

## COMMUNICATING WOMEN IN SCIENCE

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### Abstract

The CSR National Program L'Oréal - UNESCO "For Women in Science" has been raising awareness and encouraging young researchers to pursue their career in science for the last 12 years. In Slovenia, 53% of women obtain their doctoral degree but only 36.1% remain in the research field. It, therefore, follows that raising awareness of women in scientific fields is necessary. As a result, in the area full of stereotypes this year our communication support took into perspective new and old scholarship holders, their lives as young women researchers and scientists, and the challenges of being a woman in the scientific field. There were many challenges in communicating the topic. With detailed communication strategy, however, we achieved national coverage of the program, raised public awareness of the position of women in science, broken some prejudices and stereotypes as well as motivated and encouraged award-winning young researchers. We also assisted scientists in gaining recognition for their work and presented the project as an opportunity for young researchers to receive a scholarship. We believe the diverse perspectives and intellectual capabilities of women result in new scientific understandings and discoveries which are important for the whole society.

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Keywords: women in science, communicating science, corporate social responsibility campaign, gender equality, raising awareness.

### Komuniciranje žensk v znanosti

#### Povzetek

Družbeno odgovorni projekt - Nacionalni program L'Oréal - UNESCO "Za ženske v znanosti" v Sloveniji že 12 let dviguje ozaveščenost in spodbuja mlade raziskovalke, da nadaljujejo svojo kariero v znanosti. V Sloveniji 53 % žensk pridobi doktorat, le 36,1 % pa ostaja na raziskovalnem področju. Zato je namen projekta povečati ozaveščenost o ženskah v znanosti. Komunikacijska podpora, na tem področju polnem stereotipov, vključuje perspektive novih in starih študentk, njihovega življenja kot mladih raziskovalk in znanstvenic ter izpostavlja izzive žensk na znanstvenem področju. Pri spodbujanju medijev o poročanju o temi in pri ozaveščevalnem vidiku smo se komunikatorji srečevali z različnimi izzivi. Kljub izzivom nam



je uspelo s podrobno komunikacijsko strategijo doseči nacionalno pokritost programa, povečati ozaveščenost javnosti o položaju žensk v znanosti, razbiti nekatere predsodke in stereotipe ter motivirati in spodbuditi nagrajene mlade raziskovalke. Pomagali smo tudi znanstvenicam pri pridobivanju priznanja za njihovo delo in predstavili projekt kot priložnost za mlade raziskovalke, da se prijavijo na razpis in se potegujejo za enoletno štipendijo. Verjamemo, da raznolike perspektive in intelektualne sposobnosti žensk privedejo do novih znanstvenih dognanj in odkritij, ki so pomembna za celotno družbo.

Ključne besede: ženske v znanosti, komunikacijska znanost, kampanja družbene odgovornosti, enakost spolov, ozaveščanje.

## **1 The challenges of communicating L'Oréal - UNESCO "For Women in Science" program**

Raising awareness of women in science and encouraging young female researchers is a necessity, which we have been supporting at Pristop communication agency with pride through the CSR National Program L'Oréal - UNESCO "For Women in Science" for the last 12 years. Despite the progress in gender equality, there is still a long way to reach equality in the field of science.

When we accepted the challenge of communicating the project, we faced several different challenges. The first one was presenting the science and the scientific research itself, which is typically seen as a less interesting topic by the general public. We, therefore, shifted away from the stereotype of science being too difficult for everyone to understand. As a result, we showed the research of the awarded female researchers as accessible and clear to general public. The second challenge was presenting the program in a new light, as this year already marked the 12<sup>th</sup> call for application "For Women in Science". Therefore, it was expedient we innovate promotion of the program, both for getting scholarship applicants and for animating media to report on the topic that had already been known to them. Media coverage was crucial as the primary communication channel of spreading awareness on women in science. Our award ceremony was also held a week after Women's day in Slovenia resulting in additional coverage of that topics about women covered in the media. Third challenge was to address the problem of women's low participation in science in Slovenia, particularly since no new research had been furnished since 2012.

Communicating "For Women in Science" program presents a special responsibility as a successful completion of project's goals affords young female researchers the opportunity for a scholarship, thus assisting them in achieving their career dreams. At the same time public is more aware of the position of women in science, the prejudices and stereotypes are broken, and young female researchers and students are motivated for pursuing their career in science. Furthermore, we also help female scientists with gaining recognition for their work in the scientific field and also among general public.

