

Version 0.1
December 2024

Yearly report
WITAR WORKING GROUP
ACTIVITIES 2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report gives a snapshot of WiTaR WG activities in year 2024, with a particular focus on promoting the participation and advancement of women in telecommunications. Despite significant technological progress, the ICT industry continues to face gender disparity, with women underrepresented at all levels, from technical roles to leadership positions. Women comprise less than 30% of the global ICT workforce, with even lower percentages in technical and leadership roles. This imbalance limits the diversity of perspectives essential for driving innovation and making informed decisions. Key barriers contributing to this disparity include societal stereotypes, limited access to STEM education, insufficient mentoring opportunities, and workplace biases, all of which hinder entry and retention for women in the field. The underrepresentation of women not only impacts social equity but also diminishes the economic and innovation potential of the sector. Research highlights that gender-diverse teams enhance business performance and foster creativity. Addressing this challenge requires a multifaceted approach, including fostering inclusive workplace cultures, implementing gender-sensitive recruitment and retention strategies, expanding access to STEM education for girls, and creating mentorship and leadership development opportunities. By closing the gender gap, the ICT sector can unlock significant economic benefits and position itself as a leader in equitable innovation. This report reflects on the effort made by the Women in Telecommunication and Research (WiTaR) 6G-IA working group over the past year to take a step in closing the gender gap in ICT.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The “Women in Telecommunications and Research (WiTaR)” Working Group was founded in 2023, but the initiative stemmed from the H2020 project Hexa-X, in which a group “Women in Hexa-X” was created in 2020. This group gathered participants from the Hexa-X project interested in promoting diversity in the ICT area, and in particular in the ecosystem of collaborative actions in Europe. The name of the group changed to WiTaR in 2022, to extend beyond the Hexa-X project and gather participants from SNS-JU projects. The Working Group has been progressively growing (112 participants in the WG at the time of publication) and extending its reach, organizing special sessions in events.

Objectives of the WiTaR WG are:

- Become a “reference” point in the SNS Programme and develop awareness across the overall SNS Members/Community to ensure a gender-balanced approach in European R&I activities.
- Promote visibility of women and their achievements and encourage them to engage in leadership positions.
- Support role models for both soft and hard skills of junior researchers and students to contribute to 6G-IA and SNS actions related to ICT Skills, ensuring that ICT missing Skills in EU also systematically address missing ICT Women Skills.
- Contribute to engage more Women in 6G research in particular Sustainability – Societal work, including Panels, Interviews... contributing to the definition of 6G use-cases ensuring the minimization of bias and enriching the set of identified use-cases.
- Interact with SNS and 6G-IA members, analysis of potential gender reported issues and contribution to the issues solving.

2. STATISTICS AND SURVEYS

Conducting surveys and extracting the outcomes in the form of statistics, is one of the effective ways, WiTaR gets in touch with its community and understands the pressing issues that need to be addressed.

A survey conducted during the Women in Telecommunication and Optics (WeInTel) workshop (ICTON 2024) and received some comments and feedbacks from audiences. Here are some important questions and the answers:

- *Have you ever received training or education around diversity, equity and inclusion, specifically related to gender balance?*

- %50 YES / %50 NO

- *What is your company not doing, although it would be beneficial?*

- Establishing a minimum number of women in intermediate and high positions. Considering the gender bias introduced on the decision-making processes.

- *How can we improve the current statistics in SNS with women participation and retention?*

- Promote dissemination events to generate curiosity in young people of all genders and promote an inclusive representation of the research field in SNS.

- Gather enough data to create a strong scientific base for this claim. Also, adopt better public relations and marketing.

- *Which actions/initiatives could support gender diversity and inclusiveness in SNS-JU?*

- Workshops like this in large communication impact conferences (EUCNC, OFC, ECOC, GLOBECOM)

- Recruitment of female researchers and less disadvantaged people.

- Establishing workshops (like this one) for bringing to the table the work made by women in our field and share their experiences.

