PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LAUSANNE

Action Plan 2017-2020
The University of Lausanne has long been committed to gender equality. As an institution promoting freedom, creativity and responsibility, UNIL ensures that its members are able to develop their potential. As Rector, one of my priorities is to increase the proportion of female professors. The hope is to establish a ‘virtuous circle’ by fostering women’s career interests through setting an example.

Certain measures need to be taken by UNIL in order to achieve this: for example by soliciting applications from women, ensuring a minimum number of female candidates for professorial posts and even extending deadlines for submission. We must adopt a more subtle approach to tackle gender stereotypes during the selection process, which encourages the belief that men are more competitive, more focused on success. Stereotypes influence women too, often resulting in self-imposed limitations.

Changing mindsets, beliefs and habits to attain parity and thus reinforce excellence in teaching and research, such is UNIL’s ambitious but equally realistic goal.
Equality is a value that is intrinsic to UNIL’s identity. Our gender equality policy, formalised by the Swiss Federal Equal Opportunities Programme, is strongly supported by the university Rectorate.

The new 2017-2020 action plan develops the Rectorate’s strategic vision and sets out the goals and measures to achieve greater gender equality at UNIL. The plan signals a desire on the part of the new Rectorate to pursue the work already begun.

The Rectorate aims to support students and teaching and research staff of both genders in achieving success in their intended studies and careers.

This means guaranteeing women and men equal opportunities in their career pathways. In particular, women who opt for an academic career must be able to secure professorships and managerial positions more easily.

While the proportion of female research and teaching staff at postdoctoral level at UNIL has noticeably increased in recent years, women remain underrepresented in professorial and executive posts. In addition, the gender balance varies widely depending on the discipline.

As a responsible employer, UNIL is also mindful of its employees’ working conditions. It is determined to guarantee respect for personality and diversity, evaluate equal pay and offer conditions that are conducive to a good work/research/family-life balance.

To attain these goals, UNIL will continue to involve all stakeholders within the institution’s faculties and services. UNIL’s action plan is a confirmation of its desire to provide the university community with gender-equality training and to make it aware of the issues and benefits of a culture that respects diversity and the constitutional principle of gender equality.
5 priority goals

1. APPOINTING MORE FEMALE PROFESSORS
   Despite progress, the proportion of female professors remains low. And yet almost half of doctoral and postdoctoral students and staff are women. To avoid a loss of talent and to recruit higher calibre individuals, UNIL will ensure that non-discriminatory appointment practices are established.

   OBJECTIVE To appoint women to at least 40% of all professorships.

   MEASURES
   • Generate applications from female candidates.
   • Make appointment committees aware of gender bias.
   • Define guidelines for professorial appointment procedures.
   • Closely monitor the procedures in practice and the statistical records of progress.

   To recruit more female professors, attention must be paid to the gender bias to which men and women are unconsciously subject. In particular, selection criteria must be made more explicit and transparent.

   Prof. René Véron
   Dean of the Faculty of Geosciences and Environment

2. CAREER SUCCESS FOR WOMEN
   Today women are widely represented in universities, but their numbers decrease significantly higher up the ranks of the profession. For this reason, UNIL actively supports career success for women.

   OBJECTIVE To actively support women’s academic and professional careers and increase their share of positions of responsibility.

   MEASURES
   • Propose research funding and mentoring/training programmes for female academics.
   • Raise the profile of UNIL female researchers and their work.
   • Offer support and advice on career development to female technical and administrative staff.

   How UNIL welcomes and treats its female staff is a determining factor in motivating them to pursue an academic career.

   Prof. Nicky Le Feuvre
   Head of the European GARCIA project at UNIL

UNIL belongs to the regional women’s mentoring network – the Réseau romand de mentoring pour femmes – aimed at female researchers at the start of their scientific career. It is also part of the REGARD Programme, which offers continuous professional development workshops to early-career female academics and female professors.

