PLAN INTERNATIONAL | telenor group

PROGRAMMED OUT:

THE GENDER GAP IN TECHNOLOGY IN SCANDINAVIA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WHAT ARE SUCCESSFUL WAYS TO GET MORE GIRLS INTO TECH IN SCANDINAVIA?

«We need women to design this digital world because it's primarily designed by men for men… imagine if we had diversity in the way we design IT… what value that would bring to us»

Digital technologies aren't just the future – they're also the present. In a world where over half the global population is online, and every facet of our economic, political and social existence is digitized and datafied, technologists have never been more powerful. Yet more often than not, the creators of digital technologies are men. In many countries across the world women are underrepresented in STEM and computing classes and careers. As a result, the digital world is being shaped in the image of only half of the population.

Scandinavia has one of the largest gender gaps in technology in the world. The perpetual lack of young women entering the sector here has resulted in significant skills shortages, stagnant growth and inequality of opportunity. Technology companies are losing out from this dearth of female talent. But there is much they can do to help reverse this trend.

Plan International, with support from Telenor, commissioned this report to identify existing evidence as to 'what works' to support girls and women into tech in Sweden, Norway and Denmark. Initiatives to address the gender digital divide in these three countries are on the rise, yet rigorous evaluation of these programmes is lacking. This research breaks new ground; as well as mapping existing evidence and identifying evidence gaps, it presents new insights gained from speaking to experts and young women engaging in technology in Scandinavia. It concludes with recommendations for how tech companies can contribute to a more equal digital world.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

«Girls somehow learn that they can't do tech. That could partly be due to the stereotypical image of who is doing tech, and what tech is, how it is communicated in school»

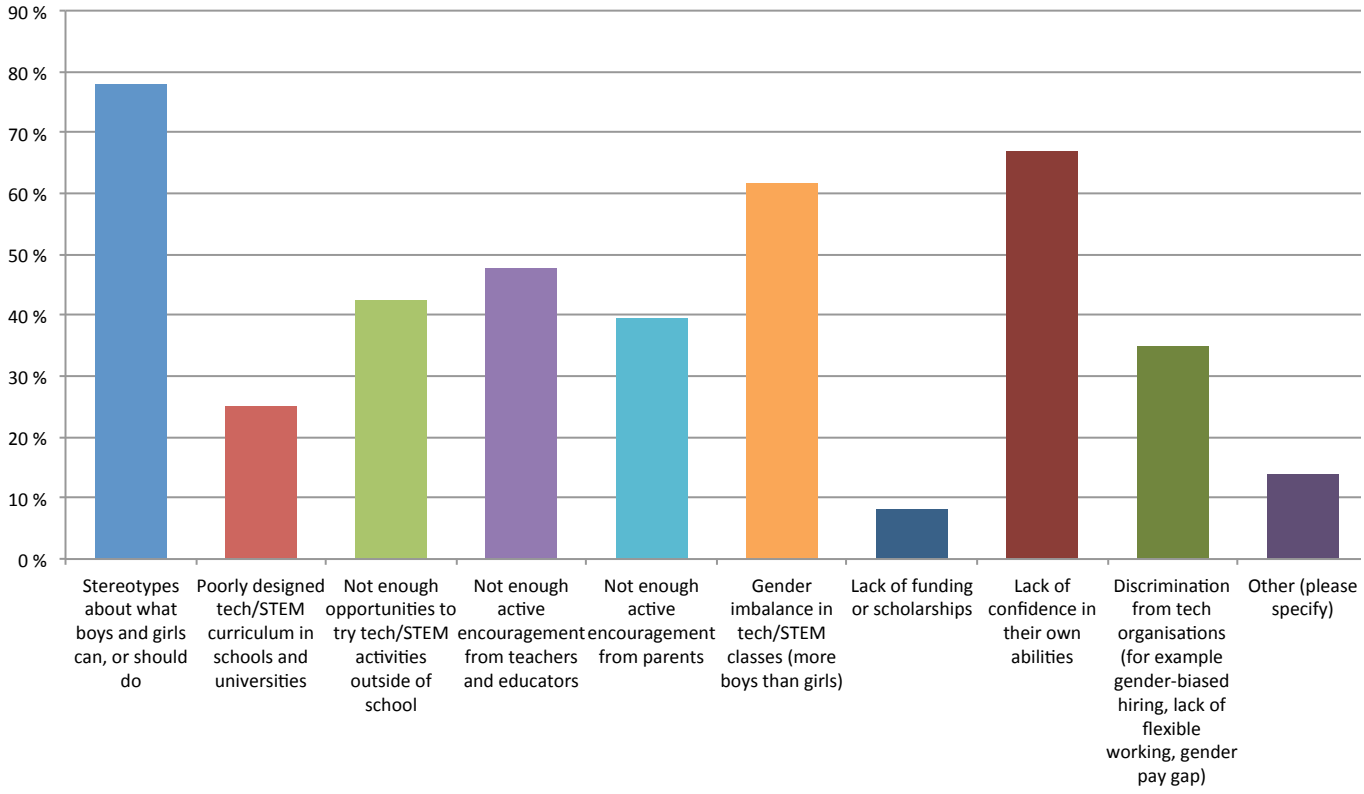
Gendered norms and expectations about who is suited for an education or career in digital technology are embedded within Scandinavian society. Gender stereotypes can be compounded by teachers and parents, leading to girls lacking confidence in their own abilities. The gender imbalance in tech reinforces stereotypes and is off-putting for girls who are interested in the subject.