- give specific support for projects with women in leading Technical positions

- Make mandatory a dissemination about gender balance

- Create a strong scientific base

- Networking event for women

- give more opportunities

One the most important results from WiTaR activities is evidence in participation of women in the EUCNC conference. The EUCNC conference has seen a significant rise in female participation, increasing from 7% to 19.5% within a year. This remarkable growth highlights the ongoing efforts of WiTaR working group to promote gender diversity and inclusivity within the field of communication networks and technologies. The increase underscores the growing interest and recognition of women's

contributions in this traditionally male-dominated sector, paving the way for a more balanced and innovative future.

3. WITAR ACTIVITIES

3.1. WEBSITE

We are pleased to announce the launch of a dedicated page for our working group on the 6G-IA website, on May 23rd, 2024 (<https://6g-ia.eu/witar/>). This page serves as a focal point for promoting diversity and empowering women in telecommunications and research as part of the 6G-IA initiative.

This website page acts as a central hub for sharing resources, highlighting success stories, and providing updates on our activities and events. It will also host tools for networking, and collaboration, fostering a vibrant community committed to advancing inclusivity in the development of 6G technologies. Through this digital space, we aim to amplify our mission, engage with a broader audience, and inspire a more diverse and innovative telecommunications ecosystem.

This space also facilitates hosting our membership application form (available at <https://6g-ia.eu/wg-application-witar-wg/>), enabling us to expand our community within the same digital environment.

In terms of active traffic, we have cumulated in almost six months a total of 361 views for 188 unique active users for an average engagement time per user of 1m43sec (see table below).

Page path and screen class	Views	Active users	Views per active user	Average engagement time per active user	Event count
Total	361 0.76% of total	188 1.42% of total	1.92 Avg -46.4%	1m 43s Avg +44.52%	1,194 1% of total
/witar/	361	188	1.92	1m 43s	1,194

Table 1: WiTaR page path and statistics from 23/05/2024 to 09/12/2024

An analysis of the WiTaR page's path and statistics from May 23rd, 2024, to December 9th, 2024, indicates consistent user activity throughout the period. Notably, there was a significant peak on September 25th, which may correlate with a LinkedIn promotional post about the WiTaR page that directed increased traffic from our community (see Figure 1).

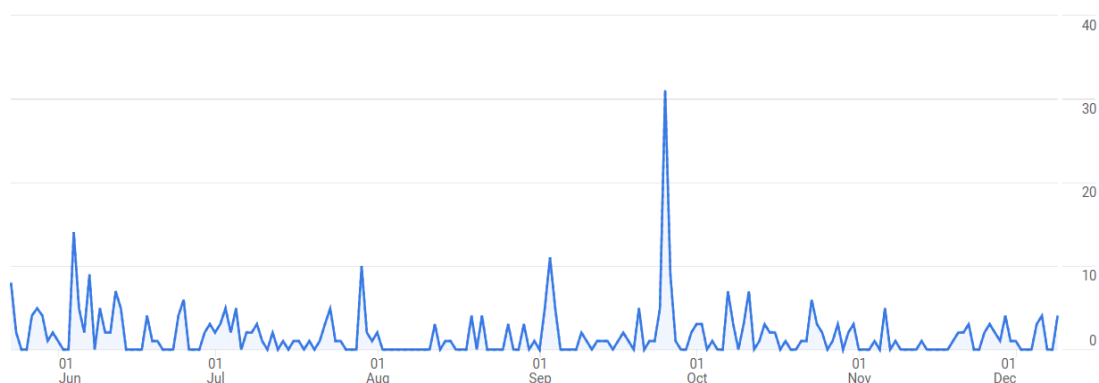


Figure 1: WiTaR page views and screen class over time between 23/05/2024 and 09/12/2024

3.2. LINKEDIN

On September 15th, 2024 we officially launched our new public LinkedIn company page (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/6giawitar/>) dedicated to showcasing our group's efforts toward promoting working group working on ways to include diversity and empowering women in telecommunications in research projects as part of the 6G-IA initiative.

Previously, WiTaR working group operated as a closed group on LinkedIn, fostering a close-knit community. However, to reach a wider audience and amplify our impact, we have transitioned to this public page option. This page will be a dynamic space for sharing updates on our projects, spotlighting inspiring achievements, and engaging with a global audience passionate about inclusivity in the telecom industry. Through regular posts, event announcements, and interactive discussions, the LinkedIn page aims to foster a supportive community and encourage broader participation in shaping the future of 6G.

