

## FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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# TALLINN SCIENCE PARK TEHNOPOOL, ESTONIA

### Tech Sisters community

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Estonian startup ecosystem is constantly struggling to attract new engineers. The need for engineers in ICT sector is considered to account for 7000 people annually. At the same time the rate of female founders of startup companies is relatively low, accounting for 18% of total founders and the women workers in tech sector is around 25% of total. With the limited population of only 1,3M people, Estonia considers technology as key sector and decent flow of new talent is crucial in terms of continuation. Tech Sisters community represents the tools and methods to attract more women to consider engineering as an occupation, who would become startup entrepreneurs and valuable members of startup community. Community based actions of Tech Sisters have proven to be valuable as the ranks of members increase year by year and first success stories out of the community have appeared.

Tech Sisters is a non-profit organization with a vision to inspire, educate and encourage women and girls in technology and IT. The organization stands for the world's need of more diverse group of people taking part in developing new technological solutions. They arrange entry level hands-on technology-focused workshops in development, robotics and design and monthly networking events to provide opportunities to meet, mingle and share experiences with peers. The organization was founded in 2013 and is based in Tallinn, Estonia. Today the number of active members in the organization is around 100, the total community size is estimated to be 2500 members. The main topics the organization stands for are the following: 1. Challenging stereotypes - the most common stereotype is that science and math are masculine fields, thus nudging girls toward a "softer" career path. Indoctrination begins in kindergarten where many activities are split by gender. Robotics and programming classes are mainly marketed to boys, while girls are encouraged to pick "more feminine" activities, such as drawing or photography. Tech Sisters are running multiple awareness related action lines to change the situation. For example, the volunteer organization members have a busy schedule of teaching tech basics in kindergartens and schools, also participating in career planning events across the country. In addition, the organization is running their own classes of coding, robotics etc. that is available and accessible for everybody. 2. Hands-on experience and role models – the organization stands for including more programming and hands-on experience with different kinds of technology to make the subjects of science, technology, engineering and mathematics more accessible and attractive to girls and young women. Showing the attractiveness of the sector it is crucial to showcase positive female role models. Estonia is fortunate to have a number of outstanding female entrepreneurs and technologists building amazing products (Funderbeam, Testlio, Jobbatical etc.). Also, it is about showing everyday work in the tech sector. Tech Sisters run initiative called "Digigirls", where teenage girls participate in versatile and practical workshops held by women who work in tech. These workshops are a

sneak peek into a rich variety of career paths and roles within tech, guided by amazing female role models.

The number of female startup founders in Estonia is relatively low compared to the average of EU but over the year the number has increased from 13% up to 17%. Strong role-models – Tech Sisters has bought up and promoted many strong female entrepreneurs who have established strong startup companies. Two Estonian female founders are currently listed among TOP50 the most influential founders in Europe. Changing the career path – each year more and more women consider engineering or entrepreneurship their desired career. The total percentage of women in tech sector is around 25%, one of the highest in the region.

For more information on Tech Sisters community, Tallinn Science Park Tehnopol

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