In general, supporting innovative research by female scientists contributes to tackling the challenges of today's time and realizing the potential they have to change the world for the better. The society as a whole benefited by taking advantage of the diverse perspectives and intellectual abilities of women in the advancement of scientific understanding and discoveries.



## **2 Communication was at the heart of the CSR strategy for L'Oréal - UNESCO "For Women in Science" program**

### **2.1 About L'Oréal - UNESCO "For Women in Science" program**

The National Program L'Oréal - UNESCO "For Women in Science" started in Slovenia in 2006. Ever since, it has been drawing attention to the importance and role of women in science, and, at the same time, rewarding scientific excellence of young female researchers and helping them gain recognition for their work. Thus, every year scholarship is awarded to three outstanding young female researchers in their final year of PhD studies in fields of natural sciences, biotechnology and medicine. They have to be doing their research in a Slovenian institution and be up to 35 years old. So far, 34 outstanding researchers have been awarded in Slovenia. It is important to note that scholarship recipients receive a onetime scholarship in total amount of €5,000 and the money can be spent for any purpose.

The national program is part of the wider partnership L'Oréal - UNESCO "For Women in Science" which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. Internationally, there are two types of programs "For Women in Science". One is an award for an established woman scientist and another for the raising talents of young female researchers. In the latter, named "International Rising Talents," also two Slovenian researchers received international scholarships in the past years.

On 2 October 2017, L'Oréal Slovenia and the Slovene National Commission for UNESCO, with the communication support of Pristop, opened their 12th call for applications for the "Women in Science" scholarship 2018. Selection of three scholarship holders followed and ended with a formal award ceremony on 15 March 2018 in the atrium of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

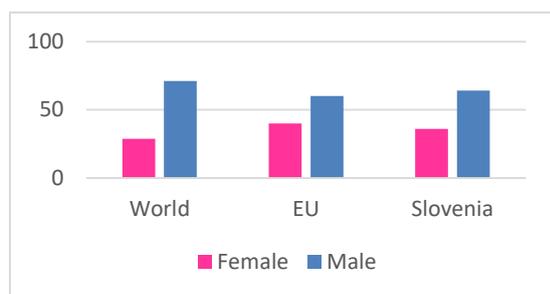
### **2.2 Researching women in science**

In recent years, we have seen an increase of professional opportunities for women in areas, where, historically, it had been extremely difficult for them to develop a career path; more of them are entering leading positions in the economy, politics and other areas. However, when compared to percentage of men, they are still a minority. This is also the case in the field of science. The share of women researchers worldwide is only 28.8%. In Europe, this share represents 40%, yet at highest levels of academia there are only 11% of women (UNESCO Institute for Statistic, 2014). Also, according to the She Figures Study, the proportion of female researchers in the EU increased by 11.1% between 2008 and 2011, while the share of men in science increased by 3.3%. Nevertheless, the relationship between female and male researchers is still incoherent (European Commission, 2015).

The inequality is also reflected in the Nobel Prize Laureates. In all the years of awarding these distinct honors, only 3% of women received the Nobel Prize, and in 2017 there were no women among the winners (The official website of the Nobel Prize, 16th of August).

In Slovenia, according to the latest available data from 2012, there is a larger percentage of women pursuing a doctoral degree, yet by employment time, the percentage drops drastically to 36% which is 3,9% below the European average (SURS, 2012).





Graph 1: Percentage of women in the field of research

Research also shows that the decision of young women to become scientists is influenced by stereotypes some of the most prevalent being: women in science being less successful, scientific areas being intended only for men, main objective of rearing a family, incompatibility of being both a scientist, work of a scientist being lonely, etc. (Carli and others, 2016).

According to research, it is upon completion of secondary school that the differences in the attainment of education according to sex begin. Specifically, a female graduate has, on average, a 35% chance to be enrolled in a scientific study program, 18% chance to graduate in science, 8% chance to complete a scientific master's degree and 2% chance of getting a PhD in science. While men have 6% chance for the latter (Boston Consulting Group, 2015). Data also shows that in the last years in Europe, women exceed the number of men in terms of level of education and diplomas (Eurostat, 2016).

### 2.3 Communication activities for the 12<sup>th</sup> call for applications L'Oréal - UNESCO "For Women in Science"

For the last 12 years we have been supporting awareness about women in science and encouraging young researchers to pursue their career in science with National Program L'Oréal - UNESCO "For Women in Science". This year, the communication support has taken a different turn as young researchers, past and current winners, were put in the focus of the project communication. They narrated their stories, dilemmas, efforts, and positive aspects of their careers, intertwining their everyday private lives as well. We have put special emphasis on their work and its potential to improve different areas of their research – health, agriculture, environment - in Slovenia.

