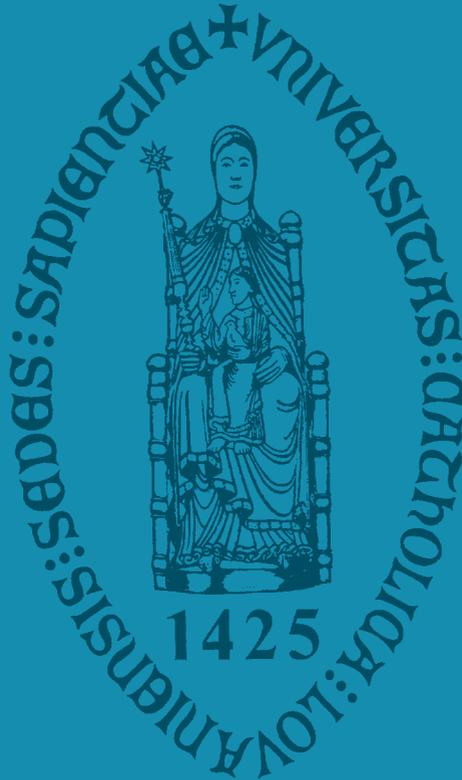


KU LEUVEN



Gender Action Plan KU Leuven

2014 - 2017



Preface



Dear reader,

We proudly present to you the gender action plan of the KU Leuven, which is intended to enhance the recruitment and transfer of women to positions within the Senior Academic Staff (SAS) and to increase their participation in the boards and management of our university. In 1999, the KU Leuven Equal Opportunities Report revealed the dismally small percentage of female academic staff at the university, particularly in the higher regions of the SAS: professors and full professors. Since then, there have been gradual improvements to this situation, but women are still underrepresented in the KU Leuven SAS. Our new, comprehensive gender action plan has been specifically designed to provide a policy framework within which clearly circumscribed actions can make a real difference.

We wish to thank everyone who has contributed to producing this plan: the working group Staff Diversity, who delivered much of the preparatory work; the working group Woman & University, whose critical voice was instrumental in pinpointing the crucial issues; the diversity teams and the Diversity Council, who play a key role in the KU Leuven's diversity policy, and the Diversity Policy Office, which works hard to gain the most from diversity and to translate their findings into policy documents. Our thanks also goes out to the Executive Board, the Academic Council, the Board of Governors and the Board of Trustees of the KU Leuven, who all endorse the importance of a solid gender policy and who have approved this policy framework with conviction. Finally, we thank our rector, who has transformed his dedication to a university-wide gender and diversity policy into words and deeds.

Prof. Katlijn Malfliet
Vice Rector for Diversity
January 2014



© KU Leuven – Rob Stevens

Introduction



For the KU Leuven, a Flemish university with a broad international orientation, an active gender policy, as one element of our diversity policy, is an important issue. The terms ‘gender policy’ and ‘diversity policy’ are preferable to an ‘equal opportunities policy’. After all, the concept of ‘equal opportunities’ refers primarily to the absence of obstacles for economic, political and social participation (in a gender policy that is based on sex or gender roles). Simply removing barriers is not enough to bring about gender equality, and this explains the need for specific gender-sensitive measures. The rather negative concept of freedom implicit in an ‘equal opportunities policy’, which mainly stresses the absence of obstacles, can only evolve into a rich diversity policy when the individual and societal context in which we find ourselves is taken into account.

The KU Leuven’s diversity policy is connected to its identity. As a center for critical thought, the KU Leuven aspires to be a forum for open discussion on and involvement with societal, ideological and ethical issues. It is only in a university in which discussion and reflection play an essential role, that a diversity of insights and experiences can provide a powerful source of inspiration. For the KU Leuven, the term ‘diversity’ pertains to a varied wealth of personal experiences, values and worldviews, which have emerged from the interaction of culturally and contextually determined factors, such as home language, cultural background, gender, age, religion, geographical region, sexual orientation, functional disability and socioeconomic situation.¹

In its pursuit of excellence, the KU Leuven strives for every talent in society to be able to develop optimally. And because potential talent is present at all levels of society, the KU Leuven takes initiatives to create an environment in which this talent can be maximally cultivated.

This means that a gender-neutral policy should go hand in hand with gender-sensitive measures. The obstacles experienced by individuals and groups striving for self-development are often indirect and difficult to discern. They are caused by structural phenomena, social representations and personal and professional cultures that are often difficult to grasp and are particularly resistant to change.

A policy that values diversity should be built on the appreciation of differences, with, as a limit to this appreciation, the condition that human rights and basic democratic rights should be respected.

Subsequently, a gender action plan implies that a whole range of actions are necessary in order to recover from a deeply-rooted gender inequality. Such a diversity policy differs from 'equal treatment', which only refers to the avoidance of direct discrimination. The term 'gender equality' refers to a situation in which individuals of both sexes are free to develop their personal abilities and to make choices without being bound by strict gender roles, and in which possible differences in behavior, aspirations and needs of women and men are taken into account and are valued.²

The underrepresentation of women in academic and (top) management positions at the KU Leuven cannot be denied. The presence of women decreases the higher one ascends the career ladder. As such, talent is lost from which the university and broader society could benefit. The KU Leuven wants to improve its gender policy and make this policy domain a priority.

Many aspects of the lack of gender equality are due to institutional culture. The KU Leuven is dedicated to making an effort to achieve a gender-equal company culture; measures are necessary to develop working conditions and a workplace culture in which female as well as male scientists feel they are welcome, have job satisfaction and experience the university as a caring and fair employer. Additionally, the KU Leuven takes a clear stance when it comes to quota and target figures, as is elaborated further in this action plan. At the same time, it is important to work on company culture. A quantitatively formulated target has no use if a change in mentality is not simultaneously pursued. Therefore, this gender action plan will be completed in the future with a detailed implementation plan.

Gender policy in management organs, boards and committees



“The envisioned change in culture is supported by working out a policy which strives for a minimal 1/3 representation of each sex in management organs and other boards and committees. In this, the Task Force is no proponent of externally imposed quota, but rather advises to bring about a more gender-equal representation in the advisory and management organs, by having the institutions take effective measures for themselves and report on this to the government and society transparently, regularly and in public. Measures installed by the institutions themselves can count on broader support and are related to bringing about a change in culture within the organization. This also allows universities to maintain democratic processes, to respect the participation model, to govern the quality of management processes and to guarantee the continuity in decision-making.”

