



P-D10

Report on the Promotion of Gender Equality in REWERSE

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Abstract

This report documents the efforts and achievements of REWERSE to promote gender equality among the members of the Network of Excellence. It consists of two parts: One part is of statistic nature, showing the presence of both genders in different functions in the project. The second part reports about a questionnaire that was handed out during the last annual meeting and was requesting the members perceptions on gender equality in the project.

The statistical results given in the first part show a relatively high number of female researchers in all positions in the project. The results from the questionnaire show that REWERSE did a good job in promoting gender equality in all aspects, no respondent felt treated less favourably because of gender, and the way things were handled in REWERSE were positively stressed. Interesting suggestions to continuously promote gender equality in European networks were made.

Keyword List

gender equality

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Report on the Promotion of Gender Equality in REWERSE

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1 Introduction

This report documents the efforts and achievements of REWERSE to promote gender equality among the members of the Network of Excellence. It consists of two parts: One part is of statistical nature, showing the presence of both genders in different functions in the project. The second part reports about a questionnaire that was handed out during the final annual meeting end of 2007 and was requesting the members perceptions on gender equality in the project.

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2 Proportion of genders in all positions in REWERSE

The following sections describe the member structure of REWERSE according to the presence of female members in different positions. The statistics have been compiled in November 2007, viz. three months before the end of REWESE. We compare the presence of senior members (holding a PhD) with junior researchers (mainly PhD students), count the number of women in leading REWERSE positions (co-ordinating functions, committee functions, etc). We compare the REWERSE figures with figures from European and German statistics regarding the proportion of women in informatics This comparison shows that in REWERSE the proportion of women is higher than the average.

2.1 General member structure in REWERSE

Figure 1 shows the general REWERSE member structure distinguishing the proportion of junior/senior and male/female members. REWERSE has in total 110 members of which a high proportion of 45 members is junior (45%), viz. not yet holding a PhD. Among the junior members a relatively high proportion of 29% are female while among the senior members only 17% are female. Altogether the average of female members is 22%.

Given that REWERSE is situated in the area of informatics and computing where the proportion of women is in general still relatively low (cf. Figure Figure 2 below) in particular the high proportion of female junior members can be seen as a clear sign that REWERSE is fostering young female researchers in informatics. Among the senior researchers the female proportion is only 17% which, however, we do not see as a result of REWERSE's member policy but as a mirror of the general European research environment (cf. Figure 2).

