

Report on Webinar:

IRPA Statement on WiR & Call for Action—Empowering Women in Radiation Protection

On the 16 March 2026, IRPA hosted a 90 minute webinar to enable its Task Group – Women in Radiation to present its *Statement on Women in Radiation Protection*, highlight the eight Calls for Action detailed in the Statement, and have an open discussion.

All IRPA Associate Societies were invited to attend this webinar. It was pleasing to see nearly 180 attendees linking into this event from many countries. The webinar support was provided by Brett Burk, who provided the necessary support throughout the proceedings.

Dr Bernard le Guen, IRPA Executive Officer and IRPA Past President, who is an active supporter of the Task Group, introduced the session and facilitated the webinar proceedings.

The Chair of the Task Group – Women in Radiation (TG WiR), Marina Di Giorgio formally introduced the topic by giving a presentation on *Empowering Women in Radiation Protection*. After her presentation, several members of the Task Group were available on a panel to actively discuss certain key thoughts and implementation strategies.

The webinar highlighted the enthusiasm and interest in this subject, and it was clear that there was a shared commitment to advancing gender equity, fostering inclusivity, and highlighting the significant contributions of women within the radiation protection profession.

The *Statement on Women in Radiation Protection* was approved by IRPA in December 2025 and has been shared with the Associate Societies. Associate Societies are urged to not only endorse this Statement, but also to actively engage in its implementation and to help shape its future development.

Presentation

Over 35 minutes, Marina Di Giorgio presented on the *Statement on Women in Radiation Protection* and the eight Calls for Action. Many topics were covered; in particular, Marina:

- provided the background on the establishment of the Task Group and its activities to date
- explained that the objective of the *Statement on Women in Radiation Protection* is to enhance visibility and recognition of women's contributions to radiation protection and to inspire the next generation of female professionals in this field
- highlighted the importance of equity, inclusion and good safety culture
- recognized our female pioneers (Marie Curie, Elise Meitner, Chie-Shiung Wu, Edith Quimby) and the challenges they faced simply because they were women

-
- noted some of the current challenges facing women as it relates to career progression, representation and practical barriers
 - highlighted cultural and gender barriers which limit education, employment and leadership opportunities
 - affirmed the need for genuine inclusion based on merit and equity as tokenism undermines credibility.

Marina then provided an overview of the eight Calls for Action, highlighting that we must all work together to create a more inclusive, supportive, and empowered environment for women in the radiation protection field, empowering them to thrive personally and professionally. It was noted that our combined efforts will not only address immediate challenges but also build a sustainable foundation for gender equity in the field.

Marina provided a summary of the following Calls for Action for IRPA and the Associate Societies and outlined key initiatives and strategies in:

1. training and mentorship
2. webinars and workshops
3. networking
4. funding equity
5. childcare support
6. collaboration and visibility
7. workplace policies and career sustainability
8. outreach activities and new generation

In closing, Marina reiterated that:

By acting together, we will achieve recognition, equity, collaboration, and inspire the next generation. Empowering women is essential for progress and sustainability.

Panel

After the presentation, several Task Group members were on a panel to provide further discussion. These members included Marina Di Giorgio, Amber Bannon, Ana Maria Bomben, Renate Czarwinski, Zhanat Kenbayeva, Ramona Gaza, María del Rosario Pérez and Gabriela Siraky.

Other Task Group members were registered on-line and provided much support via the Q&A function.

This panel format for an IRPA webinar was relatively new and seemed to be a successful way of reaching out to the IRPA membership.

Over 50 minutes, the Panel fielded several questions covering an array of topics, including the following:

1. ***How can the legacy of pioneers like Marie Curie, Lise Meitner, and Chien-Shiung Wu inspire today's efforts to strengthen gender equity in radiation protection?***

Responses from the panel included:

-
- The legacy illustrates the importance to have visibility – we need this visibility as ‘see it to be it’ provides inspiration and empowerment.
 - We have wonderful role models and encouraging visibility will encourage other women to be vocal and share what they are doing.
 - Marie Curie, in particular, faced many challenges, including being a mother, and succeeded. In spite of her challenges, she inspired her daughters to excel. Her story can inspire us to move forward and prevent these challenges from happening to other women.

2. *What do you see as the most pressing barriers women face in radiation protection today and how can we address them?*

Responses from the panel included:

- Women have been overcoming barriers for the past 100 years, and we need to look and imagine other ways of overcoming these barriers.
- Women need to have the confidence that they have gained their position because they deserve it.
- Overcoming barriers needs to involve men. This may include communicating differently, educating them and inspiring them. All voices are important. It is important that women are recognized on their merit – not because of tokenism.
- We are proud that María del Rosario Pérez was awarded the Sievert Award in 2024 and that Renate Czarwinski is an IRPA Past President. Ana Maria Bomben is now Chair of the Sievert Award Committee (in her role as IRPA Vice President) and she has ensured the equitable makeup of this committee which should create a new perspective on the deliberations.
- It is important to acknowledge that we have a team mission (not a single woman mission), and it is important that we exchange our opinions and expectations and write it down. It is important that we now voice our expectations to make change happen.

At this time, Zhanat Kenbayeva provided an important overview. She reminded participants that it has been 40 years since the nuclear accident in Chernobyl and 15 years since Fukushima, and that we are also facing an unstable geopolitical environment.

