

PB19 – Gender-balance in decision-making: How to lead?

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For those countries identified as having no measures but above EU average levels of implementation.¹

This policy brief provides evidence-based, concrete recommendations for national level policy makers on how to encourage gender balance in decision-making positions and boards in RFOs and RPOs.²

Why is this important?

Women's representation in academia decreases the higher up the academic ladder culminating in the very small percentage of women in decision-making posts, on boards and in committees. For example at grade C the difference with men is 10 percentage points – widening to an incredible 58 percentage points at grade A (full professors).³

In 2005 the European Council set a goal for women to be in 25% of leading public research positions. The findings of the 2014 ERA survey however show that– on average only 18% of surveyed RPOs were headed by women, although there is great variation between member states.⁴ This represents a considerable loss and waste of talent for research in Europe. It also detrimentally impacts on optimal institutional decision-making as women have fewer opportunities to shape and influence the research agenda.⁵

In 1999 the European Commission set and recently reinforced a target of 40% for the under-represented sex in groups, panels and committees. This is applied to the European Commission's main funding programme Horizon 2020 which also raises the target for advisory groups to 50% and stipulates the inclusion of at least one gender expert.⁶ According to She Figures, 2015 only 28% of scientific and administrative board members are women, this drops to 22% of board leaders within the EU-28.⁷ The results of the ERA survey 2014 – show that only 35.8% of research evaluation panels in research funding organisations include at least the 40% target of the under-represented sex in their composition.⁸ This is of great significance as allocating research funding does not only impact on the scientific community but has much wider societal implications. What gets funding and what does not has real implications for societal development as well as a differential impact on specific groups of people. The diversity of society including gender must therefore be reflected in the allocation of research funds.⁹

What is the extent of the problem?

This policy brief addresses specifically those countries that have no national measures to improve gender balance in senior positions, quotas, targets and or awards, as according to the ERA Facts and Figures 2014 survey.¹⁰ In addition, more than 18¹¹ of their countries' research performing organisations are headed by women. They also have above average support to improve gender balance in the decision-making process of RPOs. In concrete terms this "How to Lead"- brief targets Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Finland and the UK.¹²

For this group of countries, we can see how there is frequent funding support for the implementation of gender balance in almost of the RFOs surveyed in the UK, as well as by just over a third of those RFOs surveyed in Finland. Forty-four percent of the RFOs surveyed in Lithuania state that funding support to the implementation of gender balance is occasionally provided, whilst there is no funding support for the implementation of gender balance in all of the RFOs surveyed in Slovakia, and just over half of RFOs in Lithuania.

In these countries, there may still be a relatively limited approach to gender equality, in terms of gender balance being seen as numbers of women and men represented in decision-making. In addition, there are further key issues to be addressed regarding decision-makers' competence in gender issues and gender equality, gender in research content, procedures and processes in decision-making, diversity and intersectionality, and gender and sexual diversity.

What are the options?

The European Commission's Communication on a renewed European research area invites member states to ensure at least 40% of the underrepresented sex to participate in committees involved in recruitment/career progression and in establishing and evaluating research programmes.¹³

There are various ways that national level policy makers can improve the gender balance in senior positions in public research institutions and on boards and committees. Legislation can be developed as well as 'soft measures' which can take the form of quotas, targets and/ or awards.¹⁴

The Austrian University Act regulates gender balance in leadership positions and decision-making bodies in public research organisations.¹⁵ Austria is one of the few countries that has set up a fixed female quota of 40% of the underrepresented sex of decision-making bodies in RPOs."¹⁶

In Spain the governance of Spanish universities is regulated by the Law of Universities, which requires universities to achieve parity in representative/governing bodies. Gender balance is also sought in research groups, selection

committees to appoint researchers to positions in university faculty bodies and committees granting the necessary national accreditation to work in a public university.¹⁷

The Spanish National Strategic Plan for Equal Opportunities (2014-2016) includes gender equality objectives and priority areas and requires that the implementation of legislation on gender balance be monitored. Whilst measures to encourage the greater participation of women in research teams are requested – these are not specified.¹⁸

In Belgium in Gent University a new decree came into force in 2014. This decree prescribes at least a gender balance of minimum one third to two-thirds to be maintained in the University's decision-making and advisory bodies.¹⁹

Recommendations

- Include gender balance as a criterion for funding in performance agreements with RPOs when institutional funding is allocated by public administrations. For example, this could take the form of 40% of the under-represented sex on decision-making boards or in committees.²⁰
- Include explicit targets to improve gender balance and action plans of how to get there within the overarching gender equality strategy of scientific institutions. Progress should be monitored and be publically available.²¹ This can also include funding national support structures (for example, national helpdesk, services facilities at the rectors conference offices etc.).
- Introduce quotas of women in higher positions and panels – accompanied by powerful incentives and or/ sanctions.²²
- Facilitate the collection and publication of sex-disaggregated statistics in leadership and decision-making positions and committees annually as part of the national standard statistical reporting on research and innovation.²³
- Put in place measures to ensure that a balanced representation of men and women in committees must also apply to those bodies that design and evaluate research and innovation public policies.²⁴
- Fund education and training to deepen further the expertise and competence in gender equality policy and practice, at both formal and informal levels, and both research content and decision-making process, for decision making boards, committees and groups in RFOs, RPOs and the authorities which fund research.
- Develop national policy targets and measures on gender equality in relation to the heads of RFOs and RPOs.
- Ensure familiarity with relevant overarching European Commission gender equality policy^{25, 26} and relevant information at the European level.²⁷

Further Reading

Further, in-depth reading concerning gender-balance in decision-making is available through the report *Gender Equality Policies in Public Research*²⁸ published by the European Commission and Gender-Net report on *National Plans and initiatives promoting gender equality and structural change* (see footnote 17).