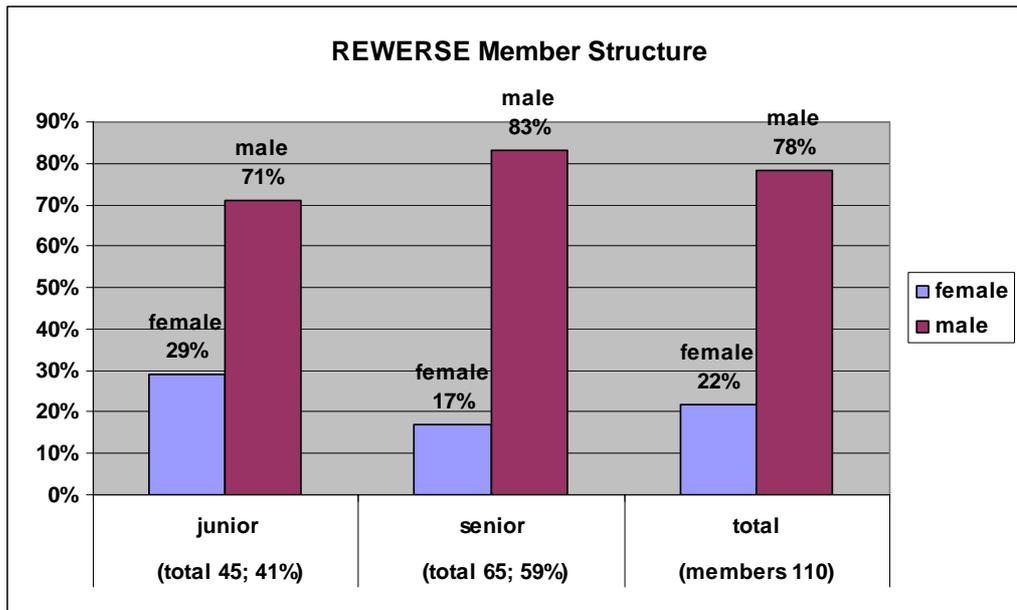


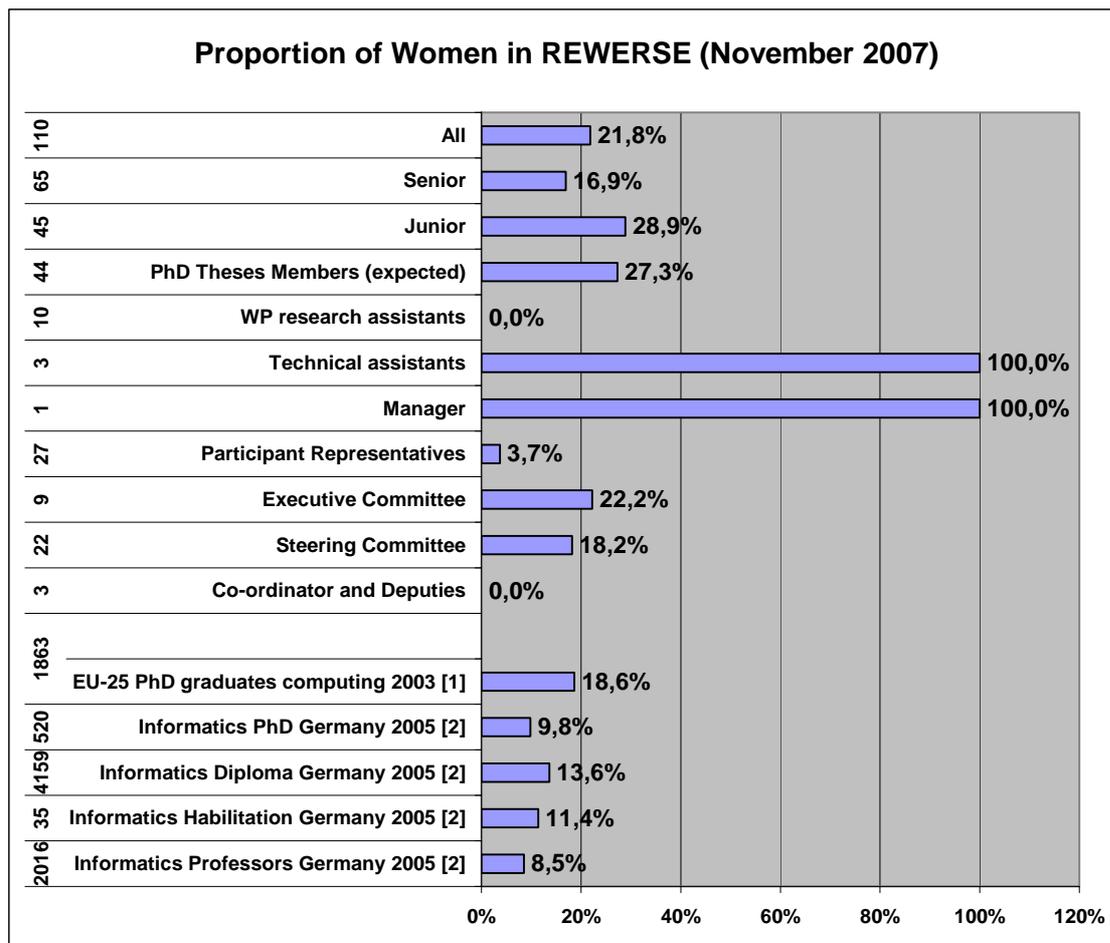
Figure 1 REWERSE Member Structure

2.2 Proportion of women within REWERSE

In this section we describe the proportion of women regarding different positions in REWERSE. Figure 2 shows that the proportion of women significantly varies across different positions and functions within REWERSE. We compare the REWERSE female proportion with figures extracted from the following sources.

- [1] She Figures, Women and Science, Statistics and Indicators. European Commission, Directorate-General for Research, Information and Communication Unit, Science and Society, 2006. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/pdf/she_figures_2006_en.pdf
- [2] „Genderaktivitäten im Wissenschaftsjahr 2006“ compiled by Kompetenzzentrum Technik-Diversity-Chancengleichheit e.V. Available at <http://www.kompetenzz.de/Genderaktivitaeten/Themen-Daten-Fakten>

The figures relate to the years 2003 in the Europe-25 states [1] and 2005 in Germany [2].