Since the official launch of WiTaR's new public LinkedIn page, activity between September 15th, 2024, and December 9th, 2024, highlights significant growth and engagement within our professional network. Additionally, the page experienced significant follower growth, reaching a total of 182 followers, with 115 new followers gained over the last 86 days. This period marks a key milestone in establishing WiTaR's online presence and fostering connections with a broader audience.

Follower metrics

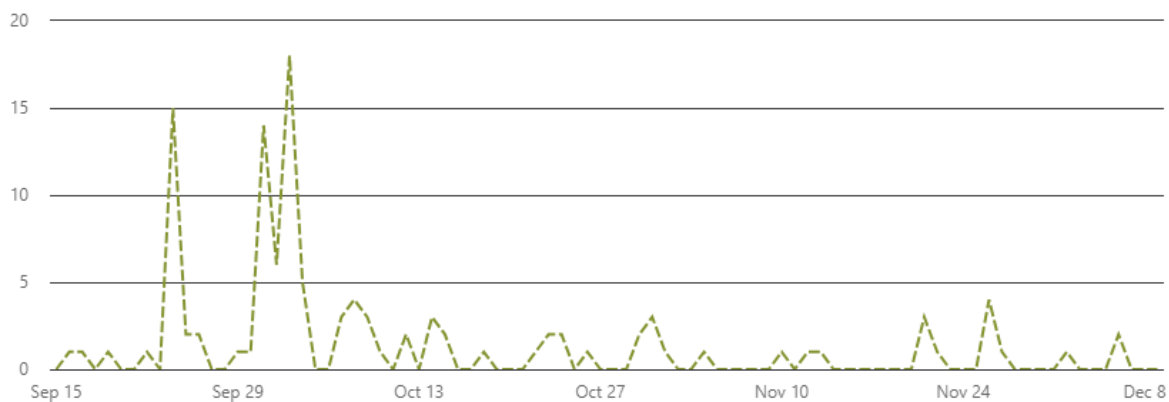


Figure 2: WiTaR LinkedIn page followers metrics between 15/09/2024 and 09/12/2024

During this timeframe, the page achieved an impressive 9,110 impressions, reflecting the substantial reach and visibility of our content within the LinkedIn community. These impressions represent the number of times our posts appeared on users' feeds, underscoring growing interest in WiTaR's initiatives. In terms of direct engagement, the page accumulated 320 reactions, signalling widespread positive responses to our content.

Highlights

Data for 9/15/2024 - 12/9/2024

9,110

Impressions
●0%

320

Reactions
●0%

5

Comments
●0%

3

Reposts
●0%

Table 2: WiTaR page path and statistics from 23/05/2024 to 09/12/2024

Overall, this activity demonstrates the success of WiTaR's new public LinkedIn page in building an active and engaged audience. The consistent visibility, robust engagement metrics, and notable follower growth underscore the platform's potential as a key tool for community building and outreach. With continued strategic content and engagement efforts, WiTaR is well-positioned to further expand its digital footprint and strengthen its professional network.

To ensure continued growth and engagement on the WiTaR LinkedIn page, we will adopt a proactive and structured strategy that builds on the success achieved thus far. Central to this approach is the creation of a shared content calendar that will align all our posts with key events and activities, ensuring a consistent and coordinated communication effort. This calendar will allow us to strategically plan content that resonates with our audience and maintains their interest.

A cornerstone of our actual strategy is the weekly series titled #WiTaRMondayFacts, which features inspiring profiles of women pioneers or individuals who have made significant contributions to the STEM field, particularly in advancing diversity and inclusion. These posts, shared every Monday, are here to celebrate their achievements while raising awareness about the importance of representation and equity in STEM.

This consistent effort in content creation and research directly aligns with the WiTaR working group's mission to spread knowledge, foster awareness, and advocate for diversity and inclusion. By staying true to our mission and providing valuable, educational, and inspiring content, we aim to strengthen our connection with the LinkedIn community and continue to grow our audience meaningfully.

