



Bundesministerium
für Bildung
und Forschung

State Secretary Cornelia Quennet-Thielen
Welcoming Speech
on the occasion of the MPG's
“Career Steps Opportunities Road Show 2017”
in Berlin
on 10 March 2017

Professor Friederici,
Dr Weber,
Ladies and, of course, Gentlemen,

“Road show on equal opportunities at Harnack Haus.” This title sounds pretty sensational for the venerable Max Planck Society. What would Adolf von Harnack have said? His daughter for one would have considered it a good idea. Agnes von Zahn-Harnack was a leading campaigner for women’s rights.

Road show at Harnack Haus: The title alone indicates that the MPG is making tracks. Equal opportunities will be a guiding principle in coming years. The MPG is committing itself to ambitious quotas for the appointment of women at all leadership levels and intends to do more to promote the reconciliation of career and family life.

This development is based on exactly the same realization as we are currently seeing in industry, politics and society as a whole: We cannot do without women in top positions and changes do not just happen by themselves – or at least not to a sufficient extent.

I Thanks

Equal opportunities as a guiding principle for effecting genuine change: Quite some people at the MPG have been committed to this goal for many years.

Let me just mention a few of them:

- the President, who recognized that equal opportunities must be a “matter for the bosses to deal with”;
- Prof. Ute Frevert, who chaired the presidential committee on “Gender”;
- Prof. Reinhard Jahn as Chair of the presidential committee on “Junior Scientists in the Max Planck Society”. He knows just how closely the promotion of junior scientists and the promotion of equal opportunities are interlinked and has convinced other people that this is true;
- and let me mention in particular Dr Ulla Weber and
- Prof. Angela Friederici.

Dr Weber, as the MPG's Central Gender Equality Officer, you are more aware than anyone else of the challenges facing women particularly in the Max Planck Society. Firmly established structures and a scientific sector which has long been male-dominated do not always make things easy for women or for you personally. Thank you for your commitment! My thanks also go to the gender equality officers in the individual institutes.

I would also like to extend my sincere thanks to you, Prof. Friederici. You chair the presidential committee on "Chances". You are the patron of the Road Show and you have clear ideas on what needs to be done. However, you don't simply impose your ideas on others – this method would have little chance of success in an organization like the MPG with its independent and headstrong institutes. On the contrary, you, together with the President, seek a dialogue with the institutes, with the Sections, with the Senate – as I know from my own experience.

I am thanking you in my capacities as both a Member of the Senate and as the responsible State Secretary in the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. At Senate meetings, I have made an active contribution to the debate on equal opportunities in the MPG – together with the still far too few other women members. We are all quite naturally pulling in the same direction and don't even need to coordinate our arguments.

As State Secretary, I advocated that the commitment to more equal opportunities should play an important role under the Pact for Research and Innovation with the non-university research institutions. The basis for this is the cascade model which derives the share of women on every scientific career step from the share of women at the level immediately below. This proposal met with opposition and criticism, along the lines of: "That is a non-scientific objective for science organizations." One can, by all means, query this. Of course, the introduction of equal opportunities is an expression of societal change. But it is also a question of making the best possible use of the abilities of women and men for the benefit of science. In the meantime, this conviction has begun to prevail. What is also clear is that the research institutions themselves must be responsible for shaping and implementing changes.

II What the MPG is doing

The introduction of equal opportunities rarely succeeds through a top-down approach *alone*; and rarely through a bottom-up approach *alone*. It calls for a combination of both approaches. At the same time, it is always a question of linking structural and cultural change. Without a new culture, new structures are an empty shell; similarly, a new culture without new structures leads to spontaneous change without common standards – in other words, it is not sustainable. This is my firm conviction and this is also how I see the approach adopted by the MPG.

The MPG achieved a great deal in the ten years between 2005 and 2015.

- It managed to treble the share of women in top leadership positions (W3), from 4.5 percent to almost 13 percent (12.9 percent). This means that you are now well above the share of DAX board members, where 6.4 percent are women (2016), but below the share of university rectors and presidents, where women account for around 15 percent of all rectors and presidents (2013).

