



**EPWS Position Paper
Research, RTD, 7th EC Framework Programme 2007-2013:
Research, Technological Development and Demonstration Activities**

EPWS calls for consideration of women scientists' needs in FP7

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 hold on average only 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 welcomes FP 7 but urges for inclusion of women scientists' needs

As recognized and highlighted by the European Commission and equally stressed by the European Parliament, Europe will need more researchers to increase and improve its research efforts. This goal can only be achieved if all potential scientists, male and female, are given attractive incentives to take up a scientific career and to follow it through. Trained and highly qualified women scientists however continue to quit scientific careers disproportionately compared with their male colleagues. The European Platform of Women Scientists EPWS is pleased to find various aspects addressing the causes of this imbalance in the proposal put forward by the Commission concerning the 7th Framework Programme, such as the support for researchers to re-enter the profession after a career break. The Platform also strongly supports the European Parliament ITRE Committee’s focus on young researchers. EPWS also welcomes the ITRE Committee’s mentioning of a need for special attention to gender mainstreaming.

The Platform is disappointed however that in the present Commission proposal for FP 7 as well as in the amendments proposed by the European Parliament's ITRE Committee women scientists and their particular needs are not explicitly considered.

EPWS has only recently become operational and therefore did not have an opportunity to engage in the debate at an earlier stage. Despite the late stage of the negotiations on FP7, the Platform however additionally urges, for the purpose of the general direction of FP 7, to take careful consideration of an equal participation and encouragement for participation of women scientists in all new and old instruments, mechanisms and projects supported by FP7, as well as to take careful consideration of the need for addressing gender mainstreaming in research contents of the thematic specifications. EPWS is aware that committees lacking gender balance draft measures which might seem gender neutral but are actually discriminatory. The Platform, therefore, urges that representative percentages of women are involved in the planning stages of the new FP 7 instruments. For the further development of FP 7, the European Platform of Women Scientists suggests that attention is paid to the need to include gender balance and gender mainstreaming

- Especially in the overall rationale of the areas "Cooperation", "Ideas", "People" and "Capacities"
- Throughout all appointments and structural aspects of the Framework Programme, such as the appointment of members to the Scientific Council and the support of researchers at early and later stages in their career to remain in or reenter the scientific profession.
- Throughout the evaluation of project proposals, in the first as well as in the second stage.

For gender mainstreaming to be taken seriously by scientists, this criterion really has to matter in the evaluation process of proposals which is currently not the case: In the marking of proposals, a good gender mainstreaming part does not compensate a shortcoming in any of the other parts.

The newly founded European Platform of Women Scientists EPWS is a non profit association with an international aim. The Platform seeks to promote women scientists by networking their networks and engage women scientists in the research policy debate. The overall objective of the platform is to act as a structural link between women scientists and policy makers.

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