(VLIR Action Plan Gender Executive summary, 2013)³

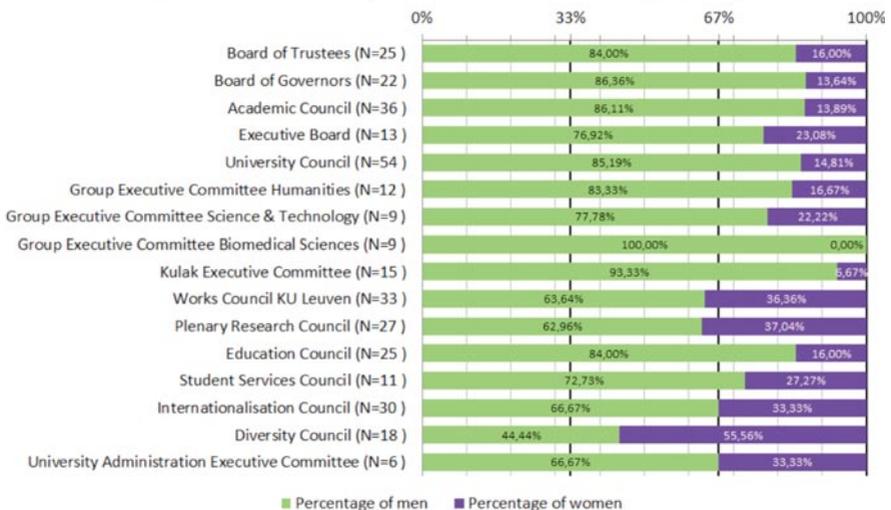
When it comes to quota policy, the KU Leuven takes a nuanced point of view. The KU Leuven is neither a generalized advocate nor opponent of quota, and unconditionally supports the position of the VLIR (Flemish Interuniversity Council). The VLIR warns against a results-driven approach, which can become counterproductive if a change in institutional culture and context is not simultaneously pursued. For the composition of certain specific boards and management organs, however, gender quotas are appropriate. The KU Leuven has already established gender quota for the Research Council and for the Student Services Council (maximum 2/3 members of the same sex). Boards of the Faculties can also choose to follow these guidelines. At the moment, the KU Leuven does not maintain target figures or quota for other boards, councils or committees.

An overview of the composition of several boards and organs of the KU Leuven reveals that the majority of boards do not reach the minimal representation of 1/3 of the same sex. Moreover, it is remarkable that the Group Executive Committees (KU Leuven is composed of three groups: humanities, biomed and science & technology. The three of them have their own executive committees) only have female members at the level of student and staff representation (except for a female vice-dean, who replaces the dean of her faculty). Additionally, the lack of female deans and the scarcity of female vice-rectors influence the balance in several management organs.

Institutionally, quotas cause problems when formal criteria such as rank, position and degree determine membership. The most significant examples are provided by the Group Executive Committees, which are composed of deans. If, in general, mainly male deans are elected, then the Group Executive Committee will also be mostly made up of men. The KU Leuven strives for balance in the composition of its boards and management organs, and therefore it will consider how these can be diversified, striving for a minimum presence of a third of each sex. These considerations will of course depend on the nature of the organ in question and its manner of composition, and will take into account the democratic principles of election and representation connected to certain positions.

In a number of faculties the Assessment Committees are also exclusively populated by men. The Assessment Committees can divide up their meetings into sessions regarding appointments and sessions regarding promotions. SAS members who are not full professors are allowed to take part in the sessions regarding appointments, which means that more members are eligible to chair the Assessment Committee (for appointments). Regarding promotions, the criterion of full professorship is essential, as these commissions evaluate colleagues who are to be promoted, and SAS members who do not have a full professorship still compete with these colleagues in the ranking. Therefore, in cases of such boards and commissions which lack female SAS members due to formal reasons, they can either co-opt female colleagues (from other faculties or external to the university) or the board can appoint a gender expert (this could be a peer or someone from the HR Department) to the committee. Assessment Committees also aim for a minimum target of 1/3 members of the same sex (see below).

**Percentages of men and women in boards and organs at the KU Leuven
(N=chair and members; Source: KU Leuven website 18/09/2013)**



Gender policy for the recruitment and promotion in the SAS



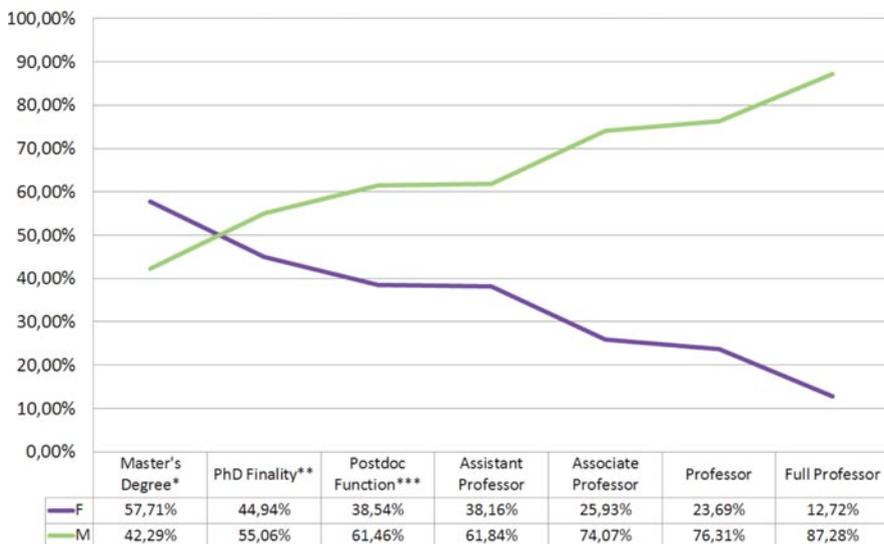
“The development of a (gender) diversity policy for researchers and the courses of their careers supports the envisaged change in culture.”

