

Men - part of the solution not just part of the problem

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Although the presence of a man at meetings related to this issue is generally welcomed, it is rare to find men included as members of groups invited to report on the issue or even to present their views. Although it is possible that what is perceived by many as the male tendency to dominate may cause the organisers of activities aimed at promoting women in science to "shy away" from including one or more men in their groups. It is possible that men are not included in such forums because so few have made any significant contribution to the field.

We can all do our part to improve on this situation in harmony with what Catherine Jay Didion, the Executive Director of the Association for Women in Science, recommended in a recent speech in Brussels on US experience on this issue. Didion pointed out that the success of her organisation had come from getting men onboard and enlisting their cooperation. She explains: "AWIS is the Association FOR Women in Science, not the Association OF Women in Science. This is an important distinction as we welcome men who support our goals and we see men as part of the solution that we advocate not just part of the problem"

As Vice-Chairman of the European Association of Research Managers and Administrators (EARMA) I welcome this debate. It raises awareness, provides examples of best policy in gender management, both in research and in science administration, and publicises arguments in favour of gender equality in science. Thereby helping those who are struggling to overcome barriers and prejudices and those in "decision making positions" to come to grasp with the whole picture.

In 1995 EARMA was founded to promote the effectiveness of European Research by improving the quality of research management and administration in practice and application, and to set high standards of performance for those in research management. To accomplish our goals, we have working groups addressing various current topics in research administration, including training and staff exchange. Equal opportunities (EO) are of utmost importance in this context and the special working group, whose aim is to set up social and working conditions providing EO for everyone working in, and in support of science, engineering and technology, was established for this purpose, and has been extremely active over the past few years. In addition, our network raises awareness and spreads information on best practices for gender policies among the decision makers in research in Europe (more details of our work can be found at the web sites [below](#)).

To cite Dr Krummacher in her comments about the Julich scheme, EARMA "does not consider the promotion of women in science as a social welfare programme for the handicapped", but as a necessity in "Best Practice in Research Management" and one of these practices is the "Best Person in Right Place" irrespective of gender. EARMA fully supports initiatives to develop equal opportunities both in Science and Science Management.

We welcome the fact that all of the opening contributions address the issue of equal opportunities in science, engineering and technology through management approaches and not through legal sanctions.

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EARMA home page: <http://sirio.cineca.it/earma/welcome.html>

EO working group: <http://sirio.cineca.it/earma/wg.html>
