

Gendered study paths

Perspectives on the selectivity of higher education aspirations

Petra Wejwar, Angelika Grabher

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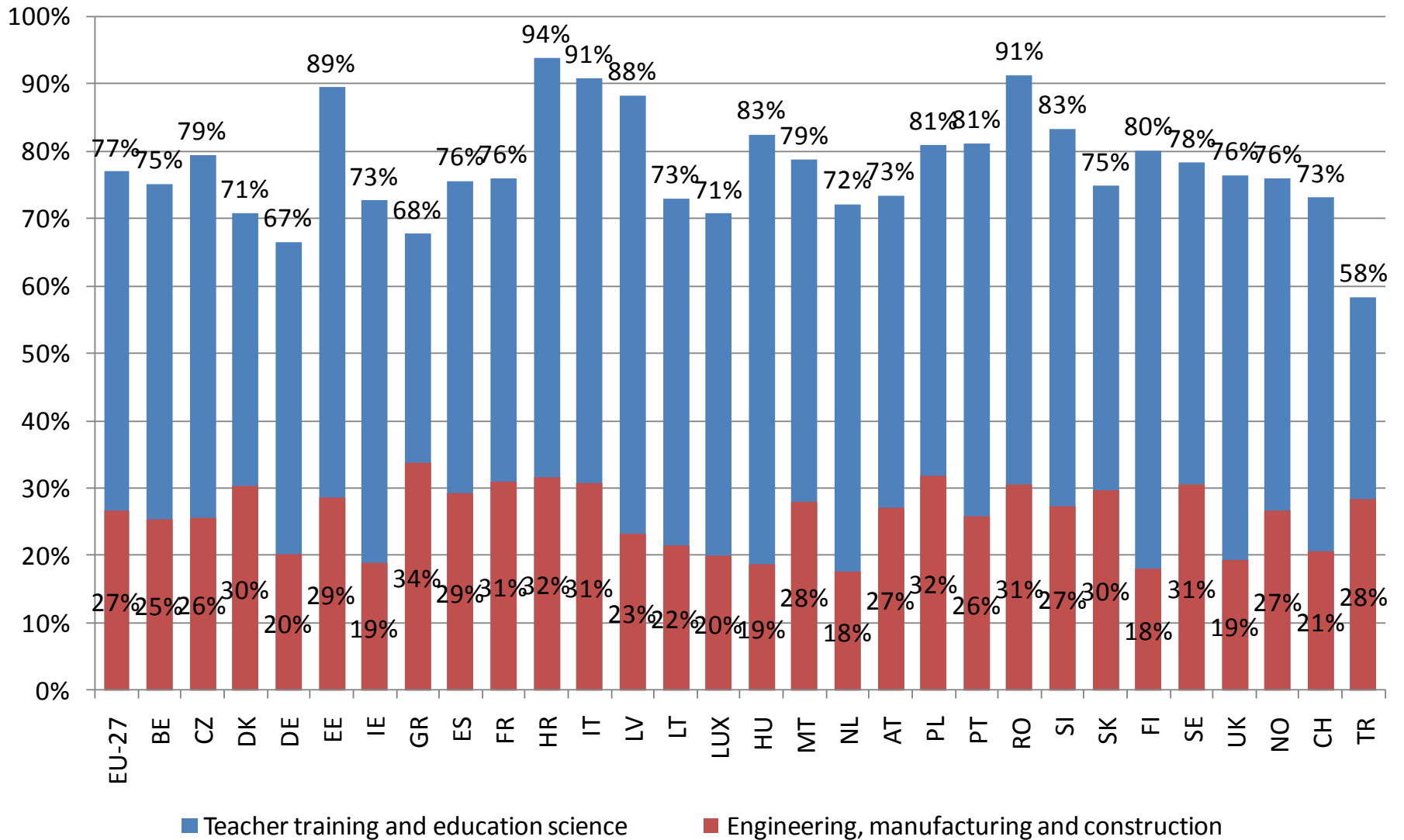
Introduction

Career paths in HE are characterised by

- Horizontal segregation
- Vertical segregation
- Interactions of vertical and horizontal segregation

- Women represent the majority of BA and MA students/ graduates, but the minority among PhD candidates/ graduates.
- BUT women have lower transition rates from BA to MA, MA to PhD than men