3.3. MEMBER GROWTH

Our journey has been one of remarkable growth and evolution. Starting as a small team with few members within a project Hexa-X, our dedication to promoting diversity and empowering women in telecommunications resonated across the community. This led to our expansion, engaging members from multiple projects under the 5G-PPP framework. We attracted around 60 members (from all genders) from 15 5GPPP projects within a year.

Building on this momentum, we have now established ourselves as a stand-alone working group, becoming an integral part of the 6G-IA initiative. The numbers growing on a daily basis (~ 112 members from 22 SNS JU projects). This transition reflects our growing influence and commitment to fostering inclusivity and innovation across the telecommunications sector, positioning us to drive meaningful change as we shape the future of 6G technologies.

As we are also active in our activities and engage via event organization and participation at strategic forums to create awareness and to foster a culture of inclusiveness and equity we are expecting to grow more in number.

4. SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITIES

4.1. INTERVIEWS

At the occasion of the EuCNC 2024 & 6G Summit conference in June 2024 in Antwerp, Belgium, three interviews were conducted by our members, delving into the intersection of technology and societal progress work that tries to undertake the WiTaR working group.

The WiTaR chair, Bahare M. Khorsandi, had the privilege to be interviewed [1] by the organizers of EuCNC 2024, delving into the impactful WiTaR activities that were a highlight of the conference. The discussion centred around initiatives designed to empower women in the industry, foster inclusivity, and inspire the next generation of leaders in telecommunications. This format was also the occasion for Luis M Correia, one of the conference organisers, to reflect on the event's standout sessions, which featured engaging panels, cutting-edge research presentations, and thought-provoking discussions on emerging trends - offering an insider's perspective on how EuCNC 2024 is shaping the future of telecom by championing diversity and innovation.

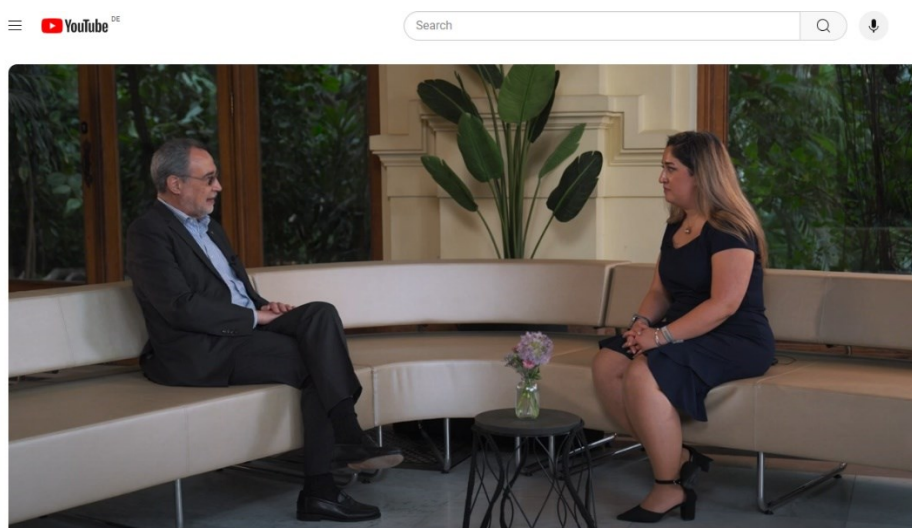


Figure 3: WiTaR chair interview with EUCNC organizers

In the same line, Pooja Mohnani, Project Manager at Eurescom GmbH and member of SNS ICE coordination & support project, also delivers a short interview [2] in Antwerp, Belgium, sharing the sustainable development goals on diversity and inclusion in 6G development for the same conference. In this interview, she underscores the critical role of gender diversity in research that will advance next-generation networks in Europe.

1[1] Khorsandi, B. M. (2024, June 20). EuCNC & 6G Summit 2024 - Interview with Bahare Masood Khorsandi. Interview by Flanders Meeting & Convention Center Antwerp.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xyeOJ8DiKs>

2[2] Mohnani, P. (2024). Championing Diversity in 6G by Pooja Mohnani, Project Manager at Eurescom GmbH (EuCNC 2024). Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vTnMrMHKQA&list=PLdoUExp7oG-5eGICp8jqlpjlMBzrc18Hr&index=14>



Figure 4: Pooja Mohani's interview at EUCNC 2024

Further enriching the dialogue, Ishita Mishra, Research Analyst at Institute PIIU and Gender Diversity and Inclusion Officer for the 6G flagship project Hexa-X-II, shares valuable insights³ [3] on the importance of gender diversity in telecommunications research, underlying the importance of standing out for our rights and a field where the female and male gap is still visible.