- The MPG also managed to increase the number of women at the second highest leadership level (W2) from just under 21 percent (20.8 percent) to almost 31 percent (30,9 percent),
- Furthermore, we saw an increase at the third leadership level (TVöD) from around 22 percent (22.3 percent) to 30.5 percent.(2015)

Until 2017, the basis for this increase was the commitment under the Pact for Research and Innovation to increase the share of women in positions of leadership by 5 percent within five years – that is to say, by at least 1 percent per year. The MPG is very close to achieving this goal. We are looking forward to seeing the figures for 2016!

You at the MPG are currently discussing other forms of commitment to equal opportunities for the period after 2017. The differences between the Sections of the MPG due to specific disciplines are supposed to play a greater role as is the rate of new appointments instead of an overall increase. I am pleased to see that the MPG is aware of its specific situation and the challenges it is facing – and that it is analysing, reappraising and drawing concrete conclusions. At the same time, I would like to appeal to you not to cease in your effort to set yourself ambitious objectives to increase the share of women on the whole and those in top leadership roles in particular! A trebling of the numbers within ten years is a good start but a 13 percent share of women cannot be the end of the story. After all – and please forgive me this platitude – it means that 87 percent are men!

I certainly don't intend to belittle the successes of the Max Planck Society. The developments over the last ten years have been impressive. They are an expression of structural and cultural change.

- The MPG has systematically sought to recruit highly qualified women;
- It has systematically promoted women – even if mistakes have been made here and there: The Minerva programme for women offered worse conditions than comparable young researcher programmes for women and men. But on the one hand, one learns from such mistakes and on the other hand, the programme has definitely contributed to a change in culture and awareness.
- Presidential committees are also a part of this structural change.
- And the MPG is introducing concrete measures to improve the work-life balance – not least by providing child care facilities. It is considering how it can better enable young researchers to plan their careers at an early stage – for the simple reason that the promotion of young researchers and the promotion of equal opportunities go hand-in-hand. Here the MPG wants to focus in particular on those postdocs who are interested in a professorship, the so-called “established researchers”. At the same time, it is important not to lose sight of the other young researchers. In other words, they must still be included in your statistics.

Cultural change also means that more and more people – especially men – are realizing what is possible. This means, for example:

- Recruiting more women – precisely in accordance with the Harnack principle.
- Promoting a work-life balance for both men and women without detracting from an institute's strength – even if measures in this field often require a certain organizational effort.

Cultural change also means recognizing the fact that hidden mechanisms contribute to ensuring that things are sometimes easier for men than for women. Let me cite one example: It is not rare for job

advertisements to call either implicitly or explicitly for an “assertive leadership personality”. Many people understand this to mean a male “hands-on”-attitude. Or again: Employers often don’t even consider whether a job could also be advertised as a part-time position.

Cultural change is always linked to the question of: Who feels responsible? Sentences like: “I’m all for equal opportunities but that’s not my responsibility” prove – to put it mildly – that the change has not been accomplished.

We must bear in mind that ultimately everyone is responsible for comprehensive changes in a large organization. I fully agree with President Stratmann when he says that this is especially also the task of the management of the MPG, the institutes and the General Administration.

Let me add: Ultimately we are all “change agents” and – let me emphasize – not just for the cause of women. After all, opportunities for women and a better life balance are also opportunities for families; that is to say for both men and women. Moreover, they are opportunities for our society, which needs men and women. We must bear in mind that Germany for one does not have a surplus of highly qualified people, but that these are in short supply in many sectors.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we all know:

There is still a lot to be done.

- The bare figures show that there is a drastic gap between the number of women completing their doctorates and those being appointed professors – due to what we call a “leaky pipeline”. The MPG intends to specifically address this phase in women’s careers. I very much welcome this approach because the long-term success of our equal opportunities policy is also reflected in how many women make this decisive career move. Moreover, it must be remembered that we need these women to act as role models for others.
- The work-life balance must be improved for both women and men, not least as far as child care is concerned.
- And, last but not least, individual institutes, their management, personnel departments and research group leaders – both male and female, must become more aware of their responsibility. This is precisely why you have launched the Road Show.

