

PB3 - Encouraging the recruitment and promotion of female researchers: 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 improve efforts to recruit and advance more women in the research workforce.

Why is this important?

Despite various national and EU level gender equality policies in science, the research sector in Europe continues to waste and under-utilise highly skilled and talented women. Whilst in 2012 47% of all PhD graduates in the EU 28 are women - they only make up a third of researchers in all sectors.²

Europe needs to find a way to ensure the full participation of women in science and technology if it is to maximise its capacity and ability to respond to the challenges facing Europe as well as guarantee its competitive edge in the global arena.³ It must also make sure that the applications and innovations developed – reflect the needs of all citizens.⁴

Factoring in the different roles that gender plays in science and innovation systems and taking advantage of these new opportunities is essential to improving the effectiveness of research and innovation outcomes for women and men whilst fostering socio-economic progress for all.⁵

National bodies that want to maximise the full innovation potential of their human capital resources must take into account the barriers hindering the participation of women in science and innovation and develop innovative solutions.⁶

What is the extent of the problem?

This policy brief addresses specifically those countries that have no national measures for recruiting female researchers. In addition, more than 59% (EU average)⁷ of their research performing organisations self-report implementing recruitment and promotion measures for female researchers. In concrete terms, this “How to Lead” brief targets specifically: Latvia, Hungary and Finland.

In 2013 women represented 47% of grade D academic staff, 45% of grade C academic staff, 37% of grade B academic staff and just 21% of grade A (the highest academic level, full professor level) academic staff in the EU 28.⁸ The average proportion of female academic staff in Latvia, Hungary and Finland is

average for grade D (46%) yet above the EU-28 average in grade C (49%), grade B (46%) and grade A, (28%).⁹

The danger is that those Member States with higher than EU-27 average levels of female representation, as is the case in Latvia, Hungary and Finland- fail to recognise that stronger incentives are needed to improve the recruitment and promotion of female researchers - as part of a wider push for institutional change –for gender equality to become reality and benefit the entire science system.

What are the options?

The 2012 ERA Communication invites Member States to “create a legal and policy environment and provide incentives to remove legal and other barriers to the recruitment, retention and career progression of female researchers”.¹⁰ This can take the form of:

- enacting legislation requiring provisions for ensuring compliance with existing and new legislation,
- developing ‘soft strategies’, i.e. targets as well as supporting and promoting Concordats that establish principles for organisations to comply with
- Ministries can also initiate specific guidelines and various practices.

Equal opportunity legislation can impact on gender balance in scientific recruitment. For example “in Sweden and Norway, anti-discrimination acts allow for moderate preferential treatment in recruitment procedures [Cf. Swedish Discrimination Act and Norwegian Gender Equality Act.]”.¹¹

Soft strategies can also encourage the recruitment of more female researchers, which can be promoted and supported by Ministries and policymakers.

In the UK The Equality Duty of 2010¹² introduced positive action provisions through which HEI establishments were expected to voluntarily take up positive action in recruitment and promotion. This is reinforced in the UK Concordat to support the Career Development of Researchers – which is an agreement between employers and research funders. Principle 6 of the Concordat is that diversity and equality must be promoted in all aspects of recruitment and career management of researchers.¹³

In Germany the Female Professors Programme funded by BMBF- the German Ministry for Education and Research promotes outstanding women researchers will be in operation until 2017. Since 2008, 270 additional women professors have been appointed to higher education institutions.¹⁴

Also in Germany, at the Federal level, the German Pact for Research and Innovation – requires research performing organisations to work towards gender balance – especially in leading positions.¹⁵

Recommendations

- Enact legal provisions specifically regulating gender balance of staff in universities – particularly targeting academic leadership positions.
- Enact legal provisions promoting transparency in recruitment and promotion. This requires a recognition that these are complex processes that need to be thoroughly understood in order to be improved. On the one hand, there are several stages (definition of position, call, selection rounds, interviews and trial lectures, research seminars) that need to be taken into consideration. On the other hand, multiple actors besides academics contribute to the final decision (the department, research group, faculty, boards, scientific committee, equality office....) and need to be made aware of the benefits of promoting transparency in recruitment and promotion.
- Implement work life balance measures, promote co-responsibility between women and men in care work and provide care services for children and dependents to break the glass ceiling in female academic careers and to prevent women withdrawing from academia.
- Implement gender mainstreaming throughout all policy fields as well as specifically in the realm of science. Legal provisions regarding the definition, methodology, implementation, monitoring or evaluation of gender mainstreaming must be developed.¹⁶
- Develop a comprehensive approach to ensure inter-ministerial co-operation –for a coordinated effort across several ministries to enable change on a structural level.¹⁷
- Establish or consolidate organisational structures on gender and science – at the highest possible government level – with sufficient resources, in terms of personnel, expertise and funding – to provide an institutional basis for concerted action in the field.¹⁸
- Integrate recruitment and promotion policies into a broader strategy for institutional change.
- Link funding to performance criteria in gender equality – this has proved a successful strategy – in steering universities and research institutions towards a greater gender equality.¹⁹ This however needs to be accompanied with institutional buy-in – or there is a danger that efforts in this field are not seen as legitimate.²⁰
- Fund further research on recruitment and gatekeeping in the promotion of female researchers.
- Provide competence development for recruitment staff at research performing organisations. Hiring committees need gender expertise to avoid gender bias in the recruitment of academic staff.

