The role of excellence in a reflexive approach to gender equality

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Agenda

- Paradox in Austrian Gender Equality Policy
- Gender Equality Policies in the university sector
- Recent developments - success stories?
- Reasons for the paradox ... 
- ... and how to address it
Paradox in Austrian Gender equality policy

- **Agreed concept on political level**
  - Participation of women in teams (fixing the number of women)
  - Reduction of structural barriers for women / female careers (fixing the organisation)
  - Integration of gender in research content (fixing the content)

- **Comprehensive and well implemented policy mix**
  - Successful programmes with a long tradition
  - Sound legal foundation (university sector)
  - Tradition of evaluation

- **Slow progress due to ...**
  - Selective focus of policies
  - “pro-forma” implementation
  - Contradictions between ideal of “good science” and equality goals
University sector

- Long tradition of equality polices
- Comprehensive policy mix developed by turn of the century
- Austrian Universities Act (UG 2002)
  - Changing role of Federal Ministry
  - Universities responsible
  - Idea of „targeted policy mix“
  - Sound legal foundation
- Additional targeted programmes
  - Career development programmes for excellent female scientists (FWF)
  - excellentia
  - Awards etc. to increase visibility of women / gender studies (e.g. Gabriele Possaner Staats- und Förderpreise)
- Gender equality monitoring
Recent developments ... success stories?

- Increasing share of professors
- Increasing female participation in decision making (quota)
- Moderate increase in share of female researchers in SET
- But persistent gender segregation in study choice
- ...

![Graph showing trends in women's share in rectorate and female rectors over years.](image)
Reasons for the paradox

- **Roots in tradition of gender equality policy**
  - Requirement of Federal Ministry → administrative task to show adherence to rules
  - Something “in addition” – additional positions, extra money ...
  → The rationale behind policies and programmes got lost.

- **Lack of gender equality discourse**

- **Implementation of policies top down**
  - Management by objective
  - Monitoring
  - But only in exceptional cases discussion of results embedded in a gender equality discourse

- **Lack of reflection and reflexivity at institutional and individual level**
Elements of reflexivity

- Reflection of traditional practices from a gender perspective
- Recognition of structural inequality
- Assumed responsibility
- Development of alternative practice
- Implementation against resistance

Preconditions for a cultural change

- Everybodies responsibility
- Link to discipline
- Gender equality has to become part of the definition of „good science“

Make effective use of policies with a potential to initiate reflexivity

Need for more policies to initiate reflexivity
Thank you for your attention!