Promoting young talent, the work-life balance, framework conditions – these are areas where people usually look to policy-makers. And rightly so. After all, individual large and – yes – powerful organizations such as the MPG can achieve a great deal, but not everything.

III The Role of Politics

Almost nine out of ten young researchers in Germany would like to have children, but more and more of them are postponing their plans to start a family because of uncertainty regarding their future careers.

Policy-makers and science organizations are basically pursuing the same approach: Equal opportunities and an improved work-life balance are two sides of the same coin. But what has happened here

over the last ten years, that is to say, since research organizations committed themselves to equal opportunities?

First, we have improved child care.

- The Federal Government invested huge sums in establishing and expanding full-day schools between 2003 and 2009 (2003-2009, 4 billion. €).
- We made massive investments in care for the under-three year-olds (5,4 billion € bis 2014)
- And we are continuing to fund the expansion of child care facilities. (1 billion)

Altogether, this funding amounts to around 10 billion euros.

Secondly, we have provided answers to the question of how to offer more certainty for people planning their career paths. We have amended the Academic Fixed-Term Contract Act (WissZVG). It is still the subject of criticism because it cannot and does not set out to eradicate every deficit. This is when the individual employer must take action. However, it does link the duration of fixed-term employment contracts to the duration of the qualification phase or to the duration of third-party projects. This puts a stop to the excessive number of extremely short-term contracts of often less than one year. Furthermore, we have strengthened components regarding families.

Starting in 2017, the Federal Government will provide one billion euros to fund 1,000 additional tenure-track professorships. For the first time ever, the new joint programme of the Federal Government and the Länder is establishing tenure-track professorships at universities throughout Germany. This will make the path to a professorship more plannable and transparent for many young researchers. Tenure track will alter staffing structures at universities and can lead to more equal opportunities. In those places where there are more tenure-track professorships, there are more female professors and more women in leading positions in science and research. Here too, we have introduced a family component: Funding is extended by one year per child in the case of the birth or adoption of a child.

Thirdly, the Federal Government is providing specific funding for women at universities under the Female Professors Programme. Over 500 women have benefitted from this programme since 2008! The same applies here as to the MPG: There will be no deviation from the principle of excellence! Under this programme, women must compete against other female and male researchers on the basis of their ability. And in my view, this is the only way for becoming convincing role models for female students and young women researchers. We also said from the very beginning that we would only fund a professorship if the university presented an ambitious equal opportunities plan for the entire university. This is how we are changing structures.

Last but not least, as already mentioned earlier, we have also linked the steady increase in funding for the research organizations under the Pact for Research and Innovation to their commitment to promote equal opportunities. I am delighted that attitudes have changed. Providing equal opportunities is no longer a tedious obligation but part of everyday practice.

Of course, there is still a lot to be done – for a large organization like the MPG as well as for policy-makers. We have reached a milestone in equal opportunities. But If we merely sit back and enjoy our tangible success we will run the risk of squandering this success. The glass is half full. It is up to us not only to consolidate the positive developments to date but also to press ahead.

IV Gender Studies for a fairer Society

This also applies to gender-specific research questions. Here we often encounter strong opposition – with claims that gender research is unnecessary, unscientific, etcetera, etcetera. Of course, there is poor gender research just as there are poor historians or poor psychologists. But a lot of gender research is exciting and above all useful:

- Medical research has recognized that women and men suffer in different ways. They react to drugs differently and they must therefore be treated differently. This issue was long neglected.
- Gender-specific safety research, for example, has led to the development of seat belts which provide pregnant women and their unborn children with better protection. Seat belts used to be virtually optimized for men because crash test dummies were modelled on the average male body.
- Organizational research, to give you one more example, reveals hidden mechanisms which discriminate against women. It thus provides a basis for abolishing such mechanisms.

Ladies and, of course, Gentlemen,

Ultimately, any research and work for more equal opportunities and all political measures to improve the work-life balance are about creating a fairer society which attaches importance to rational standards, better arguments and the ability to communicate and to listen to one another. We are currently witnessing that this open society is far less a matter of course than we previously assumed.

Let us unite in its support. Let us all be change agents!

Thank you.