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Consideration of Gender Aspects in EU-Funded Research Projects in Germany

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Consideration of Gender Aspects in EU-Funded Research Projects in Germany - Summary

The study *Consideration of Gender Aspects in EU-Funded Research Projects in Germany* on behalf of the Contact Point Women into EU Research (FiF) within the EU-Bureau of the BMBF (German Federal Ministry of Education and Research), examines the role played by *Section 5 - Consideration of Gender Aspects (CoG)* in practice with regard to project planning, application advice, evaluation, project negotiations as well as in execution of EU supported collaborative projects under German direction. Within the scope of the six month study, 60 interviews focusing on these topics with four groups of actors involved (project leaders, application advisors, evaluators and commission officials) were reviewed in which the interviewees described their actual everyday practice and assess the effectiveness of these reporting points. Content, consistency of administrative procedures and the aspect of commitment were compared with selected European national research funding providers.

The results of the study document that CoG in total assumes a somewhat lower position in the complex process of EU research funding procurement and administration. For the majority of those interviewed gender equality was at the forefront, although project-related gender equality activities were seldom explicitly named. Gender roles and gender differences in research content were frequently not considered in project applications under CoG, as this objective is not formulated clearly enough in the guidelines for applicants. As CoG is not an official evaluation criterion, gender equality questions in the advising process represent a peripheral aspect for national contact points and EU advisors, and are not universally addressed. The evaluation of gender equality and gender in research content does not differ along gender lines. Life Sciences as well as the humanities and social sciences collaborative projects generally give due consideration to gender content, as this is required for the tender documents and/or belongs to the practices of the disciplines. Information resources facilitating CoG are little known, and not use-oriented enough for application and consulting in practice. The results show that consideration of gender equality goals and gender in research content is neither consistent nor sustainable in the evaluation procedures and not followed up by the European Commission in contractual negotiations. Individual scientific and gender competence was crucial for good handling of CoG for all interviewees.

The study results document broad individual freedom of action among all groups of actors, which in practice often exerts a negative effect on consideration of gender equality and gender in scientific content in EU-supported collaborative projects. The most significant cause for the lack of effectiveness of CoG is that this point is non-compulsory for the entire process. The following measures could improve consideration of both aspects in the application process in practice: 1) As the dual objective is not perceived in one formal application point, Section 5 should be reduced to only one objective, preferably on promoting gender equality. 2) Gender equality objectives should be more formalized in the funding application; gender equality measures obligatorily supported and disregard should be financially sanctioned. 3) Discipline-specific evaluation of gender content must be part of scientific evaluation processes and thereby also represent an explicit sub-point of the evaluation criterion "Scientific excellence" and "Impact" as well as be mentioned in the tendering process. 4) Guidelines and practical aids delineating responsibilities, conditions and advantages of considering both aspects should be made better known in particular by the European Commission. 5) Available information resources should flow into the application proceedings at an earlier point.