



*Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri*  
Dipartimento per le Pari Opportunità

## Common Strategic Framework for Research and Innovation

“Horizon 2020”

Italy’s first contribution to the  
discussion on science and technology  
priorities

“Raising the gender-science  
relationship to strategic relevance  
in 2014-2020 programming”



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**Consultation Panel MIUR** (Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research)-  
**DPO** (Department for Equal Opportunities, Presidency of the Council of Ministers)

**Working group Italian pre-proposal on gender balance in  
HORIZON 2020**

**Raising the gender-science relationship to strategic relevance in 2014-2020  
programming**

**Foreword**

The FP7 Interim Evaluation clearly points out that, despite some progress in women participation to scientific research, women under-representation and gender mainstreaming are still open problems.

While acknowledging progresses that inspire hope in further and decisive steps ahead, we cannot underestimate the glass ceiling still existing for female careers in science and research; career advancement for women is all but easy, and characterized by *pipe leaking* under-representation of women in some disciplines, such as engineering and technologies in general, is as low as being embarrassing, and the gender *pay gap* is not showing a decreasing trend.

Such criticalities need to be placed in the wider problematic context of gender balance in the scientific community of EU Countries at large, that records only a 30% of women scientists. This evident unbalance is proportionally mirrored in research areas usually considered “traditionally feminine”, such as health, social sciences and the humanities, while altogether the presence of women in projects varies considerably, depending on specific thematic areas, age, projects' dimension, and roles (in this latter respect, more present in managerial rather than scientific positions).

Some optimism is induced by the fact that in the last few years the rate of increase of female researchers in our Country (10% versus 4% of male researchers), as well as in other European countries paves the way for a substantial contribution of women to Italian and EU research, and allows to foresee a positive process towards a gender re-balancing.

Both our Country and Europe need more research, and therefore, also, more women researchers. It is thus mandatory that effective instruments to increase female participation be put in place.

In order to reach this objective, it is essential that actions to be undertaken, for CSF HORIZON 2020 specifically, be set in a favourable context, where the promotion of wide campaigns to raise awareness and assert the value of the contribution of the female population to a country's success is foreseen; such actions should be put in place in the Member States and on their own specific initiative. Everyone, both men and women, should recognize that a limited use of the available human

resources, namely those represented by women, for the construction of a country and the EU's future would mean resigning *a priori* the success of any action and a waste we cannot afford; it would be an explicit choice for the preservation of a model that has already shown not to be functional to reach the objectives, if not a clear conservative choice *tout court*.

Amongst the EU objectives adopted in the Council Conclusions of May 2010, research and innovation are recognized as essential instruments for growth and sustainability, in order to meet global and societal challenges (EU2020 Strategy). In its preface to the Europe2020 Strategy, the President of the Commission states that: *"To achieve a sustainable future, we must already look beyond the short term. (...) Europe has the capability to deliver smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, to find the path to create new jobs and to offer a sense of direction to our societies. (...)"* and proposes for 2020 five measurable EU targets related, among others, to employment, research, innovation and education.

Within and in coherence with this strategic plan, the EC proposed the "Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015", adopted on 21 September 2010, where it states that *"in order to achieve the objectives of Europe 2020, namely smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, the potential and the talent pool of women need to be used more extensively and more efficiently"*.

If the aforementioned EU statements and planning are sincere, the **CSF HORIZON 2020** principles and philosophy, and its relevant actions, can only be directed towards promoting a larger female presence in scientific research, with a particular focus on younger generations. This is the starting point for building a solid EU future. On the other hand, we are convinced that the objectives linked to gender issues in CSF HORIZON 2020, and not only them, cannot be reached in the absence of a strong commitment by Member States in fostering balance between men and women at the social, economic, and institutional levels. This is the precondition for ensuring efficacy to all actions aiming at exploiting, in the sense of using and valorising also in decision-making and managerial positions, the full potential of the entire society.

The EC itself is convinced of this, as in its Report on equality between women and men 2010 to the European Parliament declares that *"Gender equality can only be achieved if there is a strong and clear commitment at the highest political level, be it the European institutions, governments or social partners. (...) It is important that gender equality becomes a visible and central concern in policy and planning, and that gender mainstreaming becomes a more efficient tool in policy making."*

## Documentation

We assume as steering guidelines for our proposals:

- the EC "Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015", adopted on 21 September 2010;

- The Position Paper “Gender and Research beyond 2009”, adopted on 24 November 2009 by the Helsinki Group on Women in Science;
- The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for their Recruitment, with the hope that a growing number of Universities and research institutions adopt their values, principles, and implementation measures, and conform their statutes and executive rules accordingly.
- The above documents, together with the previous FP6 and FP7, represent important reference frameworks for us. Some particularly positive activities, such as the Marie Curie actions, are worth being mentioned for their specific reference to gender issues, and should be confirmed and strengthened in CSF HORIZON 2020 .
- We would suggest to avoid placing the gender theme under “*other issues*”, as in FP6 and FP7. Such form can be interpreted as gender not being relevant for the project, its objectives, priorities and potential impact. On the contrary, the centrality of gender must be firmly affirmed, and we propose this dimension to become mandatory and transversal (see proposals farther down in the document), and be provided for in the four basic documents for EU research policies namely CSF HORIZON 2020 , Euratom, Rules for Participation, Financial Rules since it would be inappropriate that it be foreseen exclusively in the negotiation phase.

