

Gender Equality in Academia and Research

Hungary

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN RESEARCH

Legal framework

The Act CXXV of 2003 on Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities is the main legislation guaranteeing equal treatment in Hungary. It recognises a number of protected grounds, among them “gender”, “motherhood”, “pregnancy” and “fatherhood”. According to this Act a person cannot be treated less favourably than a person in comparable situation. Direct and indirect discrimination is forbidden and punishable. Positive actions directed at vulnerable groups under certain conditions are allowed. Article 63 (4) provides that “budgetary organisations and legal entities that are mainly owned by the state and which employ more than 50 employees are obliged to draw up an equal opportunities plan.” State universities and state colleges, as well as the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, are under the obligation to draw up equal opportunities plans. This article does not apply to those research institutions where the state is not the main owner.

Policy framework

The National Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality – Guidelines and Objectives 2010-2021 (1004/2010 I.21) has a two-bullet point section on women in science in chapter V subchapter 3. It sets as a goal the promotion of women’s and men’s equal participation in the field of sciences. More specifically, the following aspects are referred to:

- 1 “Gender issues as a subject of research should be a priority in all the research, development and innovation projects financed by EU resources in the coming period, and gender attitude and methodology should be included in applied research methods. When application schemes are invited and assessed, special attention should be given to the gender aspect”;

- 2 | “Elimination of women’s disadvantages in the educational and research institutes. Through gender oriented research, other new, innovative approaches may come to light. Based on the new aspects, new scientific results can certainly be expected. A precondition for this is to eliminate the obstacles hindering women’s promotion in their scientific career and their participation in research grant applications.”

The strategy also states that the percentage of women in leadership positions (both in public and private sectors) should reach at least 40 % in Hungary by 2021. There has only been one Action Plan to the strategy, for the years 2010-2011, and this plan stated the following: “the equal participation of women in science should be promoted by research on gender equality and by putting these issues in common discourses (awards, public events)”.

The National Research-development and Innovation Strategy (2013-2020), entitled Investment in the Future, adopted in 2013, highlights in Annex 6 Enforcement of horizontal priorities in the strategy: “It is a priority objective to create equal opportunities for women in the Research & Development & Innovation professional field, for instance, when managers are appointed”.

Other stimulatory initiatives

In the past several years, the government has advertised a call for “Family-Friendly Workplaces.” Those companies and public institutions that were awarded a project after responding to the call could receive a maximum amount of 3,000,000 HUF (approximately 9,500 Euro) in 2015 to develop their unit to become a family-friendly workplace (e.g. playing corner for children). In addition, they can carry the title “Family Friendly Workplace.” A total of 50,000,000 HUF (approximately 159,000 Euro) was allocated in 2015. The award is given to companies/organisations where work and family balance is supported and there are other measures that support employees with families (e.g. special rooms for women for breastfeeding). Universities, colleges or research institutions can also apply for this funding. In 2014 the University of Szeged and the University of Debrecen received the award among higher education institutions, in 2015 the Eszterházy Károly College in Eger and the University of Debrecen were awarded funding (all are state institutions).

The award was initiated in 2000, and renewed in 2008. In 2010, following a change of the then government, the award was not opened. In 2011, the award was again made available and has been awarded ever since with a growing number of applicants.

The L’Oreal-UNESCO Hungarian Grant for Women and Science is given to female scientists in the fields of natural sciences or materials sciences. In 2014, the call specified three age categories (under 30 – 3,500 Euros, under 40 – 3,500 Euros, and under 55 – 4,000 Euros). In 2015, the grant was given in two age categories (under 35 and under 45 with grants of approximately 6,500 Euros for each).

The Girls' Day, organised by the Association of Hungarian Women in Science (Nők a Tudományban Egyesület, NaTE), took place in Hungary for the first time in 2012. Since then, several companies and organisations have been participating. In this programme, companies have open days for high school girls who can get a glimpse into the work of universities and companies in the field of technology and natural sciences. NaTE also gives an award called „Kiválóság Díj” (Excellence Award), since 2013, each year to three female scientists, one in each of the following fields: materials technology, biotechnology and space technology. The Prize has a special section for a female Romani researcher.

ABB Ltd launched a mentorship programme for five female university or college students in technology, engineering or IT. An open call is launched at selected colleges and universities. After receiving the applications, ABB selected the female students that will have a high profile mentor for five months. They meet once a month, the female students have the opportunity to visit the company (perhaps abroad) and to meet with women leaders at the company, the HR Department for one-on-one counselling or to join the company as an intern.

Key actors

The National Institute for Family and Social Policy is responsible for managing the central government's initiative “Family-Friendly Workplaces”. It is funded from the budget line for Family Policy grants in the budget of the Ministry of Human Resources.

INITIATIVES FOR GENDER EQUALITY BY RESEARCH PERFORMING ORGANISATIONS

Until October 2015, no gender equality plans had been set up in public research institutions. Nonetheless, general equal opportunities plans are in place and include a few initiatives to promote gender equality in research. Some research organisations have also put in place some initiatives which are not listed in plans. An overview of the existing initiatives is provided below.

