

**PLAN OF ACTION
FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AT USI
2013-2016**

Summary

PREFACE	4
INTRODUCTION	5
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AT USI	6
Statistical data on the position of women at USI	6
Summary review of activities: 2000-to date and Outlook	7
SWOT Analysis.....	10
ACTION PLAN 2013-2016	11
Directions and objectives.....	11
Areas of intervention and measures.....	11
1. Increasing the proportion of tenure-track women professors	12
2. Promoting the career of women academics	13
3. Reconciling home life with work time and wellbeing at work	14
4. Monitoring and auditing gender equality by means of indicators, statistics, and surveys	16
5. Spreading a culture of equal opportunities	17
6. Promoting and maximising the impact of taught subjects and research on issues of gender diversity..	18
7. Developing the Equal Opportunities Service (EOS).....	19
STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION	20
Organisation, collaborations and funding.....	20
Managing and reporting.....	20
Communication	20
CONCLUDING REMARKS	22

Preface

USI's Plan of Action for Equal Opportunities is a fundamental instrument; it will underpin our work in pursuit of equality and of a culture of non-discrimination where diversity can be valued.

In addition to its commitment to improving the presence of women on the professorial staff, the University wants to guarantee a working and study environment that is fair, inclusive, and harmonious, where women and men may devote equal attention to career and family. The right to self-fulfilment based on an enriching and satisfying employment is an essential condition for a truly improved quality of life. Concrete results may be achieved if we develop, organically and coherently across all Faculties and services, an integrated strategy for equal opportunity.

Aware that synergy between different sectors and actors is indispensable to promoting equal opportunity for all, we intend to implement an integrated and transversal strategy enabling us to deliver our set objectives in all the priority areas of intervention identified. This is set out and described in detail in the present document.

Attention to "diversity" (not only in matters of gender, but also of race, cultural background, age, family situation and professional experience) will be the main feature for a code of good practice applied innovatively. This will enable us to value and capitalize on difference within our academic community and to develop a sentiment of inclusion. The teaching and professional environment will become all the more welcoming, productive for that, enhancing at the same time the variety of talent and skills in our midst.

It is our belief that the broad gamut of measures and projects envisaged for the next four years is going to meet the demands of our entire academic community. Our great hope, therefore, is that they may be welcome to the Federal Programme for Equal Opportunities and attract its support.



Piero Martinoli
President



Arianna Carugati-Giugliano
Equal Opportunities Representative

Introduction

The “Plan of Action for Equal Opportunities at Università della Svizzera italiana 2013-2016” was set out in response to a call by the Swiss University Conference, on 3 July 2012, a further stage in the implementation of the “Equal Opportunities / Gender Studies” Programme 2013-2016.

Working closely with USI’s Working Group for equal opportunities¹, USI’s Equal Opportunities Service began by discussing, analysing in depth and sharing with the direction a number of goals and measures to be implemented to ensure that equal opportunities are suitably upheld. The Representative subsequently drafted the present document, which was approved and endorsed by the President, on 24 September 2012.

The Plan of Action, included in the Outlook for 2020 and in the 2013-2016 Strategic Plan of the University, begins by analysing the current situation of equal opportunities at USI. This initial analysis helped us, first, to point out the endogenous and exogenous factors that have a bearing on the context of gender equality at USI and, secondly, to define the priority areas of intervention for the next four years. The driving force of the Action Plan is the systematic presentation, by area of intervention, of the specific goals and operative measures proposed for achieving them. For each of these we detail the successive implementation stages as well as the instruments to be used to test their effectiveness. The Plan of Action concludes with some recommendations on organisation and communication strategies to maximise the impact, and the allocation of funds.

The documents enclosed make it easier to understand the proposals for action submitted herewith.

¹ USI’s Equal Opportunities working group agreed, on 29 March 2012, to designate a sub-committee, made up of its President and the representatives of the junior academic staff of the Faculties of Informatics and Communication, to participate in the formulation of new measures for the Action Plan.