## Objectives and Actions

Research policies are a fundamental instrument for growth and sustainability. The governance of research policies requires:

- **Continuity:** both in strategic lines and in the definition of specific programmes and instruments, while being open to suggestions for improvement;
- **adequacy of funding:** consistent financial resources must be allocated in order to achieve the objectives of Europe 2020; the budget of FP7 should represent the minimum level, to be progressively increased;
- **cooperation:** amongst the different stakeholders and research organisations: universities, research centres, public authorities and institutions at the European, national, regional and local levels.

## CSF HORIZON 2020 pillars from the gender perspective

Since gender equality is a pre-condition and a fundamental element for the realisation of sustainable growth, the gender dimension should become the factor marking the overall PF8 design in the definition of eligible thematic areas, programmes, instruments and criteria for projects in each phase of their life, from the proposal stage to evaluation, from implementation to monitoring, and dissemination.

The EU twin-track approach encompassing gender mainstreaming and specific actions targeting a higher participation of women in CSF HORIZON 2020 projects (art. 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union), needs to become the foundation of the next Framework Programme.

The pillars of CSF HORIZON 2020 from the gender perspective should be the following:

1. **valorization** of equal opportunities within the overall EU political strategy
2. **transversality** of gender issues in all CSF HORIZON 2020 actions/programmes
3. **reinforcement** of actions and initiatives in support of gender parity in S&T research.

From the above conceptual pillars, the consequent strategy should permeate the entire CSF HORIZON 2020 and pursue as general aim that of reinforcing the presence of women, valorizing their talents and promoting effective gender equality in the scientific world. This strategy entails two major spheres for intervention: the modification of cultural and behavioural models in the scientific and research world, and the setting up of services ensuring appropriate work/life balance, with a particular attention to the initial phases of the career.

### **Strategic objectives in CSF HORIZON 2020**

In order to achieve the general goal, specific and measurable objectives need to be defined, such as the proposed following ones:

#### **Objective 1 – Promoting cultural change with respect to gender in science, policy-making and civil society.**

The following actions are proposed in order to achieve it:

- European and national campaigns to raise awareness of science and research for the definition of the strategy for sustainable growth.
- European and national initiatives to raise awareness of the importance of an increased presence of women in science. The objective of gender balance in science and research must be proposed both as assertion of the principle of social equity and as an essential means for the full valorisation of the potential available to society.
- Communication and sensitization actions aimed at ensuring visibility to women active in the fields of scientific and technological research (for example adverts, newspapers, radio, web, annual dedicated meetings).
- Campaigns to overcome gender stereotypes in science and research specifically, as well as horizontal segregation, by promoting the collection and publication of data and documents that demonstrate the groundlessness of stereotypes of women in science.
- Initiatives aimed at overcoming the traditional family stereotype (male breadwinner/female homemaker) by identifying as role models women who have reached high level positions, as well as men who have interrupted their career or work part-time, and giving them visibility.
- Training and sensitization initiatives to directors/managers for diffusing awareness on gender issues, decisive for the success of scientific careers of women.
- Adoption of "gender-sensitive" language and materials.
- Promotion of gender studies in universities and research institutions and centres.

**Objective 2 – Promoting structural change in the organizational culture of science and research through the application of ‘diversity management’ to human resources in all phases of a project life-time: concept, proposal, evaluation, project management**

Actions proposed:

- **Gender balance as mandatory criterion for project evaluation.** Projects become not eligible for funding if gender issues are ignored or not sufficiently considered. To this end, a minimum threshold should be introduced in the structure (research group composition, coordinators, team leaders, contact persons), under which the project would be uneligible. The threshold could be fixed at 25%. The more the project is gender-balanced in structure (50% as optimal rate), the higher the score assigned to it. This principle would therefore assume two configurations: rewarding, with maximum score for the optimal balance of female participation (50%), or penalizing, with progressive proportional score reduction the lower such balance gets from the 50%.
- **Promotion and monitoring of the training of evaluators and experts.** If gender balance is a mandatory criterion, the training on this specific issue for those who have to assess projects is particularly important. It is imperative that the assessment of gender balance in proposed project and actions be carried out by experts with recognisable competences, which can be clearly identified or provided with appropriate compulsory training.
- **Setting up in the MS of Committees or Consultation Panels** (such as the Italian one between MIUR and DPO) to promote, in close connection with the Helsinki Group Women in Science, policies in favour of a larger presence and the role of women in science and research.