Three universities in Hungary use sex-disaggregated data available from their HR Departments to assess the gender equality situation. Whereas Budapest University of Technology and Economics, and the University of Debrecen gather these data across all levels of staff, the University of Physical Education only considers numbers in middle and top management.

The Hungarian Academy of Sciences (HAS) introduced in 2009 that an age limit for its grants and fellowships which defined that female researchers who have a child under 10 years old and male researchers who have been on parental leave can receive an extension of two years by child to complete their research. From early 2016, HAS's calls will also include single parents among the beneficiaries of this policy. This is part of an [equal opportunities framework programme](#) adopted at a presidential meeting of HAS in 2009. HAS is planning to develop this draft programme into a full-fledged Equal Opportunities programme.

The Central European University (CEU) created a policy on gender equity at academic events and summer schools in 2012. This policy document states that all events that are sponsored by the Conferences and Academic Events Fund and the CEU SUN support should ensure a "good balance of female and male speakers" or efforts have to be made in this regard. The policy also encourages all departments and schools to aim at gender equity at all events organised by them. In 2015, the Central European University carried out a survey to assess the situation regarding equality needs.

At both the Central European University and the Hungarian University of Fine Arts (MKE), the period spent on parental leave does not count in the allowed time period for academic cycles (that is, an assistant professor can remain an assistant professor for a longer period if s/he has been on parental leave).

A yearly prize called the Seadrop Prize (Tengercsepp Díj) is given at the Faculty of Natural Sciences at the Eszterházy Károly College (in Eger) since 2010. This prize is awarded to female professors who have furthered the good reputation of the University by demonstrating at least one of the following achievements at an exceptionally high level: 1) excellence in teaching; 2) well-acknowledged professional results; 3) has helped the professional development of young talents; 4) has developed (funded) projects that supported the positive future of the Faculty; or 5) has participated in innovation of national or international reputation. The [Board](#) consists of six members who are delegated by the Institutes at the Faculty and by the Student Self-government.

Finally, the Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) used questionnaires for assessing the situation in relation to equality, including gender equality in their institution. More concretely, at ELTE, a self-diagnosis about organisational practices was used. The results of this assessment are described in ELTE's Equal Opportunities Plan detailing what which Faculty was doing, what kind of programmes were being set up and for which target groups, at the time of the drafting of the plan.

RELEVANT EXAMPLES OF PRACTICES

Age limit extension in calls by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences for female researchers with children under 10

In 2009, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (HAS) accepted an equal opportunities framework programme (Presidential decision no. 13/2009. II. 24). One element of the framework programme is the extension of age limits for female researchers who have children under the age of 10. This means that all calls of the HAS (scholarships, fellowships and grants) with an age limit, the age limit is extended by two years for each child under the age of 10 for female researchers and male researchers who certify that they stayed with their child(ren) on parental leave. From early 2016, the Academy will extend the scope of the programme to single parents as well.

Attracting more women into technology

The Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Informatics at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics joined the programme Girls' Day in Hungary in 2012 as the first university to be part of the programme. The goal of the programme is to attract high school girls to the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Informatics by introducing them to the programmes of the Faculty and showing them the advantages of studying at the Faculty. Since 2012, every year, on the last Thursday of April as part of the official programme of the nationally organised Girls' Day (set up by the Association of Hungarian Women Science), the university opens its doors and high school girls, between the ages of 14-18, can visit several labs in groups of eight to 10 accompanied by a female and a male university student. Part of the programme is a 1 hour orientation during which the girls are encouraged to choose studies at the Faculty despite the common misconception that this is not "a girl thing." Faculty representatives explain how it is actually for women to work in health informatics, to find an aesthetic solution, or to telework from home. They also present a film in which female university students tell about their positive experiences at the university. The programme, over the years, has progressed to include other initiatives to attract female students to the Faculty: a special, devoted website to show girls how the field of technology may be for women, how successful women can be in this field and how happy the female students are at the faculty. The information flyer printed for students who are about to choose college or university include encouraging words by the dean addressing female students and a few articles on successful women in technology, engineering and IT.

How to achieve a good gender balance at academic events

The Central European University (CEU), in line with its mission to promote an open and just society based on equal opportunities, approved, in 2012, the Policy on gender equity at academic events and summer schools sponsored by CEU. This policy requires that those academic events at CEU, which are supported by the Conferences and Academic Events Fund and the summer schools receiving CEU SUN financial support, take into consideration gender equity when selecting speakers for their events. The purpose is to ensure they have a “good balance of male and female speakers” at their events. The application forms for both funds have a question referring to this requirement. The event’s programme needs to be attached to demonstrate gender balance in the composition of the speakers. In case a good gender balance is not achieved, the event organiser has to prove the efforts made to achieve this. Besides the events receiving support from the aforementioned funds, departments and schools are also invited to take gender equity into consideration in all academic events organised by them.