Figure 5: Ishita Mishra's interview with 6G SNS ICE at EUCNC 2024

These three engaging interviews conducted at the EuCNC 2024 & 6G Summit conference, provided an interesting view of the ongoing efforts to advance inclusivity and diversity in the telecommunications research field.

4.2. PODCAST

An upcoming podcast titled "Shifting the Balance: Advancing Diversity in Telecom R&D", a collaborative effort between WiTaR and the SNS ICE project, is set to be released.

The podcast will be moderated by Pooja Mohnani, Project Manager at Eurescom, and features a distinguished panel of experts:

³[3] Mishra, I. (2024). The Importance of Gender Diversity in Telecommunications Research by Ishita Mishra, Research Analyst at the Institute PIIU (EuCNC 2024). Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3c42uoX3sUg&list=PLdoUExp7oG-5eGlCp8iqIpijIMBzrc18Hr&index=17>

- Alexia González Fanfalone, Head of the Connectivity Services and Infrastructures Unit, Directorate for Science, Technology, and Innovation
- Hakima Chaouchi, Head of Digital Sovereignty and Sobriety at IMT
- Prachi Sachdeva, 5G/6G Consultant at TNO, and Lunar Science & Missions at TU Delft

The podcast aims to raise awareness about the critical importance of incorporating equity, diversity, and inclusivity into the development of 6G technology. It will address key questions, such as why it is essential to build future technologies that are unbiased and transparent, the barriers women face in telecom R&D, and strategies to overcome these challenges. Additionally, the discussion will explore how gender diversity influences innovation in emerging technologies such as AI and cybersecurity.

5. CAMPAIGNS

5.1. INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY (MARCH 8TH, 2024)

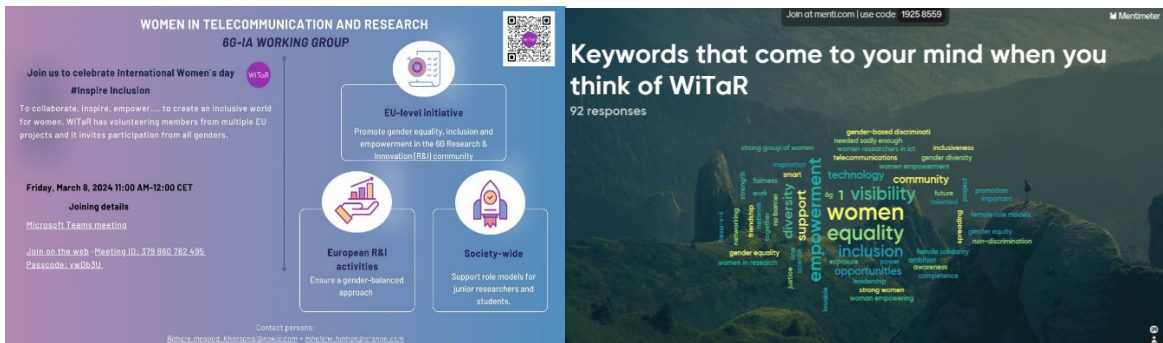


Figure 6: WiTaR online session in International Women’s Day 2024

On March 8th, WiTaR celebrated International Women’s Day with an online session focused on raising awareness about gender diversity, inclusion, and empowerment within the 6G Research & Innovation (R&I) community.

This year, the theme was #InspireInclusion. The event began with an introduction by the group’s Chairs, Bahare Masood Khorsandi (Nokia) and Marie-Hélène (Orange), who welcomed participants and shared fascinating insights about the group’s formation, vision, and goals. This activity fostered meaningful exchanges and discussions, centred on the importance of women’s participation in telecommunications and ways to empower one another within the field.

This was followed by a brief survey conducted by Pooja Mohnani (EURESCOM) using the tool: Mentimeter. The survey provided valuable insights into the representation of women in ICT roles and organizations, serving as a foundation for a brainstorming session on potential actions to enhance knowledge exchange and collaboration.