(VLIR Action Plan Gender Executive summary, 2013)³

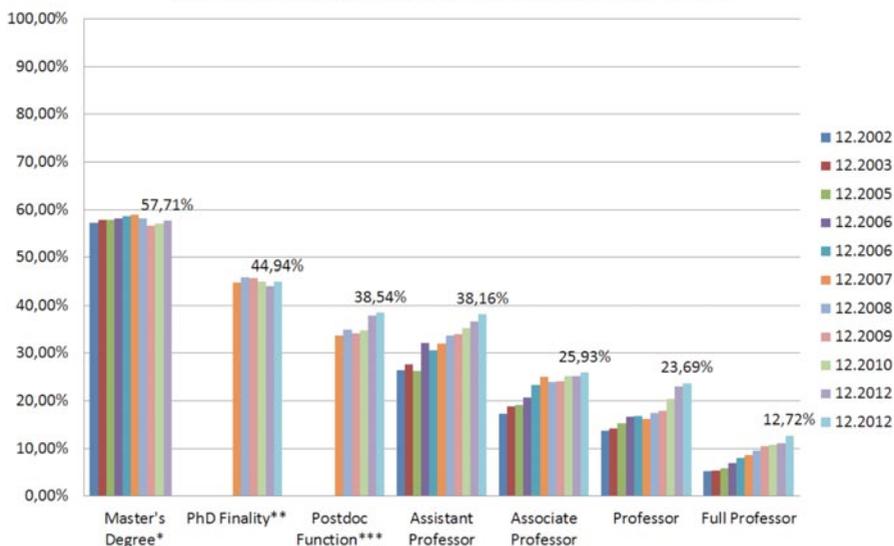
The KU Leuven is dedicated to removing the various obstacles that women encounter during their careers and on their way to leadership positions: it considers different strategies and takes into account the possible pitfalls which may undermine these strategies. In order to increase the representation of women in all levels of academic positions, the KU Leuven has followed an ‘equal opportunities policy’ for over ten years. Despite these efforts and a gradual increase in ten years from 5% to 13%, the number of female full professors remains very low at our university.

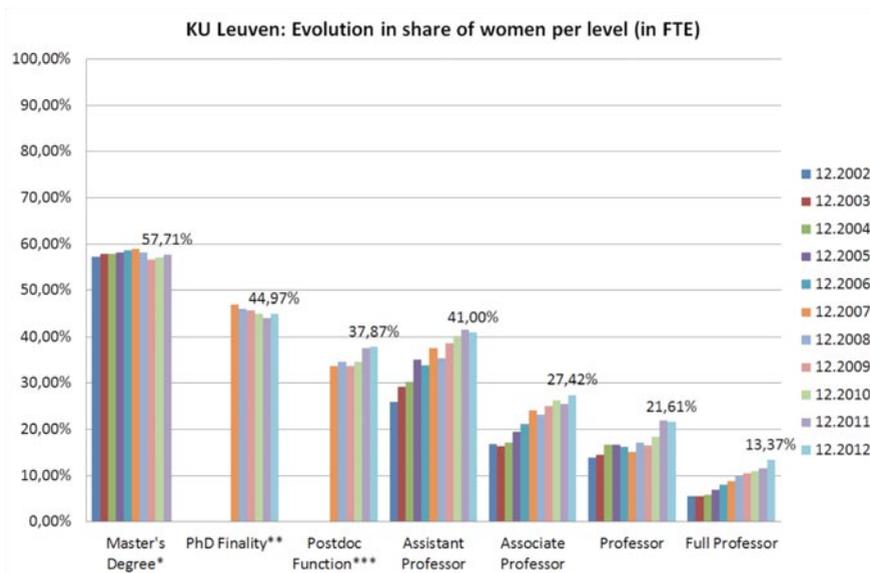
The following diagrams show the most recent percentages of men and women in the different phases of an academic career at the KU Leuven.⁴ The share of women decreases in each phase. The diagrams below, however, do indicate that for each phase over the last ten years there has been an increasing trend, when counted in heads (i.e. the number of natural persons on staff) as well as when counted in FTE (i.e. weighed according to the percentage of employment). Looking at the level of the groups, we see similar patterns arise, although the situation strongly differs from group to group. The Science, Engineering and Technology Group, for example, has a lower share of female SAS members. However, this does not mean that women in this group perform less than those in other groups. The share of female students and PhD researchers is lower in this group than it is in other groups. Additionally, the course of the curve is much flatter, which indicates that, in spite of a low proportion of inflowing women and, at first sight, a low proportion of female SAS members, a relatively satisfactory staff transfer is realized.

Scissors Diagram (in heads, 12.2012)



KU Leuven: Evolution in share of women per level (in heads)





Despite the many different education and employment systems in the academic world, in many countries women still systematically disappear from higher levels of academic hierarchy. This phenomenon, also called “the leaking pipeline”, presents itself upwards from the post-doctoral level.⁵ This means that gender equality necessarily needs to be supported by gender-sensitive actions during recruitment, employment and promotion. This will motivate the best male and female talents, who wish to combine their work and private life in a balanced way, to participate and persevere in an academic career.

1 Monitoring

Monitoring is very important in the materialization of a gender policy. Patterns of indirect discrimination must be revealed and their frequency investigated. The Diversity Policy Office is responsible for monitoring the indicators of gender and diversity policy and reports the results annually to the Diversity Council, the Executive Board, the diversity teams and faculties. Therefore, the gender topic is and has been included in the HR Department’s quarterly report to the KU Leuven and the HR Department’s annual report to the Groups. In the near future, the Diversity Policy Office intends to report on staff diversity in a more structural way, tailored to smaller entities and in greater detail. These kinds of reports prompt attention for and reflection on the current gender policy. The generation of gender-specific data that is widely available and accessible, is continually worked on. Additionally, within the framework of the LERU working group on gender, gender data are collected and compared internationally.

A gender policy report will be ready by the beginning of 2016. This report will sketch the evolution and current situation of gender equality at the KU Leuven (facts and figures) and will identify and suggest remedies for persistent bottlenecks. A special gender coach (at the work-life balance desk in the HR Department) will be appointed to supervise the trajectory and to prepare the report (1 FTE). The HR Strategy for Researchers Action Plan of the HR Department plans to develop a “follow-up instrument which will allow us to follow up on gender (in)equality in detail. This instrument will go further than current data and will allow us to identify specific leaks during the research career”.⁶ This will considerably increase the efficiency of measures taken.