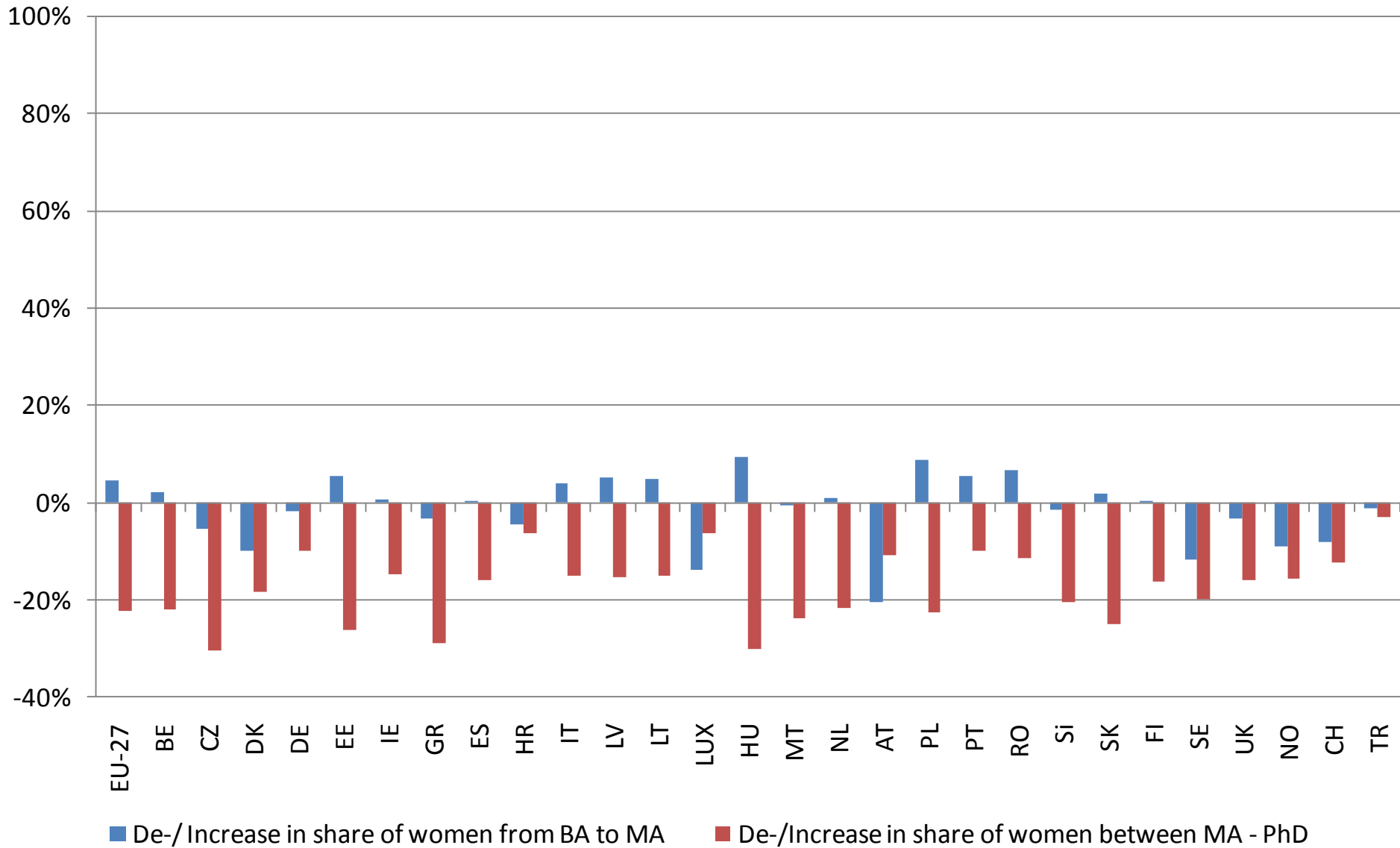
Gender segregation by field of study



- Share of female students in different fields of study.

