

Gender issues in R&D

Current state of women in R&D in Europe

Since the 1990s, the majority of university graduates in Europe have been women, but the proportion of women in top positions in Europe science is still very low, even in the traditionally more 'feminised' fields of science. The scarcity of women in senior positions, and as a result in bodies such as scientific boards, inevitably means that their individual and collective opinions are less likely to be voiced in policy and decision-making processes biased decision-making on topics of future research development.

Due to long period of qualification, high level of career insecurity and international mobility significantly more women professors than male professors live alone and do not have children. Women researchers in industry tend to have fewer children than women in academia and return schemes after 'family breaks' are not always offered. It can also be stated that women in science are younger than their male colleagues. Also the working conditions are different: more temporary employment, less job tenure and lower wages.

But it is also an obvious fact that there is still not enough data on gender issues in R&D.

Conditions for female scientists in Germany

It is known that women in science are under-represented. In comparison to the EU average Germanys performance is particularly poor, exemplified by the following figures:

| Proportion of women graduated ¹ | |
|--|-----|
| Germany | 45% |
| England | 54% |
| France | 57% |
| Finland | 59% |
| Portugal | 65% |

¹ European Commission, Helsinki Group, Rees-Report 2002

| Proportion of women PhD ² | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Germany | 45% |
| England | 54% |
| France | 57% |
| Finland | 59% |
| Portugal | 65% |

This under-representation does also apply for women with a full professor. Here Germany ranks on the final position regarding the European average.

Most women in Germany and in Europe focus on research in the field of medical science, agronomy and social science. Natural science and engineering are least of interest.

Activities of the European Commission to promote gender equality

Political Objectives

The European Commission aims at reaching a 40% participation of women at all levels in implementing and managing research programmes.

EU enlargement and the changing roles and life plans of women and men in Europe present some of the greatest challenges to European societies and this impacts on the creation of the European Research Area.

Activities of the European Commission

In February 1999 the European Commission adopted the Women and Science Action Plan. Since then the gender issue in science have become an important part of European Research policies, supported both by the European Parliament and the national governments.

In the Sixth Framework Programme a specific budget for funding women in science projects was made available. In FP6 a total of around €20 Mio will have been

dedicated to Women in Science activities.

One important instrument are the “Gender Action Plans” (GAPs) which are obligatory for all Integrated Projects (IP) and Networks of Excellence (NoE) in FP6. The GAPs are actions that promote gender equality an all forms within a funded IP or NoE project. The German Contact Point FIF (Frauen in der EU Forschung) has made a survey on the efficiency of the GAPs. As a main result the report stated that GAPs have accomplished an important and hitherto unique process of creating awareness for gender equality in research projects. GAPs are regarded as an necessary instrument as part of the gender mainstreaming strategy of the European Commission in the future (FP7) because the gender mainstreaming still faces obstacles in the implementation and need to be continued. As one responded resumed: “Gender aspects are easy to integrate into a project and at the same time are very easy to ignore.”

Further gender mainstreaming activities in R&D by the European Commission are:

- At the time of 1999 no systematic or centrally co-ordinated collection of sex-disaggregated data on R&D staff existed at European Level. A programme of statistical work was therefore initiated and the *group of Statistical Correspondents* was created as a subgroup of the Helsinki Group on Women and Science in 2001.
The data has been integrated into Eurostat and it helped to develop gender-sensitive indicators.
- At the end of 2001 the Commission set up the expert group WIR: *Women in industrial research*. It is an industry-driven expert group to analyse and comment the business perspective of women in industrial R&D.
(http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/science-society/women/wir/index_en.html)
- By the end of 2002 the Enwise Group has been launched to produce a report, which would set the scene, review the issues and challenges for women in science and in scientific research in the targeted countries; and, building upon

² European Commission, Helsinki Group, Rees-Report 2002

the resulting landscape, it would formulate policy recommendations for the different levels of research policy (within research administrations, public and private research bodies, at regional, national and EU level) and for the scientific communities and the scientists themselves, both male and female.

(http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/science-society/women/enwise/index_en.html)

As a first result the European Commission is funding the project Central European Centre on Women and Youth in Science with partners in seven countries (CZ, H, SI, SK, RO, F and I).

(<http://www.cec-wys.org/html/>)

- In December, 2004 the Council adopted the Directive on the principle of equal treatment between women and men in the access to and supply of goods and services. It lays down the principle that sex based actuarial factors should be eliminated.
- In spring 2005 a *European Platform of Women Scientists* has been launched (www.epsw.org) to bring together networks of women scientists that are committed to gender equality in scientific research.

Future Priorities

On basis of the knowledge gained through the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated statistics and in the light of the progress already achieved in policy terms a number of new and continuing priorities can now be identified:

- Improving scientific excellence by promoting gender awareness and fairness (special training programmes to be developed and implemented).
- Boosting the number of women in leading positions (the number should increase to at least 25% by 2010)
- Strengthening gender research (establish gender research as a recognised item, launch a European award for gender research, gender budgeting)



- Enhancing the role of women in engineering and innovation
- Establish conditions which allows both women and men scientists to combine family and work
- Gender monitoring in the member states (still information lacking for certain policy measures).



Bibliography:

- 1 Commission Staff Working Document, Women and Science: Excellence and Innovation – Gender Equality in Science, Brussels, 11.3.2005
- 2 Competence Consulting: Studie im Auftrag der Kontaktstelle FIF des EU-Büros des BMBF: Perspektiven deutscher Wissenschaftlerinnen in der EU-Forschungsförderung
- 3 Report from the Commission on equality between women and men, 2005, COM(2005) 44 final
- 4 Gender Action Plans – Results of a survey by the Kontaktstelle FIF – Frauen in der EU Forschung, Juli 2005
- 5 Data gathered by Internet search.