2 Repairing gender blindness: “is there really a gender problem?”

In order to bring about a change in the university’s professional culture, diversity policy must generate awareness of possible gender issues and this awareness must permeate all levels of the university. To this end, the monitoring and reporting described earlier will be very important. Next to these objective findings, extracted from the data, a qualitative approach to the investigation of possible obstacles and gaps will also be crucial. Gender and Diversity, a central contact point where complaints may be lodged, will inventory the complaints and comments it receives. Reports will not have judicial consequences, but they may provide a basis for policy orientation and, if desired, individual solutions can be pursued. Through an information campaign (website, Facebook, newsletter) this service will become better known within the KU Leuven, so that employees (and students) can find their way to it. Next to the reports from Gender and Diversity, diversity policy will also receive input from the diversity teams in the faculties and departments. Systematically conducting exit interviews will also provide better insight into the reasons why women leave an academic career when they are already at a high level. Given the importance of a gender-neutral academic culture, the next version of the HR Department’s employee satisfaction poll will include a section that focuses on gender neutrality within the faculties, departments and research groups. Awareness will be further raised throughout the university through networking meetings, specific training (see section 3), lectures on gender topics, workshops, monitoring and reporting.

Stereotypes and prejudices can also be dismantled by giving female SAS members more visibility. At present, there is no general HR policy regarding encouragement of female role models. Female SAS members should be advanced more often as role models, throughout their academic career. At this time, all chairs of Group Executive Committees are men, members of the Group Executive Committees are mainly (and sometimes exclusively) male SAS, and there are only two female vice-rectors. The presence of women on other boards is often insufficient to serve as a collective role model. A portrayal of women in academics that challenges roles is necessary. Stereotypical approaches to topics should be avoided (for example, the fact that speeches at the beginning of the academic year and talks at scientific conferences are predominantly given by men). Policy can actively promote role-challenging models. Mentoring of SAS by female role models and by gender-sensitive men could be formulated as a social service. Female leadership within the academic community

is not widely accepted. According to qualitative research following up on the first equal opportunities report of the KU Leuven, women in higher functions experience more resistance and they feel that their leadership is less respected. The KU Leuven must investigate how it can make leadership functions more compatible with a satisfactory personal life, for example by cultivating more varied leadership styles and by offering management training programs to support this approach. The university is also dedicated to giving more visibility to women who can function as role models, as well as inviting more female speakers for lectures and events, in order to reflect more balanced gender equality in diverse arenas. The Diversity Policy Office will raise more awareness of these goals and will provide support in recruiting appropriate role models.

3 Employment, selection, retention and transfer

When it comes to qualitative assessment in a competitive context (for appointment and promotion), pure quota are out of the question. In an academic culture, the use of quota or other forms of positive discrimination results in negative backlash, and those selected bear the stigma that they have not been chosen because of their academic capabilities but because of their gender. At the same time it is important to break through the kind of corporatism in which the group seeks its own 'clones' to promote and thereby breaches the standards of objectivity and neutrality.

At the KU Leuven there exist a number of (often fragmented) measures to encourage the retention and promotion of women, but these are not always well-communicated and often difficult to track down.

Gender-sensitive measures are necessary in the domains of recruitment, selection and employment.

First, there is the need for gender-neutral and gender-sensitive job listings. Every vacancy published by the KU Leuven contains the sentence "the KU Leuven has an equal opportunities and diversity policy". This is not the most proactive way to appeal to opportunities groups. This statement should be more clearly and actively formulated. Additionally, the language in which job descriptions are written, and the decision over which tasks should be highlighted in them, could be done with more sensitivity to gender neutrality.

The KU Leuven strives for a better gender balance in the field of candidates for job openings. Therefore, when there is a lack of suitable female candidates or other underrepresented groups, the university encourages the use of a 'search commission' which will look for excellent candidates outside of the usual profile. This way, underrepresented groups and candidates with a more unusual profile can be explicitly encouraged to send in a job application. In some faculties, this is already a reality.

The KU Leuven can cultivate more open-mindedness by accepting and appreciating atypical career patterns. Placing a higher value on teaching duties when it comes to appointing staff and in the early stages of promotion, allows the efforts of both men and women at the university to be better acknowledged and taken into account. Another gender-sensitive measure is the broad publication of job openings. Some job profile descriptions mirror the average profile of the prevailing cohort so closely, that there are less opportunities for people who do not correspond to this average profile, e.g. because of their sex, age, origin, etc. The responsible minister can positively influence this process, for example by reserving some additional mandates for candidates with such broader profiles.

Contrary to the situation in the Netherlands, at the KU Leuven the time which researchers can exclusively dedicate to research is not formulated in percentages or otherwise indicated. Protected research time, however, does offer women more guarantees for a workable schedule.

The evaluation systems lack the necessary transparency. There is very little information to be found on the criteria which are used to approve or reject files, there is minimal feedback after a selection or promotion round and at this moment no further appeal procedure is provided. Therefore we suggest the following measures:

Open and impartial selection procedures imply precise and transparent selection criteria, which are relevant to the candidates' scientific knowledge and, when evaluating a candidate's productivity, take into account the life cycle of men as well as women. A broad perspective on skills is necessary, as well as gender-neutral function classification and appreciation of internal commitments. Assessment Committees, therefore, should elaborate clear descriptions of function profiles and selection criteria and progress towards gender-neutral/gender-sensitive decision-making. This will ensure the objectivity of decision-making and lead to better reporting, which can underpin clearly formulated feedback to candidates.

This process in the Assessment Committees will be monitored by faculty gender vanguards or a member of the HR Department who is trained in gender-neutral/gender-sensitive staff policy. The position of gender vanguard is assigned to all deans and to at least one full professor (M/F) per faculty who has a special interest in gender equality. In German assessment committees, the participation of such a gender vanguard is standard procedure; however, the position is rarely filled by a peer and is more frequently a deputy of the 'equal opportunities service' of the university (which can be compared to the Diversity Policy Office at the KU Leuven). For example, at the University of Freiburg (also a member of LERU), the mandatory presence of a gender expert (Gleichstellungsbeauftragter) in the Assessment Committees is included in the behavioral code of the commissions.⁷

A selection procedure must be composed of mixed selection panels. The KU Leuven strives for a minimum of 1/3 of each sex in the Assessment Committees. If it is impossible to realize this number in a given faculty, someone from another faculty or university can be added to the commission in order to achieve gender balance. This measure is often implemented in other countries as well. For example, we can again refer to the University of Freiburg, where the composition of the assessment committees is schematically depicted as requiring a mandatory gender vanguard and two mandatory members who are external to the faculty, as well as one expert who is external to the university.⁷ If these target numbers cannot be reached, the faculty will report this and will indicate which efforts will be made in order to reach the target.

