Exploring quotas in academia
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Michele Garfinkel
Gerlind Wallon

Ingrid Wünning-Tschol
EMBO is

- a European academy for the life sciences
  - >1700 elected members in Europe and world-wide
- a funder
  - funds via 27 member state intergovernmental organization (EMBC)
- a publisher of scientific journals
Why quotas in academia?

adapted from SheFigures 2012
Reasons for concern in academia

quotas vs merit
Where have quotas been tried?

- Politics
- Business
Aim of the report

• Analyze possible harms and benefits of gender quotas to increase the number of women at the highest career levels.

• Provide options to decision makers:
  – Politicians
  – Science administrators/heads of institutes
  – Funders
  – Scientists
Project methodology

- Literature review
- Interviews with stakeholders
- Closed workshop with stakeholder group
Working group

- Scientists in academia
- Government officials
- Funders
- Decision makers in academia
- Researchers on gender issues

Exploring quotas
Project methodology

- Literature review
- Interviews with stakeholders
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- Report
Gender quotas analysed in 3 areas

1. for hiring at the highest career levels
2. for the composition of evaluation committees
3. for research funding
1. Quotas for hiring at the highest academic career levels

The cascade model
1. Quotas for hiring at the highest academic career levels

**The cascade model**

<table>
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<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Harms or concerns</th>
<th>Open questions</th>
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| • Would effect long-term change in academic units.  
• Realistic, based on composition of individual departmental/institutional workforce.  
• Require active participation of the institute. | • Quota calculation may become complicated and can be manipulated.  
• Perpetuation of small numbers due to small entry numbers.  
• May lead to promotion/hiring of less qualified individuals.  
• Stigma for those hired under a quota system.  
• Stigma for institutions hiring under a quota system. | • Should there be a time window in which the quota is reached? |
2. Quotas for the composition of evaluation committees
Critical mass

- 30%?

Effect of more women on committees?

- Data are unclear:
  - ERC: no correlation (Vernos, 2013)
  - Italy: inverse relation (Bagues et al, 2014)
  - Spain: correlation only for full professor positions (Zinovyeva and Bagues, 2011)
Existing quotas for review committees and oversight bodies

- Finland, Gender Equality Act: 40%
- Norway, Gender Equality Act: 40%
- Spain, Law on Science, Technology and Innovation: 50%
- European Commission, Horizon 2020: 40% on advisory structures
- EMBO: 30%
- The Swedish Research Council: 30%
2. Quotas for the composition of evaluation committees

- **Benefits**
  - Reduce isolation and tokenism.
  - Broaden the points of view in discussions.

- **Harms or concerns**
  - Cause work overload for the few women who qualify for committee work, thereby limiting their scientific output.

- **Unknowns**
  - What is the “critical mass” that represents women effectively?
  - What is the effect of the presence of women in a committee?
3. Equal success rate for research funding
Is there a lower success rate for women when applying for research funding?

YES:
• BBSRC: women 3-5% less successful, 2009-2012
• EMBO: women had 20% lower success rate, 1998-2008
• ERC: women have 16% lower success rate, 2007 - 2013

NO:
• Wellcome Trust, 2007
• Wellcome Trust and UK Research Councils, 2000
• DFG, 2008
• EC (27 members states), 2009
3. Equal success rate for research funding

- **Benefits**
  - Systemic biases would be excluded.
  - The applicant pool would be fairly reflected, full inclusion is ensured.
  - Equal success rate might encourage a higher rate of applications by the underrepresented group.

- **Harms or concerns**
  - Possibly less qualified applicants may get funded.
  - Other minorities may demand quotas as well.
  - May be viewed as an unfounded measure, since systemic biases have not been demonstrated in all funding schemes.

- **Open questions**
  - Should there be a time window in which the quota is reached?
Who can implement quotas?

- Governments
- Universities or institutes
- Funders
- Professional societies
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Conclusions

Benefits:

• Quotas can make change happen (fast)

Harms and drawbacks:

• Stigma for individuals hired or selected through a quota process
• Concern expressed by the academic community
• Quotas will not be sufficient to address all issues effecting gender balance
Issues not addressed by quota

• Precipitous drop of women after post doc: women do not apply for professorial positions.

• Women do not choose the more technical subjects.
Exploring quotas in academia

Gertlind Waltens, Sandra Bendiscioli, and Michele S. Garfinikel, EMBO

www.embo.org/science-policy
Thank you for your attention!
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Working group members and interviewees

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