



**From academia to market:  
The challenges and opportunities  
of creating start-ups in women's  
health**

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**BII**

**BiInnovation  
Institute**

An international research, innovation and entrepreneurship  
initiative in Denmark.






# Agenda

- **What is BioInnovation Institute (BII)**
- **Women's Health Initiative**
- **Challenges and opportunities**
- **Building a women's health ecosystem**
- **How to accelerate women's health**

# WHAT is BII?





**BII is a private not-for-profit  
Institute that supports Life  
Science Innovation**



BII team of **55 people** supports start-ups with knowledge, networks, financing and infrastructure.



So far BII has **granted 71 MEUR** to **80 early-stage start-ups**.



BII companies have already **raised 412 MEUR** in financing.



The Novo Nordisk Foundation can provide up to **470 MEUR** over 10 years.





## Vision

Our *vision* is to support world-class life science innovation that drives development of new solutions by **early life science start-ups** for the **benefit of people and society**.

## Mission

Our *mission* is to incubate world-class life science and **catalyze its commercialization** of new solutions through start-ups by using our **knowledge, network, funding and infrastructure**.





# We select promising start-ups and projects, and support them by offering **four essentials** for success



## Funding

Projects get access to funding via our programs to help them accelerate their business and scientific development.



## Knowledge

Projects gets an anchor responsible for supporting their business development with knowledge, tools, and mentorship.



## Network

BII offers access to a huge network. Our collaboration partners take a starting point in the start-up's journey and needs.



## Infrastructure

Access to our community and infrastructure which includes office space, laboratory facilities and technical platforms.

# Overview of BII's programs



## Bio Studio

Provides funding for **leading academics** to mature innovative translational research. By building a strong commercial case, the goal is to create a spin-out by the end of the program.

The PI will remain at the host institution. BII will help establish a project team operating at BII.



Up to  
EUR 3M



Up to  
3 years



## Venture Lab

Acceleration program designed to help newly established **start-ups** in the early phases of development.

During the program BII provides start-ups with tools for scientific, business and team development.



EUR 0.5M



12 months



## Venture House

Selected Venture Lab companies can enter the follow-on program Venture House for further development support.



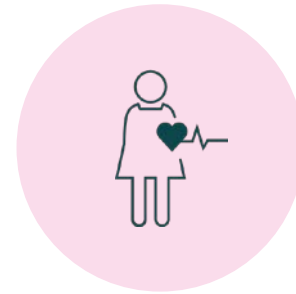
Up to  
EUR 1.3M



18 months







## Women's Health Initiative

In 2022, BII launched the Women's Health Initiative - Partially supported by a grant awarded to BII by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The initiative aims to address high unmet medical needs within women's health.

# Support Areas in women's health and gender medicine

## Female-specific conditions

- Gynecological conditions (e.g. PCOS, uterine fibroids, adenomyosis, vaginal microbiome and vaginal dysbiosis, cervical cancer/HPV treatment, endometriosis)
- Menopause symptoms
- Maternal health
- Menstrual health

## Reproductive health

- Female and male non-hormonal contraception
- Female and male infertility

## Conditions that affect females and males differently

Sex-specific solutions to conditions such as:

- Cardiovascular conditions
- CNS indications
- Autoimmune diseases
- Chronic pain
- Mental health and depressive disorders





# BII Women's Health Initiative

## Key goals

Create new start-ups by sourcing, funding and incubating new technologies and solutions for women's health.

Strengthen the European ecosystem through identifying and addressing the gaps and raising awareness of women's health.

## Ambition

Create one of the leading early-stage women's health innovation hubs in Europe with unique support programs and incubation capabilities.

Why is this a priority area for BII?



# Huge unmet medical need

## Lack of solutions, poor health outcomes, differential disease prevalence

- Endometriosis – a debilitating condition affecting 10% of women of reproductive age – have no cure and diagnosis takes on average 8 years<sup>1</sup>.
- Women are 50 % more likely to receive a wrong initial heart diagnosis and more likely than men to die after heart emergency<sup>2</sup>.
- Women are 50–75% more likely than men to have an adverse drug reaction<sup>3</sup>.
- In one-third of infertility cases, we treat the woman for a male problem. With invasive treatment<sup>4</sup>.
- Despite reporting more severe levels and duration of pain, women are less likely to be treated for pain than men; symptoms are at times described as “emotional” or “psychosomatic”.