The presence of women and men in selection panels does not guarantee a gender-neutral/gender-sensitive evaluation. Training panel members to recognize and avoid gender bias is good preparation for a gender-neutral/gender-sensitive attitude. If this is not yet possible for the entire panel, then the appointment of one trained gender vanguard (a full professor with an interest in gender equality) in the commission or the addition of a gender expert from the HR Department will be a must.

When processing selection or promotion files, maternity leave or other reasons why less time was dedicated to research and publishing should be taken into account. This issue can be addressed by the concept 'effective work time', which will be used in the evaluation of publication files. When calculating the number of publications per year, only the effective work time is taken into account for determining the number of research months or years, deducting any periods of professional inactivity due to maternity leave, time credit, thematic leave or long-term disability.

Calculations have shown that in order to reach the target of 30% women at the level of (full) professorship by the end of the full policy term of the current management team (rector and vice-rectors) at the KU Leuven, one could promote or recruit only women and the target would still not be reached. On the one hand this shows how serious the gender imbalances are, but on the other hand it also shows that it is not realistic to aim for such targets in the short term. Additionally, the wide disparity of academic staff gender balance in different faculties means that not all faculties will be able to achieve gender balance as rapidly as others.

With regard to hiring new senior academic staff, the KU Leuven strives for a 50% recruitment of women university-wide over the next three years (2014 - 2016). Depending on the budget margin for promotions and the number of new hires, in the medium-long term the KU Leuven strives for 30% of women at the level of (full) professorship. These targets reflect the ambition of the university's management to improve gender imbalance.

4 Removal of unequal treatment in various statutes

At the KU Leuven, considerable efforts have been made to treat absence due to maternity leave in one and the same way for the different categories of academic staff. More specifically, certain bursaries differ widely, in which some (e.g. FWO-mandates) receive a prolongation of their maternity until the end of the academic year, while others are expected to return back to work within a previously determined period of time. Establishing a policy to ensure the equal treatment of researchers with different statutes is obstructed by fiscal rules which determine that the length of a grant cannot exceed 48 months. Because the FWO does not have to comply with these regulations, it can extend its grants in the case of pregnancy, and thus exceed 48 months. The KU Leuven has addressed the VLIR working group Equal Opportunities about this matter and demands that the government takes action in order to allow universities, congruent to the FWO, to prolong grants after pregnancy until the end of the academic year.

Researchers with an FWO-mandate have a problem regarding the impossibility of prolonging the grant in case of pregnancy in the second term of an FWO post-doc mandate, as well as if one decides to have two children in one term. The university plans to address this issue with the FWO. After all, FWO financial support generally coincides with a critical period for women 'in the pipeline', a time when supportive measures should be taken in order to prevent these women ending their academic careers. Analysis carried out by the KU Leuven show that considerably fewer women apply for a second term with FWO than men (the number of female applicant drops to 20%). The Research Coordination Office is currently investigating the reasons for this significant drop.

Regarding maternity leave, a solidarity fund sees to the replacement of SAS staff members as far as their teaching commitments are concerned. However, this accounts for only a small fraction of the typical full SAS workload. Consequently, it is difficult for SAS staff members to combine motherhood with the remaining workload during maternity leave, which not only weighs on the (research) group, but also on the person on leave. Tenured SAS members are paid their normal salary throughout their entire maternity leave or long-term disability leave. Other academics (and other staff) receive, on top of their health insurance benefits, an additional amount from the KU Leuven to bring the sum total close to their normal net wage. This means that extra costs are incurred if, in these cases, the contract of the employee in question is prolonged for the term of their inactivity or if for this period a replacement was sought. Every year an average of 155 academics are on maternity leave, of which 6.6 SAS; 99.4 associate academic staff and 49 junior academic staff (Source: HR Department, average over five years, 2008-2012). The additional cost to the university for pregnant academic staff consists of hiring a replacement as well as the financial contribution on top of health insurance. The total average cost of this situation for the KU Leuven has never been calculated, but for individual cases calculations are made on a regular basis. These costs differ greatly from person to person because taxable wages and health insurance benefits can vary significantly with function and seniority.

The KU Leuven is investigating the possibility of starting up a fund which can, at the same time, compensate for the issues of pregnancy and long-term disability. Currently these costs are borne by the pregnant employee's research group or supervisor. Every research group that employs women has to deal with these extra costs at some point, especially considering the age group that generally constitutes the associate academic staff and junior academic staff. Research groups faced with additional payments for maternity leave and long-term sick leave will therefore have more costs. A central solidarity fund for all academics at the university would carry the weight of the extra costs in the case of pregnancy, maternity leave or long-term disability and the ensuing prolongation of connected mandates. The installation of a such a fund would prevent research groups from being required to finance these extra costs by themselves, and thereby eliminate a rationalization for these groups to avoid employing any women, which is against the law and unethical.

There are several alternatives for financing this solidarity fund. One possibility would be to provide for this financing on the central level or to fund it with a 'solidarity contribution' calculated on the basis of salary costs, analogous to the calculation of overhead costs, and which would then be transferred to the solidarity fund. Another possible, yet probably less preferable alternative for financing the solidarity fund would be to hire less SAS. Finally, the government could offer encouragement bonuses to universities that establish a sound gender policy; especially considering that while gender is not included in the existing encouragement fund's targets, the government does want universities to address the problem of gender imbalance.

5 Work-life balance

To support a healthy equilibrium between professional and private life, assistive facilities have been expanded: for example, the university offers an ironing service, a grocery service, a day care center and home care for sick children.

The KU Leuven offers day care for children (0 to 3 years) of employees at the rate of Flemish subsidized child care. No child care is available for children older than 3. The KU Leuven is currently looking into plans to extend the opening hours of the day care center, which would be financed by fees paid by those who make use of it. The amount of the contribution would be calculated relative to the income or function of the user. If an employee's child falls ill, the KU Leuven provides either child care at home for the sick child (maximum 15 days per year per child) or the possibility for the parent to apply for a 'short-term absence', which is limited to a maximum of 4 days per year.

