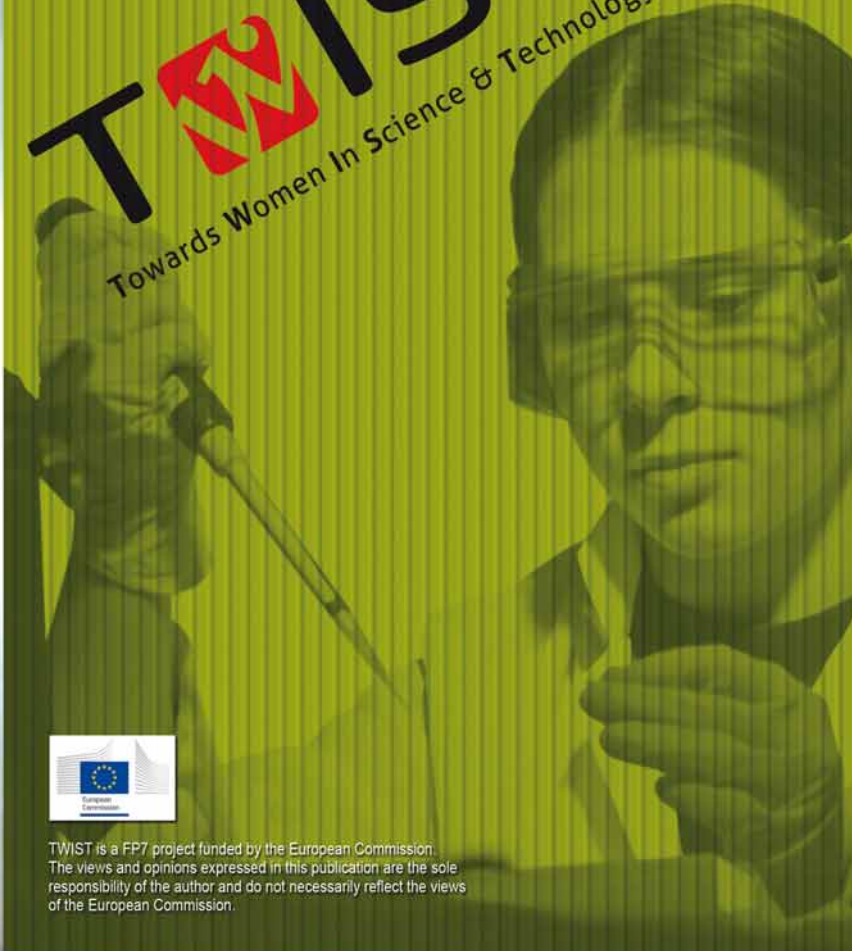


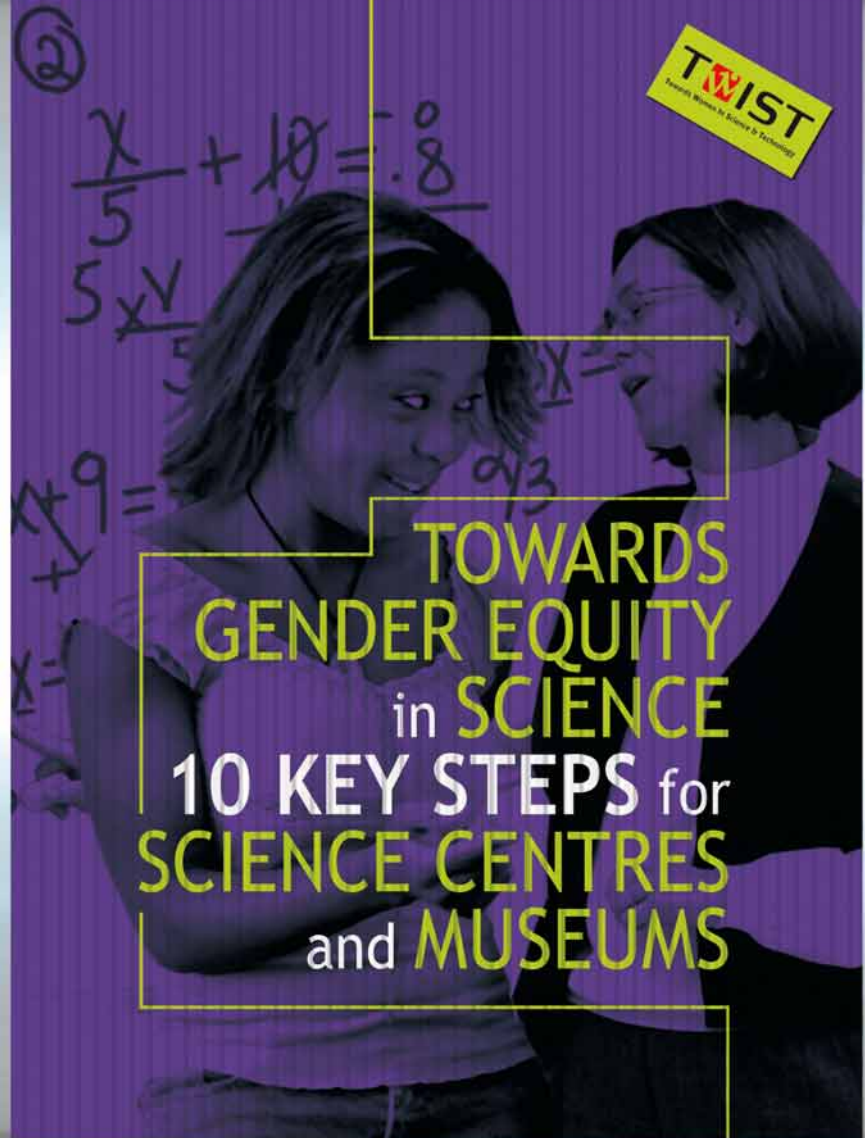
TWIST

Towards Women In Science & Technology



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TOWARDS GENDER EQUITY in SCIENCE 10 KEY STEPS for SCIENCE CENTRES and MUSEUMS

Reaching gender equity in science, technology, engineering and maths is an important challenge for our society. A balanced ratio of men and women in scientific fields and across all decision-making activities ensures greater creativity and effectiveness. Recent policies designed to support gender equity in science recruitment and employment have had some impact. But yet, a gender imbalance still remains.

How can science centres and museums meet this challenge?

The commitment of science centres and museums to issues of gender equity in science is broad and growing, as demonstrated by the results of a survey of 74 organizations from the Ecsite network. But more needs to be done.

These practical guidelines developed by the EU-funded project TWIST (Towards Women in Science and Technology) offer you inspiration, ideas and best practices on how to integrate and address the gender dimension in your organization.

For more information about TWIST visit: <http://www.the-twist-project.eu/en/>

To find out more and link to Innovative International examples, download the full guide at: <http://www.the-twist-project.eu/en/guide/exhibition/>

10 STEPS TOWARDS GREATER GENDER EQUITY

1. Actively challenge stereotypes

We all harbour unconscious assumptions and prejudices about the roles and capabilities of men and women. You can change perceptions by raising awareness of unconscious assumptions and by challenging traditional stereotypes in your exhibitions and programmes.

2. Actively target girls, but design for both boys and girls

Have you ever noticed that more boys than girls engage at your exhibits and programmes? The design of your environment may implicitly appeal more to males than females. To attract more girls incorporate the following design features: create opportunities for social interaction and collaboration; connect content to social contexts; ensure an equal representation of men and women in the content.

But, the real challenge here is one of gender mainstreaming. The most successful initiatives for gender equity are those that stimulate both boys' and girls' interests to the same extent.

3. Address women's invisibility in science: highlight women scientists

Research has shown that women rarely attain senior positions in their fields even when they have the ability. As a result, there are few role models for young women thinking about starting their careers in science and engineering. To counter this, several successful exhibitions have been developed to highlight the work of women in science.

