GENDER ACTION PLAN

FOUNDATION FOR RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY

"I have frequently been questioned, especially by women, of how I could reconcile family life with a scientific career. Well, it has not been easy."

Marie Curie, Physicist, Two-time Nobel Laureate (1867-1934)

Introduction

The Gender Action Plan (GAP) was prepared by the Educational Research and Evaluation Group - Institute of Applied Mathematics of the Foundation for Research and Technology Hellas (FORTH) and concerns the institution as a whole. The proposed actions presented in the Plan were inspired by the outcomes of the FP7 project 'genSET — Gender in Science', and specifically by the expert recommendations elaborated in the 'Consensus Report: Recommendations for Action on the Gender Dimension in Science'l.

The promotion of gender equality in science institutions is an issue of high interest for the European Commission, as it contributes to the improvement of science knowledge making and the social/economic standing of women, among others. It has become apparent that by restricting the pool of the best and brightest minds mainly to men, the outcomes that influence the scientific community and research will be less than it could be. Therefore, it only makes sense to ensure that we do not lose scientists with high potential into the ceiling effect, structural obstacles and gender bias.
The contribution of women in scientific developments - that in turn influence society - could bring out different findings and results as well as different points of view. By taking different points of view into consideration we achieve better scientific results and we further contribute to the development of an all-inclusive society. Finally, it is a democratic principle that power and influence should be distributed equally among different groups in society. For this reason we should make sure that equal opportunities are indeed provided in all sectors of society. The elimination of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, race, ect should remain a priority in all institutions.

The proposed Gender Action Plan was adopted by the board of directors and its official initiation date was Oct. 26, 2011 when the letter of the board circulated in the institutions of FORTH and the local press. The Plan was later updated (on 15/09/2012) and took its present form.

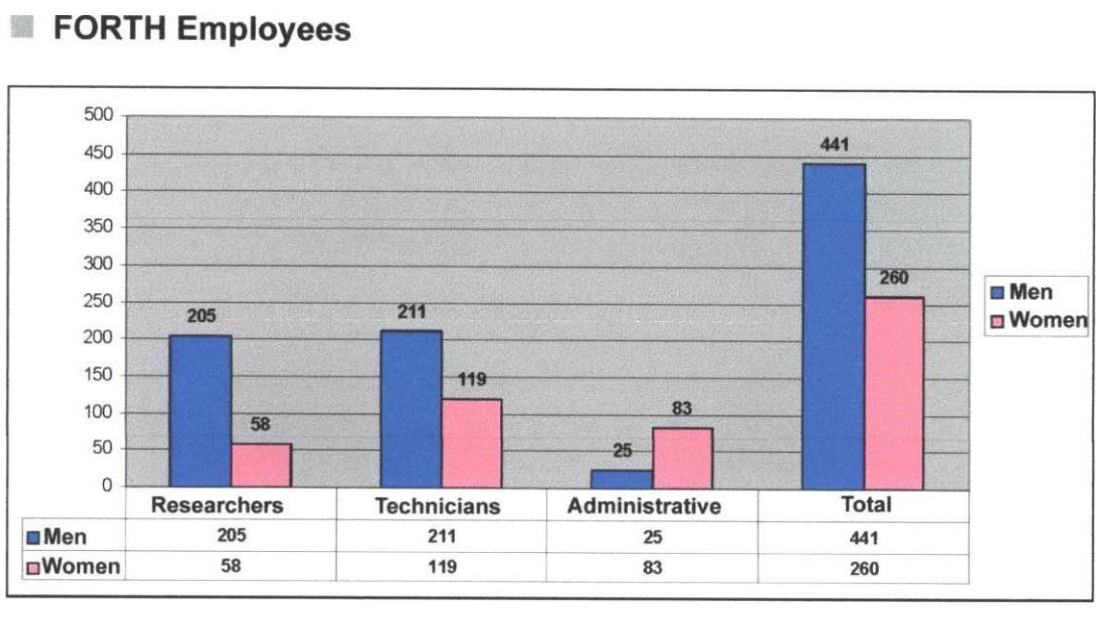
1Available online at:
http://www.genderinscience.org/downloads/genSET Consensus_Report_Recommendations_for_Action on_the_Gender_Dimension_in_Science.pdf

