



**EPWS Position Paper
on the Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council,
laying down the rules for the participation of undertakings, research centres and
universities in actions under the Seventh Framework Programme and for the
dissemination of research results (2007-2013)**

Overall Context

Europe needs leading-edge science and scientists in order to achieve its goal, formulated in the Commission Communication “Building the ERA of knowledge for growth” and taken up in the Lisbon Strategy, to become the world’s leading knowledge-based society. European research policy therefore needs to reach out to all potential contributors. This is especially important with regard to women scientists - given the substantial gender imbalance in science where women make up half of the student population, but on average only hold 15% of senior academic positions, with the percentage being much lower in some countries and in some subjects such as engineering and the physical sciences. The European Commission outlined in its Communication “Women and Science – Mobilising women to enrich European research, endorsed by a European Parliament Resolution, the need of research by, for and on women as well as the added value of the European dimension of this effort.

Traditionally, research agendas have not taken the specific needs of women into account. However, if society is to develop a better understanding and acceptance of the developments in science and technology, specific measures must be taken to address both the under-representation of women in science, and the lack of attention paid to gender differences in research. Moreover the relevance of the contribution of women in the top panels addressing the science future trends needs to be particularly taken into account.

EPWS calls for gender balance and gender mainstreaming

The Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council, laying down the rules for the participation of undertakings, research centres and universities in actions under the Seventh Framework Programme and for the dissemination of research results (2007-2013) poses a particularly valuable instrument to ensure equal opportunities for women researchers as well as special consideration of women scientists’ needs, since it may set the frame for increasing the participation of women at all levels of the research workforce and foster the integration of the gender dimension throughout European research.

EPWS, therefore, calls for special attention to the gender aspect in the rules for participation and asks for maintaining instruments to ensure the consideration of gender balance and gender mainstreaming in FP 7.

To achieve these goals, it is vital that the rules for participation encourage women to apply for research positions funded under FP 7. Project applicants should have to ensure equal opportunities in their recruitment procedures for positions at all levels. It is therefore of high importance that the proposal takes an inclusive approach and addresses the issue of gender balance. It is vital that such an inclusive approach goes beyond reasonable gender balance in the appointment of independent experts to assist with evaluations required under the Seventh Framework Programme as stipulated by article 17. It should confirm that appropriate measures shall be taken to promote equal participation and representation of women also when appointing committee members and coordinators as well as with regard to the composition of Networks of Excellence and more generally the participation of women scientists in proposed projects and with regard to funding for specific actions supporting increased gender mainstreaming and gender

balance in European research. In particular, FP 7 currently intends to offer funding for support actions with the aim of re-integrating researchers – either when seeking to return to Europe or after a career break. Evaluations have to examine and reinstate however that financial support takes due account of the specific situations of women researchers to ensure a gender balance in the distribution of the re-integration measures. The qualified (female) researcher wishing to re-enter the scientific community after a period of absence or part time work, and consequent under-achievement, due to child care responsibilities needs to be judged by different criteria from a successful (male) scientist seeking to re-establish their career in Europe after a spell overseas.

Against this background, the Platform suggests to already include the requirement for gender balance and need for gender mainstreaming at the outset of the rules for participation in Subsection 2 “Evaluation of Proposals” as follows:

Article 16, Submission, evaluation, selection and award procedures:
Addition of a fifth paragraph

1. The Commission shall adopt and publish rules governing the procedure for the submission of proposals, as well as the related evaluation, selection and award procedures. In particular, it shall lay down detailed rules for the two-stage procedure for submission, and rules for the two-step evaluation procedure.

[2.- 4.]

5. *Proposals are to take due account of*
 - a. *The aspect of gender mainstreaming by paying attention to the integration of the gender dimension of the respective research.*
 - b. *Gender balance of participants by taking appropriate measures to ensure reasonable gender balance at all levels of the participating research work force.*

In consequence of these specific points, EPWS strongly recommends formal, gender-sensitive evaluation mechanisms. Although the Platform agrees that rules for participation must not become overly complex, systematic attention to gender is needed in order to facilitate and ensure the achievement of the goals set out in the Lisbon Strategy as well as the Commission's and Parliament's ambitions to establish equal opportunities for women. In this context, raising gender awareness, as aimed at, for instance, by Gender Action Plans, and an active gender information and dissemination policy are indispensable.

The newly founded European Platform of Women Scientists EPWS is an international non profit association with its administrative seat in Brussels. The Platform seeks to promote women scientists by networking their networks and engage women scientists in the research policy, acting as a structural link between women scientists and research policy makers.

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