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Should a Gender Indicator be Included in the Innovation Union Scoreboard for Enhancing Gender Equality in Europe?

Gender indicators are control mechanisms that monitor the progress of gender equality in research and higher education. In Austria, there is a set of gender indicators that reflect the status quo of gender equality in the research area, including the development of women in grade A research positions. At European level, there is one single indicator for this purpose. However, at both the national and the European level, gender equality indicators require high quality, up-to-date data and a comparison with other countries. Thus the Innovation Union Scoreboard would provide a good platform to measure gender equality in the European research sector by including such an indicator.

Background

One of three major recommendations that were decided at the European Gender Summit 2012[1] was to include a gender equality indicator in the Innovation Union Scoreboard (IUS). The IUS provides an annual comparative assessment of the innovation performance of the EU Member States. It monitors innovation trends based on 25 single indicators. At present, it does not include a gender equality

[1]The European Gender Summit (EGS) is a high level platform for joint exchange about gender equality in science. Its main aim is to introduce gender as a strategic component into science and research in Europe. The Gender Summit is organised by the European Science Foundation (ESF) and genSET, which is an EU project for sustainable dialogue and actions between top level researchers, gender experts, scientific institutions and policy makers. The EGS 2012 examined gender issues with an influence on the implementation of Horizon 2020 (H2020), the European Research Area (ERA) and the Innovation Union.

indicator. This recommendation was introduced by the ERA Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility already in spring 2012. The proposed indicator is the She Figures "proportion of women in Grade A researcher positions" indicator, which is the best single indicator for measuring the inclusion of women researchers throughout Europe. The She Figures provide a variety of information on the situation of women in science and research and are published every three years[2]. The Helsinki Group on Gender in Research and Innovation, which is an advisory group to the European Commission (EC) on the promotion of equality between women and men in research and innovation, and its national statistical correspondents are mainly responsible for collecting and comparing data for the She Figures publication.

Developing indicators for measuring gender equality

In general, indicators depict something which is hard to illustrate. They are monitoring instruments to assess and measure societal issues, progress and change. In many areas, including a gender perspective in evaluations is already self-understood. However, the methods of how the gender perspective is reflected in an evaluation in terms of critical reflection of the status quo and the objectives are highly diverse.[3]

Some key questions have to be considered before implementing gender equality indicators:

- What should be changed or measured (define accurately)?
- Who should be involved in defining change, determining the indicator and gathering data?
- Are there already existing national indicators or is there data already collected that can be used?
- What legal frameworks exist (ratification of CEDAW[4])?
- How can change be measured?
- How will the data be collected, disseminated or analysed?
- Is there a political will to undertake change?
- What is the time exposure for data collection in relation to the objectives?[5]

The advantage of implementing gender-sensitive indicators is to be able to measure progress in gender equality in research and higher education because gender indicators should be used as control mechanisms to support gender equality policies. Moreover, these indicators open up fields of action and indicate the need for change; they improve planning and programming; they hold institutions accountable and prioritise what is measured. What should be measured is, however,

[2] For further information about the She Figures 2012 see: http://www.era.gv.at/space/11442/directory/11644/doc/31130.html (March 22, 2013)
[3] Institute for Advanced Studies Vienna, unpublished report 2013
[4] Convention of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
[5] OECD, www.oecd.dac/gender (March 22, 2013)

different for each player (e.g. policy maker, funding agency, ...). Obstacles remain with regard to gathering data, the quality of data, lack or volume of data, and interpretation of the indicators.[6]

Should the She Figures "% of women in grade A researcher positions" indicator be included in the IUS?

At European level, the Innovation Union Scoreboard (IUS) is a powerful political measuring tool for research and innovation performance. The Innovation Union is one of seven Flagship Initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy[7]. The IUS is an instrument that monitors the implementation of this Flagship whilst taking into account comparative data of the innovation development of the EU Member States. The IUS plays an important role because it is the only measuring instrument that allows a comparison of the innovation performance at EU level on an annual basis. However, monitoring the innovation performance of the EU Member States is a complex process, and not all details of the innovation trends are portrayed. The indicators of the IUS focus on structural aspects on a long-term basis rather than on substantial improvements in the short term. Therefore, the IUS is a measuring tool for highlighting structural weaknesses and strengths for long term perspectives.[8] The IUS 2012 distinguishes between 3 main types of indicators (enablers, firm activities and outputs) and 8 innovation dimensions. The proposed gender equality indicator would fit best amongst the enablers, since it captures the innovation dimension "human resources", among others. Including a gender equality indicator in this significant tool is strongly recommended in order to increase diversity and scientific quality by using women's potential.