Evaluating the present situation of FORTH in terms of gender equality

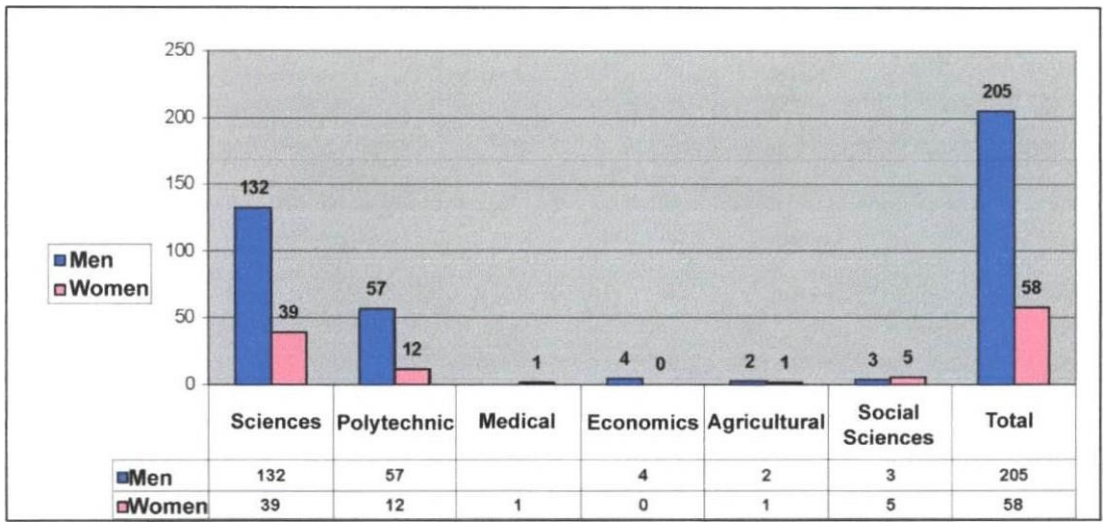
A diagnosis on the current situation regarding gender (women's participation and gender aspects in research) is the first important step to ensure that proposed actions are realistic, practical and to the point. The most obvious indication of gender gaps is found in inconsistencies in the number of women and men occupied in the different ranks and positions available in the institution.
Thus, according to the GAP adopted by FORTH, the first most important step to be taken is to search the inequalities in numbers. Then, it becomes easier to look deeper into the problems and inconsistencies identified. Our team is in the process of gathering statistical data on:

- The number of women and men holding research positions in FORTH per institute and degree
- The total number of employees per sex in other positions (technical and administrative staff)
- Number and profile of total applicants in job postings and number and profile of successful applicants per sex
- Data on promotion time and scalability to higher positions per sex

The process of gathering new statistical data on women working in STEM for 2011 is not yet finalized. However, from the data we have so far it becomes evident that there is an absence of women in leadership and higher positions, like in the board of directors, and that there are no major deviations from the data collected in 2008 and presented here below.



- Scientific Field



	Sciences	Polytechnic	Medical	Economics	Agricultural	Social Sciences	Total
Men	132	57		4	2	3	205
Women	39	12	1	0	1	5	58

Data collected in FORTH suggest that women occupy the majority of administrative positions while they are under-represented in scientific research and top ranking positions. The reason for these inconsistencies should be further investigated throughout the duration of the GAP and actions should be taken to 'test' whether they are based in the following issues, which usually affect women's progress:

- INDIRECT DISCRIMINATION: refers to situations in which 'gender-neutral' regulations have gender-biased effects because of the different situations of men and women. It is usually evident in recruitment and promotion processes.
- LACK OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE: research suggests that the number of women in top professional positions in science does not reflect the number of doctorate students and women in lower-status positions which indicates that most working environments do not take into account the work/family balance issue that many women face.
- OBSTACLES IN RESEARCH: especially in male dominated sectors, women usually take the extra burden of administrative tasks since they are required and expected to participate more frequently in various committees and councils. As a result, women have less time for their own research.
- LACK OF GENDER EQUALITY EDUCATION: the academic and administrative leadership often lacks competence in gender equality issues (knowledge of gender equality policies, insight into direct and indirect mechanisms of discrimination etc) which could greatly facilitate the process of eliminating gender stereotypes and discrimination.

