

SUC Program P-4, Sub-Program «Equal Opportunities»: Interim Report

Synthesis of the Reportings 2014 (summary)

On behalf of the steering committee of the Sub-Program «Equal Opportunities»

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Summary

Introduction

At the start of 2013, the federal program equal opportunities (new: SUC Sub-Program P-4), initiated in 2000, saw a fundamental change of system: It no longer serves to support of individual projects or persons but assists universities in the implementation of in-house **action plans** for furthering equal opportunities for men and women.

This approach is meant to grant universities more flexibility in promoting gender equality. Furthermore, it is expected that this helps the topic of gender find firmer ground within the universities themselves and that measures and structures augmenting equality, which up to now have been financed to a large degree with federal funds, will in the future be part of the universities' regular budgets.

What remains unchanged are the overarching objectives of the SUC Sub-Program P-4: It is meant to help **significantly augment the share of female professors** – from 18 % in 2012 to 25 % at the end of 2016.

The project application for the new SUC Sub-Program P-4 planned to first take stock two years after the implementation of the new system. This is why reporting for the year 2014 has been greatly enhanced. For **self-evaluation**, findings from the reports are used for assessing extensive feedback data about the implementation of action plans from the years 2013 and 2014. As a rule, the reports were compiled by equal opportunities offices and were authorized and signed by vice rectors or rectors responsible for the action plans.

The present interim report presents results in three steps:

- **Completed activities:** First it documents what types of activities the universities have completed in 2013 and 2014 in the framework of the action plans and how they themselves rate their quality.
- **Overarching goals of the program:** Second, an examination of the effects the action plans have had with regards to three overarching goals of the SUC Sub-Program P-4: a) the institutional establishment of equal opportunities, b) an increased share of women among the professorial body and groups of policymakers, and c) initiating a cultural and structural change which will help create equal opportunities for men and women in academic careers.
- **Experiences with action plans:** Third, universities are asked to summarize experiences they had with the action plans – which in Switzerland constitute a novel instrument in working toward university equality.

Activities 2013 and 2014

Action Plans and Fields of Action

The management of the SUC Sub-Program P-4 defined a total of **seven fields of action** which should be at the center of the action plans. The first five should be understood as «key fields of action»:

- Institutional anchoring of equal opportunities
- Increasing the number of women as elected professors as well as members in governing and decision-making committees.
- Measures in the field of gender specific promotion of young academics.
- Framework conditions for students, employees, and researchers with family commitments.
- Reduction of the horizontal segregation limiting access to disciplines and of the vertical segregation causing dropouts.

The two remaining fields of action can be understood to group various measures which cannot be captured by the above classifications («Human resources and organization development», «Miscellaneous»).

Most action plans cover all five «key fields of action». Exceptions are the action plans of the universities of Neuchâtel and Zurich, which do not foresee any measures against the horizontal segregation – i.e. the gender specific selection of disciplines by male and female students. This omission might be owed to cause and effect between horizontal segregation and the subordinate aim of the SUC Sub-Program P-4 (Increasing the share of female professors to 25%) being less immediate and obvious than it is the case with other fields of action.

Current State of Implementing the Action Plans

In the initial phase of implementing the action plans, **modifications made to the content or timeline** were relatively frequent. In principle, this need not be read negatively – on the contrary, it is a major plus of the action plans that they grant universities more flexibility and room for adjustment. Occasionally universities even report that in some fields of action, the results surpassed what was originally planned as the minimal outcome.

Major delays were the exception. According to the reports, universities succeeded in implementing all or almost all of the measures laid out for individual fields of action by the action plans of 2013 and 2014. Reports about major delays in several fields of action are made by the University of Fribourg (fields of action concerned: institutional anchoring and share of female professors) and the University of Lucerne (share of female professors, human resources and organization development, miscellaneous). Due to a prolonged shortage of staff, the Uni-

versity of St. Gallen downsized its action plan at the end of 2013; to a large extent, the implementation of the revised plan was successful.

The universities almost unequivocally attest to a **high quality of achievements** within the framework of their action plans in 2013 and 2014. Report forms made five categories available for a rating of the quality of achievements within each field of action. Most often, «very good» (33 times) or «good» (27 times) were selected; the choice of «mediocre» was the exception (6 times). Negative ratings («bad» or «very bad») did not occur.

Two universities (BE, GE) rate their achievements in all fields of action to be «very good». The category of «mediocre» was only selected by a total of three universities (FR, LS, SG) for some fields of action – an assessment which could be due to an at least partially self-critical attitude. Reasons given for the cautious assessments are, among others, that the personnel resources of an equal opportunities office could not be consolidated as planned, certification of a university as a family-friendly work environment did not come about, examinations of appointment procedures or cases of discrimination in wages could not be made as planned, a study of the causes of horizontal segregation did not lead to any concrete recommendations for action, and the integration of gender specific modules for the training of executive staff have not yet taken place to the desired extent.

