



EGERA CHARTER FOR GENDER SENSITIVE GOVERNANCE IN RESEARCH & HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

PREAMBLE

Significant progress has been made by research organizations and universities to achieve gender equality. Simultaneously, they have been increasingly encouraged to review their management structures and processes and the way they are governed and evaluated¹. This trend is to be noticed throughout the European Research Area, and contributes to redefining the context of knowledge production in Europe, towards new standards in terms of financial autonomy, self-governance, accountability, social responsibility and academic excellence. For the European Commission, ensuring gender equality in both the research process and the research content, constitutes one of the six basic principles supporting Responsible Research and Innovation².

Evidences abound, however, that research and higher education institutions remain characterized by strongly embedded gender inequalities, such as lower access of women to senior and decision-making positions, gender-biased practices in assessing academic performance as well as gender biases and stereotypes in framing the standards of research and academic excellence³.

This Charter therefore aims at raising the awareness of these issues and to provide an encouragement to take action, by outlining guiding principles to enhance gender equality in the governance of research and higher education institutions. Along with research, educational activities and knowledge circulation to society - the “societal impact” of research -, are at stake.

By “governance”, we hereafter refer to legal frameworks, institutions, structures, processes, actors and practices through which research organizations and universities are governed and managed. This includes scientific, educational, financial and human resources management, as well as decision-making mechanisms. As research is being increasingly governed through evaluation, the latter is understood as an inherent part of governance mechanism, referring to all kinds of instruments aimed at assessing the performance of staff and/or institutions in achieving their objectives and delivering excellence.

The principles and recommendations laid out in this Charter, are meant to cover all members of academic and research communities as far as those are concerned by governance mechanisms: researchers, teaching and administrative staff, students.

BY SIGNING THIS CHARTER IN THE NAME OF OUR INSTITUTIONS, WE:

- Acknowledge that we share certain values and principles, such as equality, inclusion, fairness, transparency and accountability.

¹ For an overview of these challenges, see: Musselin, C. and Texeira, P. (eds.) *Reforming Higher Education. Public Policy Design and Implementation*, Springer, 2014 and Michael Shattock (ed). *International Trends in University Governance: Autonomy, Self-Government and the Distribution of Authority*, Routledge, 2013.

² <https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/science-and-society>

³ Catalyst Quick Take: Women in Academia, New York: Catalyst, July, 9, 2015

- Acknowledge that research and higher education institutions should favour equal access and a balanced participation of men and women to/in senior and decision-making positions.
- Recognise our commitment to acting as role model institutions in promoting gender equality.
- Recognise that the rules, procedures, structures and actors through which our institutions are governed can be affected by implicit or unconscious legal, cultural and/or cognitive gender biases that are detrimental both to the position of women and to an effective governance itself. These gender biases often operate at the intersection with other axes of inequality.
- Acknowledge that the importance granted to the evaluation of individuals and organisations should entail a greater attention to potential gender biases, as those can impact career management and access to resources or funding.

We therefore declare to commit to promote measures such as:

! Integrating and mainstreaming the objective of gender equality in our strategic documents and when establishing and communicating our long-term priorities.

! Addressing the situations and needs of both men and women when designing internal policies, with a view to support gender equality, work-life balance and well-being at work.

! Addressing the under-representation of women in senior and decision-making positions by monitoring appointment processes and provisions regulating access to decision-making. Depending on legal contexts, this may include but not be limited to adopting mid- and long-term quantitative objectives and/or implementing pro-active measures for those positions or bodies where women remain under-represented.

! Preventing gender bias in internal procedures so as to define gender-sensitive standards for recruitment, qualification, appraisal, evaluation and career management. Standards regarding individual career paths, geographical and upward mobility or academic performance should not favour either sex, but allow a diversity of experiences and promote an inclusive notion of academic excellence.

! Aiming at setting up performance indicators for the evaluation of research units, departments, teams or projects that do not favour either sex, but acknowledge a diversity of profiles and backgrounds.

! Periodically reviewing whether the results of teaching evaluation by students are not affected by significant gender biases and assessing the role granted to this evaluation in light of this review.

! Enhancing gender knowledge in all research areas and pursuing the transformation of our academic cultures and practices for more gender sensitivity and transparency.

! Enhancing gender knowledge circulation by addressing gender in the content of academic curricula.

! Aiming at embedding adopted measures into the internal regulatory frameworks of our institutions.

The present Charter will be published together with the measures adopted by the undersigned institution in the realms of gender equality and social responsibility.

Date, place, name and signature

Name of the institution and stamp

8 February 2017, Vechta, Prof. Dr. Burghart Schmidt

University of Vechta

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