References

- [1] http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/pdf/she_figures_2006_en.pdf
- [2] <http://www.kompetenzz.de/Genderaktivitaeten/Themen-Daten-Fakten>

Figure 2 Proportion of women in REWERSE

Figure 2 shows that in REWERSE 27 % of the PhD theses are completed by female members, whereas the European average in 2003 was only 18% [1] and the German average in 2005 was even lower, viz. 10% [2]. This shows again that in particular among the young researchers REWERSE has a very good female proportion. On the other hand it is significant that none of the REWERSE research working group assistants, viz. the responsible PhDs students for a research working group, is female while all technical assistants for non-research related REWERSE groups are female. Also the project manager of REWERSE is female. This indicates that administrative positions have a higher female proportion in REWERSE than research positions.

Regarding leading positions in responsible research oriented committees the female proportion is again comparatively good. 22% of the Executive Committee members are female members and 18% of the working group co-ordinators (Steering Committee) are female showing that – at least compared to the German average – REWERSE’s proportion of women in leading positions is higher than the average. However, none of the scientific co-ordinators or deputies is female, only the project manager. Interestingly, an admittedly low proportion,

viz. around 4%, of the participant representatives are female. Since participant representatives are generally strongly involved in the University administration this again is seen as a consequence of the general distribution of female researchers in European Universities (cf. that e.g. in Germany only 8,5 % of the informatics professors were female).

In general, the female contribution to most REWERSE positions is higher than comparable figures in Germany and Europe. In particular, the high proportion of female members among the junior researchers / PhD students is worth to be mentioned as REWERSE's most important contribution to increasing gender equality in informatics.

3 Questionnaire: Gender Equality in REWERSE

During the REWERSE annual meeting, November 26-30, 2007, a questionnaire was handed out to the members of network to oversee the results of handling gender equality affairs in REWERSE. The source for this questionnaire is the Gender Equality Scheme from the University of Southampton (available at http://www.soton.ac.uk/about/genderequality/ge_scheme.pdf), which has been adapted for these purposes. The used questionnaire is given in Appendix 1, the electronic representation of the answers given to the questionnaire, i.e. the raw data, is given in Appendix 2. This section gives a summary of the results from the questionnaire.

3.1 Statistical figures and respondents profile

The questionnaire was answered by 39 participants, among them 28 % female participants. The majority of participants were computer scientists (87 %)

3.2 Perceptions of gender equality treatment in REWERSE

Here, the survey participants were asked to state how women and men were treated in the NoE REWERSE (Men & Women treated equally / Men treated less favourably / Woman treated less favourably / Don't know) with respect to several questions.

89% of the participants answered, that equal treatment was present in the participation of working groups, and approximately 70% agreed that equal treatment was present in the nomination and participation in committees, in the policies and procedures, and support for young researchers. With respect to Family-friendly policies, 45 % stated that they do not know, the others stated equal treatment. Only one person mentioned perceived that woman are treated less favourably with respect to the nomination for committees, and one person said that men are treated less favourably with respect to the support for young researchers.

97% agreed that REWERSE has an equal opportunity culture (the remaining 3% stated they do not know whether it is so or not).

100% of the respondents could not think of an occasion where they felt treated less favourably or discriminated against because of their gender.

3.3 Promotion of gender equality in REWERSE

21 subjects have answered the question on "What do you feel the NoE REWERSE is positively doing to promote gender equality?" and listed 25 examples of "good practice".

Among the answers, it was pointed out that the questionnaire itself was an example of good practice (16%). 20 % of the answers were stressing, that the way to abstract from gender issues by simply treating everybody equally is a good practice shown by REWERSE. The majority of answers, 40 %, were referring to the fact that female researchers were present in the network, in all positions (manager, working group coordinators, etc.), network committees (steering, executive, etc.), program committees (Reasoning Web, Summer School Board, PPSWR / RR, ..). Also the friendly culture for young researchers regardless gender was pointed out (12%), and the fact that job offers of open position within REWERSE / REWERSE organizations were promoted (8%). It was positively mentioned, that flexible working (home-office, part-time working) was possible (16%).