**Objective 3 - Promoting women leadership in science and research. Vertical segregation of women in science and research is one of the fundamental issues to be addressed in order to promote a true change in science, both in practice and in contents.**

Actions proposed:

- Monitoring of female presence in key decision-making positions in research institutions and centres.
- Setting up of a database and systematic diffusion of information on high profile female researchers, to enhance their visibility.
- Tutoring and guidance actions for younger female scientists in view of career progression towards leading positions, and to prevent self-exclusion dynamics, by establishing links with experienced women at the highest positions in research and from research committees (know-how transfer), and by developing dedicated websites for coping strategies.
- Lobbying activity in favour of female candidatures to awards/calls/elections to decisional positions.
- Modification of rules and procedures to ensure that promotion criteria are clear, transparent, fair, and that the re-definition of evaluation systems includes characteristics such as multitasking, transversality, hearings, innovation.

- Reinforcement of women visibility and of their role in communication, both by specific training in communication skills, and in its contents (communicate excellence of female scientists).
- Support to international and national networking and lobbying actions to increase the visibility and the valorization of female excellences (for instance meetings, conferences, workshops, territorial networks, databases).

#### **Objective 4. Promoting policies of reconciliation and sharing**

It is inappropriate to consider reconciliation and sharing policies as specific measures concerning women only. Such policies invest men and women, and social and labour organisations. Parallel measures are proposed that, on one side, are based on analyses and, on the other, take into account women's proposals, where their point of view is actually considered as mainstream, and is not, as it often happens nowadays, interpreted or filtered by evaluations based on stereotypes or market/budget needs.

Actions proposed:

- specific measures to support dual career for couples of researchers and a family-friendly environment;
- a different and more flexible organization of work and of working time and modes, in order to ensure an appropriate work/life balance for both men and women (for example telecommuting, job-sharing, part-time);
- preference for programming activities, meetings and events during standard working hours in order to avoid using extra-working time;
- guarantee to right to training, and career development and progress also for male and female researchers choosing flexible work or part-time;
- lifecycle projects that take into account specific predictable obstacles, for instance linked to early stages of women careers;
- instruments in support of conciliation present among project partners which are accessible also to externals (e.g. by visiting professors), for periods of mobility abroad;
- support to any initiative and measure to anticipate and/or overcome any form of direct or indirect discrimination with reference to access, permanence, training at work;
- guarantee of protection for maternity also for women with temporary contracts.

#### ***The following points must be taken into account with respect to the issues of career development and mobility:***

- encouraging female researchers to plan their scientific career, possibly foreseeing any breaks, by developing long-term strategies aimed at keeping up working ambitions, supporting also innovative and non conventional proposals raised by the demand and true needs of women (e.g. avoiding the nearly exclusive use of part-time as in some EU Countries);
- support to female careers in the early stages of their working life;
- promotion of dedicated mobility schemes for female researchers;
- explicit provisions for pregnancy and paternity/parental themes in the setting up of mobility schemes, both in the implementation and financial rules;

- support to measures that guarantee both mobility and parental care, by means also of constant connecting systems (alternative communication tools such as video- and tele-conferences);
- measures to facilitate mobility abroad, also from the financial point of view and covering family care (e.g. assistance in schools and public structures; reimbursement of private school costs, etc.)
- monitoring of careers and relevant salaries, so as to contrast any gender-related difference in wages.

### **Objective 5 - Ensuring the effective application of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for their Recruitment (Charter&Code)**

The adoption of the Charter&Code and the actual application of its principles are a clear indication of a structural change and organizational culture in academies and research institutions, thus contributing to the construction of and participation to a pan-European network of researchers and research organisations applying common rules and standards for career enhancement, transparency in recruitment procedures, evaluation of mobility, and respect for work/life balance. It is therefore proposed that the adoption of the Charter&Code guidelines be introduced as eligibility criteria for projects and for funding applications in general.

### **Objective 6 – “Genderizing” research contents**

Gender in research implies not only pursuing a larger presence of women at all levels, but also integrating the gender dimension in its contents. This latter aspect is particularly relevant because research characterised by the gender dimension is fully representative of the population involved both in the project development and in the phase of fruition of its results.

In order to address this objective the following actions are proposed:

- within a project's budget, earmarking of a percentage of funding for the parts/activities where the gender perspective is actually embedded, even more so in technologically oriented projects (the Gender Toolkit for EU-funded Research offers significant examples in this respect);
- earmarking of programmes' budget for projects directly investigating gender issues.

### **Objective 7 – Adopting an Ethical Code of Conduct in support of differences**

The recognition and valorization of differences, namely gender, by European scientific institutions contribute to promote and pursue scientific excellence. In coherence with the attribution of gender issues to the Unit Ethics and Gender and with the fact that women account for a relevant portion (30%) of scientists, the following actions are proposed:

- definition and application of an Ethical Code of Conduct towards diversities in research institutions;
- particular attention paid to gender diversities within the Ethical Code of Conduct itself.