For the years 2015 and 2016, universities predict somewhat fewer divergences from the action plans. At only two universities are modifications within a majority of fields of action foreseeable. Since summer 2014, the University of St. Gallen has been developing a new strategy for equal opportunities and diversity measures, the concrete implementation of which will be decided in spring 2015. At the University of Berne, presumably five of the seven fields of action will be expanded or will see content-related rebalancing.

Finances

In 2013 and 2014, the federal government provided universities with a total of five million francs for the implementation of the action plans. A condition for the release of the funds was that universities were to pay at least half of the expenses themselves. According to their own reporting, five universities had spent at least 80% of **federal funds** by the end of 2014. All of the other universities have used up a smaller share, in two cases even less than 50%: The University of St. Gallen, due to unforeseeable staff shortage, was unable to spend more; the University of Lucerne's multi-year planning already ensures full internal funding for the equal opportu-

nities office, and, in addition, approaches project funding restrainedly: It would like to use federal funds only for financing measures it can keep up itself once federal aid runs out in 2016. This is why Lucerne is the sole university which, by its own account, possibly won't have spent the entire sum of federal funding by the end of 2016.

Up to today, the requirement that at least half of the expenses for action plans should be paid through the universities' **own resources** has been met by nine out of ten universities. Due to delays within some projects, the current share at the University of Zurich is slightly less than half. However, the University asserts that its contribution when viewed across the entire span of the project (2013-2016) will likewise be more than 50%.

1st Goal: Institutional Anchoring

Since 2001, structures for equal opportunities at Swiss universities have been developed with substantial support from the federal government. With basic structures now in place, the SUC Subprogram P-4 aims to lastingly secure these structures and eventually hand over the financial and organizational responsibility to each university. The reports serve to document the progress made at the midpoint of the SUC Subprogram P-4, focusing on four different areas:

- Funding of the staff of equal opportunities offices
- Integration of equal opportunities measures within a university's multi-year planning
- Institutional anchoring of equal opportunities at the faculties
- Establishment of a monitoring system for equal opportunities

Equal Opportunities Offices

At the end of 2014, **personnel resources at equal opportunities offices** at the larger Swiss universities (BS, BE, GE, LS, ZH) ranged from between 3.9 and 5.8 full time positions, smaller universities (FR, LU, NE, SG, USI) were staffed with between 1.3 and 2.1 full time positions. With the exception of one (USI), all universities at the **end of 2014** covered more than half of the personnel costs. Only at the University of St. Gallen, however, is the entire funding of staff organized through a multi-year plan. All other universities secure between 20% (USI) and 70% (LS) of their personnel resources in a multi-year planning. Yet these numbers cannot be taken as proofs for an incomplete institutionalization: Some universities point to the fact that otherwise financed positions partly include fixed-term contracts for project work for which no future funding needs to be made available.

Where the future is concerned, seven universities are optimistic that funding for their equal opportunities offices will, starting at the **beginning of 2017**, be secured by funds available for personnel in the multi-year plans. Three universities (BE, FR, LU) doubt that this will be the case: At the universities of Fribourg and Lucerne, a question mark remains regarding positions in place for cooperation projects among several universities. The University of Bern assumes that the current level of staffing of the equal opportunities office cannot be secured without federal funds.

Equal Opportunity Measures

Nine universities – with the exception of the University of Fribourg – indicate in the report that they also finance some equal opportunity measures **through the multi-year plan** and, thereby, have institutionally anchored these measures. The most frequent measures are programs for the promotion of young academics (BS, BE, GE, LU, NE) and the spending of university funds and material resources for the running of equal opportunities institutions (BS, BE, LS, LU, ZH).

Money spent in the year 2014 of the **total sums** reserved in the multi-year plans for equal opportunity measures was in the following range: At two universities the amount was lower than CHF 50,000 (SG, LU), at four universities it was between CHF 100,000 and 115,000 (NE, USI, BS, BE), at two universities between CHF 180,000 and 200,000 (LS, ZH), and one university spent over one million Swiss Francs (GE). Proportionally large sums are mostly spent for gender specific grants for young female academics.

Institutional Anchoring at the Faculties

Remarkable differences between faculties of larger and smaller universities can be observed regarding the institutional anchoring of equal opportunities. **The five largest universities** (BS, BE, GE, LS, ZH) confirm in their reports that the action plans have, at least tendentially, contributed to establishing equal opportunities to a larger extent at faculties. At three universities, this is directly linked to the ways in which the action plans were conceptualized: At the Universities of Bern and Lausanne faculties are asked to independently develop (action) plans for equal opportunities; at the University of Zurich, the action plan mainly consists of projects located in the individual faculties. In the report, the University of Zurich singles out this organizational strategy for the action plan having gained wide acceptance from faculty members.