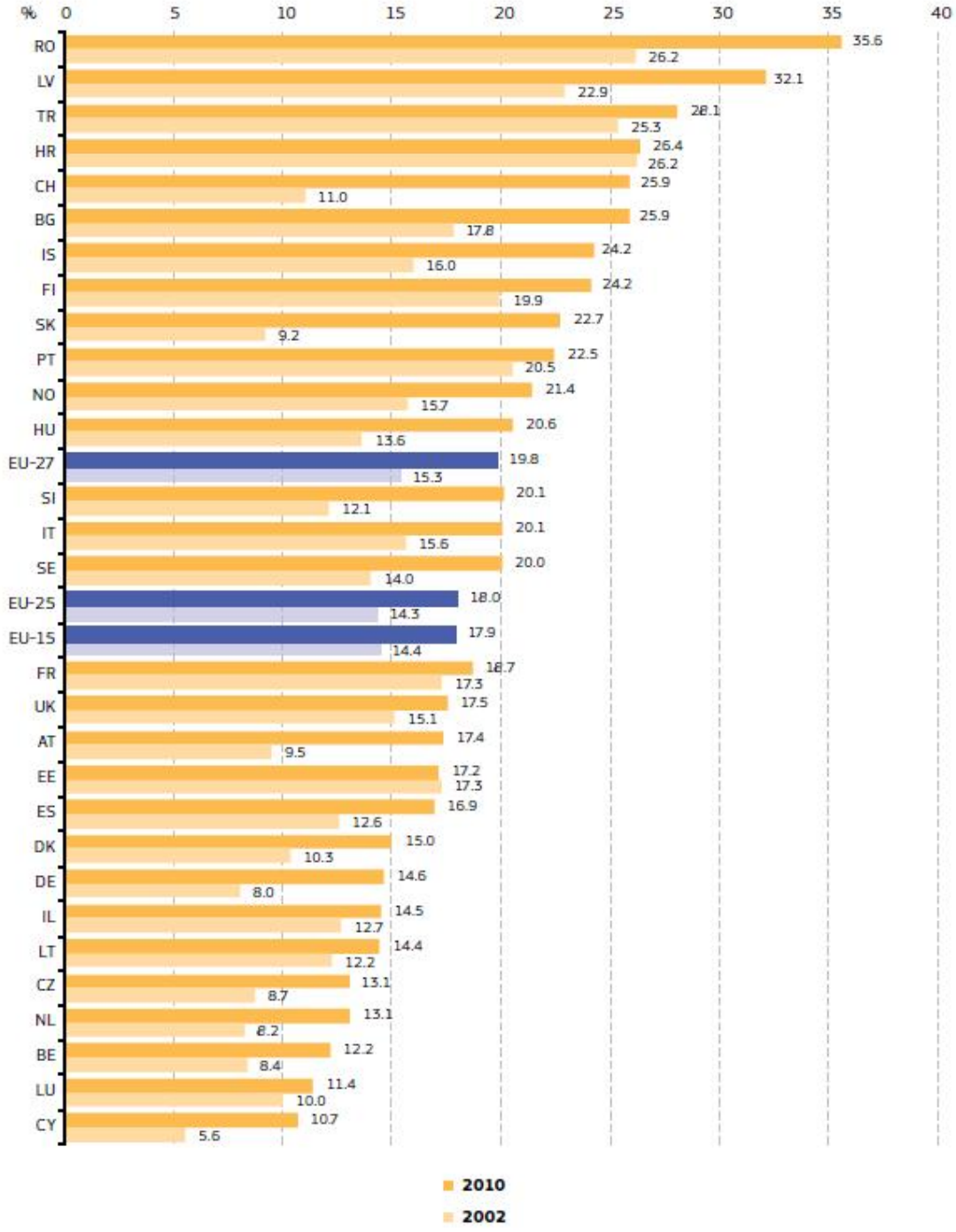
Throughout the EU Member States, female researchers are still underrepresented in the top-level research and decision-making positions. The current "% of women in grade A academic positions" indicator describes female representation in grade A research positions throughout the EU Member States between 2002 and 2010. It is evident that the number of women in grade A research positions has increased over the years in all EU Member States except Estonia. According to the She Figures, "grade A" describes the single highest grade for conducting academic research, and in most EU 27 countries grade A corresponds to a full professorship.

[6] Institute for Advanced Studies Vienna, unpublished report 2013

[7] For further information on the Europe 2020 Strategy see: http://www.era.gv.at/space/11442/directory/11486.html (June 9, 2013)

[8] Austrian Research and Technology Report 2012

Figure 3.3: Proportion of women in grade A academic positions, 2002–2010



Exceptions to the reference years: **2002:** NL, UK, NO: 2003; HR: 2008; IL: 2006; **2010:** CZ: 2008; DK, FR, CY, AT, PT, RO, SE: 2009; EE: 2004; LT: 2007; SK:2011; UK: 2006.

Data unavailable: EL, IE, MT, PL, MK, JP, US.

Data estimated: EU-27, EU-25, EU-15 (by DG Research and Innovation), SI.

Others: Head count.

NO: before 2007 biannual data.

Source: WiS database (DG Research and Innovation).

Source: She Figures, 2012

Comparing grade A levels in all EU Member States is not easy due to the different national varieties of classifying academic grades and differences in national data collection. The She Figures indicator of "% of women in grade A research positions" is based on a three-years examination.