Zhanat advised that the conversation around equity is timely and essential for the community, as no country can face inequity alone. Women are under-represented in leadership roles, decision making and in global networks. When women connect globally, visibility increases, opportunities expand (e.g. networks open) and impact grows as research, for example, increases. She also highlighted the following four key areas which, if successfully implemented, will assist in ensuring that, globally, women are visible, connected and empowered:

- First: build networks across regional programs and develop communities of practice - ensure women are included in advisory groups and panels.
- Second: increase visibility – social influence is growing and it is also important to work on gender balanced events.
- Third: strengthen leadership pathways – via global networks, workshops etc.
- Fourth: ensure gender inclusiveness across leadership and in policy framework across all areas involving radiation protection.

It is important that IRPA, WHO, IAEA and professional societies commit to working together. When women rise, the entire field of science rises with them, and global resilience becomes stronger.

3. *Flexible work arrangements and childcare support are highlighted in the Statement. What practical steps can institutions take to implement these policies effectively?*

Responses from the panel included:

- Flexibility is important, but it was recognized that it can be difficult.
- Some countries have policy and legislation which promotes equity in relation to maternity leave and paternity leave which supports a balanced professional life and family life. Certain employers recognize, provide for, and support the need to bring children to the workplace.
- A professional development barrier may be women and mothers not being able to attend conferences due to their family responsibilities. Providing free childcare opportunities may make these opportunities more accessible.
- The IRPA Congress at Orlando was the first Congress to provide childcare and enabled young women and men to come with their children, and it is important to recognize this key initiative.
- Childcare facilities will be available for a nominal fee at the IRPA European Congress at Liverpool in June 2026.
- IRPA should strongly suggest to organisers of international and regional congresses to modernize their outlook and provide the opportunity to enable attendance for both parents to attend the conference while caring for their children. This suggestion could be included within the memorandum of understanding between IRPA and the organising Associate Society.
- IRPA can advocate for equity, and it is expected that Associate Societies would have a strong voice to influence workplace policies. A top-down approach is needed to promote and advocate for policy change and support other arrangements and to prevent tokenism. Action is important.
- Some workplaces have great flexibility which enables both men and women to actively prioritize their family, particularly if there is an activity involving their children. This flexibility means that all parents can be involved as needed and any 'work' time taken can be made up later. This is a transparent process and shines visibility on the importance of family for both parents.
- The employer focus is back to more in-person meetings to allow better interaction. However, there needs to be an openness to discuss personal issues, particularly where there is a focus at home (e.g. mums with babies).

4. *What innovative approaches could inspire the next generation to pursue careers in radiation protection?*

- It is important that courses, workshops and training is engaging and there is strong participation by women.
- The young generation needs to be provided with the opportunity to attend events at local, national and international levels.

-
- Outreach material needs to be prepared for young to teenage children and young adults. Children as young as 7 have already made up their minds about whether they like and are good at STEM subjects; we need to capture their imaginations early and promote gender equity. Having standard material to assist with outreach activities will assist with distribution.
 - Support to implement outreach activities is important. Associate Societies can help cascade these activities by ensuring that they are known and introduced widely.
 - It was acknowledged that some mid-career women have stopped in their professional endeavors because of their family arrangements and their career has stalled. To help them overcome challenges, it is important to understand their goals and be side-by-side with them to help them move forward with their ambitions.

5. If you could prioritize one of the eight calls to action outlined in the Statement, which would it be and why?

Responses from the panel included:

- Education and training is a priority and will assist in instilling confidence. A leader must have expertise and have the strength to provide their opinion, while considering the culture of others. This can happen if the woman has self-confidence.
- The Task Group is a way we can discuss an individual's particular challenge, reflect, and provide the much-needed support to strengthen self-confidence.
- International collaboration is important, including cross-boundaries in education and mentoring programs. It is important to see what we can do together.
- All women need to call-out ignorance.

Other Q&A from registrants

There were many questions and comments from the registered attendees. Unfortunately, time constraints meant that we did not have the time to actively address each one. Please reach out to a Task Group member to continue this important theme.

It was re-affirmed that it was important not to focus on just women. It is about equity. It is important to build capacity and education in the radiation protection field and ensure all representatives have a position of confidence.

Next Steps

Proactive engagement is needed. During the webinar it was recommended that the following steps should be taken to progress the work outlined in the Statement.

- IRPA and Associate Societies ensure that the *Statement on Women in Radiation Protection* is disseminated and visualised in their business activities.
- We gather and share our ideas and experiences, including what implementation strategies have been used to improve equity.
- IRPA should strengthen and formalise collaboration with other international agencies, such as WHO, to promote global networks.
- We work to shift the culture to a global outlook, acknowledging that there can be language and cultural barriers. To assist with cultural change, we need to ensure we have a common goal.
- We identify champions – both men and women.

- IRPA and Associate Societies engage with other professional societies (national and international) to share experiences. This broader outreach will assist in strengthening collaboration.
- We ensure that the young generation have a common voice, and we use technology (such as AI) to our advantage.

The suggestion that we meet again in 6 months' time to update and share our progress was supported.

Conclusion

It was noted that IRPA represents 53 Associate Societies in 68 Countries. The membership of the IRPA Task Group – Women in Radiation currently consists of 27 members from 20 countries and one international organisation. Details of the Task Group, including its Terms of Reference, may be found at: [IRPA - International Radiation Protection Association](#).

The goal of having a representative from every Associate Society on the Task Group would be very welcome in the global drive to advance gender equity, foster inclusivity, and highlight the significant contributions of women within the radiation protection profession.

We urge IRPA, Associate Societies and members to visualise the common objectives and take action. Thank you for being part of this change.