[Further Reading](#)

Further, in-depth reading concerning the recruitment and promotion of female researchers is available through the report *Structural Change in Research Institutions* (see footnote 3) published by the European Commission and *She Figures 2015* (see footnote 8), also published by the EC.

[Resources shared in the GenPORT e-discussion on Recruitment and Promotion of Women Researchers:](#)

[Carrots or Sticks? A Study on Incentives to Attract and Retain Women in Science, Engineering and Technology in South Africa](#) by Elaine R. Salo, Felix Liersch, Lieketseng Mohlakoana-Motopi, Marinda Maree

[Women's Networks in Academia: Practical Advice for Positive Impact](#) by Women@TUoS

[GenPORT Research Syntheses on Gender and Science](#) by Rachel Palmen and the GenPORT Consortium.

[ADVANCE at a Glance](#) by National Science Foundation's (NSF)

[Strategies for Effecting Gender Equity and Institutional Change \(StratEGIC Toolkit\)](#) by ADVANCE programme.

[COACHE's Special Reports on Academic Careers in Higher Education](#) by Harvard University.

[Tools For Change Project](#) by AWIS.

[Recruitment Bias in Research Institutes](#) by CERCA

[Constructing excellence: the gap between formal and actual selection criteria for early career academics](#) by GARCIA Project

[Gender Issues in Recruitment, Appointment and Promotion Processes](#) by FESTA Project

[Evidence That Gendered Wording in Job Advertisements Exists and Sustains Gender Inequality](#) by Danielle Gaucher and Justin Friesen & Aaron C. Kay

[Searching for Excellence & Diversity: Recruiting Resources for Search Committees](#) by University of Wisconsin & Madison.

[Mapping organisational work-life policies and practices](#) by GARCIA Project.

[Academic duets: On the professional and private life in science](#) by Marta Vohlídalová (ed.)

[PLOTINA : Promoting Gender Balance and Inclusion in Research, Innovation and Training](#) Project

[Gender Bias Learning Project by Center](#) of WorkLife Law, with support from a NSF ADVANCE

- [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] On average the number of women PhD graduates in the EU has been growing by 4.4 percentage points each year between 2003 and 2012, whereas men PhD graduates have grown by 2.3 percentage points annually. European Commission, (2015c). Preliminary Results of She figures, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union.
- [3] European Commission, (2012b). Structural change in research institutions: Enhancing excellence, gender equality and efficiency in research and innovation, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p13.
- [4] Ibid.
- [5] Pollitzer, E. & Schraudner, M. (2015). Integrating Gender Dynamics into Innovation Ecosystems, *Sociology and Anthropology*, Vol. 3, No. 11, p624.
- [6] Ibid.
- [7] 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).
- [8] European Commission, (2016). She Figures, 2015: Gender in Research and Innovation, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p129.
- [9] Data from European Commission, (2016). She Figures, 2015: Gender in Research and Innovation, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p129.
- [10] European Commission, (2012a). A Reinforced European Research Area: Partnership for Excellence and Growth, COM (2012) 392, p12.
- [11] European Commission, (2014a). Gender Equality Policies in Public Research, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p25.
- [12] <https://www.gov.uk/equality-act-2010-guidance>
- [13] <https://www.vitae.ac.uk/policy/vitae-concordat-vitae-2011.pdf>
- [14] Deloitte, (2014a). Researchers' Report, 2014, Country Profile: Germany.
- [15] For more information see <http://www.bmbf.de/de/3215.php>
- [16] Müller, B. (2008). Innovation and Excellence by Women in Science: University recruitment procedures under scrutiny, Swiss Confederation, State Secretariat for Education and Research SER.
- [17] Wroblewski, A., Leitner, A., Gindl, M., Pellert, A., & Woitech, B. (2007). Wirkungsanalyse frauenfördernder Maßnahmen des bm:bwk, Vienna, Verlag Österreich.
- [18] European Commission, (2012b). Structural change in research institutions: Enhancing excellence, gender equality and efficiency in research and innovation, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p44.
- [19] European Commission, (2014a). Gender Equality Policies in Public Research, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p25.
- [20] Spreyerman, C. & Rothmayr, C. (2009). Evaluation Bundesprogramm Chancengleichheit von Frau und Mann an den Universitäten: Wirkungen des Programmes 2000-2007. Bericht zu Handen des Lenkungsausschusses; Dossiers de l'Office federal de l'éducation et de la science.