



INSTITUT FÜR HÖHERE STUDIEN
INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES
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Gender in research content: Experiences from an Austrian programme

Angela Wroblewski

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Gender dimension in research

- **Three-dimensional concept of gender dimension in research**
 - Participation of women in teams (fixing the number of women)
 - Reduction of structural barriers for women (fixing the organisation)
 - Integration of gender in research content (fixing the content)
- **Several policies address participation of women and organisational change**
 - Promotion of women
 - Structural change programmes funded by EC and national states
 - Evaluation and monitoring available
- **Few policies address gender in research content**
 - E.g. Gender criteria in research funding
 - Specific programmes focusing on gender projects
 - Systematic evaluation missing



Austrian FEMtech research projects

▪ FEMtech research projects

- 55 projects funded, calls from 2008-2014
- Aim to consider gender in research content in applied contexts

▪ Projects funded

- 84% cooperation projects (2-8 organisations involved)
- 49% of projects submitted by non-university RPO, 35% by universities, 16% by companies
- 27% life sciences, 27% ICT, 11% mobility, 11% energy/environment, 4% manufacturing, 16% other sectors
- 69% femal project leader

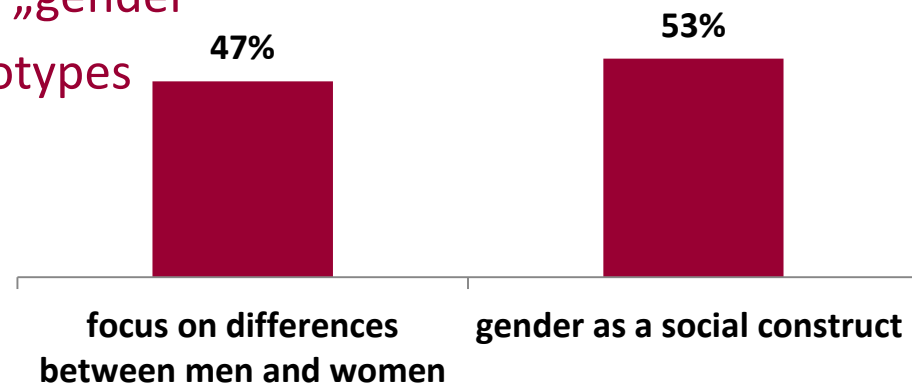
▪ Empirical evidence

- Project propsal, interim report, final report
- Interviews with project leaders, gender expert

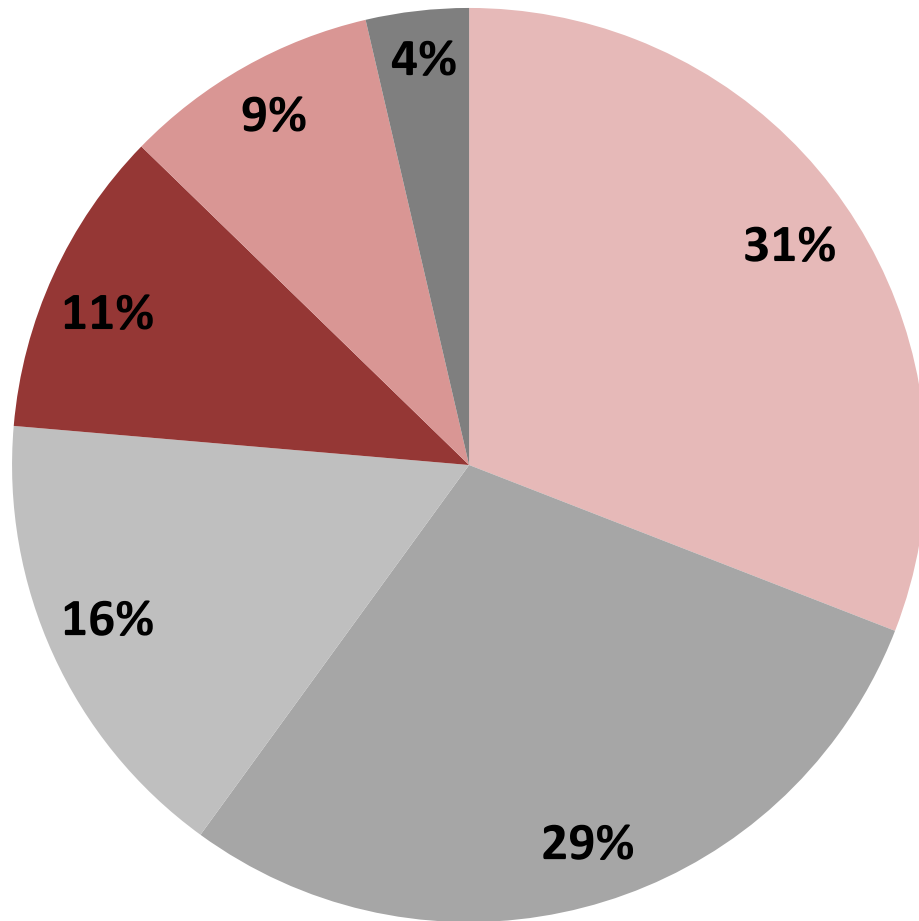


Gender concept used

- **38 proposals (69%) do not provide an explicit definition of sex/gender understanding in the project**
- **Deduction from research question/design**
 - Focus on women (women as a specific target group)
 - Focus on differences between men and women (sometimes in an intersectional understanding)
 - Focus on gender as a social construct (in most cases in an intersectional understanding)
- **Consequences of missing definition**
 - Unreflected and inflationary use of „gender“
 - Potential for reproduction of stereotypes



Gender expertise – strong/weak role



- gender expertise in the bidder organisation
- gender expertise in one or more partner organisation
- external gender expertise
- gender expertise in all participating organisations
- gender expertise in the bidder and partner organisation
- no gender expert nominated



Role of gender experts

- **Incorporation of current field-specific gender research into the project**
- **Creation of a shared understanding of gender in the project team**
- **Reflection on the results of the project from a gender perspective**
- **Reflection on the research process**
- **Creation of awareness for measures to promote women and gender equality in participating organisations**

- **Conflicting roles – gender experts versus advisors**



Added value of the gender dimension

- **Anchoring gender research in applied research**
 - Research questions and goals consider gender aspects
 - Contribution to further development of the discipline
 - Opening of new markets
- **Contribution to quality assurance**
 - Avoiding gender bias in empirical approach
 - Avoiding gender bias in interpretation
- **Greater awareness for the relevance of the gender dimension in research institutions**
 - Drawing attention to subtle exclusion mechanisms
 - Drawing attention to unintended gender bias in research process



Conclusions: how to move forward?

- **Differentiation between gender expertise and gender competence**
 - **Gender competence:** recognition of gender relevance of the research topic in conjunction with willingness to address this in the research project with the support of gender experts (willingness to reflect)
 - **Gender expertise:** knowledge of different gender theories and gender mainstreaming as a political strategy and of gender construction processes. Knowledge of the state of research in the field, methodological competences to integrate this knowledge in research processes.
- **Integration of gender expertise in the proposal phase**
- **Definition of role of gender expert**
- **Strong position of gender expert**
- **Creation of space for reflection and raising visibility of learning processes with regard to gender**



Thank you for your attention!

Reference:

Wroblewski, Angela (2016), Review der FEMtech Forschungsprojekte 2008 bis 2014, study on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology (BMVIT), Vienna. [in German]