

Wageningen University & Research in Balance

Action plan for gender balance

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Context

Diversity at the top levels gives organisations a clear competitive advantage because it brings about structural improvements to performance in important characteristics such as growth and innovation. There is clear added value to having mixed-gender teams representing a wide range of competencies. These teams are more productive, the management style focuses more on cooperation, team members listen to each other better and efforts are made to find win-win solutions.

For Wageningen University & Research, gender imbalance is a complex theme calling for an integrated approach. This issue has become more urgent since it has become clear that Wageningen University & Research scores worse on this issue than does nearly every other European university. As a result, we do not make use of existing talent, we are not taking sufficient advantage of the proven benefits of diversity and we have a poor image. The purpose of this action plan is to improve the gender balance. The foundation of the plan is the quality of all employees at all levels of our organisation. Efforts to improve diversity are in the interest of quality. More diversity results in better use of talent, particularly among women, and that helps our efforts to achieve excellence. Scientific research has demonstrated that companies with a diversity of employees at the top levels perform better¹. Within the existing framework and working methods, Wageningen University & Research has already implemented the following measures:

- Men and women have equal opportunities for the tenure track.
- Preferably two women sit on appointment advisory committees and selection committees.
- Management reports and discussions pay attention to the position of women.
- The annual report contains a report on the position of women.
- Female candidates for vacancies are expressly sought out.

If all positions in the scales 12 and up which will become vacant in the coming years due to retirement are filled entirely by women, the following figures will emerge:

- December 2012: ratio of men to women: 78.2%-21.8%
- December 2016: ratio of men to women: 66.9%-33.1%

This is without counting departures or dismissals for other reasons.

Of course, it is unrealistic to achieve this. The Executive Board aims to achieve a situation with equal representation of men and women in the long term. This gender action plan describes the actions that can help this situation and the efforts needed to increase gender awareness within Wageningen University & Research and to support and stimulate women. The programme has a budget of approximately €200,000. These financial resources are covered by previously acquired Aspasia grants. The Executive Board and the Managing Directors will be expressly involved in the implementation of the action points to ensure that the efforts and application of available resources are effective. The progress of the action plan for gender balance will be on the agendas of the Management Directors' management meetings and the Board of Directors.

Assignment

Draw up an action plan to increase the diversity within the top levels of Wageningen University & Research, with a focus on the flow of women into higher positions (scale 12 and up).

Action points

This action plan consists of the following four components:

1. Increasing gender awareness
2. A systematic approach to mentoring
3. A realistic approach to appointments, including supportive measures
4. Creating, supporting and increasing the visibility of female role models

¹ Desvaux, G., Devillard-Hoellinger, S. & Baumgarten, P. (2007). *Women matter: Gender diversity, a corporate performance driver*. Paris, France: McKinsey & Company.

Increasing gender awareness among managers and other involved parties

The persistence and complexity of gender imbalance is caused in part by the fact that many people assume that they themselves do not discriminate on the basis of gender. Scientific research has demonstrated that both men and women subconsciously evaluate women and men differently or subconsciously look for people who are similar to themselves. It is important to achieve broad awareness of this issue within the organisation. Wageningen University & Research offers the right tools to those who are involved in application, selection and appointment procedures so that they can strive for greater gender equality in their work activities.

Further details:

Development and set-up of 'Gender awareness' programme

- Target audience:
Chairs, secretaries and members of appointment advisory committees; professors; will be invited to the first implementation of the programme.
- Intended content:
Information and discussion about what happens during selection procedures. Why do we subconsciously look for those who resemble us and why do others become less visible as a result? Why is it that men and women have subconscious prejudices (so-called 'mind bugs') and make choices on the basis of them. A mind bug test could be part of the programme. The participants fill in a questionnaire in advance to determine their biases relating to gender, leadership and talent selection. The test provides insight into the participants' personal subconscious preferences. The programme consists of half-day workshops for fifteen to twenty participants per group.

The goal is that participants will take the insights they gain in the workshop and put them to use in their own spheres of influence. The Executive Board and the Board of Directors will place gender awareness on the agendas of as many existing meetings as possible.

- Schedule:
In the second and third quarters of 2013, the content of the programme is finalised and the first workshop is organised with the Executive Board and the Board of Directors. In 2013-2014 and 2014-2015, ten workshops per year will be organised by Corporate HR.
 - o A compact version is possible for groups of 85 to 100 participants. This will be offered to all employees.

AAC Start-UP = ASU (analogous to Project Start-Ups, PSU): -

- Contents:
Initial meeting, in which the complete appointment advisory committee (AAC) discusses common goals, the various roles of the AAC participants, working methods and specific points for attention. One of the points for attention is increasing awareness of gender issues, also examining the question of what specific goals the relevant AAC can aim for in relation to the position of women in that particular recruitment procedure.
- Target audience: Each new AAC and selection committee for higher-level positions.
- Schedule: Starting in September 2013

A systematic approach to mentoring

By taking advantage of mentoring and/or coaching, women are able to work on improving their positions, giving themselves a greater likelihood of being promoted to higher positions. It is possible to work with either a male mentor or a female mentor, depending on the individual employee's wishes and goals. It is necessary to distinguish among various goals that can be reached through mentoring:

- Career planning and development
- Network development
- Development of personal effectiveness/job performance

Initially, the programme is specifically targeted towards women; in a later phase it may also be offered to men.

In this programme, women work on developing their own ambitions and taking steps to advance their careers. It can be expected that a significant number of them will actually advance in their careers after participating in the mentoring programme.

Setting up a mentoring programme for women primarily calls for formative input from the employee who develops the set-up, recruits participants and mentors, carries out intake interviews, matches participants with mentors, etc.

