

## Gender Action Plan of EUGeneHeart Integrated Project

Excerpt from Annex I of EUGeneHeart integrated project:  
Genomics of Cardiomyocyte Signalling to Treat and Prevent Heart Failure,  
funded by SIXTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME - PRIORITY 1: Life sciences,  
genomics and biotechnology for health



### Gender action plan

The percentage of women participating within the IP reflects the overall representation of women in this research area. Nevertheless, the under-representation of women in science, in general, and in this IP in particular, is unacceptable. To improve the attractiveness for woman scientists and ensure their future involvement, we put special emphasis on equal involvement of woman as team leaders in this IP. Thus the vice coordinator plus two of five task managers are woman. We have decided on the following gender action plan:

Women's participation in research must be encouraged both as scientists/technologists and within the evaluation, consultation and implementation processes. Therefore, the members of this project propose four strategic activity lines (eventually with information about the maximum and minimum goals for points 2-4 in order to simplify quality control and make it a transparent process):

- 1) commit to the needs and ideas of gender equality within the Project;
- 2) increase the participation of female researchers within the Project, within expert advisory groups, as well as the participation of women in user groups;
- 3) support career advancement of female junior researchers within the project;
- 4) mobilise girls/women to enrich European research (outside the Project);

#### 1. Commit to the needs and ideas of gender equality

The basic requirement for introducing gender mainstreaming is the commitment of the whole consortium with a special regard to the management level of the project (Co-ordinators and executive board). Without such a top-down approach, gender mainstreaming as a political controlling instrument will not work properly. Within the management structure, a **Task Force on Gender Equality** will be implemented. This Task Force will have 4 members (2 women and two men, Karin Sipido, Vera Regitz-Zagrosek, Jean Luc Balligand and Gerd Hasenfuss). The management and all participants of the project will adopt and sign a **mission statement** on gender equality proposed by the Task Force on Gender Equality within the first 6 Months. Main issues of the mission statement will include:

- consideration of the potential impact of all decisions within the project on gender equality;
- representation of women in all management committees of the project with a minimum
- reflecting the percentage of women scientists involved in the project;
- use of gender-neutral language in meetings, official documents and correspondence;
- provide support to the Task Force on Gender Equality while ensuring adequate resources
- (e.g. time, money) for gender mainstreaming activities are made available.

To raise the awareness of gender issues within the project the following activities are planned by the Task Force:

- Briefing folders on gender dimensions associated with the subjects of the project will be prepared and regularly updated for use as reference material by working groups;
- Organisation of a workshop to raise awareness about the need to increase gender equality in the field of the project;
- Reports on gender equality during the coordination meetings;
- Reference to existing gender expertise within the EU. This should be supported in order to bring gender experts together to share experiences, brainstorm on perspectives and methodologies, and act as sounding boards for new ideas and approaches.

## **2. Increase participation of female researchers within the project**

All participants declare a voluntary commitment in handling job vacancies within the network activities of the project in the following way:

- targeted address of job vacancies to female researchers as well as encouraging their application;
- check the possibility of part-time work in order to increase participation of persons with family responsibilities and to provide incentives for persons to return to work following maternity/paternity leave;
- Investigate opportunities for flexible work practice (e.g. teleworking).

Beyond these voluntary commitments, the participants will:

- send their job advertisements to the national networks of women scientists (see: Women and Science Network Guide 20011) in order to achieve a broad dissemination
- within the female scientific community; disseminate the vacancies with the help of the virtual platform 'European Platform of Women Scientists' by the project secretariat. The 'European Platform of Women Scientists' could also be used to search for research cooperations and to disseminate training activities for participants from outside the Project;
- give preference to female job applicants if female and male applicants have the same qualifications;
- take into consideration user groups and experts.

## **3. Support career advancement of female junior researchers within the project**

Networking, coaching/mentoring and training are important pillars for the scientific career of young researchers.

- With regard to this, a female researcher mentoring program will be established within the project as part of the training initiative. Mentoring is a process in which an experienced person, the mentor, supports the professional and personal development of a younger person, the mentee, outside a superior/subordinate relationship. Every junior female researcher of the project will be encouraged to choose a senior researcher (not from the home institution) as a personal consultant. Mentees shall visit their mentor once a year and keep the mentor informed about their plans, publications and research activities in a biannual report. Funding for travel and subsistence has been calculated within the workpackage training;
- One special rubric on the project's virtual platform will be set up to provide Information about women scientists within the network, their expertise, publications as well as contact details in order to make these expert pool of women in this field of research more visible. It will enable contact with these experts. The linking of this platform with networks of women scientists in the field of the project is planned;
- With regard to their professional development, the female project partners in the project are encouraged to take part in the project's internal training activities. A participating contingent within the training workshops reflecting - at a minimum - the percentage of the female representation involved in the project will be reserved for female participants.

## **4. Mobilise women to enrich European research (outside the project)**

In order to mobilise the 'next generation' of female researchers within this specific field of research, the project partners will use the established structures of activities and links with schools in their

organisations to trigger the interest of women in this research domain (e.g. 'Girls-Day', 'a taste of university life' activities, 'Girls only' workshop courses).

Every workpackage leader is responsible for proposing annual gender equality activities with respect to the tasks of the workpackage (planning's and results). Based on this the Task Force Gender Equality finalises the annual update of the overall gender action plan. The review of success and weak points will be done by the Task Force Gender Equality and this is part of the regularly updated gender action plan. The results and updates of the gender action plan shall be part of the agenda of the co-ordination meetings in order to promote the awareness of the importance of gender issues in the project.

The gender specific analysis of cardiovascular problems, i.e. gender mainstreaming, focuses on problems separately in women and men. Life style for women and men in Europe is undergoing rapid changes, risk factors vary in the geographical regions, the number of women with cardiovascular disease is increasing and cardiovascular disease also increases epidemic like among middle-aged men in many Eastern European societies. Knowledge and balanced consideration of gender effects requires the understanding of its genetic and biological bases, of molecular mechanism, of hormonal and psychosocial effects. It will directly contribute to the improvement of health care for women and men, i.e. to gender specific prevention programs, hormone therapy, targeted pharmacological approaches, risk reduction in surgery. Therefore, we will assure that throughout the whole network, sex and gender aspects are considered in experimental projects and clinical studies. This includes cell culture work, animal experiments and translational projects.

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