

## **Ten years of promoting gender equality at the FWF: Achievements to date and challenges to come**

According to the Austrian Research and Technology Report 2016, women still account for less than 50% of researchers in all OECD countries. In Austria, the share of women in research is just under 30%, meaning that the country continues to rank in the bottom quartile among OECD members. If we compare Austria to the leading innovation countries, only Germany reports a lower figure.<sup>1</sup> It is thus clear that women are still under-represented in the Austrian research community, accounting for only 34% of researchers at universities, 25% at non-university research institutions and 16% in the corporate R&D sector. Despite the fact that the percentage of graduates from tertiary education in Austria has risen to 57%, the “leaky pipeline” phenomenon is still prevalent in the country's research institutions: the higher the position, the less likely it is to be filled by a woman.

In the Austrian and European contexts, the FWF plays an important role in identifying imbalances and taking measures to rectify them. As an independent organisation, it funds basic research in all disciplines, evaluates research according to top-notch international standards, and helps to shape research quality standards in Austria. In this way, the FWF provides broad support for researchers within Austria and makes an active contribution to the European Research Area, while also promoting the internationalisation of Austrian research.<sup>2</sup>

In 2005, the FWF adopted a gender mainstreaming strategy<sup>3</sup> with the following aims:

- to highlight the attractiveness of the FWF's funding portfolio as a career development vehicle for women researchers;
- to enhance the visibility of women as project leaders;
- to increase the number of female applicants to the FWF;
- to ensure the quality of gender-related data on proposals and project leaders, and to communicate the corresponding indicators on an annual basis.

The FWF's monitoring data on gender equality from 2015<sup>4</sup> clearly reflect the current situation in the organisation's structures, programmes and processes. Thus the FWF's top decision-making bodies – the Supervisory Board<sup>5</sup> and the Executive Board<sup>6</sup> – are currently balanced in terms of gender. The Assembly of Delegates,<sup>7</sup> which includes representatives of Austria's universities and other extra-university research establishments and decides on the organisation's rules of procedure, now comprises 35.6% women and 64.4% men. The share of women on the FWF Board,<sup>8</sup> which is responsible for making funding decisions, is currently 38.9%.

As for funding applications, 31.6% of proposals in 2015 were submitted by female principal investigators. Broken down by discipline, the share of female applicants (in descending order) is 42.1% in the humanities, 41.9% in the social sciences, 40.2% in medical and health sciences, 29% in agricultural sciences and veterinary medicine, and 24.9% in the natural sciences. The lowest share of proposals submitted by women (8.4%) is found in the technical sciences.

Of the projects approved by the FWF, 31.9% are headed by women. There is virtually no difference in overall approval rates by gender: in 2015, the figures were 25.1% for women and 24.7% for men.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.bmvit.gv.at/en/service/publications/downloads/downloads\\_ftb/ftb\\_2016\\_en.pdf](https://www.bmvit.gv.at/en/service/publications/downloads/downloads_ftb/ftb_2016_en.pdf)

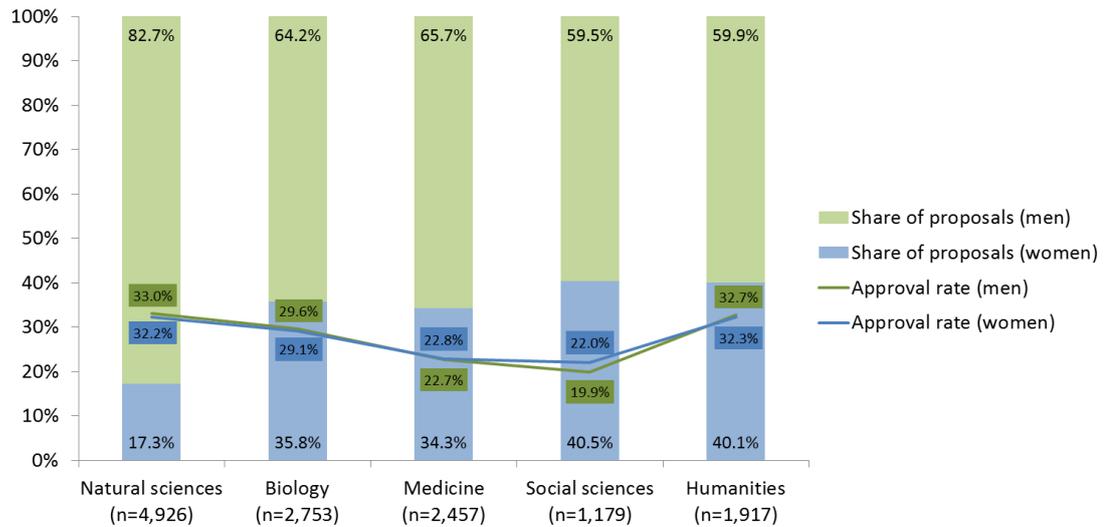
<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fwf.ac.at/en/about-the-fwf/publications/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.fwf.ac.at/en/about-the-fwf/gender-issues/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.fwf.ac.at/en/about-the-fwf/gender-issues/monitoring-equal-opportunities/>

<sup>5,6,7,8</sup> <https://www.fwf.ac.at/en/about-the-fwf/organisation/>

The chart below shows the results of an analysis of approval rates by gender and discipline from the years 2009 to 2015 (covering 13,232 projects in total).



**Chart:** Proposals received (all funding programmes), 2009 to 2015 / Shares of applicants and approval rates by gender and discipline

As can be seen, the approval rates for projects submitted by women and men are nearly equal within each discipline; any differences are statistically insignificant. The only significant differences are between disciplines, the reason for them lying in the relative quality of the projects submitted.

In the projects it has approved, the FWF is currently funding 3,430 junior researcher positions. Of those for doctoral candidates, 44.2% are held by women; among post-doctoral researchers, the figure is 43.6%. As for the reviews obtained from the international research community in the FWF's evaluation process, 21.5% were prepared by women.

In summary, a number of successes have been achieved over the last 10 years:

- The FWF's decision-making bodies now exhibit a reasonable gender balance.
- The share of women involved in the FWF's funding decisions is now approximately 40%.
- The percentage of proposals submitted by women reached 31.6% in 2015.
- The organisation's procedures are demonstrably fair and objective. There is no statistically significant evidence that any group of applicants identified by the FWF is disadvantaged.

The FWF now needs to explore new ways to increase the number of applications from women even further and thus to leverage the potential implied by the roughly 40%<sup>9</sup> share of women among researchers in Austria. To this end, the FWF is currently preparing a gender equality plan for the period 2017–2020. To be completed in summer 2017, it will contain a catalogue of specific measures designed to make it even more attractive for women to apply to the FWF, thus highlighting even more clearly the role of the FWF's funding portfolio as a career driver for women researchers.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> BMWFV statistical reports for 2008, 2010 & 2015. [www.bmfwf.gv.at](http://www.bmfwf.gv.at)

<sup>10</sup> <https://zenodo.org/record/20580#.WHil3GfFB9A> (in German)