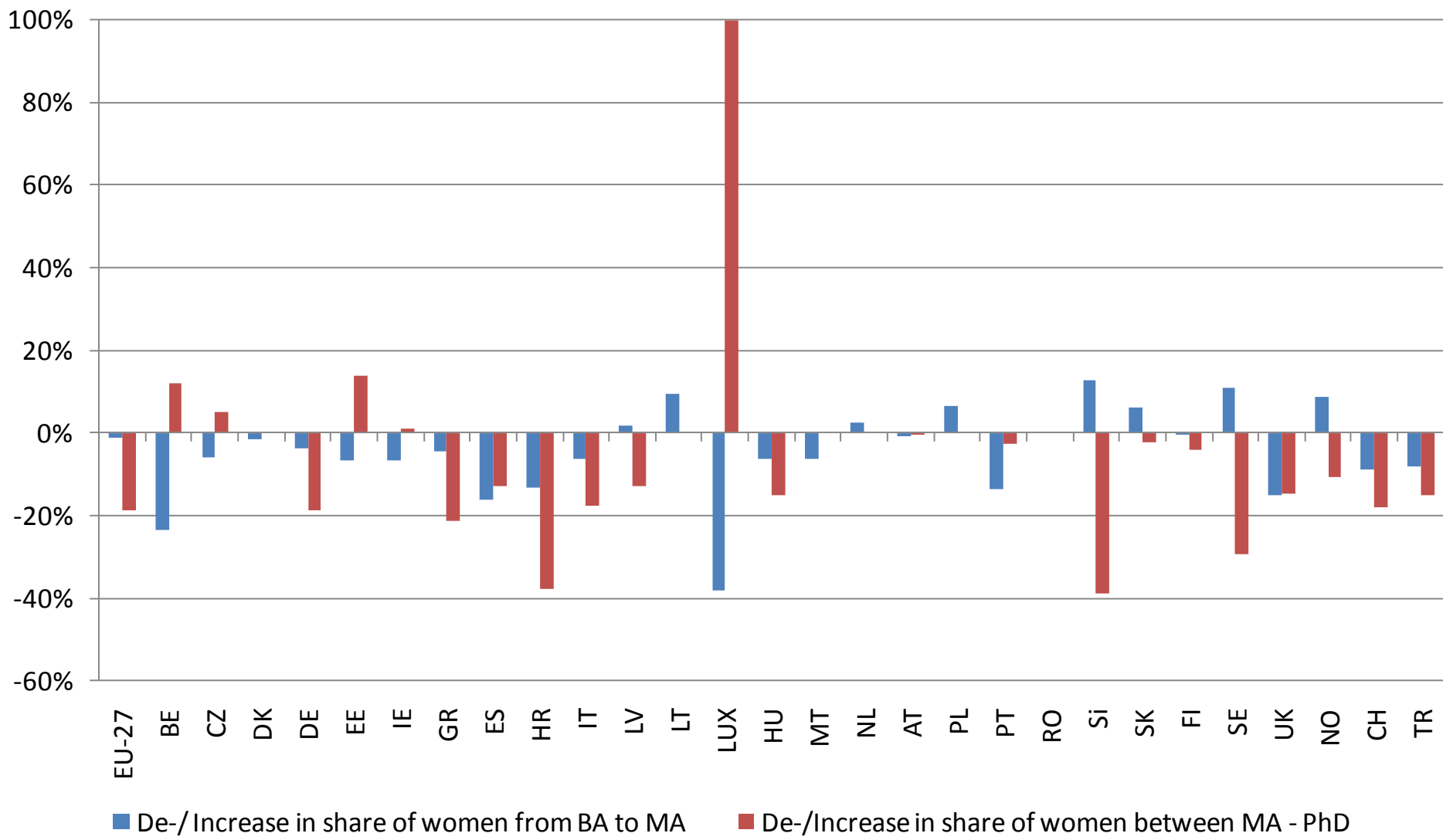
Source: Eurostat 2014, data for 2012.

