

Working with Gender Issues in the European Network of Excellence Nano2Life

Prof. Jenny Emnéus, Dept. Micro and Nanotechnology, The Technical University of Denmark, Kgs. Lyngby, Denmark

Since the 1999 EC communication on women and science and the subsequent declaration of women networks, a set of measures have been implemented by the EC to fight against gender-blind policies in research with the objectives to: (1) increase female representation in research programmes (research BY women), (2) address women's needs (research FOR women), (3) promote the understanding of gender issues (research ABOUT women), based on sex-disaggregated statistics and indicators.

Bringing Nanotechnologies to Life (Nano2Life) is the first European Network of Excellence in Nanobiotechnology, which started in Feb 2004 and is running for four years. To ensure excellent, profitable and fair cooperation between the very different organisations and cultures involved in Nano2Life, gender equality was recognized as one important aspect to address at all levels in the network and thus a specific workpackage 3 – gender issues - was created with the overall objective to:

- Create awareness and recognition of gender equality issues
- Design and implementing a common gender equality policy
- Reach a 40% ratio of women in Nano2Life in all working groups
- Monitor gender indicators related to Nano2Life to obtain gender statistics
- Evaluate how potential pilot actions influence the gender balance in Nano2Life.

During the course of the work, a number of different gender related pilot actions were implemented, briefly described below.

Progress in developing groups and leaders (PROGRESS)

PROGRESS is a multi-cultural and equality oriented human resource management course that addresses leadership training in combination with empowerment. The aim of the program is to develop a common leadership- and group-orientated knowledge within N2L that promotes the fundamental value of equal treatment (<http://www.education.lu.se/o.o.i.s/3493>).

E-Mentoring

This is an electronic mentoring program that primarily involves electronic communication, but also face-to face meetings. It is designed as a support for young Nano2Life scientists through encouragement, advice, additional information and access to networks from an experienced researcher/project manager in his/her field outside their current institution (<http://bsvc.fov.lu.se/nano2life/>).

PAN-European expert group

The PAN-European expert group deals with gender specific issues in nanobiotechnology. Gender specific issues in research due to different metabolism or different pre-conditions between sexes are receiving more and more attention Worldwide, and are expected to become integrated topics of the strategic research projects of initiated within Nano2Life.

This lecture will describe how we in workpackage 3 –gender issues - decided to approach the gender topic, the kind of difficulties we encountered during the first two years, and finally, how our work in workpackage 3 apparently now is considered a success both in Nano2Life and in Brussels.