«It's called vetenskapsMÄN!»

Poorly designed curricula in schools and a lack of extracurricular opportunities to try tech further dissuade girls from choosing a technological path.

Discrimination and lack of inclusivity within tech organisations prevents young women who have made it to a higher education in STEM from forging a successful career in the industry.

The young people and experts engaging with this research identified a range of challenges, as the image below shows:



1 *It draws from in-depth interviews with both experts and young people from Norway, Sweden and Denmark with either personal or professional experience in STEM. Additionally, it is informed by an online survey with a total of 172 respondents.*

WHAT ARE THE SOLUTIONS?

«Everyone wants a magic pill, like if we do A then B will happen – but we need to do the whole alphabet»

Disrupting gender stereotypes: Bringing young boys and girls together to work on technological projects; creating girls-only initiatives for teenagers that provide a supportive, safe space while challenging restrictive 'feminine' norms; and educating both teachers and parents on the importance of gender equality in technology and STEM.

Improving tech education in schools: Supporting educators to engage with young people of all genders on this issue; and increasing project-based group work that connects STEM to real-world issues through creative means.

Increasing opportunities for girls to explore technology outside of school: Including mentorship initiatives that provide much needed role-models for girls.

Supporting young women's career paths into technology: Including the creation of career networks, work experience and inclusive, flexible and family friendly employment practices.