One fact to consider when implementing the She Figures indicator of women in grade A positions in the Innovation Union Scoreboard is that it requires the data of the indicator to be collected on an annual basis in order to allow for comparability and ensure up-to-date data. In this context it will have to be found out if all EU Member States are able to provide the data on an annual basis, taking into account the required financial resources and the amount of time that will have to be spent. However, the question is also if the % of women in grade A levels really shifts so rapidly in one year as to make it significant enough to collect this data every year, i.e. it would be necessary to balance the time and money spent on gathering the data annually against the data's significance. It takes time until policy measures to increase the share of females in grade A level positions take effect.

Besides, at European level indicators that are gathered only every three years were used in annual monitoring reports. For example the "Education and Training Monitor 2012" report[9] of the European Commission, which is an annual monitoring report related to the Europe 2020 Strategy, used data from the OECD PISA study[10]. The data for the PISA study are collected every three years.

Intellectual capital report indicators on gender equality – an Austrian example

In Austria, the data for the She Figures indicator of women in grade A positions is taken from the R&D survey based on the Frascati Manual[11], as in most EU countries. For the She Figures 2012, data from the R&D surveys between 2002 and 2009 was taken into account. Austrian data for this indicator can only be provided for public universities, and only those survey units (e.g. university institutes) that report research activities in the relevant years of assessment are considered. In other countries, the data supply includes the entire higher education sector. The data in the R&D survey are examined on a two-year basis.

In addition to the R&D survey, Austrian universities provide data on the presence of women in grade A research positions on an annual basis through their intellectual capital reports to the Federal Ministry of Science and Research. The intellectual capital reports consist of a series of indicators which reflect the status quo and the development of gender equality in research. In concrete terms, the gender monitoring indicators[12] measure the presence of women in different university positions

[9] Education and Training Monitor 2012: http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/rethinking/sw373_en.pdf (July 10, 2013)

[10] Programme for International Student Assessment: http://www.oecd.org/pisa/ (July 10, 2013)

[11] The Frascati Manual provides the standard of conduct for R&D surveys and data collection in the OECD and the EU. For further information see: http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/science-and-technology/frascati-manual-2002_9789264199040-en (May 24, 2013)

[12] uni:data (datawarehouse) of the Federal Ministry of Science and Research: http://bmwf.gv.at/unidata/auswertungen/gendermonitoring (July 4, 2013)

and hierarchy levels; their promotion prospects (glass-ceiling index); the gender pay gap, gender-specific choice of fields of study and the presence of women in recruitment proceedings[13].

Based on the Universities Act (2002), the autonomous universities formulate gender equality targets and strategic measures to meet these targets. On the basis of the three-year performance agreements (which are public law contracts between the universities and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research), the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research monitors progress with regard to these targets through the intellectual capital reports every year.

An evaluation of the gender indicators in the intellectual capital reports, carried out by the Institute for Advanced Studies Vienna in April 2013 on behalf of the Ministry of Science and Research, discussed the strategic control potential of these indicators. Successful gender monitoring provides a comprehensive overview of the situation of women at university level, but also shows the need for action in terms of gender equality. Another important criterion for making gender monitoring work is its inclusion in concrete strategies. In Austria, equal opportunities are incorporated in the Universities Act (2002) and, at university level, are also part of the performance agreements and university-specific documents (e.g. university statutes, affirmative action plans).

Austrian gender monitoring[14] provides a good instrument for analysing the implementation of gender equality measures and statutory provisions. However, some adjustments would be desirable. Close cooperation between higher education policies and the universities' internal ambitions are a requirement for implementing gender monitoring successfully. This also leads to a better reflection of the findings of gender monitoring, and to an improvement of the quality of data. In order to be able to compare between the universities, definitions and calculations of data should be harmonised both at policy and at university level. In order to avoid misinterpretations, the gender monitoring indicators should not be interpreted in isolation, but in the overall context[15].

[13] Institute of Advanced Studies Vienna, unpublished report 2013

[14] uni:data (datawarehouse) of the Federal Ministry of Science and Research: http://bmwf.gv.at/unidata/auswertungen/gendermonitoring (July 4, 2013)

[15] Institute of Advanced Studies Vienna, unpublished report, 2013

Summary

In order to measure gender equality in research and innovation successfully at EU level, it is important to introduce a gender indicator into the EU Innovation Union Scoreboard. At EU level, the sole comparable indicator for women in top level research positions is the She Figures indicator "% of women in grade A academic research positions".

Before considering the inclusion of the She Figures indicator in the IUS, several issues will still have to be addressed, such as national differences in data collecting, data gaps, and the question as to whether the Member States are able to provide data of women in grade A research positions on an annual basis, due to the financial resources and the amount of time involved in this process.

However, the lack of annual available data in itself is not a sufficient argument for not including the proposed She Figures indicator in the IUS, as is shown by the example of the "Education and Training Monitor 2012": This monitoring report is published annually, using data that is generated only every third year.

The recommendations which can be made at this point are to

- use gender indicators as a basis for the assessment of gender equality, and to
- further examine the possibility of including the She Figures "% of women in grade A research positions" indicator in the Innovation Union Scoreboard.

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Sources

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