Good Practices throughout Academic Careers: from PhD to Professor

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Inria’s Committee on Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities
created in 2015
http://parite.inria.fr/en/

European Network For Gender Balance in Informatics
COST ACTION CA19122

WG 3: From PhD to Professor

Booklet on best practices from PhD to Professor
(available at https://eugain.eu/)
Diversity of scientific profiles, what is at stake?

« Gender equality and diversity are important for the quality of the research. »

Wealth of choice
No reason to dismiss 50% of the talents.

Attractivity
The more diverse the people, the more attractive the institute is.

Be more representative of society
Avoid mistrust of a « scientific elite ».

Improve well-being at work
Limits caricatural behaviour.
Good practices at all career stages

• Recruitment

• Application evaluation (hiring and promotion)

• Retaining talents

• Promoting women
Recruiting
Stereotypes and bias....

Bias against women operates in recruitment and selection processes, affecting recruitment advertisements, the composition and working methods of selection committees, and the language used in evaluations (Gvozdanovic and Maes 2018)

Example in pictures:
(Former Inria website advertising positions)

Mind your language!

• Use inclusive language
• State equal opportunity employer
• State flexible working conditions in ads

postdocs: 1 woman

assistant profs: 1 man + 1 woman

associate profs: 1 man

full profs: 2 men
Spread the word

• Advertise on time

• Approach candidates directly + indirectly

• Consider the use of dedicated channels (e.g. send ad to national women in tech network)
Not enough female applicants?

• What are the actions if not enough suitable women apply?
• Set up quotas and/or dedicated positions

A Cascade Model

Used in several German research institutions, including Helmholtz Association.

Flexible quotas: percentage for level n depends on actual percentage of level n-1
Application evaluation and interviews
Are we biased when interviewing?

- Gender bias in an evaluation process is very difficult to prove

- Yet demonstrated in a study by Goldin and Rouse in 2000
  - male-dominated context of prestigious symphony orchestras
  - the use of blind auditions significantly increased the number of women being hired

  ➔ Do not doubt that we are biased! Be aware and think what to do about it.

  ➔ Organise unconscious / implicit gender bias training (in advance) for panel members.
How to act in a committee to avoid bias
Charter on gender equality and equal opportunities @Inria

Chair of the committee (set up)

Raising awareness before
• Recall the existence of societal biases and stereotypes;
• Draw attention to documents and resources (e.g. on the Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities website) that detail these biases;
• Suggest to view the video of ERC panels (8:00)

Monitoring
• Appoint to gender equality and equal opportunities (GEO) leads before the first stage of the hiring process;
• Maintain statistics (GEO leads).

Prepare the documents
• Prepare review templates containing: seniority, number of children, career breaks;
• Send the file evaluation summaries before the meetings to enable the files to be re-read.
Jury members (avoid bias)

Before opening the files
• Watch this video: ERC video (8min)

When summarising files (at each stage)
• Recall the candidate's background and career:
  E.g.: maternity leave ≠ a few weeks' leave; much longer impact on a career (ERC rule: count 18 months).

• Take care to avoid bias when recalling the files and during hearings.
  These biases can influence:
  Our judgements (halo/solo effects, double standard);
  The (written/oral) presentation of candidates (threat of stereotyping, solo effect, letters of recommendation,...).
Bias in recommendation letters
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Trix and Psenka studied over 300 recommendation letters at a large medical school and have shown that the length, wording, and style significantly differ for male and female applicants.

Trix, F & Psenka, C. Discourse & Society, 2003

Expressions and adjectives used to support candidates may vary according to gender:

leadership, excellence, ambition, potential

VS

serious, competent, generous, caring, kindness

“is a recognized first-class specialist”

“could possibly become a first-class specialist”

E-mail sent to recommenders by HR with pieces of advice
Retaining talents
The culture of an organisation or a department, or the views of the manager/director, can have a direct impact on whether women stay with an organisation or leave for something better that answers their needs. 

Gürer and Camp 2002; Sanzari, Dennis, and Moss-Racusin 2021; Shi et al. 2018

- Family compatible meeting schedules and right to disconnect
- Promote an inclusive working environment (and provide a budget for these initiatives)
- Acknowledge and credit time spent on gender balance initiatives (this is not done on your spare time!)
- Take harassment seriously! (And communicate about it.)
Childcare at conferences
The example of Schloss Dagstuhl

• Schloss Dagstuhl supports parents who would otherwise not be able to attend the events due to a lack of childcare opportunities at home
  • Bring a caregiver of their choice (free room and board)
  • Schloss Dagstuhl nanny

https://www.dagstuhl.de/en/program/childcare-at-schloss-dagstuhl/
Promoting women
Leaky pipeline & glass ceiling

• Improvements in gender balance at PhD level and early-stage research positions
• … but no significant progress in research leading positions
  • ensure positive representation of women in Decision Making Positions
  • ensure female representation for invited speakers / program committees
• run a mentoring program
Changing the paradigm
Promotion @UCL, UK

• Switch from an “opt in” to an “opt out” default
  suggested in Joyce C. He, Sonia K. Kang, and Nicola Lacetera, PNAS’21

• Implemented at CS Department at UCL
  • All non-professorial members of staff submit a CV every year
  • Identify candidates for promotion
Conclusion
• No silver bullet

• Not all good practices fit every system

• Still a long way to go: more is needed

• We just addressed part of the problem

  Attract more girls in scientific studies/careers at the first place (see other WGs of EUGAIN)
Thank you!