By contrast, **smaller universities comment more skeptically on the importance** action plans have had for the institutional anchoring of

equal opportunities at faculties. Reasons for this cannot be directly gathered from the reports. On the one hand, this might be due to faculties at smaller universities not reaching the critical size for running equal opportunities work in its own right. Another reason might be that smaller universities, due to their limited size, tend to assign this task primarily to central services. At the same time, it needs to be pointed out that such an institutionally limited validity of action plans need not be read only negatively: In the eyes of some smaller universities, equal opportunities was already adequately set in place before and therefore no additional action was needed.

Monitoring of Equal Opportunities Measures

A vital element of institutional anchoring is regular reporting on the status of equal opportunities. Therefore, action plans were required to include the setting up of a monitoring of equal opportunities measures. In the reports five universities (FR, LS, LU, SG, ZH) indicate that their equal opportunities offices write **independent equal opportunities reports**. As a rule, these reports are published every second year and through a formal procedure are approved or, at least, taken notice of by university authorities (e.g. university management, equal opportunities committee).

At the other universities, **monitoring instruments are put in place in various ways**. At the University of Geneva, for example, updates on relevant facts and figures are sent to the rector's office every trimester and are included in the management report in a chapter on equal opportunities. In other places, conversely, an update of the facts and figures takes place only every four years or monitoring is limited to a small set of charts.

2nd Goal: Stronger Representation of Women

Full and Associate Professors

In its third phase (2008-2011/12), the federal program Equal Opportunities had formed the subordinate goal to augment the **share of full and associate female professors to 25%**. After this goal was not met, it became part of the SUC Sub-Program P-4. However, it looks as if, this goal will remain unattained in the current project's duration: In 2014 the share was 19%, and an increase of 6% within two years' time is very unlikely. The highest annual increase rate ever observed is 1.8% (in 2006, in comparison to 2005). At most universities the share of female professors in 2014 was relatively comparable, ranging from 17% to 21%. Exceptions are three smaller universities with a specialized range of disciplines: The University of Lucerne has, due to its focus on the Humanities and Social Sci-

ences, the highest share of female professors at 26%; the University of St. Gallen has the smallest share, 11.6%, a number which in parts can be explained by the dominance of Economic Science. Relatively small is the share at the Università della Svizzera italiana – 15.8%. However, this university marks a strong trend of increase: In the last five years it was able to more than double its share of female professors.

In the reports, several universities are surprisingly confident of **reaching the 25% mark by the end of 2016**. Almost all universities whose share of female professors in 2014 was around 20% think this to be a realistic endeavor (FR, GE, LS, NE). This optimism might be due to two facts: First, three universities have newly introduced extensive benchmarks from 30% to 40% for new appointments (GE, LS, FR). Second, most universities have in the past years indeed increased their share of female professors – albeit to a much lesser degree than what is needed to reach the program's goal. If the universities do not succeed in significantly augmenting their annual increase rate, the program's goal remains out of reach for most of them.¹

Assistant Professors

The Sub-Program SUC P-4 served to introduce a target value for assistant professors for the first time. This is set at a **40% proportion of women by 2016**. At the moment, four universities (BE, LS, LU, NE) have reached this; most others are, with a share of under 30% far from it (BS, FR, SG, ZH, USI). Only the University of Geneva, with a share of 35%, takes up an intermediary position and assumes it will reach the 40% mark by the end of 2016.

The target value for assistant professorships demonstrates the difficulty involved in setting a sensible common goal for all disciplines and universities. Some universities (LS, NE) surpassed the target value already in the beginning; for others, the goal is unrealistic. It might prove to be more effective to aim for a common target value of 40%, allowing for target values specifically set for each university. Thereby it could be acknowledged that assistant professors are not equally frequent at all universities and that their degree of integration varies from one discipline to another.

¹ The University of Lucerne has currently reached this goal (26%). However, the setting up of an economic science faculty might prove to set a new challenge. The University of Lausanne, in its reporting, points out the fact that it has almost no say in the appointments at the University Hospital. If one puts this aside, the University of Lausanne comes much closer to the 25% mark in 2014. Comparable situations might be found at other universities with medical faculties.

Governing and Decision-Making Committees

Eventually, the SUC Sub-Program P-4 supplemented the subordinate goal of a 25% share of female professors for the first time with the addition that the share of women in governing and decision-making committees should be augmented. This was done without indicating a percentage.