Firstly, we prepared communication plan for the call for applications, in which we defined the project, target groups, our communication goals, topics we will be communicating, communication channels and tools, timeline of work and detailed plan of encouraging media publications. We prepared a similar communication plan for an award ceremony and promotion of the new scholarship recipients (Komunikacijska strategija "Za ženske v znanosti", 2017).

We divided our target groups into primary and secondary. Primary target group consisted of young researchers in the area of natural sciences in Slovenia, potential applicants in the future calls for applications, Slovenian science sphere (including mentors of potential scholarship holders) and decision makers. The secondary target group was formed of wider Slovenian public and media (Komunikacijska strategija "Za ženske v znanosti", 2017).



Key take-aways were divided into six content sub-sets:

- 1) Opening of the 12th call for applications
  - Conditions, procedure and deadline
- 2) World needs science. Science needs women.
  - Science in Slovenia and the world
  - Science and women, career of women scientists, stereotypes about scientific career and motherhood, life and lifestyle of women scientists in Slovenia
  - Science and economic crisis, job opportunities, brain drain, financial and other incentives for successful scientists
  - Science in the public eye, gender equality in science
- 3) Closure of the 12th call for applications
  - Research areas of the applicants, next steps in the project
- 4) Research topics of the new scholarship recipients
  - Biomedicine: Molecular protein domain evolution for cell surface binding
  - Chemical technology: Formation, characterization and application of polysaccharide aerogels
  - Ecology: Feasibility evaluation of remediation with chelates and risk assessment of remediated soil
- 5) Award ceremony
  - Event announcements
  - Publications about the award ceremony
  - National Program L'Oréal - UNESCO "For Women in Science" and its meaning
  - Members of the National Committee and their views on science
- 6) Scholarship holders
  - Personal portfolios of new scholarship recipients: what it means to receive this honor, presentation of award-winning research work, their lifestyle and life
  - Former scholarship holders - how the scholarship affected their lives and work

Table 1: List and timeline of executed communication activities for the 12th call for applications L'Oréal - UNESCO "For Women in Science"

Communication activities	Time of execution
<b>Primary target group</b>	
Preparation of the visuals for the applications call	September 2017
Preparation of a brochure and poster for the 12th call for applications and its distribution at relevant institutions	September 2017
Call for applications 2018 preparation and publication	September, October 2017
Monthly preparation of "For Women in Science" Facebook page	September 2017 – March 2018
Collection of applications	October, November 2017
End of application deadline	November 2017
Review of applications and selection of this year's scholarship recipients	November, December 2017
Photography, presentation training and media appearance coaching of scholarship	February 2018



recipients	
Organization of award ceremony	March 2018
<b>Secondary target group</b>	
Formulation of communication plan with emphasis on encouraging media publications regarding applications call	September 2017
Preparation of press release about the opening of the call for applications	September 2017
Encouraging media publications about the call for application	October 2017
Preparation of press release at the end of the call for applications	November 2017
Encouragement of media publications regarding award ceremony	January 2018
Announcement and promotion of award ceremony	January – March 2018
Preparation of “save the date” invitation	January 2018
Preparation of media infrastructure (media material, Q&A)	February 2018
Formulation of three different press releases featuring award ceremony and new scholarship holders for different types of media	March 2018
Preparation of invitations for award ceremony for guests and media	March 2018
Encouraging media publications about award ceremony and new scholarship holders while raising awareness about women in science	March 2018

Additionally, we adjusted press releases according to the type of media and geographical location. For example, this year’s new scholarship recipients came from Primorska and Prekmurje regions, so the emphasis in our press releases for local media in the area was on the particular scholarship holder that came from the region. Furthermore, the contents were additionally adapted for media reporting on the following topics: science, health, career and employment, health, environment, lifestyle topics and motherhood media.

## 2.4 Achievements

In just a few months, from time of the participation call in October 2017 to their award early in March 2018, we managed to raise public awareness of the position of women in science with the national reach of the campaign, break prejudices and stereotypes about women in science, and motivate and encourage award-winning young researchers to continue their career paths. Additionally, we assisted scientists in gaining recognition for their work within the scientific community, the general public and their local environment. Lastly, we informed the scientific sphere and wider public in Slovenia of the project itself as well as the opportunity it presents for young researchers to receive a scholarship.