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1) WHO and <https://www.endometriosis-uk.org/endometriosis-facts-and-figures>

2) <https://www.escardio.org/The-ESC/Advocacy/women-and-cardiovascular-disease>  
leading cause of death in women worldwide and Women’s Health Access Matters (WHAM)

3) Rademaker M. Do women have more adverse drug reactions?. *Am J Clin Dermatol.* 2001;2(6):349-351

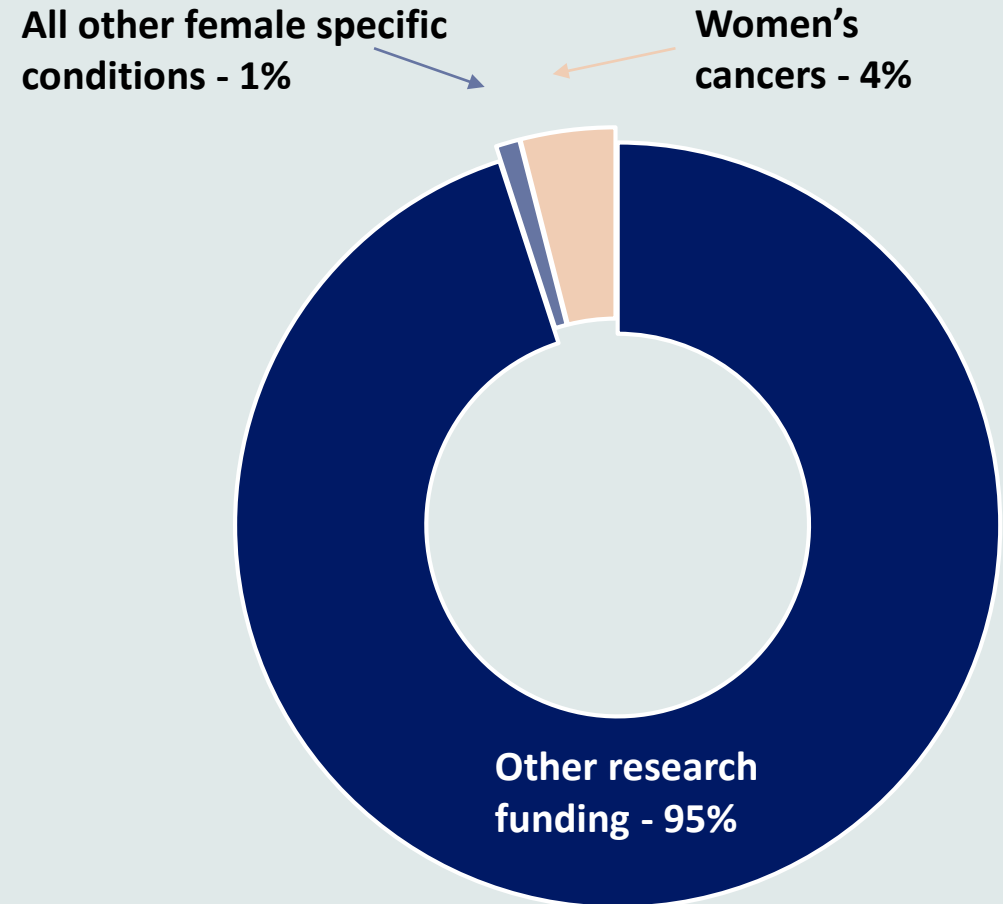
4) Turner KA et al. Male Infertility is a Women's Health Issue-Research and Clinical Evaluation of Male Infertility Is Needed. *Cells.* 2020 Apr 16;9(4):990<https://www.washingtonpost.com/wellness/interactive/2022/women-pain-gender-bias-doctors/>

# Caused by...

## Lack of basic research funding

Approximately 1% of healthcare research and innovation is invested in female-specific conditions beyond oncology.

## US biopharma research funding, 2020<sup>1</sup>



# Caused by...

## Data and knowledge gaps

For years, women have been underrepresented in clinical trials.

