

# GenderBasic: promoting integration of sex and gender aspects in biomedical and health related research

## Bringing gender expertise to life sciences research practices



Women and Science



Universiteit Maastricht

GenderBasic was nominated as a STAR project 2006 (success stories in DG RTD). Currently joint publication of these review articles is explored. The recommendations for research as proposed in the reviews, constitute a European agenda for sex and gender sensitive biomedical and health research that will serve the different health needs of men and women in an equitable way.

The EU gender equality policy for research constitutes a good practice and can act as a leverage for research institutes and research councils in member states.

**T**he biological (sex) and socio-cultural (gender) differences between women and men may result in different epidemiological patterns and effect modification of diagnostic, preventive and therapeutic interventions. The possibility of sex and gender differences must therefore be considered in all areas of health research where appropriate.

### GenderBasic Project

The implementation of the EU gender equality policy for research has resulted in new guidelines - based on the recommendations of the Gender Impact Assessment Studies of FP5 - on the consideration of sex and gender in FP6 (See footnote Klinge & Bosch 2001).

Application of the FP6 guidelines to biomedical and health related research appeared to be not without difficulty and posed challenges (practical, methodological, conceptual, ethical and financial) to basic, translational, clinical and public health research. Further support from experts in the field was needed.

The GenderBasic project (see website for activities and products) aims to provide scientists involved in biomedical and health related research (with a focus on basic and clinical research) with practical tools, relevant examples and best practices as regards paying attention to sex and gender

differences in the content of their research. Incorporation in research proposals will contribute to scientific excellence in FP7.

### GenderBasic Expert Meeting

A major activity was the organization of an Expert Meeting in Maastricht 26-27 Jan 2007 for which ten reviews have been commissioned. International high profile experts from a variety of disciplines have been invited to review the following topics:

- methodological aspects of paying attention to sex and gender in research (basic, translational, clinical and public health research).
- six health areas where attention to sex and gender issues is urgently called for: anxiety disorders, asthma, metabolic syndrome, nutrigenomics, osteoporosis and work-related health.

Written comments on the reviews were invited from similar knowledgeable experts and presented at the meeting. Experts and invited stakeholders engaged in a lively dialogue and exchange of insights and the overall feeling was that it was a unique event to have brought these experts together. EC representatives emphasized that this network should keep its momentum and where possible should work together in FP7.

Gender expertise: knowledge on the relevance of sex and gender aspects as determinants of health and disease. **1**

Relevance for FP7 Themes *Health and Food, agriculture and biotechnology* Sex and gender aspects in research have a particular relevance to these themes as risk factors, biological mechanisms, causes, clinical manifestation, consequences and treatment of disease and disorders often differ between men and women. Also behaviour, management and communication of diet related disease and disorders may differ in men and women. **2**

#### Footnote:

Klinge, I. & M. Bosch (2001) *Gender in research. Gender impact assessment of the specific programmes of the Fifth Framework Programme - Quality of life and management of living resources. EUR 20017*

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