

Brussels, 26 March 2012

## **EPWS Position Paper on the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation *Horizon 2020***

### **Introduction**

*The European Platform of Women Scientists EPWS, the voice of women scientists in EU research policy, is an umbrella organisation bringing together networks of women scientists and organizations committed to gender equality in research in all disciplines in Europe 27 and the countries associated to the European Union's Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development. EPWS currently counts more than 100 member organizations, together working for more than 12.000 women researchers all over Europe active in academia and in industrial research. EPWS constitutes a new strategic instrument in European research policy, complementing various initiatives taken at the European level to ensure a better participation of women scientists in research and in the research policy process as well as the inclusion of the gender dimension in research.*

The European Platform of Women Scientists EPWS welcomes Horizon 2020, the EU's new programme for research and innovation and financial instrument implementing the Innovation Union, a Europe 2020 flagship initiative aimed at securing Europe's global competitiveness.

*"Designed to support the Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative "Innovation Union", the basic principle of "Horizon 2020" and [its] rules is to adopt a much more strategic approach to research and innovation."*

Horizon 2020 is part of the drive to create new growth and new jobs in Europe; we will need at least one million more researchers by 2020. To ensure and achieve scientific excellence and technological innovation in this upcoming research effort, the European Union must significantly increase the number of female researchers among these one million additional researchers. That means, a key for the realization of Europe 2020's Flagship initiative "Innovation Union" is the use of the full potential and scientific excellence of women scientists. Therefore the EU has to make major efforts to open the programme to more participants, especially to more women scientists from across Europe. To reach this goal the preconditions of the new programme have to be free of gender-blindness.

This is indeed recognized in Horizon 2020 which states in particular that:

- *"Gender equality shall be promoted in particular by supporting changes in the organization of research institutions and in the content and design of research activities – that means structural changes, changing the science culture".*
- *"Gender will be addressed as a cross-cutting issue in order to rectify imbalances between women and men, and to integrate a gender dimension in research and innovation programming and content. Horizon 2020 includes specific provisions to incentivize such cross-cutting actions".*
- *"Horizon 2020 shall ensure the effective promotion of gender equality and the gender dimension in research and innovation content".*

These general statements must be supported by practical actions to become reality.

In the present position paper, we first stress that excellence requires women participation and gender research. Then we propose targets for women participation in Horizon 2020. This has consequences on the Rules of Participation in Horizon 2020, particularly on Articles 12 (Proposals) and 15 (Evaluation). Finally, we analyze the difficulties experienced by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), such as the European Platform of Women Scientists EPWS, when they want to participate in European projects and we propose improvements.

## **Excellence includes women participation and gender research**

### *Excellence definition and women scientists*

In the scientific work assessment, scientific excellence is the only criterion. But excellence is multidimensional: scientific excellence is inseparable from the social, technical and financial opportunities available in scientific work; unequal opportunities play an important role in this context.

Consequently the definition of excellence only based on mathematical indicators, like the number of publications, is not objective and not suitable for instance for women who take care of family, who may have career breaks. Therefore it is in the interest of any future oriented research policy to encourage a revised gender-sensitive notion of excellence as a guideline for future reference. In this process, a diverse composition of research groups as well as gender awareness and multidimensional evaluators are preconditions to excellence. Consequently, the gender bias in current ways of defining and evaluating of scientific excellence needs to be genuinely examined, the objective being to create a more open and inclusive, gender-sensitive sense of excellence by improving the scientists' assessment.

### *Excellent research and its gender dimension*

An excellent research has to include gender aspects in its content. As recommended in the Marie Curie Actions work programme,

*« In addition, in research projects where human beings are involved as subjects or end-users, gender differences may exist. In these cases the gender dimension in the research content has to be addressed as an integral part of the proposal to ensure the highest level of scientific quality. »*

This is of course true in the medicine-related research, where neglecting to test drugs effects on women may lead to accidents, but also in business-driven activities, where not taking into account the women's points of view allows to fulfil the needs of only half of the customers.

Consequently, the Gender issue should be present in the three Horizon 2020 priorities: *Excellent Science, Industrial Leadership, Societal Challenges*, and in all identified societal challenges as an axis integrated to fundamental and action research and to Human Resources. In each challenge, the work programme should target a call in which Gender is an important issue, or even propose a gender call in the problematic such as Gender and Security, Gender and Energy, etc.

### *Administrative simplification should not be detrimental to gender issues*

One of the objectives of Horizon 2020 is administrative simplification. Now gender aspects in the proposals should not be a complication, especially if the application file is properly organized. A space should be left in the file to explain clearly how gender would add quality to the proposal.

