

# Gender quotas in academia—challenges and opportunities

September 23 2015

---

Authors of a new report have examined the use of gender quotas to increase the number of women at the highest career levels in academia. 'Exploring quotas in academia', a report of a study conducted by EMBO in collaboration with the Robert Bosch Stiftung, looks at the potential benefits and challenges that could arise from the use of quotas as one way to achieve better gender balance in academia. The report describes options for introducing quotas and provides information for decision makers who might consider implementing them.

After conducting interviews with a wide range of stakeholders, the authors organized a closed workshop in Berlin, where options for the use of [gender](#) quotas were analyzed. The working group included gender researchers, heads of research institutes, funders and scientists. They discussed measures such as cascade models for hiring, quotas for the composition of committees, and equal success rates in funding schemes.

"There will be no perfect system to assure gender balance in academia and other research organizations," said Michele Garfinkel, Manager of the EMBO Science Policy Programme. "Some administrators and politicians may want to use quotas but this is not straightforward," added Sandra Bendiscioli, Programme Officer. "Quotas require sensitive implementation. Moreover, they are not sufficient. Further changes in academic settings are necessary to assure that everyone has a fair chance."

"The cascade model can be an effective type of quota setting,"

commented Gerlind Wallon, EMBO Deputy Director. The cascade model envisages flexible quotas for female participation at various levels: The quota is calculated on the percentage of women at the level immediately below. "This seems a reasonable method that takes into account the number of available, qualified candidates. I would call this a smart quota," added Wallon.

Quotas can produce an immediate increase of female representation in higher academic positions. Quotas, however, do not address two fundamental problems: significantly more men than women choose scientific and/or technology-based careers in the first place and, if women do choose this path, they tend to leave academia early.

Ingrid Wuenning-Tschol, Senior Vice-President at the Robert Bosch Stiftung: "Gender inequality is a critical issue in [academia](#). To increase the number of women at the highest career levels, every possible solution should be considered. Quotas are one potentially powerful option".

**More information:** The full report is available at [www.embo.org/documents/science ... exploring\\_quotas.pdf](http://www.embo.org/documents/science...exploring_quotas.pdf)

Provided by European Molecular Biology Organization

Citation: Gender quotas in academia—challenges and opportunities (2015, September 23) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-09-gender-quotas-academiachallenges-opportunities.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.