Overall, the session welcomed over 50 participants from diverse backgrounds, featuring engaging contributions from various working groups and project representatives. It concluded with positive feedback from attendees, and the organizers outlined the next steps for driving meaningful change.

Starting in 2022, WiTaR has been spreading the word and advocating diversity and inclusion to promote and bring visibility to the “SNS Community Women” involved in research. The posters below were published with the themes “Embrace Equity” and “Inspire Inclusion” in the years 2023 & 2024 respectively.



Figure 7: WiTaR postcard on International Women’s Day 2023 and 2024

5.2. ADA LOVELACE DAY (OCTOBER 8TH, 2024)

The “Ada Lovelace Campaign”, conducted on LinkedIn from October 1st to October 8th, 2024, proved to be a highly successful initiative in engaging our audience and expanding our community. Over the course of the campaign, we gained 50 new followers and attracted 46 unique visitors to our LinkedIn new page: showcasing the campaign’s ability to draw attention and spark interest.

Highlights

Data for 10/1/2024 - 10/8/2024

3,456

Impressions

▲1,304.9%

102

Reactions

▲436.8%

5

Comments

●0%

0

Reposts

Table 3: WiTaR LinkedIn Ada Lovelace campaign metrics between 01/10/2024 and 08/10/2024

The content strategy for this campaign was carefully planned and executed. It featured a daily series of polls with a total of five questions, one published each day, allowing followers to actively participate. In addition, a post summarizing the poll was shared, providing insights into the responses. To conclude the campaign, a detailed explanation post about Ada Lovelace was published on October 8th (see Photo below), honouring her legacy and connecting her contributions to the campaign’s theme.

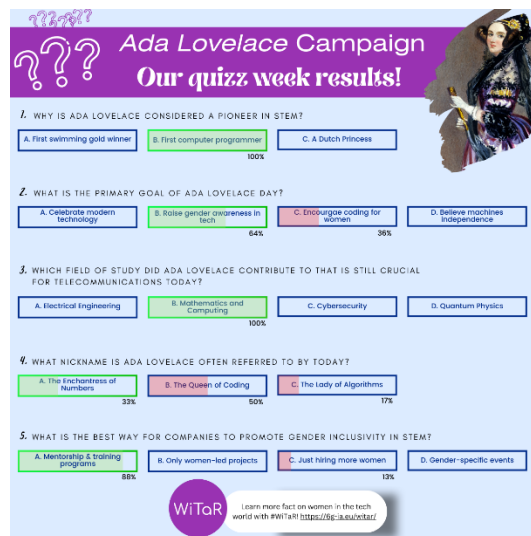


Figure 8: WiTaR LinkedIn Ada Lovelace campaign poll results

The campaign’s performance metrics underscore its success. Across all posts, it generated 3,456 impressions, reflecting a broad reach within our audience. It also received 40 poll responses and collected 47, highlighting active engagement with the content. These results demonstrate the effectiveness of thematic and interactive campaigns fostering meaningful connections and growing our LinkedIn re-new presence.

6. EVENTS

6.1. EUCNC JUNE 2024

The EuCNC 2024 (European Conference on Networks and Communications) featured a special convened session dedicated to Women in Telecommunications and Research. This was the 3rd WiTaR convened session in EuCNC conferences. This session aimed to spotlight the contributions of women in advancing the telecommunications field and to address challenges in achieving gender diversity in research and industry. Bringing together leading women professionals, researchers, and advocates, the session will foster dialogue on creating inclusive opportunities, overcoming barriers, and inspiring the next generation of female leaders in telecommunications. Join us to celebrate achievements, share insights, and drive actionable strategies for greater gender equity in ICT and beyond.

The program kicked off with a video message from Erzsebet Fitori (Smart Networks and Services Joint Undertaking Executive Director), Mari-Noëlle Jégo-Laveissière (Orange, CEO Orange Europe) and Azimeh Sefidcon (Nokia, S&T BLCR Head of Network System and Security Research). Presentation given by Chair and other members on the history of WiTaR and targets and further steps.