[The GenPORT Gender Balance in Decision-Making in Research Organisations Online Discussion](#)

- [1] Please see 'Gender and Science Policy Briefs: From "Where to start" to "How to innovate": An Introduction', for a description of the methodology used. Available at:
http://www.genderportal.eu/sites/default/files/resource_pool/pb_introduction_.pdf
- [2] Gender balance in decision-making has the potential to effect change in both RPOs and RFOs. These briefs have grouped countries according to levels of implementation (share of women who are heads of RPOs) and the presence or not of measures to improve gender balance in the decision-making process based on the results of the survey conducted with RPOs. These briefs however do include findings of the survey carried out with RFOs- which looks at whether funders provide support to the implementation of gender balance. This approach attempts to provide a more holistic picture of the situation in each country group.
- [3] European Commission, (2016). She Figures, 2015: Gender in Research and Innovation, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p5.
- [4] European Commission, (2015a). ERA Facts and Figures 2014, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p31. Strong variations among countries ranging from 5% in EL to 50% in LU.
- [5] GenSET, (2011). Workshop Briefing Materials: Advancing Excellence in Science through Gender Equality, p8.
- [6] European Commission, (2015a). ERA Facts and Figures 2014, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p32.
- [7] European Commission, (2016). She Figures, 2015: Gender in Research and Innovation, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p6.
- [8] European Commission, (2015a). ERA Facts and Figures 2014, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p32. It should be recalled that these figures concern funders who answered the ERA survey in 2014, which represent 34% of total EU GBOARD.
- [9] GenSET, (2011). Workshop Briefing Materials: Advancing Excellence in Science through Gender Equality, p17.
- [10] In Finland, there has been no need for developing specific quotas for RPOs and RFOs, or specific funding schemes to promote gender balance in decision-making, due to the general gender quota regulation within the national equality legislation, applied successfully since 1995 (Act on Equality Between Women and Men). The proportion of women as heads of institutions, and gender balance in decision-making boards in Finland are among the highest in the EU.
- [11] It should be noted that these figures concern RPOs which answered the ERA survey in 2014, which employ 515 000 researchers (around 20% of total EU researchers).
- [12] Based on the findings of the survey with RPOs. European Commission, (2015a). ERA Facts and Figures 2014, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p30.
- [13] European Commission, (2012a). A Reinforced European Research Area: Partnership for Excellence and Growth, COM (2012) 392, pp12-13.
- [14] European Commission, (2015a). ERA Facts and Figures 2014, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p31. At the level of decision-making in public research institutions, the Commission could identify national initiatives to improve gender balance in senior positions (AT, BE, DE, DK, HR, NL) quotas (AT, BE, EL, ES, FR, LU), targets (AT, DE, DK, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, SE, SI) and/ or awards (AT, BG, CZ, DE, DK, FR, HR, HU; IE, IT, NL; PL, PT, RO, SE, SI).
- [15] European Commission, (2015a). ERA Facts and Figures 2014, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p14, Lipinsky, A., Ahlzweig, G., Steinweg, N., & Getz, L. (2015). GenPORT (D4.1) Analysis of Policy Environments Report, p39.
- [16] Lipinsky, A., Ahlzweig, G., Steinweg, N., & Getz, L. (2015). GenPORT (D4.1) Analysis of Policy Environments Report, p39.
- [17] Gender-Net, (2015b). Analysis Report: National plans and initiatives promoting gender equality and structural change, p 12.
- [18] Gender-Net, (2015b). Analysis Report: National plans and initiatives promoting gender equality and structural change, p13.
- [19] <http://www.ugent.be/en/ghentuniv/diversity-and-gender/good-governance>
- [20] European Commission, (2013b). Recommendations on the Implementation of the ERA Communication: Report of the Expert Group 2013, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p48.
- [21] Recommendation 12 of the GenSET, (2010). Consensus Report, Recommendations for Action on the Gender Dimension in Science', p24.
- [22] Gender Summit 7 Europe, (2015). Mastering Gender in Research Performance, Contexts and Outcomes Conference Report, p3.
- [23] European Commission, (2013b). Recommendations on the Implementation of the ERA Communication: Report of the Expert Group 2013, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p45.
- [24] European Commission, (2013b). Recommendations on the Implementation of the ERA Communication: Report of the Expert Group 2013, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p43.

- [25] European Commission, (2011). European 2010-2015 Strategy for Equality between women and Men, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/documents/strategy_equality_women_men_en.pdf
- [26] European Commission, (2015). Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016-2019, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/sites/antitrafficking/files/strategic_engagement_for_gender_equality_en.pdf
- [27] European Commission, (2016). She Figures 2015, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/research/swafs/pdf/pub_gender_equality/she_figures_2015-final.pdf
- [28] European Commission, (2014a). Gender Equality Policies in Public Research, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1FiBmmu>