Concerning the issue of representing the women in science, we achieved national coverage with raising awareness, while covering all target audiences, thus exceeding the given communication goals. At the same time, we saw to the visibility of the corporate social responsibility project's owners: L'Oréal and UNESCO.

Our achievements:

- We received 13 applications for the 12<sup>th</sup> call for applications.
- Various faculties, scientific institutions, libraries, relevant state institutions and other organizations reported on their web pages and social media about the program. We recorded 37 such announcements.
- We had 80 guests at the award ceremony, among them president of the National Assembly of Republic of Slovenia Dr. Milan Brglez, minister for education, science and sports Dr. Maja Makovec Brenčič, director of ZRC SAZU Dr. Oto Luthar, general secretary of Slovenia National Commission for UNESCO Marjutka Hafner and others.
- Partners of the program – L'Oréal Slovenia and UNESCO were mentioned in all but 16 media reporting.
- From October 2017 to April 2018, we achieved 99 media publications about the program, which were all positive. Reach of this publications was 10.424,198, while average reach per publication was 105,294. We got national coverage with publications at Delo, Dnevnik, Finance, Večer, STA, Siol.net, Žurnal24.com and Radio Slovenija 1 (Kliping zbirka medijskih objav 2018).
- The total value of the media publications amounted to 70,632 euros, which is several times exceeding the value of invested funds in communication support for the project (Kliping zbirka medijskih objav 2018).
- We also measured the average Communication Quality Index (CQI)<sup>1</sup> per media release 4.75 from 6 possible points per release. From the largest possible points for our publications - 594 points - we collected 470. This means that all media publications contained positive content, they were talking about the call for applications, raising awareness of women in science or talked about granting scholarships to new scholarship holders. The also had a positive title, most of the publications mentioned the program holders, had positive visualizations and contained positive statements by third parties.
- Organic reach of our Facebook posts about the program, which were published on "For Women in Science" Facebook page, was between October 2017 and April 2018 5758, which means that average organic reach per post was 479.8.
- We reached Social Media Engagement Index (SMEI)<sup>2</sup> of our Facebook posts 5.5 points per post from a possible 10 points. In this case, two posts reached all possible points, but none of the posts received negative points.

Picture 1: Media publications of "For Women in Science" program

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<sup>1</sup> The Communication quality index (CQI) is based on the Katie Delahaye Paine methodology, measuring the quality of the achieved media posts by rating the positivity of the content of the publication, the mentions of key stakeholders, third party statements, the analysis of the title and visual material.

<sup>2</sup> Social Media Engagement Index (SMEI) is based on a methodology that evaluates and measures the performance of individual Facebook post in terms of reach, interaction (this combines likes, divisions, and clicks), the conversion rate (the number of people who saw the post and clicked on the link or viewed the photo) and individual clicks on the post.





Source: Kliping, March 2018

Picture 2: Esteemed guests and this year’s scholarship holders, at the formal award ceremony



Source: Jernej Kokol, March 2018

### 3 Conclusion

This year’s program slogan “The world needs science. Science needs women.” perfectly sums up our discoveries along with execution of the communication support of the program L’Oréal - UNESCO "For Women in Science".

Despite the progress, there is still much to be done to achieve gender equality and solve many of the world’s pressing challenges. In front of us is the opening of the 13<sup>th</sup> call for applications for L’Oréal - UNESCO "For Women in Science" 2019. What can we do differently this year? Of course, we can aim to achieve more applicants and higher number of media publications, but some new approaches will definitely be needed. This year an established Slovenian scientist was nominated for the international “For Women in Science” award, which is definitely a new topic to be covered by Slovenian media. We are also checking the possibilities of organizing workshops for young researchers in order to introduce them to the



program and the application process as well as to prepare an event for all the Slovenian scholarship recipients.

One of the new approaches was also to gain traction at the international level of the program. With the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of L'Oréal-UNESCO "For Women in Science" the partners launched new initiative Male champions for Women in Science. The initiative will encourage respected male leaders within the scientific community to make specific, measurable commitments to expand access to grants, encourage equal opportunities in hiring, promotion, research publications and award nominations, and offer mentorship to talented women scientists. It will support these men in making progress, celebrate champions and share best practices. Additionally, it will encourage the next generation of men scientists to commit to promoting gender equality in science. The initiative has the potential to make a difference at national levels.

Despite the progress made, the communicators will have to overcome many challenges ahead to improve gender equality in the field of science and empower women scientists to pursue research. We are looking forward to achieving new communication goals of the upcoming 13<sup>th</sup> call for applications L'Oréal-UNESCO "For Women in Science".

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