16% of the subjects stated that particular gender equality actions related to REWERSE were initiated by the participant they belong to, 16 answers were given. Among the answers, flexible working hours, the possibility to work at home or to work part-time were mentioned most often (44%). Also, the everyday handling with equal opportunities were stressed (19%). Further actions mentioned were the promotion of female computer science students and the offering of training courses.

Only one subject mentioned that particular gender equality actions were taken by the working group: the promotion of female computer science students. With 100% of the participants stating that equal treatment of both genders within the REWERSE project was achieved, there was no particular need to put further efforts on working group level.

3.4 Promotion of gender equality in EU projects

The respondents were asked to give suggestions what EU projects should be doing to further promote gender equality amongst staff. 21 subjects have answered this question, altogether 25 suggestions were given. 40% of the answers were centered around the topic engaging both genders in projects. Among the suggestions were "encourage woman to apply", "continue to allow and support woman in heading important tasks of projects", "more woman in coordination positions", "please be careful in the evaluation process of project proposals to have a substantial number of female researchers", and "Nothing special. I think EU should promote good research projects without considering the gender of the promoters".

Quite some suggestions were centered around the topic working conditions and support, e.g. "promote / support flexible working, part-time, home-office, etc." (12% mentioned this), and "make costs for child care eligible costs".

The promotion of good examples of promoting gender equality were mentioned, as well as that the EU commission itself could provide research projects with examples and guidelines of "good practice".

Some practical suggestions for observing gender equality were given, though contradictory. On the one hand, it was suggested, that "the steering committee of each project should have a person responsible for gender equality", on the other hand: "stop gender questionnaire bureaucracy. Instead, give personal funding / grants to woman.

Further answers stated that gender equality is perceived to be "already gained", or that this is "more a matter of the participating institutions themselves".

3.5 Discussion

The results of the questionnaire clearly show that the way gender issues were treated within the REVERSE project was perceived to be fair. Nobody reported about an occasion where he or she felt treated less favourably because of his or her gender. It was pointed out that the way to "equally treat all people regardless gender" was present in all activities, and handling the affairs, e.g. with the presented questionnaire, was received as very good. Valuable hints were given by the respondents by showing good practice within REVERSE (proportion of female researchers in leading positions, support for young researchers, etc.), and suggestions for further promoting gender equality in EU projects were given (presence of all genders at all levels of research projects, flexible working conditions, etc.).

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Appendix 1 – The Questionnaire



Gender Equality Questionnaire

*This questionnaire is open to all members of the NoE REWERSE.
Please note: All responses will be treated as confidential.*

Gender is everyone's duty – get involved and make a difference!

Q1. How would you describe your gender?

Female Male

Q2. Do you have a degree in computer science?

Yes No, but degree(s) in _____

Q3. Based on your experience, do you feel men & women participating in the REWERSE project are treated equally in the following areas? Please tick as appropriate.

	Men & Women treated equally	Men treated less favourably	Women treated less favourably	Don't Know
Participation in Working Groups				
Nomination for committees				
Participation in committees				
Policies and procedures				
Family-Friendly Policies				
Support for young researchers				

Do you have any comments?

Q4. The REVERSE project has an equal opportunity culture. Do you agree?

Yes No Don't Know

Q5(a). Can you think of an occasion where you feel you were treated less favourably or discriminated against because of your gender?

Yes No

(If yes, please go to Q4b)

(If no, please go to Q5)

Comments:

(b). How did you resolve the issue? Please tick as appropriate.

I dealt with the issue myself by approaching the person/group involved

I reported the issue to the network co-ordinator

I reported the issue to the project officer / to the EU

Other (please comment): _____

If no action was taken, please explain why below:

(c). Were you satisfied with the way your issue was handled and resolved?

Yes No

Comments:

Q6(a) What do you feel the NoE REVERSE is positively doing to promote gender equality?
Please list some examples of "good practice".

Examples:

(b). Did the participant you belong to initiate any particular gender equality actions related to REVERSE?

Yes No

If yes, which?

(c). Did the working group you are mainly involved in initiate any particular gender equality actions related to REVERSE?

Yes No

If yes, which ?

Q7. What do you feel EU projects should be doing to further promote gender equality amongst staff?

Q8. Has this questionnaire missed any important gender issues or topics? If so, what are they? Please comment below:

Thank-you for your participation!