De-/Increase of share of women by type of programme: all fields



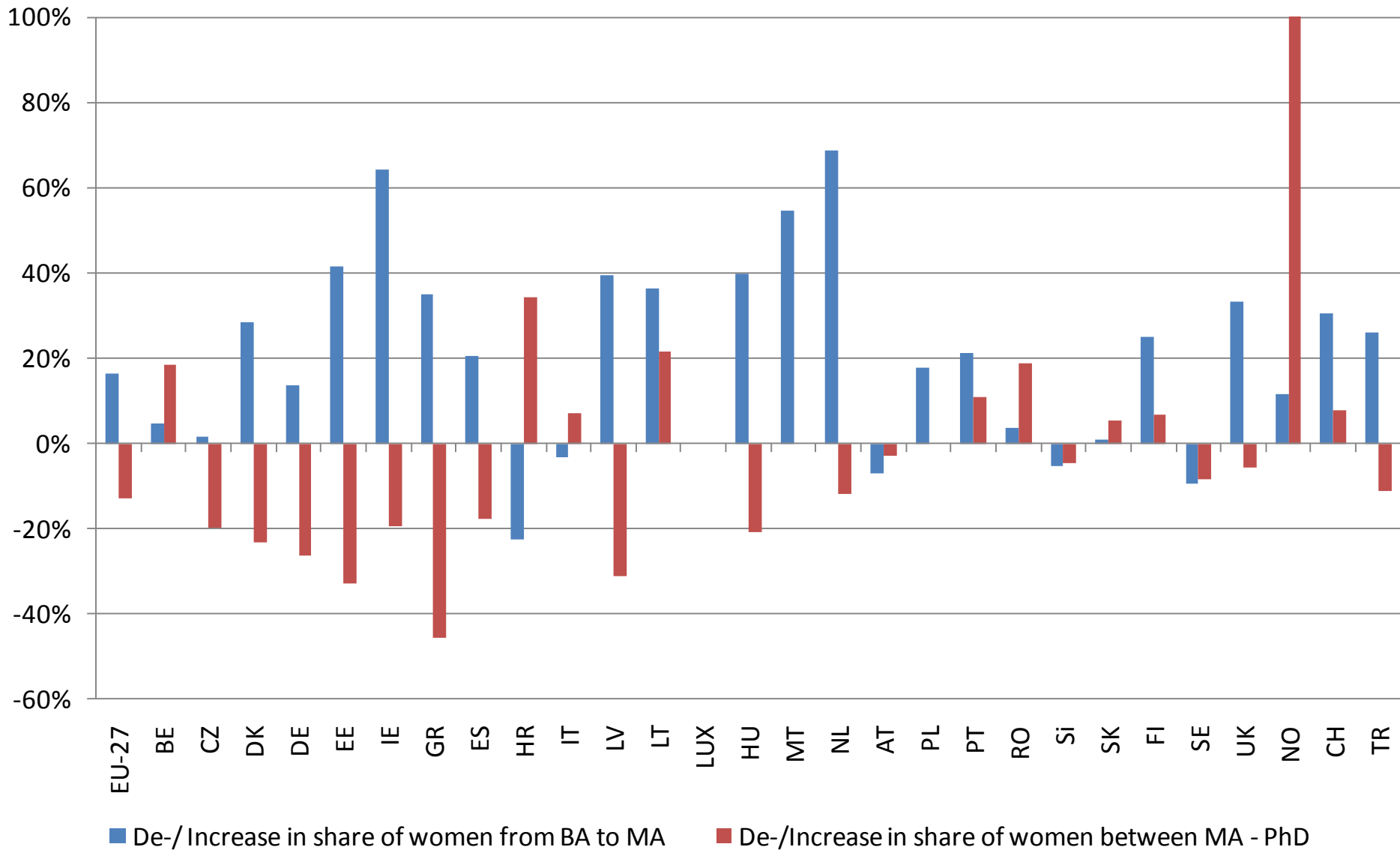
- Share of female graduates
Source: Eurostat 2014, data for 2012

De-/Increase of share of women by type of programme: Teacher Education and training