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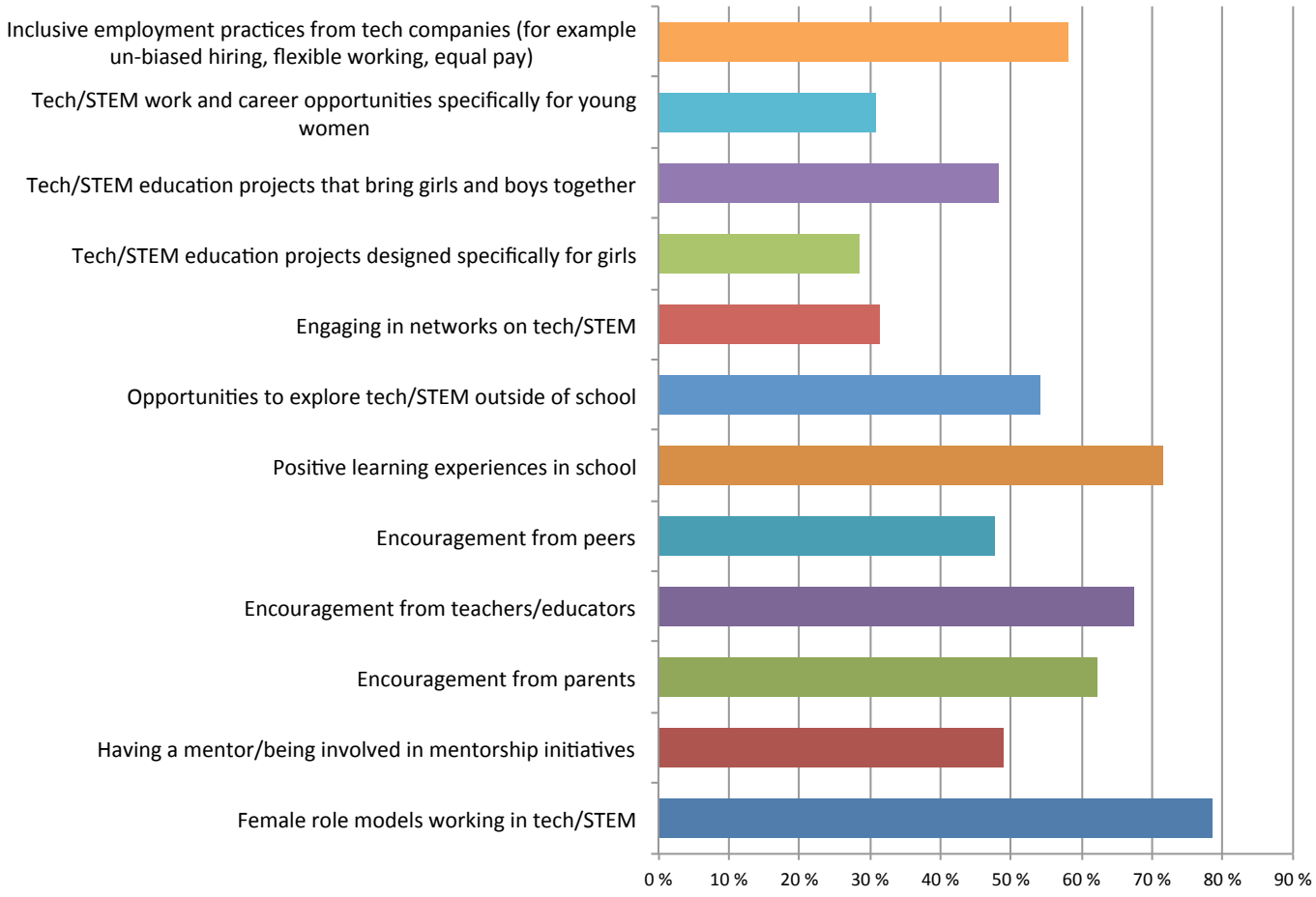

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Overcoming the gender divide in digital technology creation in Scandinavia will require the co-operative efforts of multiple stakeholders. This report highlights the role that technology companies, in partnership with other actors, can play in closing the gender divide in the Scandinavian tech sector. A few of the recommendations for tech companies to consider are:

WITHIN YOUR ORGANISATION

ASSESS THE SITUATION, instate a diversity and inclusion lead, make a business case for change, create a clear company strategy and publicly monitor set targets

NEXT STEPS INCLUDE REDUCING recruitment bias, promoting an inclusive work culture and conducting gender audits of existing, and future, products

OUTSIDE YOUR ORGANISATION

RUN MENTORING SCHEMES (for young women external to the organisation and those within it)

PARTNER WITH UNIVERSITIES to create careers networks for young women in STEM and tech

CREATE, AND/OR SUPPORT existing, extracurricular digital tech/STEM activities for girls

CONSIDER CREATING, and/or supporting, initiatives that target parents and teachers as role models for girls interested in tech

GENERATE, AND/OR FUND, gender transformative STEM/tech content across different media channels, and ensure that general company advertising uses diverse/non-stereotypical imagery

PARTNER WITH OTHER organisations to sign agreements, collaborate and share best practices

CONTRIBUTE TO POLICY discussions and engage with decision makers around national tech and digital strategies and initiatives to improve girls' and women's access to tech education and careers

FUND RESEARCH to address knowledge gaps, and provide concrete, longitudinal evidence as to 'what works' in supporting women in digital tech and STEM