Employment in knowledge-intensive activities (%), 2010

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Seniority

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Setting the scientific agenda

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Introduction

What is the proportion of female and male researchers in EUR. and do they participate equally in the different scientific fields in which women are better represented? These are the core questions addressed in this survey. The survey also aims to identify whether policies and initiatives have contributed to a long-term change and if the gender imbalance is self-correcting. It could take a very long time to achieve a significantly improved gender balance.

Moreover, the share of women graduating at PhD level in sciences grew by an average of 4.3% per year between 2004 and 2009, compared with a 3.3% yearly increase for men. In 2009, a proportion unchanged compared with 2006 (2002: 42% for men, 34% for women). In 2010, tertiary-educated women continued to catch up with men's education levels, with 52% of women holding a tertiary education compared to 56% for men. A PhD can be a stepping stone to an academic career. Since 2002, the share of women holding a PhD degree in science has increased by an average of 5.1% per year, compared with 3.2% for men. However, it should be noted that these figures reflect a trend towards greater equality in academic positions.

Despite a number of positive trends, women in scientific research are still more likely to hold junior positions than men and women less represented in knowledge-intensive activities. Moreover, the share of women graduating at PhD level in sciences compared with 3.3% for men; but not enough to indicate that the gender imbalance in science is self-correcting. It could take a very long time to achieve a significantly improved gender balance.

Although women thus seem to be rapidly catching up with men at the PhD level, they remain a minority in scientific research, especially in the natural and engineering fields. Women were most poorly represented in the field of engineering and technology.

Critical mass

The forthcoming edition of She Figures, to be published at the end of 2012, aims to provide answers to these questions and many others. How can this trend be curbed? And how can the specific obstacles to women’s participation in scientific research be overcome? Can there be any gender-based differences between countries, and do they have a clear pattern of female under-representation in science across all fields of activity?

What is the proportion of female and male researchers in EUR., compared to that of men? In 2004–2009, the number of female researchers in EUR. was growing faster than that of men, i.e. at an average of 5.1% per year between 2002 and 2009, compared with a 3.1% yearly increase for men. Although women thus seem to be rapidly catching up with men, they remain a minority in scientific research, especially in the natural and engineering fields. Women were most poorly represented in the field of engineering and technology.

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Evolution of the proportion of female researchers in the Higher Education and Research Sector (HERS) by field and sex, 2005–2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Sciences</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and Technology</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The percentage of female researchers in 2009 and 2010 across all fields shows that women were more under-represented in the fields of engineering and technology. However, women were more over-represented in the field of social sciences.