In 2013 and 2014, only a few universities have introduced **specific measures** for reaching this goal (BS, LS, LU, ZH). Research conducted in the framework of a research project at the University of Zurich demonstrate that even when taking up an international perspective it is hard to find universities who have developed such measures.

Due to the absence of a target value and the poor data available, universities were only asked to state in their reports whether they think it to be likely that the share of women in governing and decision-making committees will **significantly increase by the end of 2016**. Only two universities chose the answer «yes» (NE) or «likely yes» (FR). The rest repeatedly pointed out that this process takes a longer period of time. Different opinions exist regarding the question of whether there might be a shortage of qualified women willing to take up newly vacant positions.

3rd Goal: Change of Cultures and Structures

Sustainably securing equal opportunities for women and men at universities depends not least upon on a change of commonplace and partly subconscious patterns of thinking and acting. The SUC Sub-Program P-4 has not explicitly defined such a cultural and structural change as one of the program's objectives. Nonetheless, the management of the Sub-Program deems it very important to address this aspect in the reports in order to find out to what extent equal opportunities have found a sustainable foundation at Swiss universities.

The notion of a cultural and structural change was illustrated in the reporting form by examples but was nowhere conclusively defined. The question **whether the action plan initiated a cultural and structural change** which could contribute to women and men having equal opportunities for an academic career, most universities answered «likely yes». They remain somewhat more skeptical regarding the question whether such a change will **be effected on a wider plane by the end of 2016**.

Signs for such a change repeatedly mentioned are decisions made by central university institutions (e.g. the rector's office) in which altered attitudes regarding gender issues become manifest. However, reports most frequently feature evidence for a new sensitivity and novel behavior patterns in faculties

(e.g. feedback from appointment committees) or in the universities' daily routines (feedback about events, campaigns, service; requests for brochures or newsletters). Several universities also mention that services offered by the equal opportunities offices are more in demand – also by a broader set of people – than had been the case some years ago and that equal opportunities work generally is met with much more goodwill.

Experiences with the Action Plans

Generally, universities rate their experiences with the action plans so far very positively. For a differentiated assessment of the effects, universities were confronted with 14 statements in the reporting form which outline possible effects and outcomes of the action plans, all of which they could either endorse or dismiss. Reactions demonstrate that the action plans mainly served to ameliorate the **«consistency» of equal opportunities work**: It gained coherence and visibility, has clearer objectives, is more fully integrated as a management tool, and tendentially is better coordinated.

Verdicts are more cautiously expressed when it comes to the **actual putting into effect and the acceptance of equal opportunities work**. Statements which suggest that equal opportunities measures have found a broader base, are more strongly anchored at faculties and institutes, appeal increasingly to men, or, generally speaking, can rely on an increased self-initiative by university members, are less confirmed. In part, this might reflect the fact that the action plans have existed for a mere two years and that effects on the program level are more swiftly made than they are able to change existing conditions and alter the thinking of a wider public.

In their **concluding thoughts** about the action plans, several universities additionally pointed out the following advantages:

- **«Customized» equal opportunities policies**: Because the action plans allow universities to develop equal opportunities policies perfectly tailored to their particular set-up, great effectiveness and efficiency are most likely.

- **Greater acceptance**: Due to the fact that the action plans were developed by members of the universities themselves, often in cooperation with the office of the (vice) rector or faculty offices, equal opportunities work has gained greater acceptance at the universities.

- **Flexibility**: At least some universities emphasize the greater flexibility granted by the action plans and the possibility to react to new developments and trends. Others, however, find that there is still more potential for flexibility.

At the same time, there are several mentions of the following **challenges and risks**:

- **Institutional anchoring at faculties**: Universities whose action plans strongly involve the faculties emphasize how this has contributed to a successful implementation of measures. Others, which chose to leave out the faculties during the planning stage, think that a lack of awareness about the action plans within the faculties proved to be a big challenge during the implementation stage.

- **Management too rigid**:

Some universities find that current implementations of action plans are still managed too rigidly in order to adequately react to experience gained from the implementation process or changes in the immediate setting. Another thing mentioned several times is that the choice of seven fields of action somewhat stands in contradiction to the internal logic of the action plans, a fact which forces universities to make arbitrary allotments. Furthermore, a critical reflection is desired about the aptitude of the individual fields of action for contributing to the subordinate program objective (increasing the share of female professors to 25%).

- **Limited Duration**: Several universities fear that with the ceasing of federal funding at the end of 2016, some projects might have to be terminated in the middle of their implementation stage. It is likewise presumed that this would lessen the acceptance of the action plans, whose success can be traced back to precisely the endorsement by three authorities (equal opportunities offices, rector's office, and federal university policy institutions).

