

UNICAFE



Project no.: 036695

Project acronym: UNICAFE

Project title:

**Survey of the University Career of Female Scientists at Life Sciences versus
Technical Universities**

Instrument: Specific Support Action
Thematic priority: Science and Society

PUBLISHABLE FINAL ACTIVITY REPORT

Period covered:
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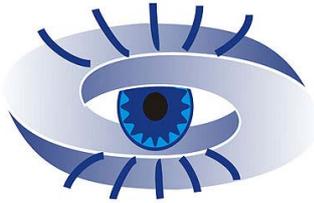
Date of preparation:
24 January 2009

Start date of project:
01 November 2006

Duration:
2 years and 2 months

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Project coordinator organisation name:
Hungarian Science and Technology Foundation



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Survey of the University Career of Female Scientists at Life Sciences versus Technical Universities

<http://www.unicafe.ee/>

Summary description of project objectives

The aim of the project was to carry out an **innovative pilot survey** to enhance existing knowledge on career patterns of female scientists at universities. The project opened up **new perspectives for further in-depth work** in the field by mapping the situation of female researchers in **engineering and life sciences** in seven universities in six countries of Europe, with special regard to gender differences in research careers, critical areas where women are underrepresented, leading university positions, access to funding, mobility and work-life balance.

Women face great difficulties in developing professional careers in equal opportunities to those of men in these sectors, especially regarding their proportion and representation at the **higher levels of the hierarchical ladder**. The project examined and compared the situation of female and male researchers and decision makers. A **methodology** to map careers in university was designed and tested in the partner institutions. The **survey** involved PhD students, researchers and decision makers. Besides the **collection of detailed statistics** – which is missing at almost all involved universities – the consortium conducted **interviews** with those female researchers who succeeded in doing a career in these areas of science in spite of the difficulties. The project mapped not only the good practices but the bad ones as well, in order to determine how the career of female researchers is set back in these areas. Furthermore, the project wanted to **draw the attention of university managements** to the importance of ensuring equal opportunities for women and men and using the practice of gender mainstreaming as a European Union policy.

The **partner countries** included two new member states (Hungary and Estonia), three old member states (Austria, Finland and Italy) and a candidate country (Turkey), so they provided an **ideal coverage of circumstances** available throughout Europe.

Specific objectives of the activities in the *UNICAFE* project were the following:

- **To deepen the quantitative knowledge base** on female scientists in the higher education sector in Europe.
- To carry out an **innovative pilot survey** to enhance existing knowledge on career patterns of female scholars at universities.
- To support the preparation of equal opportunities policies and the **implementation of gender mainstreaming** in daily practices at the universities

- To **reach efficient benchmarking and monitoring** of gender mainstreaming policies and practices at the university level.
- To encourage university managements to introduce **gender sensitive statistical data collection** to be carried out yearly, and to urge the production of sex-disaggregated statistics, including yearly recruitment statistics.
- To **put forward recommendations** to the management of universities on how to enhance the role and place of women scientists in leading positions at universities.
- To support scientific evaluation based on **more objective criteria**.
- To **raise awareness** on the difficulties female researchers face during their career.
- To review the university **best practices** for the equal treatment of female and male scholars.

In order to fulfill these objectives, a project consortium consisting of 8 partners was set up as follows:

Partic No.	Participant name	Short name	Country
1 (co-ordinator)	Hungarian Science and Technology Foundation	HSTF	Hungary
2	Budapest University of Technology and Economics	BUTE	Hungary
3	Graz Medical University	MUG	Austria
4	Semmelweis University	SE	Hungary
5	Istanbul Technical University	ITU	Turkey
6	University of Oulu	OUL	Finland
7	Tallinn University of Technology	TUT	Estonia
8	University of Tor Vergata	URTV	Italy

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Achievements of the project

As one of the main tasks of the project, an **empirical survey** was implemented. First the appropriate **methodology** for gathering relevant information and data to specify adequate measures and practices to support female researchers was identified. A **survey guide** was prepared which determined common indicators to use in all institutions for the survey in mapping the existing practices and the missing factors.

Using the methodology described in the survey guide, the partners prepared **university reports** dealing with the following 4 components:

- *Statistics:*
 Each partner collected gender-disaggregated data on the academic staff per faculty, including positions and the leadership of the university. A common glossary of the different positions' names in each country was compiled, in order to make data comparable.
- *Questionnaires:*

An on-line questionnaire consisting of 90 questions was distributed among the researchers at the partner universities.

- *Interviews:*

Each partner conducted interviews with 8 female and 8 male researchers about their life and professional experiences. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The same questions – as specified in the survey guide – were used in each country.

- *Case studies:*

The most interesting interviews – 2 female and 2 male ones per partner – were expanded into case studies.

The reports were prepared in English and in the national languages. The university reports were made available on the project's website.

A **synthesis report** was prepared integrating the most important findings of the university reports and comparing the results, based on the comparison between universities and on the comparison between the two fields of science (engineering and life sciences) involved. Conclusions were drawn and **policy recommendations** were formulated with respect to possible actions to be carried out at universities to implement gender mainstreaming:

Direct **dissemination activities** within the *UNICAFE* project were achieved through the following activities:

- The **university reports** and the **synthesis report** were **distributed** in the national languages and in English among universities, decision and policy makers all over Europe.
- An **international conference** was organized to disseminate the results of the survey, including the discussion of conclusions and recommendations with university decision makers and policy makers. The event gave floor to university leaders, decision makers and researchers to report their experiences and compare these with the project results.
- A **website** was established for the UNICAFE project at <http://www.unicafe.ee/>.

Potential impact

The comparative mapping exercise was a pilot action providing opportunity to **compare the gender mainstreaming policies and equal opportunities strategies** – if any – at the universities and the working conditions of female researchers in different countries and environments.

The project formulated **conclusions** about the university atmosphere in the countries involved, shed light on the obstacles women face in the different scientific fields and countries, and **opened up the field for further studies** based on the methodology and findings of this pilot action. University reports and the synthesis report in national languages will **help university managements to deal with the problems and tasks related to gender mainstreaming**.

The dissemination activities aimed at **spreading the knowledge** gathered during the project and sharing the experience of universities in tackling the issue of female careers in science, thus helping university managements to **implement a more effective human resources strategy**, in order not to waste valuable brains and provide equal opportunities for female and male researchers.