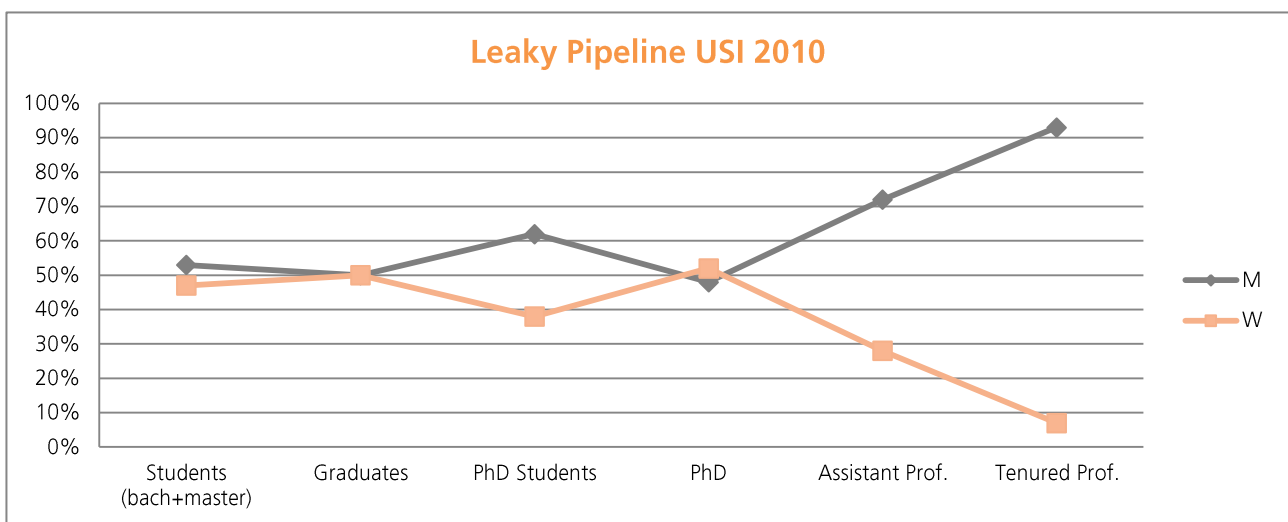
Equal Opportunities at USI

Through its Equal Opportunities Service (hereafter: EOS), Università della Svizzera italiana (hereafter: USI) has over the past decade run projects and awareness campaigns aimed at integrating equality and related gender issues into the University. The main goal was to achieve a fair proportion of women and men at all levels of the institution and, above all, in the tenure-track professorial body.

However, if equal opportunities have been promoted, the main goal was not merely to rebalance the situation for statistical effect, but they have been introduced into a more ambitious, more far-reaching cultural change designed to challenge all stereotypes to do with research and academic career path. In terms of institutional practice, this has meant creating the appropriate conditions to assure a fair balance between work activities and family responsibilities. It has also meant providing incentive for women aiming to advance further in their educational and professional career paths.

We report hereunder a summary of the main statistical data regarding women in the University and of the major initiatives achieved from 2000 to date, in the different areas of intervention seen as a priority. The SWOT Analysis described at the end relays the opportunities not to be missed and the challenges to be faced in the near future, if we want our equality policies to continue to improve and develop.

Statistical data on the position of women at USI



Examining the statistical data available divided by gender we can highlight the following characteristics of the female component within the University:

- The number of women admitted to study for a degree at the Faculties of USI, and subsequently graduating, on the whole matches that of men, although (quite significant) differences do exist in terms of course of study (see Area 2);
- Fewer women apply for a PhD degree programme (38%), but the percentage of women completing the doctoral degree is slightly higher to that of men (52%). The variance in percentage between new male and female PhD candidates may be explained by the growth of the Faculty of Informatics²;
- The number of women professors at USI has risen over the years (the average of female appointments since 2008 has reached 26% for full and associate professors and 35% for assistant professors), but there is still an imbalance in the situation (see Area 1).