Within Wageningen University & Research, approximately 280 women are employed at position pay scales 12 and up and approximately 770 women are employed at position pay scales 10 and 11. These are the positions which can be promoted to higher-level positions, and mentoring can help women improve their performance. It is possible that 200 of these women will want to participate in the mentoring programme in the coming five years. At present, the glass ceiling is located at position pay scales 11 and 12; in order to rectify this situation as quickly as possible, the programme will initially be made available to women in scale 11 and up. This means that approximately forty women will participate in the programme each year. The first group of five women and mentors starts in autumn 2013; after this, a new group could start monthly.

The mentors will be given a half-day workshop about how to act as a mentor.

Action:

- Make formative time available (0.4 FTE) for the development and organisation of the mentoring programme, embedded in the Corporate HR department.
- During the preparatory phase, make decisions on:
 - The requirements for who can participate, the conditions under which they can participate and how long they can participate.
 - Identifying mentors and what specifically they can offer.
 - Supporting and equipping mentors.
 - Matching mentors and protégées.
 - Promoting the programme.
- Set up a workshop for mentors-to-be on 'approaching and carrying out mentorship'.
- Match mentors with protégées.

A realistic approach to appointments, including supportive measures

Goals become more realistic as they are differentiated per job category or level and as possibilities for steering the intake are taken into account.

The Executive Board is taking active steps to ensure equal representation of male and female employees in the long term.

The implementation of support measures is primarily the responsibility of those who are involved in the recruitment and selection process.

- In the AAC Start-Up (see point 1), make clear agreements for each appointment advisory committee or selection committee which are tailored to the appropriate scientific field. Set requirements per appointment advisory committee for the number of women on the long list and short list and the number of women to be nominated.
- HR is to support committees in drawing up the best possible long list through scouting and headhunting; if necessary, HR can call in external expertise to this end.
- The management council and the committees are to pay more attention to drawing up the profile in such a way that the right competencies (including 'feminine' competencies²) are sought. Keep the teaching and research remit or job description broad enough so that more people are encouraged to apply.

² 'Feminine' competencies: understanding, looking for support, sensitive to the feelings of others, good at easing dissatisfaction, warm. 'Masculine' competencies: dominant, powerful, independent, having a strong personality, willing to take risks. 'Androgynous' competencies: understanding, powerful, having a strong personality.

- Ensure that a 'gender paragraph' is included in every report from an appointment advisory committee or a selection committee.
- Corporate HR is to develop texts for recruitment and selection which demonstrate that Wageningen University & Research is striving for greater representation of women in higher-level positions. Women are to be more explicitly invited to apply.

Creating, supporting and increasing the visibility of female role models

Increasing the visibility of more women in higher positions, including academic positions, can contribute in a number of ways to more balanced representation of women. They serve as role models for ambitious women, and they are also involved in decision-making processes in which gender bias may play a part, such as decisions on appointment. The Executive Board can contribute to the creation of more role models in the following ways:

- Identify female candidates whom the Executive Board can put forward for positions which it does not appoint but in which it is involved. This can include positions such as membership on the Supervisory Board or the Executive Board, as well as positions outside the organisation such as with the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, the Association of Universities in the Netherlands, etc.
- Identify potential positions for which women can be appointed by the Executive Board and ensure that there are suitable candidates in mind. This will result in the appointment of women to administrative positions within the university, such as the Director of the Graduate School, the Director of the Educational Institute, the Dean of Graduate Schools and members of the Doctorate Board.

The Executive Board encourages the Managing Directors to appoint women to the remaining higher positions, such as managers of research and staff departments.

- Communicate more explicitly about appointments and successes of female professors and top-level scientists.

Monitoring group

It is important to safeguard the implementation of these four components and, where necessary, to guide or stimulate the implementation.

Recommendation: Establish a monitoring group with a very short line of communication to the Executive Board. This group will monitor progress, have access to relevant reports, report to the Executive Board and the general public about progress and offer advice about any adjustments which need to be made to the approach.

The Executive Board is responsible for placing the progress on the agendas of the management meetings and the Board of Directors.

Additional recommendations

Separate from these four components, there are a number of recommendations for the Executive Board:

- Research the actual contribution of the tenure track to the improvement of gender balance. There are two questions which must be answered in this regard:
 - To what extent is the promotion of women equal to that of men; and do women truly have equal opportunities? In May 2013, the first group of TT employees, who started three years ago, are eligible for promotion to the next level. What conclusions can we make from this?
 - To what extent is the competitive climate created by tenure track one in which women and men can and want to perform well? What happens to women's ambitions in the tenure track setting?
- Start a discussion about the use of the quality funds in relation to gender balance. Investigate the possibility of using these funds for specific purposes, such as for an incentive fund for strengthening the position of women.

Financial aspects

As many of the actions described as is possible will be addressed using existing working methods and programmes. Certain activities require additional formation, and it will be necessary to make an additional budget available. The budget can be obtained through Aspasia grants. The finances from the Aspasia grants are sufficient to fund the components of this proposal with concomitant costs.

In total, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research has awarded four Aspasia grants. Wageningen University must use €50,000 of each of these grants to strengthen the position of women in science. In total, €200,000 is presently available. Additional requests and awards may arise in the near future. For funds to be awarded, the conditions of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research must be met. These conditions include promoting the nominated women to the position of Associate Professor. Two promotions have already taken place. The other two promotions will come up in 2014. This means that the amount of €100,000 is available in 2013. These funds must be applied to a wide range of diversity programmes at Wageningen University & Research and specifically Wageningen University. The allocation of the funds must be accounted for to the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research.

It is proposed that these funds be transferred from ER&I to Corporate HR. The appendix contains a detailed list of the activities and the budget.