



# EU Insight - Gender Equality Policies in Public Research

For information on the Gender Summit please refer to the [EU Insight from July 2014!](#)

Since 2012, gender equality has been one of the five key policy areas for achieving the objective of a common research area in Europe. Therein, the Commission invites Member States to create legal and policy environments to incentivize the removal of legal and other barriers to the progression of women's careers in research while fully complying with EU gender equality legal provisions. Addressing gender imbalances in decision-making and strengthening the gender dimension in research programmes are some of the key issues.

The report "Gender Equality Policies in Public Research" provides an up to date overview on the situation of gender equality policy implementation in public research in the European Research Area (ERA).

The report is based on a survey conducted among the members of the Helsinki Group, the Commission's advisory group on gender, research and innovation. The study covers both EU Member States and other European countries associated to the EU research programme. Gender equality in the European Research Area (ERA) pursues three objectives: the equal participation of women and men both in scientific careers and in decision making, as well as the inclusion of gender analysis in research content and programmes.

Both, the ERA Communication of July 2012 to Member States, research performing organisations (RPOs) and funding organisations (RFOs) as well as the ERA Progress Report 2013 find that there is a clear need for more EU-wide coordination of gender equality policies through the regular exchange of experiences and progress reporting against equality indicators. The first steps in this direction have been taken in the form of the ERA-Net Gender-NET, a pilot transnational research policy initiative funded in the ERA-Net scheme of the European Commission to address the common challenges still facing European research institutions in achieving gender equality in research and innovation.

## ***Career access, development and environment***

Gender-related targets have been reported from several proactive countries, especially with regard to vertical segregation and the share of women in decision-making committees. Compared to 2008, the number of countries with some type of target or quota regulation (fixed quota, cascade model or flexible quota) has increased from eight to 18 countries today. Besides the use of quotas and targets, in a total of 19 countries, policies are in place to establish clear rules for the composition of selection panels, including roles and gender balance.

Provisions for maternity and parental leave, and in some cases for other care work, are actively implemented across ERA. However, beyond respecting general anti-discrimination provisions, very few countries have reported

**GENDER-NET** is the first European Research Area Network (**ERA-NET**) to be dedicated to the promotion of gender equality through structural change in research institutions, as well as to the integration of sex and gender analysis in research. It brings together a balanced **partnership** of twelve national programme owners from across Europe and North America – i.e. ministries, national research-funding agencies or national organisations – with a shared commitment to gender equality and synergistic expertise in gender and science issues.



implementation of funding for proactive re-entry measures during or after leaves of absence.

### ***Institutional change versus individual measures***

In the past five years, the number of countries where research institutions modernised their management through more comprehensive gender equality plans has only risen modestly - from 12 to 15. Positive developments are observed in the few countries which have legal provisions that require or stimulate research institutions, including universities, to set up gender equality plans and adapt their practices.

### ***Gender in research programmes and training***

In principle, two key ways have been established to consider gender in research funding organisations, programmes and projects. Firstly, as part of an equal opportunities policy to establish gender balance in access to research funding, decision-making on funding, etc. Secondly, with regard to research quality and relevance of the research itself by advising or requiring grant applicants to consider gender and sex analysis in the content of their research.

In the [She Figures 2012](#), 17 out of 22 countries reported higher success rates for men in research funding. About two thirds of the countries (19 out of 31) surveyed for the “Gender Equality Policies in Public Research” indicated that the consideration of gender equality is not explicitly required or an eligibility criterion in national research funding programmes.

*We must do better. We need joined up policies that will achieve real change on gender equality across Europe. That means equal opportunities; equal treatment and more attention to gender in research itself.*

European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science, Máire Geoghegan-Quinn

### Sources:

The information for this EU Insight has largely been taken from the Executive Summary of the Report “Gender Equality Policies in Public Research”. The full report can be found here:

[1] [Gender Equality Policies in Public Research](#)

[2] [Press release: Progress on gender equality in public research slow and uneven across Europe](#)

[3] [Gender-NET ERA-Net](#)