- Share of female graduates
Source: Eurostat 2014, data for 2012

De-/Increase of share of women by type of programme: Engineering

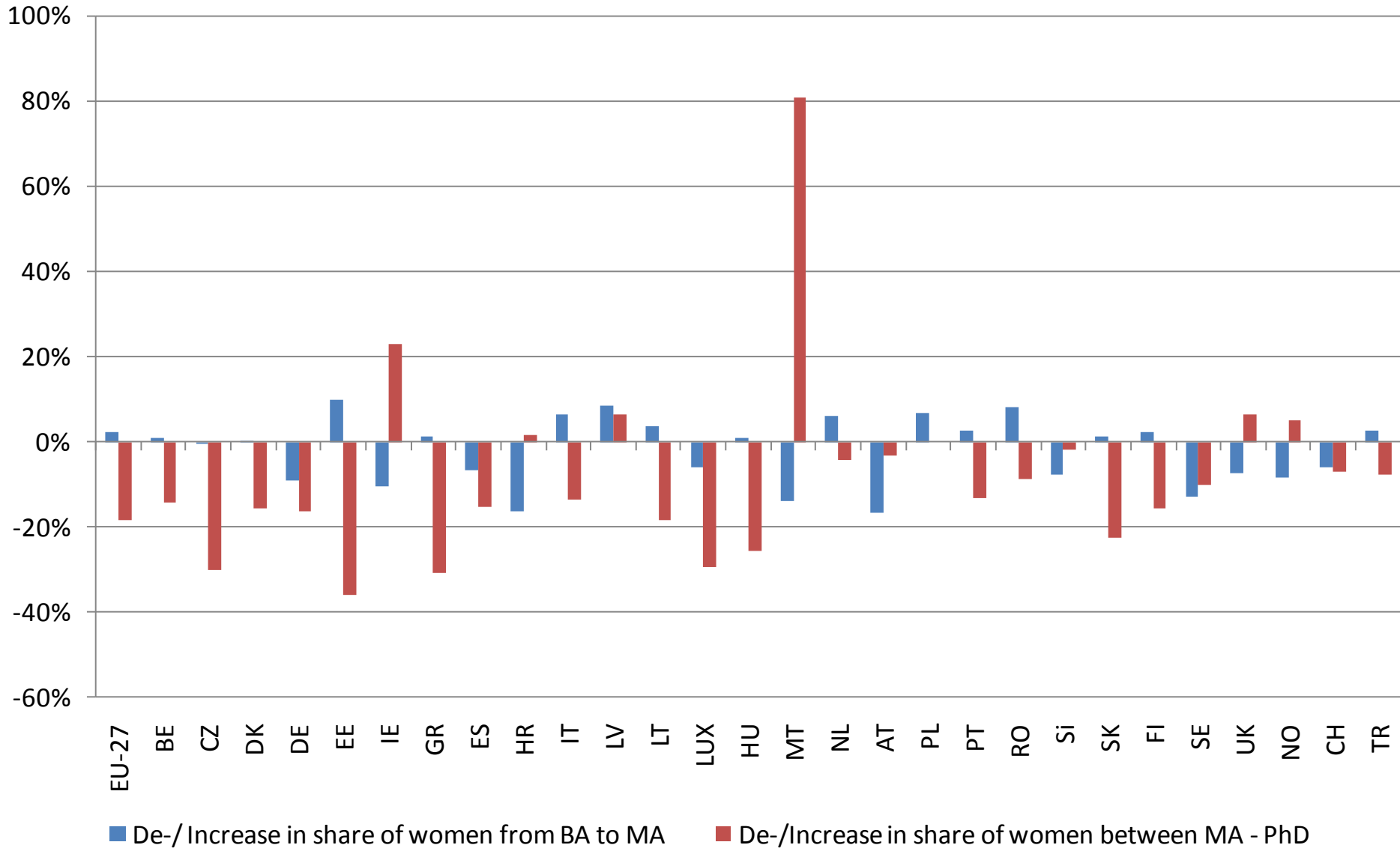


- Share of female graduates

Source: Eurostat 2014, data for 2012

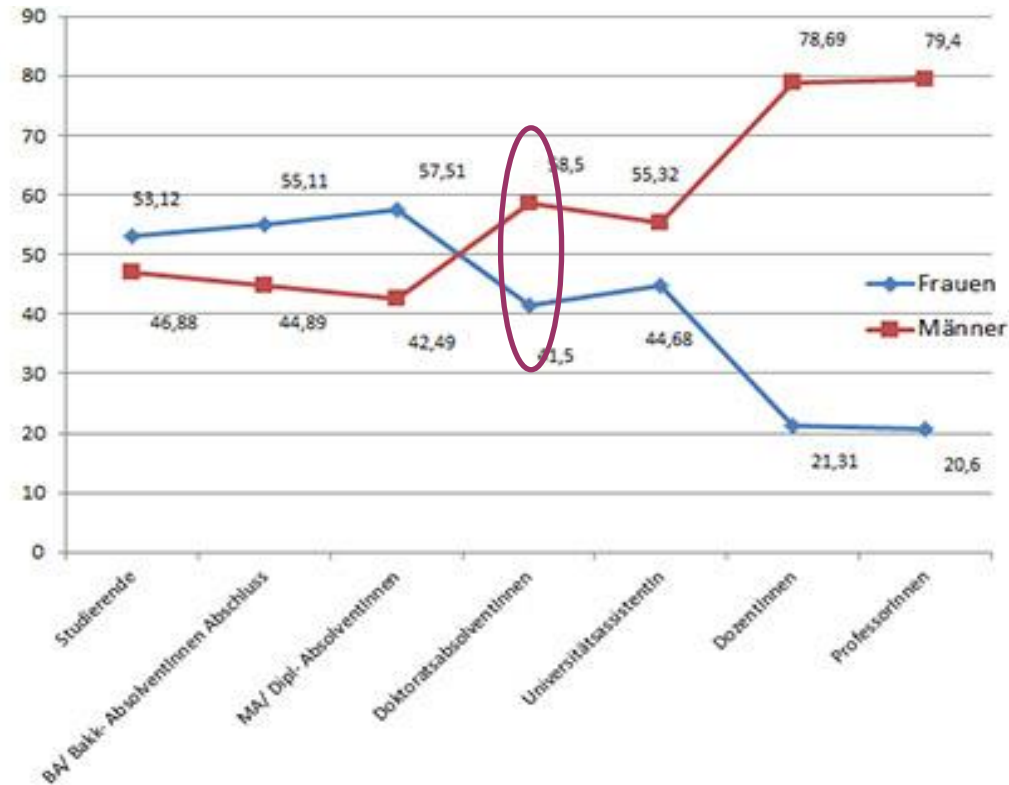


De-/Increase of share of women by type of programme: Social Sciences



- Share of female graduates
Source: Eurostat 2014, data for 2012

Leaky Pipeline



Source: Robert Czepel, science.ORF.at, 4.7.2014. <http://science.orf.at/stories/1741332/>, referring to the statistical database of the Ministry of Science.

