

Consultation: Green Paper on a Common Strategic Framework for future EU Research and Innovation Funding

Gender furthers excellence in research and innovation

The Helsinki Group as the Advisory Committee to the European Commission on Gender and Research since 1999 welcomes this opportunity to comment on the Green Paper *From Challenges to Opportunities: Towards a Common Strategic Framework for EU Research and Innovation funding*. We wish to draw particular attention to questions number 7 and 24 in the Green paper. Gender balance and the gender dimension in content of research and innovation are already admitted to be of great importance for the EU Commission. They are issues on which the Commission should play a leading role in Europe if the EU is to meet the challenges of research and innovation in Europe in the current economic context of increasing competition by emerging global players. The Great Challenges facing European societies identified by the European Research Area –among which climate change, energy, water, aging, prosperity for all- also call for a proper consideration of their significant gender dimensions.¹

¹ Our arguments are mainly based on the following documents: *Europe 2020: A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth* COM (2010), *Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative Innovation Union, Interim evaluation of the Seven Framework Program, Monitoring progress towards Gender Equality in the Sixth Framework Program, synthesis report* (EU-Commission May 2009) and *Recommendation for Action on the Gender Dimension in Science* a report from the genSET project financed by the FP7.

General remarks

The quality of science, research and innovation depends on the research community's ability to create novelties and to be responsive to the needs of society in general. A precondition to meet this challenge is that the community must recruit and retain the best people but also reflect the realities, needs and expectations of the whole of society.

Innovative capacity depends among other things on the scientific community's ability to compose gender-diverse research teams. Such teams tend to be more successful than teams consisting of women or of men only. Varied backgrounds and experiences increase the creativity which is a criterion for success in the innovation process. Hence, gender issues should be integrated in many of the questions in the green paper, especially 21 and 22. We urge the Commission to take the opportunity which a new final Framework offers, to take decisive steps to close the gap between female and male researchers. This however demands that the Commission establishes structures and measures that are sounder than they are today.

In order to meet our common future challenges we have to define innovation in a broad sense that includes for instance innovation for improving the quality of life, such as health systems, intercultural communication and education. Secondly, processes of innovation have to include and to be sensitive to the complexity of our societies. This implies an interdisciplinary approach covering subjects from both the humanities and the social sciences. It is of utmost importance that this is included in the new framework for EU research and innovation funding. Innovation is not a goal in itself but a means to develop sustainable communities. Hence there is a need to expand the objective of the Innovation Union beyond the focus on economic growth. The Gender perspective can strengthen research and innovation milieus by increasing their innovative capacity. Besides impact on the quality of research and innovation, gender equality brings the research community to the heart of society. These are important elements in the EU commitment to modernize scientific institutions, which we fully support.

In order to modernize scientific institutions in Europe and to reach the main goals in the EU's research and innovation strategies, the gender dimension must be fully integrated in all aspects of the next framework. It is of paramount importance that the Commission increases its commitment and its leadership role in Europe to enhance the gender balance in research and innovation.

What should be the measures of success for EU research and innovation funding? Which performance indicators could be used? (Question 7)

The application procedures include important instruments that ensure the quality of the applications and that they are in accordance with the overall guidelines for funding. SHE figures 2009 show that app. 60 % of university graduates in Europe are women. If the Commission does not succeed in increasing the gender balance among researchers who get EU-funding, this must be taken as a clear indication of lack of quality in the procedures that are supposed to ensure quality of research. There is no reason to believe that female researchers deliver less qualified research. In our view the Commission has a responsibility to make sure that the procedures are formulated in a way

that makes use of the potential among all researchers independent of sex. Interdisciplinary research, i.e. involving the humanities and social sciences in the Science Engineering and Technology and vice versa, is one way of including more women. The wording of calls is another.

In the last years a substantial body of research in Europe and the United States has shown how unconscious bias in evaluation (both by female and male evaluators), systematically results in lower rates of success of women in research and other professional fields. This unconscious bias is the result of long-held cultural stereotypes which contribute to undervaluing women and the work they do. This most often unconscious bias needs to be acknowledged and eradicated.