In Flanders there are general rules for taking up parental leave and time credit; all procedures are explained fully on the following webpage:

https://admin.kuleuven.be/personeel/intranet/werk_gezin/index.html

Family-friendly meeting hours remain important: minimizing the requirement to be at work during the busiest hours for families is possible, as long as enough flexibility remains to enable one to be present during these hours when exceptional circumstances require it. This guideline has not yet been adopted university-wide, but the concrete possibilities in this direction are being investigated. For example, this action point is supported in the faculty of Arts: members of this faculty avoid planning meetings after 5:30 pm.

At the KU Leuven there are rules that enable working at home, but this is not encouraged. However, this could be an interesting formula for members of the professorial academic staff and some of the junior academic staff. Few employees, however, are aware of the necessary formalities. When academics do work at home, it is often informally arranged, in agreement with the head of the department or the supervisor.

By establishing a work-life balance desk within the HR Department, the KU Leuven intends to provide a readily available information point for questions regarding the combination of work and private life and other gender-related issues (see 4.1).

6 International recruitment and mobility

Concerning international recruitment, the work-life balance desk of the HR Department could make an effort to target communication specifically toward female candidates. Unlike Scandinavian and American universities, at the KU Leuven there is no clear information available for female academics who wish to bring along their families when they are appointed in Leuven. For IRO-scholars, the situation is extremely unfortunate: financially the scholarship is insufficient to allow their families to accompany them, let alone fully support a family and/or children.

The differentiation of international mobility is another important target. At this time, having six months of research experience abroad through international mobility is a tenure track prerequisite. It should be possible to allow variation in the length of these international research posts, so that several short-term visits, as opposed to one long-term stay, can add up to the six months.

The support for international mobility can be improved by offering practical support as well as a remuneration according to family composition. At the KU Leuven the current support for international mobility is rather limited. For all practical aspects, the employee is expected to find his or her own way. A recent improvement is that the fixed amount of the remuneration can be adapted to the composition of the family (remuneration according to family composition).

Availability of structurally anchored, gender diversity sensitive education and career guidance



“By training male and female executives, gender differences and their extra added value are placed in the spotlight and a growing appreciation of ‘female-connected’ leadership qualities can be brought about. To this end, a structurally rooted offer of (diversity) education for executives is encouraged.”

(VLIR Action Plan Gender Executive summary, 2013)³

The KU Leuven offers a wide range of courses and training programs open to all employees, as well as directed at specific target audiences. Some of these courses specifically address gender issues.

These initiatives are open to female and male staff members. Because the KU Leuven’s own vision on diversity is that a diversity policy implies inclusivity, measures are aimed at an audience that is as broad as possible. Only when specific issues relevant to female staff members cannot be generalized to all staff members, are separate courses offered to women. Because the aim of these courses is directed, on the one hand, towards personal growth and finding one’s way in the existing company culture, and, on the other hand, on changing this culture, we choose an approach which does not exclude staff members on the basis of sex. In practice, mainly women take these courses at the KU Leuven, because they are tailored to address obstacles primarily experienced by women and because extra promotional efforts are made to reach them. From evaluations we have learned that female participants find the presence of men enhances the courses. But when it comes to informal meetings, women would welcome the opportunity for female-only networking (see 7).

This approach should be followed up by a permanent evaluation which continually assesses whether the intended target group has been reached and whether the training programs have had the intended effects.

Below we outline the (existing and planned) courses focusing on gender issues.

1 Career in Academia

This course is targeted at post-docs who have reached a critical juncture in their career and who are deciding between continuing at the university as opposed to a career elsewhere, in order to assist them in finding their way in academia. The focus is on self-awareness and self-coaching, enabling each participant to manage their own developmental path and to professionally develop their academic career.

Attention is given to the combination work-family, university culture and transparency during evaluations. There is plenty of room for sharing experiences and exchanging know-how. In this way, participants also cultivate a social network that can continue to provide support after the course is finished.

The course is part of the open programs organized by the HR Department. This highly interactive coaching program is comprised of four sessions spread out over a period of several weeks. The course is led by an experienced internal management trainer as well as (female) KU Leuven professors who give advice and provide insight from personal experience. The HR Department educates the participants on internal procedures concerning employment, promotion and development in the academic career. The course is offered alternately in both Dutch and English (twice every year for a group of 15 participants). In cooperation with the doctoral schools, the Science, Engineering and Technology Group provides a similar training course for PhD-students. The course is offered to deal with the problem of the stagnating number of female post-docs in this group.

2 Mentoring and coaching

In a mentor-mentee relationship, postdoctoral researchers with future prospects are guided in the development of their career (not with respect to content, but with respect to KU Leuven processes).

The mentoring project is an effective and powerful tool to enhance the recruitment of women at the SAS level in the longer term. The traditional obstacles that women experience as they establish an academic career, such as a lack of networks, non-transparent rules and the combination of work and family, form a common thread in the mentoring project. The mentoring relationship is not hierarchical, but is based on trust and support and its perspective is the long term. It consists of a one-on-one relationship between mentor and mentee. Throughout the project there is also room for short and intensive training sessions and for networking among the participants.

Experienced SAS members that serve as mentors are reminded of the obstacles faced by young researchers. A not insignificant side effect of this is that the academics who take on the role of mentor are stimulated to critically reflect on the nature of their own university culture.

The training program consists of yearly information sessions for mentees; a yearly 'coaching' course of half a day for the mentors involving an external trainer (mentors who are mentoring SAS members in Tenure Track will also be able to participate in this course); and one in-between networking meeting for mentees as a follow-up.

The KU Leuven is planning to extend the mentoring trajectory to more post-docs (i.e. not only those who followed 'Career in Academia'). Additionally, the KU Leuven intends to provide a range of mentoring options for PhD-students.

3 Balanced leadership and unconscious bias (planned)

This is a training/coaching program concerning the awareness of unconscious bias and it is specifically intended for SAS members who chair Assessment Committees (for appointment or promotion).

Numbers provided by the KU Leuven have shown that systematically fewer women apply for an appointment or promotion. International research points out that one of the causes of this phenomenon is the implicit bias of policy makers. The feedback received from the participants of the course 'Career in Academia' reveals that postdoctoral researchers have the perception that in these commissions decisions are made according to specific non-explicit dominant values.