- Gender gap in transitions to consecutive studies

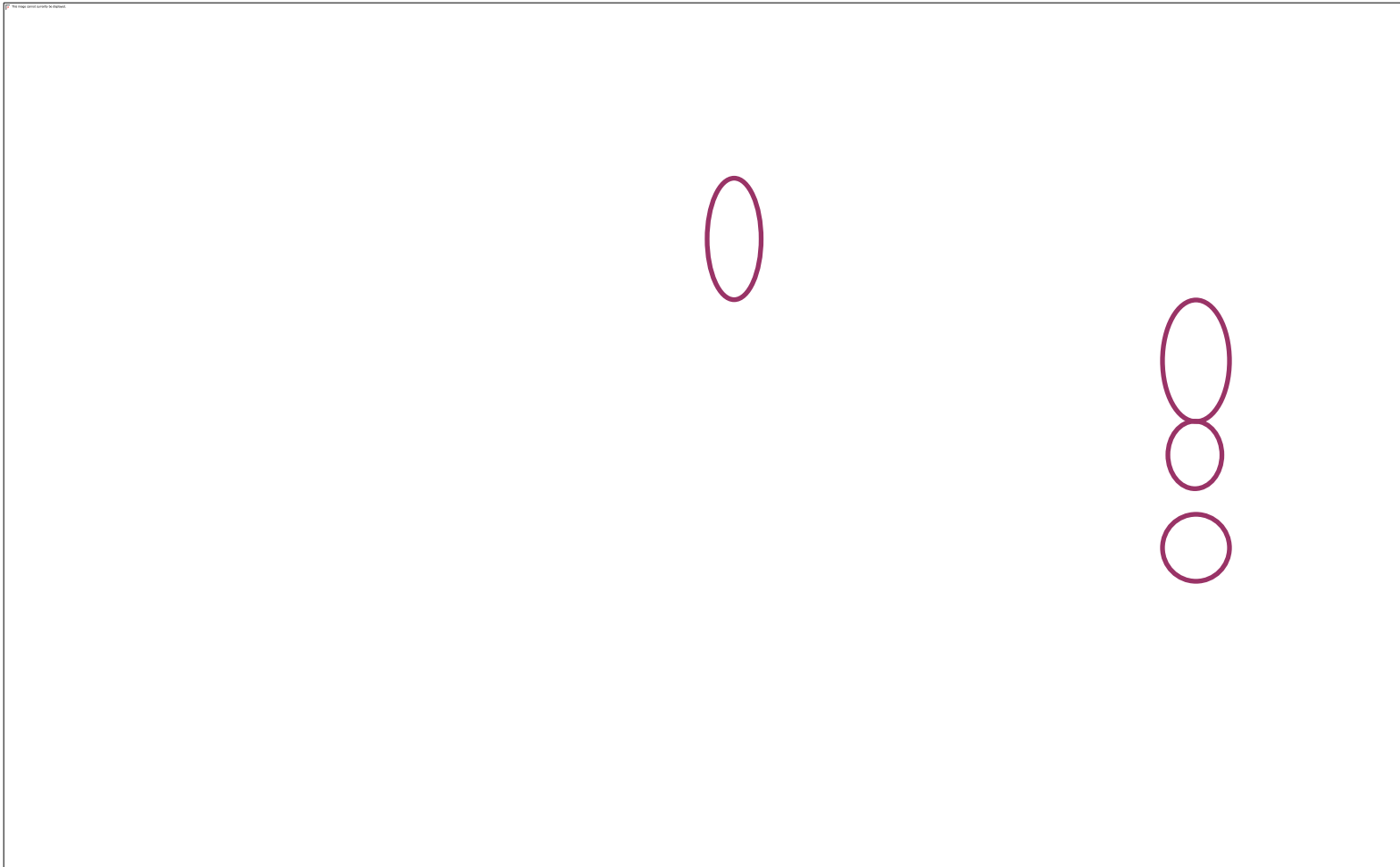
Data sources

2 cross-sectional surveys

- “Studierenden-Sozialerhebung 2011”
(Unger, Zaussinger et al. 2012, commissioned by BMWFW)
- Intentions of enrolling in consecutive study programmes of students at Universities
(Wejwar, Grabher et al. 2013, commissioned by ÖH Bundesvertretung)

Assumption: Actual share of women is compared to the fictive gender distribution (assuming all students planning a continuation of studies realise their plans)

Fictive and real share of women in BA, MA and PhD studies



Why is study transition selective? – Findings in Literature

- Individual vs. structural explanations (Lind 2007, Leemann 2002)
 - Socialisation vs. System „University“
 - Shift in paradigm, structural obstacles greater impact
- Interaction of horizontal and vertical segregation in HE (Leemann 2002, Lind 2007, Holzbecher/Küllchen/Löther 2002)
 - Fields of study with balanced/ higher shares of women do not increase the transition rates of women, but those of men
 - Contact thesis & competition thesis

Explanation Hypothesis 1

- Uncertainty and less specific goals
 - Women plan more often a consecutive study later after graduation
 - Women are more often uncertain about their future study plans
- In Literature this uncertainty is classified as a individual barrier and linked to differences in the „reassurance culture“ and „cooling out“ phases (Lind 2007, Leemann 2002, Holzbecher/Küllchen/Löther 2002)
 - Female PhD-candidates in Austria are less satisfied with the integration in research at their HEI and the support than male (Zaussinger et al 2012)

Explanation Hypothesis 2

- Horizontal instead of vertical
 - More than one fifth of female MA students plans to enroll in another master (male: 7%)
 - Might be linked to field of studies
 - Enrollment in multiple study programmes
- Past research papers support these findings (Abele 2003, Gärtner/Himpele 2010):
 - Women's career aspirations seem less „directed“ due to less specific expectations

Explanation Hypothesis 3

- Field specific conditions rather than individual occupational motivation
 - Female students attach more importance to content aspects of their (future) occupation, whereas men have more status-related ambitions when planning their continuation in HE
- Positive reinforcement and (informal) support from professors is very beneficial
 - Women not planning to enrol in consecutive studies state more often than men a lack of confidence as well as structural barriers

Further explanations

- Underrepresentation of women in consecutive studies can exclusively be linked to family planning and (expected) difficulties with the work-life-balance for women. Structural barriers within the Universities are neglected. (Lind 2007)
- Low level of formalisation of PhD-studies is also seen as more hindering for women than for men (Lind 2007, Metz-Glöckel 2007)

Summary

- „The Pipeline“ leaks already before the attainment of a PhD.
- The attempted explanations for these leaks presented here are neither exhaustive nor sufficient.
- Nevertheless, given the depth of the data available, they provide an overview of the situation in Austria.
- More targeted (longitudinal) data is needed

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Thank you for your attention!

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