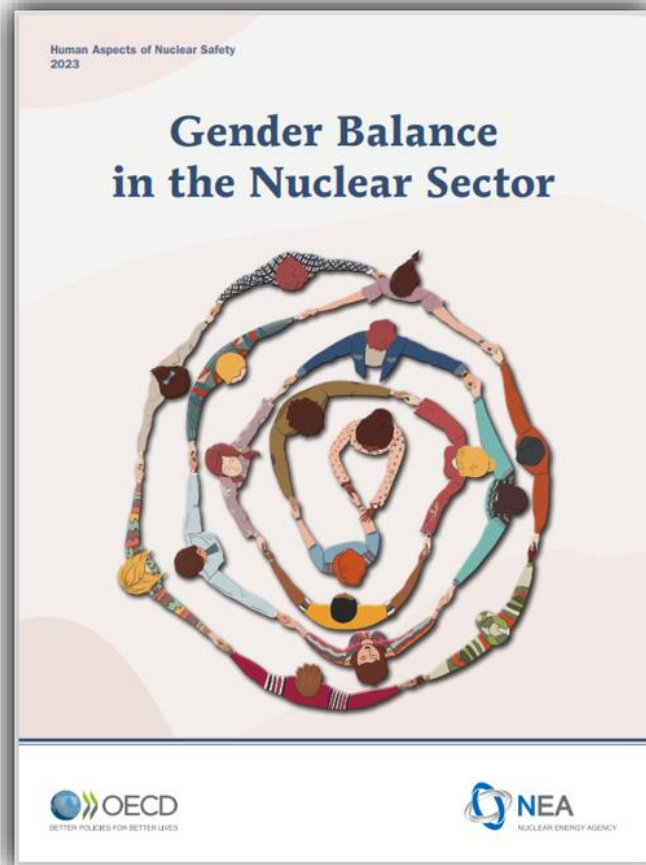
**2019:** Exploratory meeting identified data gaps

**2021:** Launch of data collection

- *Human resources survey information from 17 countries and 96 organisations*
- *Opinion survey of 8000+ women in sector*

**2023:** Data report and policy framework published  
Policy instrument adopted by OECD

# NEA Data on Gender Balance in the Nuclear Sector



Download the report:  
[oecd-nea.org/gender-balance](https://www.oecd-nea.org/gender-balance)

Data collected by the NEA in 2021:

- **Survey of 8,000+ women** working in nuclear in NEA countries
- **Human resources data from 96 nuclear orgs** in 17 NEA countries

**Women in the nuclear sector in NEA countries are:**

- **25% of the overall nuclear sector workforce is female**
  - But only **20% of STEM roles** and even **less in senior leadership**
- **29% of new hires & 27% of promotions, clustered in non-STEM** (insufficient to improve gender balance, esp. in STEM and senior roles)
- **Paid less than men** (*based on limited data*)
- Facing **negative career impacts from pregnancy & family** roles
- Eager to advance, but inhibited by **workplace hostility** (esp. in STEM roles), sexual harassment, biases, and **lack of management support**

# OECD Council Recommendation on Improving the Gender Balance in the Nuclear Sector

## 'Attract, Retain & Advance + Data' Framework

Learn more:

[oecd-nea.org/gender](https://www.oecd-nea.org/gender)



### Attract

women into the nuclear sector



### Retain

& support women in the workforce



### Advance

& develop women as leaders

**DATA REPORTING & ACCOUNTABILITY**

### What:

- **International policy instrument** by OECD Council  
→ **High-level political commitment** by 41 OECD and NEA countries to implement nationally
- **Targeted actions** under three pillars plus **data**  
→ 'Attract' pillar includes provisions for **enhancing the educational pipeline**

### How:

- **Leverages government purview** over nuclear agencies, contractors and funding recipients
- Welcomes broad range of nuclear orgs to join

# Overview of the Recommendation



## ATTRACT

- Public communications
- Showcase women's leadership
- Enhance educational pipeline
- Gender-balanced recruitment & hiring



## RETAIN

- Inclusive workplaces
- Address career impacts of family
- Eliminate harassment
- Executive performance linked to GB progress



## ADVANCE

- Eliminate unequal gender impacts
- Train decision-makers
- Leadership training
- Resource & ally groups
- Pay parity reviews

