

Gender Equality in Academia and Research

Slovakia

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN RESEARCH

Legal framework

Until October 2015, Slovakia has not put in place laws promoting gender equality in research.

Policy framework

The National Action Plan for Gender Equality for 2014 – 2019 stipulated the integration of gender equality into science, research and higher education as one of its priorities. The foreseen measures focus on the issue of gender mainstreaming and reconciliation of work and family life (supporting universities and research institutions in setting up and implementing gender equality plans including work-life balance measures) and participation of women in decision making (fostering a higher female participation in management and decision-making of universities and research institutions). The responsible actors for implementing these measures are the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, and the Gender Equality Committee of the Governmental Council for Human Rights, Minorities and Gender Equality. The measures are expected to be implemented by 2018.

The National Centre for Popularisation of Science and Technology in Society, under the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, carries out several initiatives related to gender equality and women in science and research:

Annual competition Scientist of the Year – the Centre organizes, in cooperation with Slovak Academy of Sciences and the Union of Associations for Science and Technology, the annual competition Scientist of the Year in order to reward outstanding scientific results and to promote them publicly. Since 2015, a new category was added – the Female Scientist of the Year. As a result, the competition rewards separately female and male scientists. Other categories (such as Young Scientist, Scientist in Technology or Life-long Achievements) remained gender neutral. Webpage Women in Science, focusing on women in science and research, contains information about the national and the EU level, documents related to the topic (e.g. results of project initiatives), promotes female scientists in history and shares interviews with female scientists. Ad-hoc seminars on gender equality in science (e.g. gender equality dimension in Horizon2020)

Other stimulatory initiatives

Between 2007 and 2013, the Slovak-Czech Women's Fund awarded the Ludmila Cuchranova Memorial Stipend. Stipends were awarded to female doctoral students of natural sciences and technology in order to cover travel expenses to international conferences. The Stipend aimed at assisting women scientists in research areas where women are underrepresented to promote their research and develop scientific career.

Key actors

The National Centre for Popularisation of Science and Technology in Society, under the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport is the only national institution that carries out initiatives promoting gender equality in research.

INITIATIVES FOR GENDER EQUALITY BY RESEARCH PERFORMING ORGANISATIONS

Gender equality initiatives in public research organisations are generally project-based (for instance, the participation of the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava in the EU-funded structural change project DIVERSITY) and not embedded within strategic goals and structural activities of institutions. As such, they consist of short-term activities such as seminars, conferences or trainings lacking long-term impact and institutional support or research and data collection on the position of women in academia.

Until October 2015, gender equality plans promoted by universities and research organisations have not been set up in Slovakia. Trnava University is part of a consortium of an EU-funded structural change project (GENOVATE). A gender equality plan was developed but has not been officially adopted by the University yet.

The Equal Opportunity Committee in the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS) was set up in 2005 but gender equality initiatives date before that. In 2002, an empirical survey (including in-depth interviews) was carried out about the situation of women working in the SAS as researchers. The goal of this survey was to analyse whether there was a need for a specific intervention. As an indirect result of this survey, a so-called 'children's corner' was created in SAS. Nevertheless, the initiative did not last long. The above mentioned Committee was active for a few years after its inception. In the last five years, it organised only one meeting in order to report on the fulfilment of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality for the years 2009-2013.

The Faculty of Informatics and Information Technology of the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava is implementing the AjTyvIT (You in IT) project since 2013. This project aims at attracting female students into informatics and information technology. The project's webpage promotes women in informatics through personal stories, information on IT professions and study programmes. In addition, the association set up by the Faculty organizes workshops for girls and young women, as well as mentoring programmes for female students interested in studying informatics. Finally, the faculty's association is organising the Girl's Day since 2014, during which IT companies and institutions welcome girls aged 14-18 to visit their facilities on that day.

RELEVANT EXAMPLES OF PRACTICES

Career Development Plan

In 2013, Trnava University set up, as part of EU-funded structural change project GENOVATE project, a gender equality plan that included a measure to implement a Career Development Plan (CDP) for university research employees. The project team opted for a participatory approach to develop the CDP. The state-of-play of two university's faculties was mapped, sex-disaggregated data on research and education employees were collected, interviews with HR Department of the Rectorate and Personnel Administrators of both faculties were undertaken, surveys among research employees were carried out, and several questionnaires on gender equality were distributed within awareness raising activities. On the basis of the collected information, the proposal of the CDP was developed. The inclusion of surveys, questionnaires and discussions into the process of development of policies serves not only as an example of evidence-based policy-making but also contributed to awareness raising on gender equality and the policy itself, as well as a sense of ownership within the two faculties.