The core target group of this training course are the Senior Academic Staff (SAS) who currently or in the near future serve on academic appointment and promotion commissions (n=126). The program aims to raise awareness of unconscious (gender) bias and other implicit biases; to deepen knowledge on gender and other diversity issues; and to promote balanced leadership in order to bring about more inclusive behavior.

4 Critical thinking (planned)

This course is directed towards researchers and management and aims to make them aware of their own unconscious biases and how this influences their objectivity. With reference to real-life interactive experiences, the KU Leuven wants to raise awareness for the fact that all thinking is biased, both in conducting scientific research as well as when it comes to people management.

A great deal of the course will be focused on examining gender bias and the phenomenon of 'mind bugs'. While the course 'Balanced leadership' is specifically aimed at members of evaluation commissions, this training program is for the wider audience of researchers who also hold management positions.

5 Other training courses involving gender

The KU Leuven also offers its staff other courses which do not specifically focus on gender, but in which gender is one of the issues (mainstreaming). For example:

- 'Job application' course including gender topics such as: including/discussing family situation in CV, choices made with e.g. the family in mind, 'female-unfriendly' questions during interviews, etcetera.
- 'CV advice' training course for PhD-students involving similar topics, such as including/discussing family situation in CV, choices made with e.g. the family in mind, 'female-unfriendly' questions during interviews, etc.

- 'Coaching leadership' course for executives, including SAS-members, involving situational coaching (also gender-situation coaching).
- 'Your qualities and ambitions in view' for PhD-students and post-docs: How do I become who I want to be? What are my competences and skills and for which careers am I most suited?
- Networking: fostering a networking attitude in PhD-students and post-docs which will provide them with more information, advice, support, appreciation and inspiration. This will enable them to find additional support that will facilitate career advancement.
- Intercultural communication for all of the staff: Starting out from identity formation, diversity thinking and prejudices, this course discusses gender as one of the identity aspects which can contribute to communication prejudices and misunderstanding.

6 Initiatives exclusively for women

Some female researchers have indicated that it would be interesting for them to be able to meet other female researchers informally, outside of the existing training programs.

The KU Leuven plans to facilitate network building among women by organizing specific networking events for them, for example in the doctoral schools. The doctoral schools also organize seminars with (international) speakers on gender, spreading the knowledge on gender issues while simultaneously offering the possibility to women to network.

Additionally, the working group Woman & University offers a forum for female academics. Woman & University was founded in 1996 as awareness grew that women were extremely underrepresented at the higher levels of the university. This working group aims to improve this situation by, for example, raising general awareness of gender issues, fostering a change in mentality, and proposing policy measures aimed at creating a more female- and family-friendly climate. The KU Leuven wants this working group to play a role in the university's gender policy development; for example, the group is represented in the Diversity Council.

Embedding gender policy at all levels of the university



“This commitment should be embedded at all levels of the university through an explicit policy in the framework of its strategic plan. This policy is realized through operational policy measures and actions as well as through the exchange of expertise and education. Special attention should be given to the realization of an all-encompassing approach in which ‘gender diversity’ is a topic that involves all members of all layers of the organization. To this mainstreaming a monitoring of the results is also connected.”

(VLIR Action Plan Gender Executive summary, 2013)⁹

By implementing an all-encompassing approach to diversity and gender policy, the KU Leuven intends to reach all levels of the university. This will be accomplished by developing firmly-rooted diversity structures and adopting a policy plan and concrete action plans; consolidating gender research, which will also stimulate public debate; elaborating the social and international comparative context and giving diversity more visibility in university policy documents.

1 Developing structures

The KU Leuven already has strongly developed diversity structures with a central component and peripheral elements. The basic structure of the policy advice organs that deal with diversity policy was designed to firmly root this diversity policy in the organization. Analogous to the Education Council and the Research Council, a Diversity Council was founded to develop an all-encompassing view on diversity policy and to improve the formulation of recommendations concerning diversity issues. Several levels of the university, including diversity experts, students and vice-rectors, are represented on this council. The Diversity Council’s tasks are to formulate recommendations to the Academic Council regarding diversity issues, to encourage diversity initiatives organized by students and staff and to safeguard the societal role of the KU Leuven where diversity topics and equal education opportunities are involved. The Diversity Council also coordinates working groups that flesh out specific subtopics in preparation of the formulation of policy recommendations. The composition of these working groups also reflects the diversity of the KU Leuven staff.

Peripherally, the diversity policy of the KU Leuven is anchored through a network of diversity teams in faculties and departments. These teams consist of one person responsible for diversity (this should be someone who weighs on policy, such as a dean), diversity promoters and a faculty contact point.

These teams establish annual diversity action plans for their faculty, communicate about central policy decisions, generate support for diversity policy in the workplace and inform the central Diversity Policy Office about issues that need attention. Together, the central Diversity Council, the Diversity Working Groups which come under the Diversity Council, and the peripheral network of diversity teams provide a clear and visible diversity policy structure which aims to ensure a diversity policy which is transparent and supported by the staff. The entire structure is coordinated by the Diversity Policy Office, which is supervised by the Diversity vice-rector and accompanied by a policy information employee who offers support for monitoring and reporting on the diversity policy. The central level has a diversity policy plan that spans a period of ten years, which is divided specifically into three-year action plans at the central level and yearly action plans at the peripheral level (faculties).

This structure allows not only for the implementation of the central policy of gender mainstreaming and improving gender sensitivity in the workplace, but also for awareness of current gender issues present at the level of faculties and departments. Another way to keep informed about these issues are the reports concerning diversity issues which are generated by the Gender and Diversity contact point. Here, students as well as university staff members can file a report or complaint about anything having to do with diversity, including gender.

In cooperation with HR policy, a working group Staff Diversity was founded, which formulates recommendations concerning staff diversity in the workplace with a strong focus on gender. The working group Woman & University, true to its 'avant-garde' role, is highly critical of gender equality problems and formulates suggestions for improvement.

Within the faculties and the diversity team structures, 'gender vanguards' will be appointed, whose task will be to watch over gender equality in the faculties. The position of gender vanguard is granted to the deans and to at least one full professor (M/F) per faculty who has an interest in gender equality.

The HR Department will install a work-life balance desk, comprised of at least one staff member who is specialized in gender-neutral/gender-sensitive HR policy. Here, staff members will be able to request information regarding work-life balance, supporting measures, possibilities for leave, career planning, etc. The work-life balance desk could be embedded in the career center which is currently being installed at the KU Leuven's HR Department, with an outgoing mobility adviser specialized in outgoing mobility for KU Leuven researchers.