## DATA

- **Public goal-setting** by nuclear agencies, contractors and funding recipients
- Designate **resources and senior-level responsibility** for gender balance
- Regular **qualitative and quantitative reporting** on gender balance



# Next Steps



## Mandate for high-level group on gender balance under review by NEA Steering Committee to:

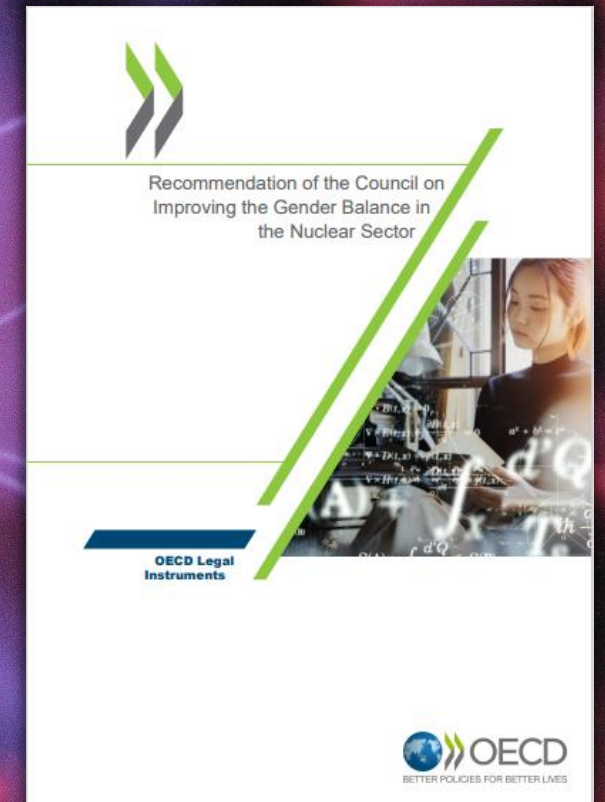
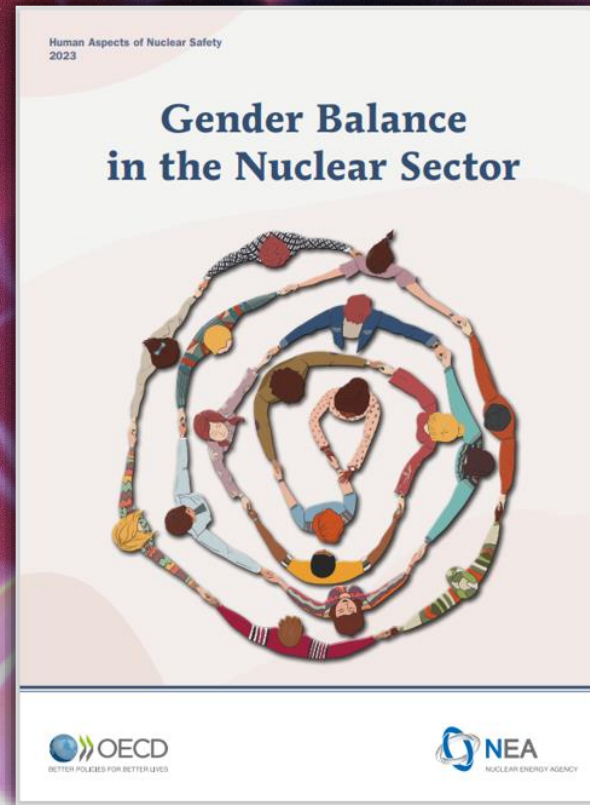
- Support countries to implement policy instrument
  - Coordination, sharing best practices
  - Developing tools and guidance
- Monitor progress through data
  - Interim data project on nuclear regulators
  - Sector-wide report due to OECD Council in 2027
- Engagement, promotion, dissemination

## In sum:

- Gender balance vital to sector's future viability and innovation
- **Report** with first international data illustrates challenges
- OECD **policy instrument** adopted in June 2023
  - Attract-Retain-Advance+Data
  - Regular reporting
  - Implementation tools envisioned

## Contact:

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**Download at [oecd-nea.org/gender](https://oecd-nea.org/gender)**