Speakers from industry and academia were invited to steer the discussion and bring awareness on various topics. Prof. Lena Wosinska from Chalmers University talked about current issues in academia such as the salary gap. Dr Silvia Provvedi, Senior Project Manager in Ericsson Italy talked about various methods her company uses to ensure inclusivity. Dr Jessica Carnerio project manager at Australo brought insight from SMEs point of view and how we can “break the cycle”. Last but not least, Dr Clare McCarthy senior principal sustainability solution from Nokia, introduced a book “Invisible Women” to emphasize on the fact on data bias even in this era.

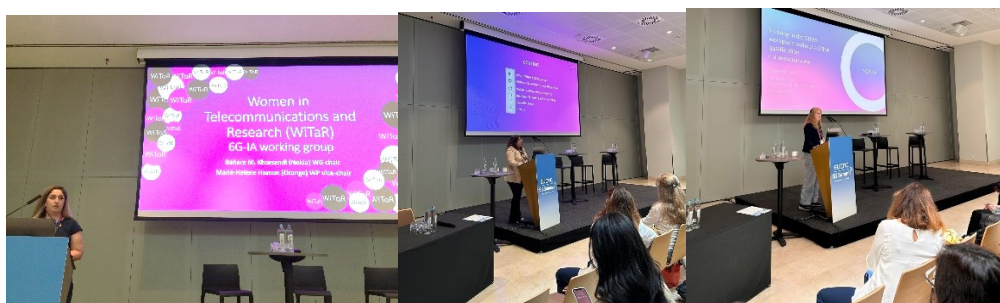


Figure 9: WiTaR Convened session in EUCNC 2024

6.2. ICTON JULY 2024

The 2nd edition of the workshop Women In Telecommunication and Optical Networks (WeInTel) took place during the 24th International Conference on Transparent Optical Networks ICTON 2024 held in Bari (Italy). The organization was carried out by the co-chairs Dr. Sima Barzegar, Dr. Pantea Nadimi Goki. The aim was to showcase a wide variety of research initiatives from women engaged in optical communications and networking with the goal of encouraging young researchers and inspiring their professional journeys. The workshop included a panel discussion to hear speakers’ opinions about women in research. Finally, a survey was carried out to hear audiences’ opinions regarding gender issues, especially in companies and academic institutions. The joint event of WiTar and WeInTel was supported by the HORIZON EUROPE SEASON (G.A. 101096120) and ALEGRO (G.A. 101092766) projects. The participants were Marta Blanco Caamaño (Telefónica Innovación Digital, Madrid, Spain), Valentina

Gemmato (TeCip Institute, Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna, Pisa, Italy), Dr. Laia Nadal (Centre Tecnològic de Telecomunicacions de Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain), Margita Radovic (Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna, Pisa, Italy) and Leyla Sadighi (Chalmers university of technology, Gothenburg, Sweden).

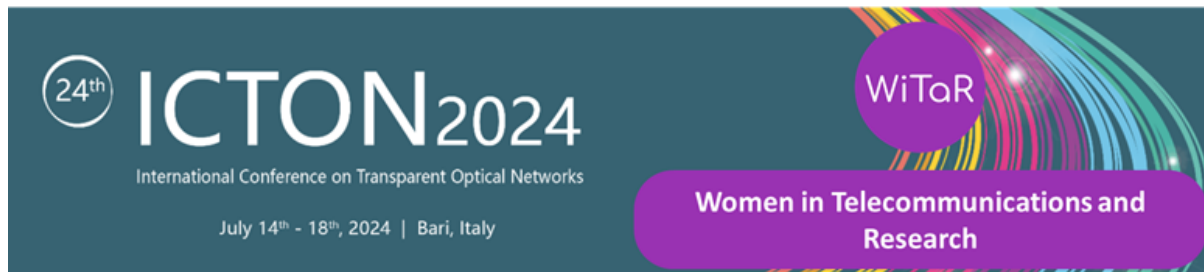


Figure 10: WiTaR session at ICTON 2024

6.3. PIMRC SEPTEMBER 2024

Special Session 2: "Bridging Gaps: Female Researchers in Mobile Radio Communications at Industry and Academia".