UNIL also seeks to provide targeted support to female professors and postdocs: for example, workshops on team management and on preparing to apply for a professorship, as well as the Tremplin funding.
Gender equality is not a given: it is learned. Managers and PhD supervisors in particular must have the benefit of specific training and tools to make gender equality instinctively part of their everyday practice.

Prof. Marianne Schmid Mast
Vice-chair of the Consultative Committee for Equal Opportunities

One innovative measure put forward by the Faculty of Biology and Medicine to its researchers of both genders involves providing funding to employ a support person during parental leave.

Prof. Sophie Martin
Chair of the Pro-women Committee

Since 2013, UNIL has successfully developed a flagship project for integrating gender equality into governance – the 50/50 Vision project – which urges faculties to establish their own equality objectives and measures that are adapted to the particular faculty context. Some faculties have, as a result, set up extremely active faculty equality committees.

Prof. Sophie Martin
Chair of the Pro-women Committee

As a responsible employer, UNIL offers working conditions that respect equality and diversity and promote its members’ personal development. In particular, it has decided to strengthen anti-harassment and conflict-resolution measures.

Prof. Martial Pasquier
Vice-Rector for Human Resources and Finances

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To integrate gender equality into the everyday work practices of all members of UNIL.

MEASURES

• Pursue the 50/50 Vision project (see inset) and involve male staff in this project.
• Support faculty equality committees.

OBJECTIVE

To guarantee an open, inclusive and non-discriminatory working environment.

MEASURES

• Measure equal pay at UNIL.
• Prevent sexual harassment.
• Consolidate campus childcare services and promote work-life balance.

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OBJECTIVE

To ensure that male staff is involved in promoting gender equality.

MEASURES

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• Support faculty equality committees.

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In collaboration with EPFL, UNIL has developed an extensive childcare provision policy: three nurseries and one primary school (P1-P2) offering full day care are available on campus.

The Equal Opportunities Office SOS-Parents Project offers parents free emergency childcare, financial assistance with childcare and holiday activities for children.

The Equal Opportunities Office offers awareness-raising on gender bias in professorial appointments that comprises several elements: video, online toolkit and workshops for appointment committee members.

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Gender equality: what they are saying

I am very willing to take on the role of mentor. I have always been keen to see gender balance in the research teams I work with and to encourage work to be organised in a way that meets the demands of career and home.

Prof. Blaise Genton
Full Professor of Tropical Health (PMU and CHUV), responding to the call for applications to the women’s mentoring network, Réseau romand de mentoring pour femmes.

Ambitious and innovative, the Plan refers to recent and well mastered scientific literature and testifies to sound knowledge of the measures implemented to promote equal opportunities in other institutional contexts both in Switzerland and abroad.

Extract of the evaluation by swissuniversities of the 2017-2020 UNIL's Action Plan.

Tremplin funding provided me with an invaluable opportunity to immerse myself in my research and writing for six months, during which I managed both to further my primary project (…) and to complete or initiate other projects that will enrich my CV and broaden my research profile in the coming years.

Mary Flannery
Lecturer (English Literature), awarded 2014 Tremplin funding. This award by UNIL for Early-Career Female Academics is designed to enable women on the staff to devote themselves to their research.

It’s an incredible incentive – like the plastic bag tax! We see far more women at our conferences and symposiums; they become more visible and, suddenly, we think about calling on them the next time.

Christina Akré
Research Manager, PhD (IUMSP/CHUV), on funding for scientific events with 40% women speakers, set up by the Faculty of Biology and Medicine as part of its “AGIR pour l’égalité” action plan.

It’s an excellent initiative for all involved, particularly for the professorial and intermediary staff, and merits being expanded. It’s a long-term task. Well done and I wish you continued success.

A participant at the Les mots de l’égalité workshop, organised by the Equal Opportunities Office, that provides training in the use of gender-neutral language to UNIL staff.