4. Promote 'mentors' and provide 'role models'

Provide opportunities for visitors to meet and connect with female scientists in order to change perceptions about who can and does work in science. "Science speed-dating" events in which visitors may talk face to face with women scientists about their career plans, private lives and challenges have been shown to be particularly effective for promoting opportunities and challenging misconceptions.

5. Target parents

Research has shown that parents are up to three times more likely to explain the science content of an exhibit to their sons than to their daughters. Support girls engagement by helping parents to facilitate their children's learning whatever their gender.

6. Provide training and resources for teachers

When scientists are asked why they chose their field of study, they often mention an inspiring teacher who was enthusiastic about the subject. Science centres and museums can support teachers gain specialized content and teaching knowledge through unique professional development programmes.

7. Adopt participatory design approaches

Mixed male and female design teams, that also involve target audience groups in prototyping ideas, have been shown to lead to exhibitions and programmes that are less stereotypical and more representative of both genders.

8. Integrate gender perspectives / gender research into evaluation

The figures emerging from the TWIST survey show that science centres and museums still lack specific programme for women and girls despite our growing understanding of gender equity. Formative and summative evaluation studies, which explicitly address issues of gender imbalance, can highlight design deficiencies and help inform solutions.

9. Promote and participate in new partnerships

Develop partnerships at European and local level with organizations working on gender issues. In collaborating with these organizations and initiatives you benefit from their expertise, while they benefit from your profile, space, and access to audiences.

10. Mirror gender equity in your own institution

A gender balance should be promoted not only in your exhibitions and programmes but also in the composition of your staff. The survey by the TWIST project suggests that men occupy double the number of managerial positions than women in our institutions.

Effective gender oriented strategies which help staff to manage their work-life balance more effectively include: facilitating access to childcare services; fair parental leave policies and flexible working hours for mothers; a constant monitoring of the gender composition of the staff and pay conditions; internal working groups; and the inclusion of gender and equity issues in the institution's Action Plan.