

GenderBasic: Promoting attention to sex and gender differences in life sciences research in Europe

Joke A. Haafkens¹ Ineke Klinge¹

¹ Genderstudies in Health and Health Care Maastricht University, Maastricht, Netherlands

In the EU 6th Framework Programme a new gender policy was introduced. Guidelines for proposers now contain specific questions on how sex and gender issues are addressed in research projects in the life sciences. For researchers in this field these guidelines are new and they consider them as a top down instrument to change research practices. Real awareness of the relevance of sex and gender differences for basic/preclinical and clinical research is still lacking. In October 2005 we started the EU funded project GenderBasic which has the aim to enhance the capacity of the research community to integrate attention to sex and gender differences in basic/preclinical and clinical research. This paper provides background information on the new gender research policy of the EU and the interventions that will be undertaken in GenderBasic to further the implementation of this policy.

These interventions are:

- The assessment of problems regarding the incorporation of attention to sex differences and/or gender effects in basic/preclinical and clinical research among project coordinators of EU funded life sciences research.
- The production of reviews by experts, describing possible solutions for identified core problems.
- A meeting for researchers and experts to reach consensus about proposed solutions for core problems. (September 2006)
- The development of tools to advice the 7th Framework Programme, EU services, researchers and research evaluators on how to improve attention to the gender dimension in basic/preclinical and clinical research.