

Policy Recommendations

Establish Mentoring in Europe to Enhance Gender Equality

Women are still widely under-represented in science decision-making positions and far too few are pursuing an academic career. The **gender dimension** still plays an unjustifiable role in determining job opportunities and funding allocation, which prevents women from fulfilling their scientific potential and **hampers the sustainable development** of European societies.

For more than a decade, **mentoring** has been a key measure for promoting women in academia and research. Mentoring provides women researchers with **role models**, fosters their **integration in scientific networks**, and enhances their **identity** as researchers and their **autonomy** in the field. Mentoring enhances their **competence** in **building their careers**.

In view of the aims and challenges of a sustainable European Research Area, there is ample **need to increase the offer of mentoring** for women researchers, to **network existing programmes** and to engage in **exchange of experience and debate** about the potential of mentoring to promote gender equality in academia and research in Europe.

› Aims and activities of eument-net

With support from FP6, eument-net has been established as a European Network of mentoring programmes promoting women in academia and research. eument-net aims at enhancing women's position in academia and research through mentoring, by fostering

- exchange of experience and best practice
- the definition and dissemination of quality standards for mentoring programmes
- knowledge transfer and international cooperation
- the development of new mentoring offers and services
- debate on mentoring as an instrument for promoting gender equality in academia and research

eument-net conducts surveys, organises expert and training workshops, panels and international conferences, and edits

publications. Its main publication is the eument-net guideline manual *“Establishing mentoring in Europe. Strategies for the promotion of women academics and researchers”* (ISBN 978-2-9700611-0-6; Bulgarian edition, ISBN 978-2-9700611-1-3). eument-net also initiates international cooperation activities, such as the Short Term International Mentoring Exchange (STIME). eument-net also offers an electronic platform and newsletter.

› Need for action to develop mentoring schemes

There are **important disparities in Europe** with regard to the availability of mentoring schemes for women researchers. Especially in Southern and Eastern European countries, such offers are still scarce or non-existent. The main **reasons for the lack of mentoring offers** appear to be a set of hindering conditions, including the lack of governmental support and funding, the lack of infrastructure and support from higher education and research institutions, as well as the novelty of mentoring. In countries where mentoring programmes have successfully been established, **favourable conditions include national or regional policies for gender equality** and ministerial support, but also **adequate structures** in academic or research institutions, and an institutional **culture open to change**. Stakeholders such as NGO's or **key players** also play an important role for the implementation of mentoring. Results from the eument-net project highlight the **need for action on various levels** to successfully address the persisting gender inequalities and to implement efficient measures such as mentoring.

› Recommendations

The following recommendations build on results from research carried out in the eument-net project and debates organised by eument-net, involving women researchers, mentoring and gender equality experts and science policy representatives.

European Policy Makers and Administrations

› Disseminate eument-net manual to scientific officers and project coordinators

Information on mentoring as an instrument to promote women's careers must be made widely available to facilitate the establishment of new mentoring schemes.

We recommend the **dissemination of the eument-net guideline manual** to scientific officers in DG Research and to **coordinators of projects** funded by the European Commission

› EU Directives requiring national policies for gender equality in HE and research

To improve women's position in HE and R&D in Europe, the **European legislation** on gender equality in Higher Education and Research **must be strengthened**. European legislation should comprise European **Council Directives** which require Member states to adopt **national legislations and policies** to promote gender equality in the HE and R&D sector. National legislation must define the **goals, instruments and responsible organs** for the implementation of the gender equality policy. Instruments comprise the publication of **comprehensive gender segregated statistics** and **funds for specific measures** combating vertical and horizontal segregation, destined to achieve equal opportunities for women and men in access to HE and R&D positions and careers.

› Calls for mentoring schemes in Southern, Eastern and Balkan countries

Calls for the establishment of **pilot mentoring schemes** in Southern and Eastern European countries as well as Balkan states should be issued. Such calls must **encourage the cooperation between actors on different levels**, in particular relevant science policy organs, research institutions and stakeholders in gender equality, etc.

› Calls for coordination activities and comparative study

Specific calls are needed to support coordination and networking among mentoring programmes to **enhance knowledge transfer and cooperation in the ERA**. Eument-net also recommends the issue of a call for a **comparative (long term) study** on women's access to measures such as mentoring and to assess the effectiveness of such measures.

National Policy Makers and Administrations

› National policy for gender equality in HE and R&D funding mentoring schemes

To be effective, a **national policy** to enhance gender equality must comprise **clearly defined goals** and a set of targeted tools, including **comprehensive gender segregated statistics** and **measures such as mentoring schemes**. In addition to adequate funding for the measures, funding should also be provided for **infrastructure**, including offices and staff, on a ministerial level and in the institutions, to pilot and implement the schemes. Policy makers must assure **support from the highest ministerial level**.

› Support stakeholders in gender equality to launch pilot projects

In **countries with little experience** in mentoring, policy makers may as a first step provide financial support for **pilot mentoring schemes** and **conferences** and support the publication and **dissemination of results**, including discussion at ministerial level.

› Support national networking activities among mentoring programmes

To enhance efficiency and **foster institutional cultures that favour gender equality**, policy makers should support networking activities on a national level to allow synergies and support **continual improvement of mentoring programmes** through exchange of best practice.

Higher Education and Research Institutions

› Integrate mentoring in institutional long-term strategy for staff development

Mentoring programmes for women must be institutionally well integrated, financially sustainable and supported by the highest management levels. They **should be "rewarding"** and consistent with PhD education programmes and staff development policies. Mentoring should also be **part of the job description of academic staff**, especially of professors, and be assessed in their annual activity records.

Civil Society Organisations

› Disseminate experience and knowledge about mentoring

Civil society organisations often play a **pioneering role** in disseminating knowledge about mentoring by organising conferences, implementing pilot mentoring schemes and assuring broad communication

Industry and Private Companies

› Finance pilot mentoring schemes between academic research and industry

Private companies can play a fundamental role in promoting mentoring schemes to enhance women's access to decision-making positions in research by sponsoring pilot mentoring schemes for women to **foster mobility between academic research and industry**

› Finance pilot mentoring schemes implemented by civil society organisations

Private companies should support civil society organisations to organise pilot mentoring schemes and conferences on mentoring

› Support networking and cooperation among mentoring programmes

Private companies should support international networking activities for mentoring programmes, on a national and international level, to support knowledge transfer and debate on mentoring in order to promote gender equality in academia and research

› Contact

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