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## From organigrams to terms of reference: Achieving gender equality in European research and science

Achieving gender equality in Europe in research and science, in line with the spirit of the European Commission's strategic engagement for gender equality, the European pillar of social rights and SDG5, remains a major challenge in Europe. In fact, recent figures on European gender in research show uneven improvement in key indicators. As one of the few female directors of a research institute in Europe, I have faced many challenges myself, from last minute speaking invitations as the token female panellist to "mansplaining" from my peers.

### **The bias starts when young graduate researchers enter the job market.**

Even though women attaining tertiary education exceed men by 9.5 percent, and the numbers of PhD students are gender balanced, women representation drops the moment they enter the labor market. According to the Commission's "She-figures" dataset, women accounted for 37% of all researcher positions in 2015 and make up only 20% of heads of research institutions.<sup>[1]</sup> The fact that young men are lagging behind young women in tertiary education should also worry us. Equality must work for all.

### **There is still a lack of awareness about the benefits of gender-balanced employment - not only for women, but for society as a whole.**

In all sectors, there is an abundance of evidence showing the benefits of gender-balanced employment. For instance, research commissioned by the Swedish presidency of the EU (2009) estimated that labour market equality boosts Member State GDP by an average of 27%. The European Commission's Expert Group on Structural Change also found that the proportion of women in research and innovation leads to many benefits, including economic growth as well as increased relevance for society and quality of outputs.<sup>[2]</sup>

### **In my view, the next frontier is to mainstream gender issues at the core of European research itself.**

In my research field of sustainability and environment in Europe, there is little research on gender issues.

environmental discussions. One example of this neglect pertains to agriculture and the necessary transformation of Europe's food system to a more environmentally and socially sustainable model. There are numerous health studies in developed countries showing that women and men have different food consumption patterns, with impacts on the associated carbon footprint.[3] In spite of improvements in the past 15 years, there is still unequal ownership of land and access to technical education, a prevalence of unpaid labour and unequal burden of care within farming households and a lack of women within leadership positions among farmers' representatives in Europe. Far fewer women than men were managers in the agricultural sector in 2013. At EU-27 level, women accounted for less than one third (27.9 %) of farm managers.[4]

### **Is change on its way?**

Under the existing strategy on gender equality in Horizon 2020, gender balance is promoted in research teams, decision-making panels and advisory groups. One of the expected impacts of this strategy is also "to increase the scientific quality and societal relevance of produced knowledge, technologies and innovations by integrating an in-depth understanding of both genders' needs, behaviours and attitudes." [5] According to the interim evaluation of this strategy, published in 2017, there is much better gender balance in advisory groups and evaluation panels, which is highly welcomed. However, gender balance in research teams is improving very slowly. Very few research projects really "implement a thorough gender and sex analysis, truly developing a gender perspective in research content and project design." [6]

The recently published proposal for Horizon Europe, the 2021-2027 research and innovation programme for Europe states, "The gender dimension should be adequately integrated in research and innovation content and followed through at all stages of the research cycle."

Let's go beyond words and good intentions. It is high time to ensure this sentence gets operationalised within concrete terms of reference, projects and funding as well as in organigrams. This will require taking a much harder look at power structures and culture within Europe's research community.

[1] [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-18-1602\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-18-1602_en.htm)

[2] [https://ec.europa.eu/research/swafs/pdf/pub\\_gender\\_equality/she\\_figures\\_2015-final.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/research/swafs/pdf/pub_gender_equality/she_figures_2015-final.pdf)

[3] <http://www.countinganimals.com/meat-consumption-patterns-by-race-and-gender/>

[4] [https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/rural-area-economics/briefs/pdf/07\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/rural-area-economics/briefs/pdf/07_en.pdf)

[5] <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/promoting-gender-equality-research-and-innovation>