All this implies a gender-sensitive evaluation of the EU proposals scientific quality, and a gender training of the evaluators.

## Women participation in European research and projects

### *Targets for women participation*

For more than ten years, the European Commission has been advocating a larger participation of women in European research and projects. The objectives are only slowly reached and precise targets have to be decided. We propose the following ones:

- 40% target for women participation, not only for advisory groups and among evaluators, but also for all structures related to Horizon 2020 (EIT, ERC, JRC, Steering Groups, High-level Groups, Expert Groups, etc.).
- 40% women target in Marie Curie actions to be reintroduced, as this objective was not reached.

These women percentage objectives should be introduced into the performance indicators; constraints should be enforced if these objectives are not reached, like for example nullity for appointments in a group if the women target is not realized.

### *Reasonable conditions for women scientists' mobility and work conditions*

We welcome the new *Career Restart Panel* measure in the Marie Curie actions which help researchers and particularly women, to return to research after a career break. This measure should be widened to an in-depth reflection about mobility for families and to Human Resources in a gender perspective. Questions like maternity and also paternity leave conditions should be analyzed to allow a good work-life balance in research, maintaining the attractiveness of such jobs

## Consequences for the rules of participation to Horizon 2020

### *Article 12: Proposals*

As explained above women participation and a gender content whenever adapted are a prerequisite to excellent research. These two criteria should be evaluated at the proposal stage and gender should be included in the « *Grant agreement* ».

### *Article 15: Evaluation*

Gender-balance should be realized among evaluators. They must be trained on gender issues to be able to properly judge the proposals and the projects, both on the women scientists participation and, when appropriate, on the gender content of research. Evaluation should downgrade projects that would miss these points.

## CSOs participation to European projects

Civil society consists in the general public and in organized structures like networks or associations. Gathering a wealth of informed suggestions and ideas from grassroots these Civil Society Organisations (CSO) complement the policy initiatives of national governments and EU institutions by bringing a “bottom-up” point of view. As such, CSOs like the European Platform of Women Scientists EPWS constitute an important voice also in the European research and innovation policy debate and should find the appropriate conditions to participate in EU projects.

In the framework of the present administrative and financial rules of EU research funding, however, CSOs have great difficulties in participating in such projects in spite of their often high expertise at European level. The emphasis on project-funding, pre- and co-financing requirements and the need for CSOs to secure their running costs often prevent their participation in EU research funding schemes:

- Smaller CSOs need strong consortium partners when applying for calls and tenders and cannot assume the role of consortium leader. EU funding is tailored towards big institutions with a long-term financial background. Small CSOs have no big institution, like a university or a research organization, backing them to cover part of the running costs or help with co-financing and pre-financing engagements.
- The contributions to administrative costs which remain within EU grant schemes and other possible grants only finance a very small fraction of an association's *running costs*. Now it is almost impossible to secure funding for the running costs of an organization since most resources granted by public or private institutions are funds for *projects* or particular *services*. Now for a European association like EPWS, private sponsorship is extremely difficult, due to the lack of law recognizing sponsorship at EU level: a company or foundation based outside the country where the CSO is registered will get no tax return for its donated amount.

We suggest the three following improvements:

- The large amount of voluntary work per annum performed by many CSO members often amounting to a total of over € 100,000 p.a. should be brought into the calculation when applying for grants and projects at European level.
- Even though the Commission solicits the opinion of CSOs in their consultation and assessments processes, the Commission's feedback mechanism with respect of the entries and opinions received should be greatly improved. To increase active CSO involvement in research at EU level, more explicit interaction with the participants of public consultations is needed to give CSOs a sense that their input is valued and taken into consideration.
- A law on CSOs private sponsorship at EU level should be passed at the EU Parliament, it would greatly help strengthening the voice of CSOs at European level.

The ambitious objectives of Horizon 2020 will only be reached if all European scientists, including women, and all the European organizations, including CSOs, are able to cooperate. The 12.000 women scientists represented by the European Platform of Women Scientists EPWS are willing to help in this process, if the European Commission gives them adequate possibilities to participate in this great project.

**Contact details for further correspondence:**

**Dr. Brigitte Mühlenbruch**

**President**

[brigitte.muehlenbruch@epws.org](mailto:brigitte.muehlenbruch@epws.org)

**Prof. Claudine Hermann**

**Vice President**

[claudine.hermann@polytechnique.edu](mailto:claudine.hermann@polytechnique.edu)

**European Platform of Women Scientists**

Rue d'Arlon 38

B-1000 Bruxelles

[www.epws.org](http://www.epws.org)