



Gender equality in science facing new challenges: Job precarity and mobility

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European policy level

- Focus on **structural change** at universities and research institutions
 - Recruitment, promotion, retention policies
 - Updated management and research assessment standards
 - Leadership development
 - Supporting policies for dual career couples
 - Returning schemes after career breaks
- There is a stress at policy level on moving away from **‘fixing women’** toward **‘fixing institutions’**



Statistical background – women in EU research

- Women in scientific research remain a minority, accounting for **30% of researchers** in the EU in 2006.
- In the EU-27, 45% of all PhD graduates were women in 2006.
- The proportion of female students (55%) and graduates (59%) exceeds that of male students, but men outnumber women among PhD students and graduates (the proportion of female students drops back to 48% and that of PhD graduates to 45%).



Statistical background - seniority

- Women represent 44% of grade C academic staff, 36% of grade B academic staff and 18% of grade A academic staff.
- The share of female grade A staff among all women working in academia is always lower than the share of male grade A staff among all men working in academia.
- Age differences:
 - At the level of the EU-27, women account for **23% of grade A academics among 35 to 44-year-olds, 21% among 45 to 54-year-olds** and **18% among those aged over 55.**

(She Figures 2009)



Statistical background - conclusion

- Horizontal segregation slowly closing in some research fields while vertical segregation continues.
- Different growth rates of research population by sex and sector across Europe
- The growth rate for women PhDs twice as high as for men (6.8 % compared to 3.2 %).
- Although in some countries the situation is more favourable for younger generations of women, the data currently available by age group reject the hypothesis of a spontaneous movement towards equality.

(She Figures 2009)



Gender aspects I.

- Greatest drop between PhD and postdoctoral levels
- Deterrents of research careers (UK results for biochemistry and molecular biology)
 - Supervision
 - Lack of support, pastoral care
 - Research groups
 - ‘macho’, competitive culture, ‘presenteeism’
 - isolation and exclusion
 - Research process
 - concerned by typical (poor) experimental success rate, frustration



Gender aspects II.

- Characteristics of careers
 - All consuming, competitive, solitary
- Becoming an academic
 - Post-docking incompatible with relationships/family
 - Concern about competition
- Succeeding as academic
 - Lack of female role models
 - Need to make sacrifices (femininity and motherhood)
 - Women advised of challenge they would face

(Source:

http://www.rsc.org/images/MolecularBioscience_s08_tcm18-139859.pdf)



New challenges

- **Growing precarity**
 - ***Growth of fixed-term contracts***
 - Roberts Report (2002): contract research staff make up 28 % of full time researchers (in biosciences more than 50 %); only 20 % of those will find a permanent position later
 - Overall statistics lacking but UK, e.g., shows negative impact on women's careers (more career breaks, part-time work)
 - ***Normalisation of research paths***: PhD – postdoc – lab leader
 - 'middle positions' or 'perennial postdocs' to disappear
 - Preferred notions of research careers – gendered (KNOWING research project CZ)
 - Working under someone versus working for someone



New challenges

- **Mobility**

- Obligatory passage point (Callon 1986) in some disciplines
- No differences between single and childless women and researchers; number of mobile mothers lower than that of mobile fathers (Mogu  rou (2004)
 - Age related aspects: women outnumber men in mobility at early stages, dropping to one third in age cohort 30-49 (Ackers 2005)
- For women mobility and parenting mutually excluding biographical projects (Stalford 2005)
- More gender equal partnerships take women's career plans more into account than traditional partnerships
- Women live in dual research couples more often than men (Sonnert, Holton 1996, Yu Xie, Schauman 2003)



Conclusions

- Gender differences firmly in place in science
- Gap between policy and practice
- Gendering of research organisations, careers and processes tends to deter more women at the outset of a research career
- Gap between individual men and women is closing
 - Work life balance issues are becoming difficult for men as well (mobility and postdoctoral fellowships)
- Continued need to change the research culture, which continues to function on the basis of masculine values
 - excellence = high performance, speed, competitiveness, sharp elbows, aggressiveness
- From **discrimination of women** toward **discrimination of careers**



Thank you for your attention!

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