

Background information on the target rate in the SFB program

The coordinated programs of the FWF, which include, among others, the special research programs (SFB) and the doctoral programs (DK), represent the flagship programs of the FWF. Their aim is to provide internationally outstanding researchers with the best financial and structural conditions. Through the now longstanding tradition of funding in this area (SFB since 1993; DK since 2004), the FWF has also helped support the establishment and expansion of internationally visible areas of specific research and thus contributed to the image of universities/research institutions.

The funding of outstanding research and the expansion and the qualification of human resources have been key priorities of FWF from the beginning. In addition to the latter, the FWF has striven to increase the share of the underrepresented gender, which in most cases is women. Looking back, the participation of women researchers in these programs has still not exceeded the 20% mark in recent years and thus a far smaller proportion of women researchers have participated in these programs over many years.

This fact runs contrary to the [gender mainstreaming strategy](#) implemented by the FWF in 2005, which, among other things, aims at the balanced participation of female and male researchers in the decision-making bodies and programs of the FWF. On the basis of this, a target rate of 30% female researchers was defined for the SFB program in 2011 to raise awareness among the coordinators to invite qualified women from the national research community to participate. The monitoring of submitted outline proposals supports this requirement. Since 2013, no outline proposal has been submitted to the FWF without the participation of at least one female researcher.

The requirements of the [national ERA Road Map](#) (Priority 4 – Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming in Research), created by the BMWFW in 2016, serve as the starting point for the FWF's next strategic step in implementing the gender mainstreaming strategy.

In 2021, the FWF Executive Board updated the [equal opportunities strategy](#) on the topic of "Gender and Diversity", which outlines the FWF's principles on the topic and defines relevant future actions. A subsection of the paper deals with increasing the share of women researchers in FWF programs. As can be seen in the annually updated [Monitoring Equal Opportunities](#), women are still underrepresented in FWF applications as well as in all fields.

The FWF has therefore retained the 30% participation target rate of the underrepresented gender in the new PROFI¹ programs, research groups and the revised SFB program and made the composition of the management team in terms of gender distribution a decision-making criterion. However, this also means that there is still no formal quota for the submission of applications. Instead, it means that, in the case of equal scientific quality, the rate of male and female researchers in the management team is a determining factor in the funding decision.

In this way, the FWF would like to emphasize the target rate that has existed for years in terms of the participation of the underrepresented gender. In addition, a clear signal should be sent to take the actions necessary to achieve equal participation of female and male researchers. Thus, the FWF finally fulfils the [political mandate](#) of the Austrian government's

¹ PROFI= project application through institutions, i.e. the applicant is the research institution, together with the coordinator.