

# Measuring Scientific Excellence

Susanne Baer, Plenary Presentation

*Excellence, Science Cultures and Gender*

- Science is a social activity
- Science activity is influenced by gender
- Academic tribes and territories
- Who makes the decision and what the criteria are – very important



bm:bwk

# Session 2C Valerie Davidson

Three critical components for fairness in measuring scientific excellence

- Clear criteria and guidelines recognizing different contributions
- Recognition of all the processes that are part of the measurement system
- Monitoring the outcomes by gender



# Session 2C Wolfgang Polt

Measuring excellence is very important but the current notion of excellence is ignorant of social and disciplinary differences

- Modify criteria to capture diversity
- Proposed Austrian initiatives:
  - Double number of women profs in Austria
  - Create centres of research led by women



# Session 2C Maya Widmer

## Gender Equality in the SNSF

Equity Commission created in 2001

- Systematic introduction of gender management issues in all areas of SNSF
- Monitoring assessment procedures to produce guidelines for gender equality
- Use of quotas and program changes



bm:bwk

# Session 2C Main Issues

## Scientific Excellence

- This is not a neutral concept
- The evaluation of excellence is subjective and gendered
- Biases in S&T culture that define excellence are well documented



# Session 2C Main Issues cont'd

## Measuring Scientific Excellence

- Subjective “you know it when you see it”
- Criteria may appear neutral but are not
- Depends on who makes the decisions
- There are unwritten rules
- Not about transparent assessment but about power



# Session 2C Main Issues cont'd

Range of approaches suggested

- Better defined requirements needed for: PhD, performance, promotion etc.
- Greater flexibility in selection criteria needed
- Specific programs to address gender bias - but these have limited impact



bm:bwk

# Session 2C Conclusion

Change in culture is needed

- Scientific community must recognize the definition and evaluation of excellence is not neutral (bias against gender, negative results, language, emerging topics)
- Critical mass of women needed in decision making positions to create the change
- Requiring gender assessment in all proposals can effect change



# Session 2C Recommendations

## General

- Identify the most critical place to focus initiatives
- Create national data bases of women scientists and engineers
- Require representation of women on selection and advisory committees



# Session 2C Recommendations

For OECD

- Identify best practices in programs, policies and evaluation criteria
- Share experience on biases and unwritten rules
- Organize workshops in the scientific community on gender bias



bm:bwk

# Session 2C Recommendations

For OECD

- Advocate education re gender bias beginning at the primary level
- Require a critical mass of women in OECD management
- Monitor and evaluate policies, funding programs, report statistics



bm:bwk