Industry and academia shared their views and professional experience on the role of women in the field of telecommunications. The Special Session was organized by COST CA20120 INTERACT & IEEE ComSoc WICE & 6G-IA Women in Telecommunications and Research (WiTaR).

Participants: Ana Garcia Armada, Silvia Rueda Pascual, Xueli An, Monika Drozdowska, Ph.D. Sofia Perez Simbor, Laurent Clavier, Irene Alepuz Benaches, and Conchi Garcia Pardo.



Figure 11: WiTaR session at PIMRC 2024

6.4. 5G-TECHTRITORY OCTOBER 2024



Figure 12: WiTaR session at 5G-Techtritory 2024

On October 30, WiTaR joined SNS ICE and Riga TechGirls at 5G Techtritory to lead a vital discussion on gender diversity and sustainability in telecoms. This impactful event, titled “Shifting the Balance,” brought together industry and academic leaders to advance gender balance and explore diversity’s role in shaping the future of 6G. The session began with an introduction to WiTaR, a working group under 6G-IA dedicated to promoting gender equality, inclusion, and empowerment within the 6G Research & Innovation (R&I) community, as well as RigaTech Girls, an organization advocating for equality and community building.

To explore diverse perspectives from industry and academia on topics such as digital skills, the role of diversity in cybersecurity, the impact of diversity on 6G use cases, and ecosystem sustainability, the session featured a bar camp. This interactive format encouraged discussions on the economic advantages of diverse workplaces, the role of inclusion in fostering innovation, and how social realities and diversity enhance decision-making.

With over 20 participants actively engaged, the session facilitated meaningful exchanges. The core focus was integrating gender considerations into research and development. A strong call to action emerged, urging participants to develop workplace sustainability strategies that address social issues such as digital inclusion, equitable access to technology, and the creation of sustainable digital economies that benefit everyone.

7. PLANNING FOR 2025 AND NEXT STEPS

As we look ahead to the next year, and working toward our main goals, we are happy to announce that we are planning an ambitious agenda to expand our impact in the community.

Building on the momentum of past successes, we aim to organize workshops to develop technical and leadership skills, and plan networking events to foster collaboration and support. Additionally, we aim to advocate for more inclusive representation in conferences, panels, and key decision-making roles within the industry. By amplifying diverse voices and championing inclusivity, we hope to drive meaningful progress and inspire lasting change in telecommunications.

More concretely, in 2025, WiTaR is proud to re-launch the “Lunch Salon” initiative, a monthly platform dedicated to fostering dialogue and engagement on gender diversity and inclusion within the telecommunications and research community. This program invites volunteers from across projects to share their insights, experiences, and best practices on topics ranging from workplace challenges and success stories to strategies for creating inclusive environments. Each session will feature a presentation followed by interactive discussions, encouraging active participation and the exchange of ideas.

The Lunch Salon aims to inspire and empower members by highlighting the transformative potential of diversity in driving innovation and collaboration. By exploring how gender diversity benefits individual fields of expertise, this initiative underscores WiTaR’s commitment to creating a more equitable, supportive, and forward-thinking professional environment.

Keeping the community informed about our activities and developments and spreading the awareness about issues in hand are the core stone of our ambitious. In the upcoming year, we planned to work toward capturing the insights on strategies on raising awareness, the learnings with our participations at strategic events, summary of surveys, interviews and related data analysis. We also plan to share the best practice from programs/companies fostering inclusivity and diversity with call-to-action suggestions.

WiTaR WG is also considering a potential LoI/MoU with other initiatives (e.g, based on our recent participation at the 5G Techritory, and the interest coming from Riga Tech girls) on joint organization of events, workshops/webinar etc. to create an impact that influences the policymakers, industry leaders and community as a whole.

8. LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Name	Company / Institute / University	Country
Bahare M. Khorsandi	Nokia	Germany
Marie-Helene Hamon	Orange	France
Pooja Mohnani	Eurescom	Germany
Audrey Bienvenu	Eurescom	Germany
Sima Barzegar	Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya Barcelona	Spain
Irene Alepuz Benaches	Institute of Telecommunications and Multimedia Applications (iTEAM)	Spain
Ishita Mishra	Institute PIU	Italy
Oluwatayo Yetunde Kolawole	Samsung Electronics	United Kingdom