Another explanation for the unsatisfactory gender balance in FP7 is that the Commission has not developed measures that are gender-sensitive enough. In FP6 each application had to include a gender action plan at the beginning of the application process. The monitoring report of the FP6 states that this had an impact on the gender balance. Despite positive results these measures were scrapped in FP7 without adequate replacements. There is therefore need for reflection on how to integrate the gender dimension in FP8 as a constitutive element of projects-- and not as an added value which would mean complexification.

Secondly, research funded by the European Commission should include a gender perspective wherever relevant to make sure that research questions, hypotheses, methods, analysis and interpretations of results are sensitive to gender issues. It also potentially opens up new fields of research and brings innovation through asking new questions. Inclusion of these criteria is aimed at increasing the quality and credibility of research and is not in conflict with the overall need of simplification in the procedures. Evaluations of previous and ongoing programs show the necessity of increasing emphasis on the gender dimension of research and innovation and of mainstreaming the issue in the main procedures, instruments, etc.

Sex and gender analysis benefits the quality and excellence of scientific production and needs to be actively incorporated into current research processes.

We strongly recommend that the Commission: 1) makes gender balance in research teams an indicator of success; 2) briefs evaluators on unconscious gender bias in evaluation.

We strongly recommend that the Commission implements gender analysis in the evaluation criteria for research funding, by:

- 1. asking research proposals to give a gendered analysis of the composition of their teams (compared to the talent pool in their disciplines), and what gender action plans, within the global politics of the research institutions they are related to, they will be launching to attract new female talents / male talents— according to the under-represented sex-- to tend towards equality;***
- 2. asking research proposals (after the setting up by the Commission of appropriate support for researchers and evaluators on the issue) to explain whether and in what way sex and or gender analysis is relevant to the intended work;***
- 3. stimulating the uptake of gender analysis through a financial bonus to research proposals that do so, when implementing gender in the evaluation criteria for research funding;***
- 4. and securing that gender is incorporated as a scoreboard performance indicator in the Europe 2020 Innovation Union.***

What actions should be taken at EU level to further strengthen the role of women in science and innovation? (Question 24)

We propose that the Commission **establishes a new program on Gender in Research and Innovation** whose main objective will be to implement the Structural Change (modernizing academic institutions) that the Commission intends to adopt in 2012, as suggested by the Council of Competitiveness Conclusions of May 2010. This program will contribute to fulfilling the Innovation Union objectives and to ensuring that the European Research Area uses the full potential of both male and female researchers. It will cover the pitfalls of mainstreaming as a single strategy for gender policy in science. Mainstreaming as a policy strategy needs to be paralleled by specific actions such as the proposed dedicated program. Legal policy interventions, such as ERA and the upcoming Communication on Structural Change need to be accompanied by a budget to ensure strong and sustainable implementation. The program must be funded in a way that allows every member state to carry out reasonable projects.

Furthermore, gender is an under-prioritized field in the knowledge triangle. European and national policy makers still face gaps to act on systematic knowledge shortage on different research and innovation cultures and structures in Europe and how these affect the gender balance in society and evolving research market adversely. Comparative analyses of the situation in European countries as well as other parts of the world would increase our knowledge base and contribute to the gathering of best practices. We therefore recommend that gender as a driving field of knowledge production gets priority in the new Framework Program for European research and innovation funding.

As a result, the program could have as its main tasks:

- mainstream and monitor gender issues in research and innovation funded by the European Union;
- fund a specific research program on gender and women, as what exists in ERC within the social science and humanities disciplines does not have sufficient dimension. This will contribute to a better consideration of the gender dimension of research in general and in particular on the Great Challenges identified by ERA. It would also feed into joint programming in health, environment, technologies, etc., and into European and international cooperation. These are just a few possible action lines that may underpin the program;
- collect, analyze and disseminate sex-disaggregated data;
- create, train and/or support, as appropriate, National Contact Points on Gender, Science and Innovation (this will make the field more efficient and prevent duplication of work);
- coordinate and support national and regional policy measures and positive actions, as well as exchange of good practice examples.

The Commissions dedicated program in the Common Strategic Framework should provide substantial budget in order to facilitate joint interventions of several member states and associated countries to the CSF. In order to speed up the modernization of public research organizations and also to integrate gender as a driving tool for innovation of services, processes and products, there is a need for more research and evidence-based knowledge.

Conclusion: We strongly recommend that the European Commission establishes a program for Gender in Research and Innovation and additionally co-funds stronger cooperation between member states.