

*A written message from Commissioner Mariya Gabriel*

*On the occasion of Move It Forward - Female digital starters - "Women vs. COVID19"*

*Unfortunately, I cannot be with you today, but I wanted to welcome all of you to this Move It Forward event. We need to support women digital starters coming together to find solutions to so many challenges arising from COVID-19.*

*This pandemic has forced us to change the way in which we live and connect to each other. The way in which we organise our resources, even our collective decision-making.*

*We need sustainable solutions to a very large range of challenges. Challenges that affect everyone – and so we cannot simply rely on others – we need to get involved.*

*Citizen participation is essential when facing challenges such as this one. Hackathons are an inspiring avenue to bring people together around a common goal. Not only does this kind of collaborative, solution-driven approach promote listening to multiple perspectives on these issues, it also leads to creative solutions.*

*If we are coming together, working together, fighting COVID together, we cannot leave half of our population behind.*

*Women often think different. We bring different concerns to the table. I am sure you see that in tech as much as I see that in politics.*

*We need women to participate, to make themselves heard. We need women to be entrepreneurial. We need businesswomen, women scientists, and women leaders. This is why I feel compelled to congratulate you. Your presence at this event, the can-do attitude that your efforts represent, are an inspiration, to me and to countless women and girls out there. Society needs your example just as much as we need your solutions.*

*The European Union is very much committed to balancing gender representation and participation in fields like ICT. We have already started with education and training, where girls closed the gender gap not only in science and mathematics performance, but also in computer and information literacy. This is as much a victory of our Member States as it is a victory of girls, women, and educators throughout our continent.*

*Yet the gender divide in science appears once we move into specific areas of knowledge. Girls gravitate towards the bio-medical sciences, whereas boys focus on physical sciences and computer tech.*

*So how can we combat this divide?*

*I already spoke about breaking stereotypes, and that is certainly part of the solution. But so are skills, opportunity and know-how.*

*To that end, gender equality is a priority of the European Research Area and of Horizon Europe.*

*In addition, through a series of workshops, the Digital Education Action Plan continues to empower young women to embark in careers in tech, focusing on the development of digital and entrepreneurial skills.*

*These workshops are organised under the tutelage of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, or EIT, getting women acquainted with start-ups, learning what it takes to start their own business.*

*But we do not stop there.*

*When we want to support these start-ups, we connect them to each other, through the EIT, and we provide funding through Start-up Europe and through the European Innovation Council.*

*The Commission has also launched a gender-smart financing initiative to fund women-led companies and to empower female entrepreneurship.*

*I encourage all of you to engage with these initiatives. We need your input and experience.*

*We cannot lose sight that the solutions you will find rely, first and foremost, not on technology, but on the people running it – on your creativity and skill.*

*So thank you for your motivation in the face of adversity.*

**move it forward**  
female digital starters