The work-life balance desk's gender expert will work in four main areas. First, this expert will function as an easily approachable contact point for all staff members of the KU Leuven who have questions concerning procedures, statutes, career possibilities, regulations on pregnancy, parenting leave, time credit, working part-time, working at home, etc.

International candidates in a recruitment procedure can also request information from the work-life balance desk. Faculties and research groups with questions about, for example, financing the costs of pregnancy, will also be able to seek assistance from the desk. Accordingly, it is imperative that the gender expert be very knowledgeable about the regulations and procedures within the groups and faculties.

The second task of the gender expert consists in career guidance and coaching. This will include the coordination and further expansion of the mentoring project (see 3.2). Additionally, the gender expert at the work-life balance desk should develop further expertise concerning gender and staff. Finally, the job description of the gender expert includes a policy aspect: the Diversity Policy Office will rely on the gender expert to provide policy input based on questions, complaints and other signals received by the work-life balance desk, as well as assistance in producing the gender policy report.

From the perspective of integration, the KULLOCS⁸ will be addressed in order to discuss the structure and strategy of a common diversity policy.

2 Consolidating gender research

Although there is a great deal of gender-related research conducted at the KU Leuven, it is not always visible or easy to locate. The concerned researchers work in different faculties and groups and do not meet each other enough in an interdisciplinary context, which is essential if gender research is to blossom. Next to the undisputed importance of applied and discipline-oriented gender research, there is also a need for fundamental research and development of critical gender theory. A full-time research professor in gender studies has been appointed. This is a first and important step, but it is still insufficient to draw the necessary attention to the KU Leuven's gender research.

Therefore, within Metaforum, a working group Gender Research will be installed. The working group's chairperson will be relieved of 20% of their duties in order to supervise this working group. Metaforum's School for Advanced Studies will invite internationally renowned professors of gender studies, and herein it will be important to distinguish between fundamental research concerning gender, gender-sensitive research and gender equality in general in research and the academic world.

In striving for excellence in research, the research community benefits enormously from investing in a fair balance between men and women, because this allows the most talented researchers to be selected from the entire pool of potential talents, and these researchers, in turn, obtain the best research results. Diversely-composed teams lead to innovative environments resulting in increased creativity, which enhances the quality of decision-making.

3 Broadening the international comparative context

Foreign universities offer, through example, inspiration regarding research on gender as well as on labor organization. A good basis for this is provided by the LERU document “Women, research and universities”.⁹ The LERU working group on Gender is an important networking tool which can be used to shape advanced gender policy at the KU Leuven. Membership in this working group empowers us to carry out benchmarking and to exchange expertise in an international context.

4 Gender neutrality and sensitivity in policy documents

In response to a question from the working group Woman & University, the Academic Council has approved a memorandum concerning the use of ‘he/she’ in policy documents. The official agreement is that ‘he/she’ will be used in documents, or that authors will try to find a gender-neutral formulation. Within the gender policy, it will be crucial to follow up on this decision so that these agreements will not be forgotten.

By implementing the structures and policies as described above (diversity council, diversity teams, gender vanguards, Woman & University, work-life balance desk, etc.), the KU Leuven will firmly embed gender policy at all levels of the university.

The commitment of KU Leuven management



“Hereby, the added value of (gender) diversity is acknowledged and the university gives the strong and clear signal that it is dedicated to a policy of gender balance and that it makes the commitment to undertake actual and transparent efforts to reach this goal.”

(VLIR Action Plan Gender Executive summary, 2013)³

As a necessary component of university policy, the university’s management supports the permanent university-wide attention to gender balance. Professor Rik Torfs, rector of the KU Leuven, promised in his electoral program to develop a gender-friendly policy and to provide a financial budget to this end. The appointment of a vice-rector Diversity (Professor Katlijn Malfliet) confirms that the management team is dedicated to safeguarding a gender balance and implementing a gender-friendly policy aimed at gender equality. It should be noted that within its gender policy, the KU Leuven does not explicitly refer to the GLBT community although it also wishes to accommodate the needs of this group.

The rector, his management team and the Board of Governors are committed to carrying out the gender action plan (decision of the Executive Board and the Board of Governors).

- 1 For this definition, the KU Leuven is inspired by the definition used by UCLA (2009) in its diversity strategy: “Diversity – a defining feature of California’s past, present and future – refers to the variety of personal experiences, values, and worldviews that arise from differences of culture and circumstance. Such differences include race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, language, abilities/disabilities, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, and geographical region, and more”.
- 2 Toolkit Gender in EU-funded Research, <http://www.kuleuven.be/diversiteit/lucide/pdf/Benschop>.
- 3 VLIR Action Plan Gender Executive summary. Women in the academic career and university policy. Prepared by the VLIR High Level Task Force Gender. Approved by the VLIR-bureau 27/2/2013.
- 4 *For Master’s degrees the academic year 2011-2012 is referred to; **PhD finality includes “assistants”, “PhD bursaries” and “FWO and IWT PhD bursaries”; ***Post-doc functions include “wage scale 44” or the scale “Doctor-assistant”, “PDM Scientific Collaborator”, “Postdoctoral bursary”, “Postdoctoral Researcher FWO”, “IWT Mandatory” and “Detached postdoctoral bursary”.
- 5 VLIR (2010) *Gelijke Kansen en Diversiteit 2010. Een evaluatie van het gelijkekansen- en diversiteitsbeleid aan de Vlaamse universiteiten*. Brussels: VLIR.
- 6 KU Leuven (2013) *HR Strategy for Researchers Action Plan*. Leuven.
- 7 An English version of the behavioral code for the evaluation commissions can be found at www.vielfalt.uni-freiburg.de/dokumente/berufungsleitfaden_en
- 8 KULLOC: KU Leuven on location. This comprises the academic courses which are integrating into the KU Leuven.
- 9 LERU (2012) *Women, research and universities: excellence without gender bias*.

RECTORALE DIENST
DIVERSITEITSBELEID
Naamsestraat 22 box 5008
3000 LEUVEN, Belgium
tel. + 32 16 32 56 14
beleid@diversiteit.kuleuven.be
www.kuleuven.be/diversiteit/



MEMBER OF

**ASSOCIATIE
KU LEUVEN**

V.U.: ?????