Recommended Actions

The genSET consensus report presented recommendations for change according to four dimensions: 1. knowledge making, 2. human capital, 3. practices and processes, 4. regulation and compliance. Our team in FORTH reflected on these recommendations and proposes the following actions to be implemented, tested and evaluated during the period 2011-2014.

1. Knowledge making:

ACTION 1: Leaders must be convinced about the importance of the gender-dimension within knowledge making and the need to incorporate methods of sex and gender analysis into basic and applied research. The most effective way of doing this will be to illustrate how continually incorporating sex and gender analysis promotes research excellence with examples available in European institutions (e.g. DG Research, ESF) and made available to institutional "change agents" (e.g. deans, provosts, opinion makers, department heads). Scientists should be trained in using methods of sex and gender analysis. Both managerial levels and researchers should be educated in such sex and gender analysis. Training in methods in sex and gender analysis should be integrated into all subjects across all basic and applied science curricula. In all assessments — paper selection for journals, appointments and promotions of individuals, grant reviews, etc. — the use and knowledge of methods for sex and gender analysis in research must be an explicit topic for consideration. Granting agencies, journal editors, policy makers at all levels, leaders of scientific institutions, and agencies responsible for curricula accreditation, should be among those responsible for incorporating these methods into their assessment procedures.

2. Human capital:

Research teams should be gender diverse. Institutions should promote gender diversity of research teams through a variety of incentives (e.g. quality recognition and allocation of resources) and through transparency in hiring.

Women already within scientific institutions must be made more visible.All public relations activities from scientific institutions should be gender- proofed (represent women appropriately), while avoiding tokenism. This could be done by including women in all promotional campaigns for scientific careers, by leaders nominating women for prizes, and by recognising women's achievements appropriately.

Deciding what to highlight should be informed by data from gender mainstreaming tools such as gender disaggregated data, information on resource allocation by gender, achievement records, etc.

Gender balancing efforts should be made in all committees, with priority given to key decision-making committees. Panels for selection of grants and applicants must be gender diverse. This must be the goal for management teams as well. Institutions should seek to improve the quality of their leadership by creating awareness, understanding, and appreciation of different management styles. This can be achieved through training, selfreflection, and various feedback mechanisms. Diversity training, specifically, is essential in this process.

3. Practices and Processes:

Assessment procedures must be re-defined to focus on the quality, rather than quantity, of individuals' publications and research output. This must be consistently applied in individual, departmental, and other levels of assessment.

For instance, researchers should select the most important articles that they have produced in a set number of years, rather than listing all publications. However, qualitative assessment must also avoid gender bias (e.g. reliance on recommendation letters in appointment procedures).

Persons with disproportionate committee and administrative duties should be provided with additional support staff or reduced teaching assignments to ensure that their research does not suffer.

Policies and procedures specifically affecting working conditions that differentially impact men and women in scientific institutions must be reviewed and revised, ensuring positive benefits for personal and professional development for both men and women. Revisions are needed in:

- implementing maternity and paternity leave policies at the institutional level;

- procedures for dual-career couples that specifically target increasing mobility of researchers by supporting partners in finding suitable employment in the same region (taking care to avoid nepotism);- institutional strategies for careers developed later in life (e.g. maintaining contact with individuals taking career breaks; providing grant opportunities for individuals at critical career/life moments and returners); and - awareness regarding salary negotiation tactics (through, for instance, targeted workshops and training for women)

Specific strategies should be employed for attracting women to apply for scientific positions. Announcements for recruitment should be formulated so that they encourage women to apply. That is, announcements should be broad, rather than narrowly focused. Job criteria for employment should be objective and transparent. Additionally, leaders should not just rely on self-initiated promotion but also encourage and promote applications, not just accept them. Finally, if there are no women in the applicant pool, the positions should be readvertised.

4. Regulation and Compliance:

Explicit targets to improve gender balance and action plans to reach them must be included in the overarching gender strategy of scientific institutions. The progress must subsequently be regularly monitored and be made public.
Gender issues must be an integral part of internal and external evaluation of institutions. Policies at all levels must require this inclusion. This should begin with a critical review of gender mainstreaming processes within each institution, identifying current successes and failures. A member of the leadership team should be responsible for gender-related issues, such as following up on the gender action strategy for the institution.