**Between 1977 and 1993, women\* were excluded from participation in clinical trials in the US.**



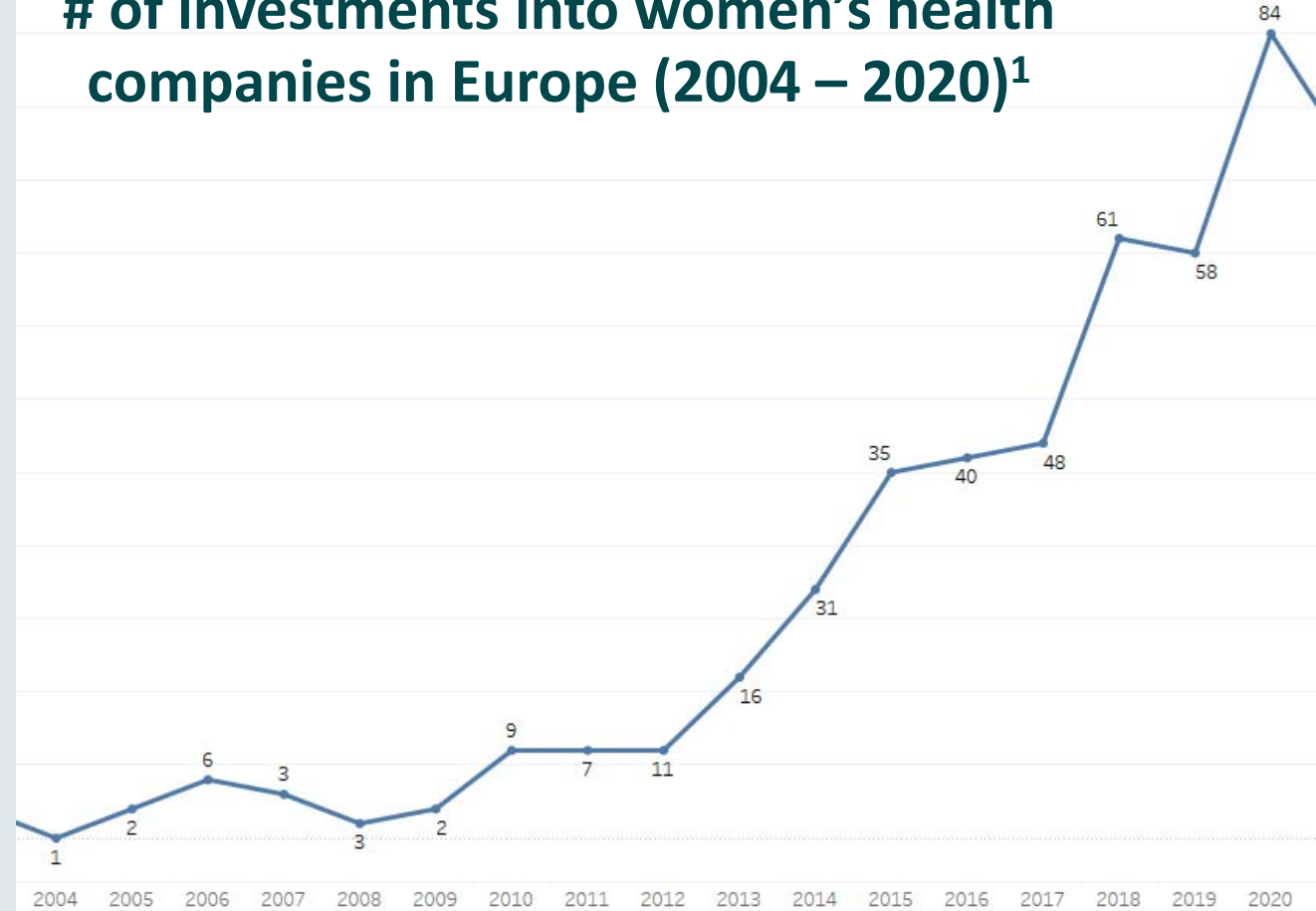
# Caused by...

## Limited private financing

We have not seen many private investments by venture capital in the space of women's health.

Women's health as an investment case is still in its early days.

## # of investments into women's health companies in Europe (2004 – 2020)<sup>1</sup>



Large patient populations, large untapped market.

Societal and political awareness is on the rise. Perception is changing.

**Opportunities**

Limited competition in many indication areas. High innovation potential.

Emergence of dedicated funding schemes. VC funding on the rise.

# Supporting innovation - from academia to patients



Basic research

**BII** BioInnovation  
Institute

Translational and pre-commercial phase

- Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- Ferring
- Investor network
- BII Women's Health Innovation Panel
- General network building



Patients

# Things we can do to accelerate new solutions to the benefit of women's health:

- 1) Increase research funding directed at women's health / gender medicine
- 2) Provide proactive innovation support in university settings and for the translational phase
- 3) Raise awareness of the opportunities with investors
- 4) Put women's health on the political agenda





**Funding innovation within women's health is a good investment for society.**

# Thank you!

Read more about  
**Women's Health Initiative**



[bii.dk/community/womenshealth/](https://bii.dk/community/womenshealth/)

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