

Press release, 28 August 2019

**Advance & HSG Gender Intelligence Report 2019**

# Around 65% of all promotions given in Switzerland go to men

Study available  
online

[advance-hsg-report.ch](https://advance-hsg-report.ch)

**Companies with a high degree of gender diversity at every level of seniority are more successful. However, companies face challenges when integrating this approach into their strategy and implementing it in practice. Only a few have achieved substantial progress to date. These are the findings of the *Advance & HSG Gender Intelligence Report 2019*, published today, for which raw data relating to 263,000 employees have been analyzed. Although companies are hiring increasing numbers of women, this growing potential is not being used when it comes to promotions.**

Companies based in Switzerland are hiring increasing numbers of women, at every level. In turn, this builds up a pipeline of highly qualified, highly talented female employees. Women and men also leave their jobs at the same rate, showing that companies' cultures are becoming more appealing to women looking to develop their careers. However, this growing potential is not being used systematically enough across every level in the corporate hierarchy. While there are equal numbers of men and women in non-managerial positions, the proportion of women in middle-management slumps to 23%, sinking even further to 18% for the top management levels.

Women are particularly losing out in terms of internal promotions with around 65% of all promotions going to men. The study believes that the key to achieving greater gender diversity up to the very top of the corporate ladder lies in transparent promotion processes: Unconscious bias should have as little influence as possible. The authors also highlight positive examples, revealing that women hold a good deal more than 30% of managerial positions at companies with the best results.

The study identifies another issue getting in the way of smashing the glass ceiling: the distribution of 'traditional gender roles' in conjunction with the yet unchallenged norm relating to full-time work in management. Data clearly shows that Swiss women, on average, have the lowest work rates. What does this actually mean in practice? Given the current full-time (or near full-time) norm for managerial positions, it is critical that women be able to increase their work rates, such as with flexible working models, so that they will be considered for management roles. At the same time, men should be encouraged to take on their share of responsibilities outside the workplace, and conditions must be put in place to enable them to do so. After all, equality can only work if men and women contribute to it equally.

## Key recommendations of the report

According to the study, Advance member companies appear to offer conditions that are more favorable for women's career advancement, being better at building up a pipeline of talented women, for example. Furthermore, there is less difference in the average work rates of women and men compared to companies not involved with Advance. *"Organizations that are successful in terms of gender diversity have adapted their corporate culture, processes and structures to promote women's career development. We want to accelerate this learning curve across Switzerland. In addition, Advance offers targeted skill building, mentoring and networking opportunities to support talented women as they climb the career ladder up to the top,"* says Alkistis Petropaki, General Manager Advance.

Prof Dr Gudrun Sander, Head of the Competence Centre for Diversity & Inclusion at the University of St. Gallen: *"It is important to make existing promotion processes more transparent and ensure that decisions regarding promotion are not exclusively dependent on a person's direct superior. Clear objectives, evaluated at regular intervals, are important in this regard. In addition, managers must actively assist talented female employees to attain greater visibility and attract more attention. They should also hold career-related discussions with them on a regular basis."*

#### Four positive examples, as used in practice by Advance member companies

'Excelle' is **ABB**'s internal program to promote and develop talented female employees. The objective is to support women early on in their careers so that they can unleash their full potential: "It's all about strengthening communication skills, sharpening the definition of their roles in a high-tech environment, the exchange of ideas, diversity, and agile working," says **Edoardo Ambrosi, University Relations and Early Talent Manager** at ABB. "In addition, we use this initiative to foster networking and experience sharing, so that our participants can rely on a solid network of colleagues."

Gender equality has been a strategic focus area for **Nestlé** since 2008, such as in the form of the measures integrated into the 'Nestlé Gender Balance Acceleration Plan'. These include helping their managers to encourage an 'inclusive' culture at work, training on 'unconscious bias', a flexible work environment, mentoring and sponsoring programs, clear ambitions in terms of hiring and promoting more women to managerial positions, regular performance reviews and the ongoing implementation of 'equal pay'. In 2018, Nestlé was honored with BILAN's equality prize, and the company was included in the Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index (GEI) in 2019. **Muriel Lienau, CEO** of Nestlé Switzerland, has sat on Advance's board since May 2019.

The biotech company **Biogen** evaluates its D&I strategy every other year. The current strategy, dating from 2018, focuses on 'inclusive talent systems' among a range of other areas. Training on unconscious bias plays a key role in this. Meetings that lead to major decisions often include discussions of the topic of 'bias', meaning that resolutions are scrutinized and discussed in a new light, if need be. The topic is also integrated into various processes along the employee 'life cycle', with recurring workshops held on the issue. "These measures along with others are the reason why 40% of our senior management positions were filled by women in 2015. By 2019, this figure had already increased to 46%," states Jeffrey Herrera, Global Diversity & Inclusions Programs Manager at Biogen. Dr **Katharina Gasser**, Managing Director at Biogen Switzerland AG, has sat on Advance's board since May 2019.

**Dow** has a very good idea of what their female managers want and strive towards: ongoing learning, development opportunities and flexibility in the workplace. "Here, we live and breathe a culture that sees results as being more important than face-time at work – and, of course, men play a key role in this," says **Margherita Fontana, Commercial Director** at EMEA Dow Europe. "In recent years, we have carried out exit interviews on a systematic basis so we can understand in-depth why women in middle-management are leaving the company." At Dow, this was often connected to the desire to take on managerial positions quicker and gain more flexibility for the sake of their family. Another important initiative is a sponsorship program that Dow developed specifically for female managers. This program has attracted unilateral support from the company's management and has enabled 37 women to substantially accelerated their professional advancement.

### **Advance & HSG Gender Intelligence Report 2019**

As the leading business organization for gender equality in Switzerland, Advance works with the Competence Centre for Diversity & Inclusion (CCDI) at the University of St. Gallen to produce the annual Gender Intelligence Report. The report is a key component of the Advance program and is designed to support companies on their D&I journey with insights, best practices and guidelines that have proven to work. The study analyzed anonymized raw data from 263,000 employees across 55 companies with 100+ to 30,000 employees. The results relate to 2018 and are enhanced by CCDI's findings and research.

The study is unique in that it integrates three drivers:

1. Facts & figures on the development of gender diversity within Swiss companies
2. Actionable recommendations and guidelines for tried-and-tested steps
3. Inspiration in the form of concrete 'best practice' examples

**The most important findings, as well as the full report with in-depth 'best practice' examples, are available via:**

**[advance-hsg-report.ch](http://advance-hsg-report.ch)**

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### **About Advance**

Advance is Switzerland's leading business association for gender equality in the workplace and is committed to increasing the number of women in management positions. Mixed-gender teams make better decisions; they are more innovative, productive and profitable. Gender diversity gives firms a competitive edge and creates a win-win situation for men and women alike. Advance offers its members an integrated program to help them encourage equal opportunities within their companies in a purposeful manner. Today, just six years after it was founded, Advance has over 100 member companies. Advance is a not-for-profit body structured as an association and is solely funded by membership fees. [www.weadvance.ch](http://www.weadvance.ch)

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### **About the Competence Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI) at the University of St. Gallen**

The Competence Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI) is among the leading research institutions with regard to diversity and inclusion in Switzerland. CCDI conducts cutting-edge research on diversity and inclusion (D&I) and provides guidance and training to companies on how to promote and manage D&I in their organizations. Their team draws on more than 20 years of experience in the field. [www.ccdi-unisg.ch](http://www.ccdi-unisg.ch), [www.diversitybenchmarking.ch](http://www.diversitybenchmarking.ch)