

# WOMEN IN BUSINESS

## UNTOLD STORIES OF WOMEN IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

ONLINE  
CONFERENCE

April 15,  
2021

**This year's edition of AmCham's Women in Business conference narrowed its focus on one specific area where women still face considerable barriers, although they have largely contributed to its development - science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).**

To open the program, a short, beautifully animated video describing the life story of physicist and chemist Marie Curie served as a reminder of the indisputable role women played in the development of science and its greatest discoveries.

Zuzana Čaputová, President of the Slovak Republic, addressed the viewers with her opening remarks, stressing that stereotypes and prejudices still present objective barriers for women in today's society and that these can no longer be justified.

The program continued with an inspirational presentation by Michaela Musilová. Michaela joined the conference live from her current residence at Hawaii where she works as the Director of the HI-SEAS space analog research station. She described her journey starting with her childhood dream of becoming an astronaut and included numerous obstacles along the way. As she pointed out, she was able to overcome them also because other people helped her, and advised everyone not to hesitate to ask for help when in need. In her opinion, one of the keys to success for women is to regard their capacity for empathy as an advantage, not a weakness.

The first panel discussion focused on the barriers women face at various levels in the STEM fields. Each of the panelists was able to

bring his or her own perspective and expertise but they all agreed on the main point - women are not underrepresented in science in general, the real problem concerns the difficulties they face when it comes to advancing in certain fields. This so called vertical segregation results in women occupying most of the lower paying positions and lacking in leadership positions.

**I hope that one day we won't have these forums anymore and we'll just have leaders' forums. That it won't be necessary to talk about female leaders as it will be something natural.**

SUZANA  
ŠAČIROVIČ,  
General  
Manager,  
Novartis Pharma  
Slovakia



Social norms and patterns account for structural reasons which contribute to these discrepancies, as the sociologist Michal Vašečka mentioned. Exceptions can be found and the two ladies present on the panel - Zuzana Krištofiková,



Zuzana Čaputová, President of the Slovak Republic



Michaela Musilová, Director of the HI-SEAS space analog research station

Epidemiologist, member of the Pandemic Commission and Rumiana Stoilova, Research Associate at the Martens Centre for European Studies, Chair of the Bulgarian Sociological Association, board member of the Bulgarian Center of Women in Technology - are living proof of this. However, this doesn't mean that the problem doesn't exist; on the contrary, personal experience and statistics clearly demonstrate that although things are improving, the pace is far from satisfactory.

As the panelists agreed, it is critically important to have more female role models in STEM to motivate and inspire young girls as well as to change the thinking of their parents and society at large.

The afternoon part of the program was opened by Branislav Sandtner, Country Head for Slovakia, Citi. He talked about the emancipation women have achieved in the traditionally conservative banking sector and the added value this has brought. He shared first-hand experience from Citigroup, which has a female CEO Jane Fraser.

The second discussion panel took a closer look at what companies

do to motivate girls to consider careers in STEM. The panelists shared best practices from their respective companies as well as their own experience of having achieved leadership positions.

They also talked about their responsibility to lead by example and help foster a work environment that enables women to realize their full potential. This approach should not be limited to individual efforts but should be reflected in the organization's DNA, which should promote diversity and the benefits a diverse culture offers.

The closing debate of the program featured Pavol Šajgalík, President, Slovak Academy of Sciences and Mirjana Krolo, COO, iptiQ by Swiss Re, who discussed whether there are any natural limits preventing more women from pursuing successful careers in science. They both rejected this possibility and agreed that women have the same abilities and actually praised the benefits women in leadership positions of scientific teams or projects. As Pavol Šajgalík added, the fact that there are currently more female PHD students than male at the Slovak Academy of Sciences is a good sign for the future.

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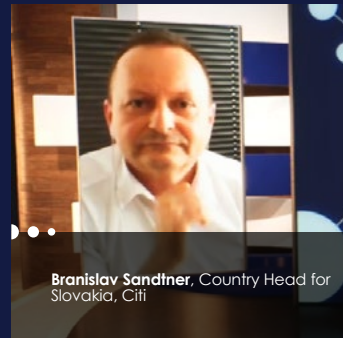


## MEDIA PARTNERS



### PANEL DISCUSSION #1

From left: **Barbara Jagušák**, moderator; **Ľudovít Paulis**, State Secretary, The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of SR; **Zuzana Krištúfková**, Epidemiologist, member of the Pandemic Commission; and **Michal Vašečka**, Sociologist and pedagogist, Bratislava Policy Institute



**Branislav Sandtner**, Country Head for Slovakia, Citi

Everyone wants to work in a company that treats people fairly. And if you treat people fairly they are more productive.

**BRANISLAV SANDTNER**, Country Head for Slovakia, Citi



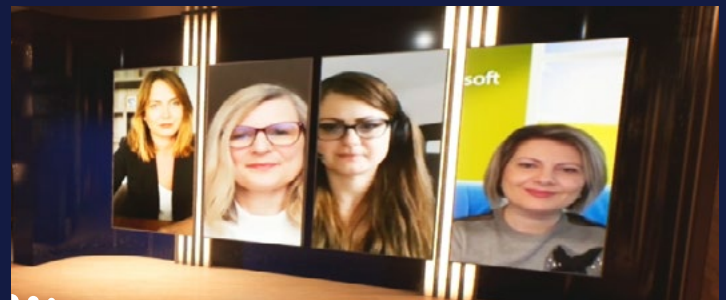
We have to promote the idea of diversity and its importance more. So that it becomes natural to expect that we have gender diversity at all levels and it becomes a natural part of the overall business strategy of companies.

**ALENA KANABOVÁ**, Senior Manager & Corporate Citizenship Lead, Accenture Slovakia



We have to look at talent and potential instead of gender and we should speak more about the achievements of women in STEM fields and IT.

**MARTINA SCHUSTEROVÁ**, Head of Education & Development Center DTITSO SK, Deutsche Telekom IT Solutions Slovakia



### PANEL DISCUSSION #2

From left: **Suzana Šačirovič**, General Manager, Novartis Pharma Slovakia; **Alena Kanabová**, Senior Manager & Corporate Citizenship Lead, Accenture Slovakia; **Martina Schusterová**, Head of Education & Development Center DTITSO SK, Deutsche Telekom IT Solutions Slovakia; and **Violeta Luca**, General Manager Czech Republic & Slovakia, Microsoft

It's about us as leaders, being role models and supporting women around us and helping everyone understand the power of diversity and inclusion in the long run.

**VIOLETA LUCA**, General Manager Czech Republic & Slovakia, Microsoft



Even in the 21st century many gender stereotypes are still alive. It's the responsibility of every family, school, and society to change that.

**MIRJANA KROLO**, COO, iptiQ by Swiss Re



### PANEL DISCUSSION #3

From left: **Barbara Jagušák**, moderator; **Pavol Šajgalík**, President, Slovak Academy of Sciences; and **Mirjana Krolo**, COO, iptiQ by Swiss Re



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