These statistical trends emphasize the need to invest a good deal more effort in developing the female component in the top and the (upper) junior academic ranks, through the launch of projects and measures devoted to these targets.

² The number of PhD students in this Faculty has risen exponentially, from 9 candidates in 2004 to 91 in 2010. As a result this is the Faculty with the highest number of doctoral students, but with a proportion of women doctoral students lower than 20%. In other words, male students registered for a PhD degree at USI has gone up; while on the other hand still few degrees are completed, and therefore the proportion of women completing their PhD degree remains high.

Summary review of activities: 2000-to date and Outlook

▪ Institutionalisation of equal opportunities

In October 2000, the University Council of USI (hereafter: UC) established the position of *Representative for equal opportunities* with the remit of pursuing equality of rights and opportunities between women and men at all levels of the academic, administrative and management structure of Canton Ticino's higher education. The EOS became operational in 2001³. Since then, and as ratified in the *Directives for equal opportunities*, approved by the UC in May 2006, the Representative is supported in the fulfilment of her mandate by USI's working group for equal opportunities (which is composed of the representative herself, two external experts, by a representative of the administrative staff and, for each of USI's Faculties, by a representative of the academic staff, junior academic staff and student body). The Representative also has sufficient financial and human resources at her disposal for discharging her duties⁴.

At present, one scientific assistant and one junior staff assure the necessary support for the coordination and execution of the projects and activities launched by the Service.

The positions of the representative (60%) and of the scientific assistant (70%) have already been institutionalised.

CURRENT POSITION	EXPECTATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directives for equal opportunities approved by the University Council in 2006 - Institutionalisation of the Equal Opportunities Service (the post of representative and of assistant funded by USI) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further improvement of financial resources available and of Equal Opportunities Service staff (see Area 7)

▪ Monitoring equal opportunities

The gender component within the University, defined as a quality control variable, is monitored by regularly checks on a series of statistical data, in particular on the number of: students, graduates and doctoral students divided by Faculty; admissions to Executive Master's programmes; members of the academic and of the administrative staff. These are the data registered in a longitudinal perspective on the University's web site (see Annex VI).

The EOS is part of central Services, which are audited at regular intervals in terms of the degree of satisfaction expressed by the academic staff and students. The findings of the survey clearly show that the EOS has become better and more widely known, used and appreciated by members of USI's academic community (in 2011, 23% of those who answered the survey declared they had consulted the EOS. 75% of them thought that the staff had been helpful and competent to a good or excellent degree).

Analysing these data, together with the individual comments added by some of the survey participants, is a valuable source of information, in our attempt to direct and assess the strategies of our Service. In addition, as a rule we conduct an internal assessment of all completed projects, to test their effectiveness, in order to ensure that what we offer reflects and satisfies a real demand within the academic community.

CURRENT POSITION	EXPECTATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular update of the statistical data sorted by gender - Assessment of degree of satisfaction of EOS users and EOS's own evaluation of its services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further development of indicators and statistics for gender equality purposes - Promoting surveys focused on key factors associated mainly with career progression (see Area 4)

▪ Fair representation of women and men at all levels and in all sectors

USI's prime objective in terms of equal opportunity has always been to preserve and/or achieve an equal proportion of women and men at all levels of the hierarchy and across Faculties and Services. While this objective has been attained at the administrative staff level, students and junior academics, (with the exception of the Faculty of Informatics, see Area of intervention 3) and we must try to keep it so, more efforts need to be put in

³ Some activities of the Service are conducted in collaboration with the Gender Service at SUPSI, with due respect for the specific, distinct character of each institution. The USI-SUPSI Gender Committee was instituted in 2005. Its mandate was to develop a strategy and formulate a number of activities to be pursued together, to reinforce or firm up the task of achieving equality of opportunity in the two institutions. The Committee is made up of one member from the Council of each University, the chairman of the USI working group, the representative for USI Equal Opportunities Service, and SUPSI's Gender Representative.

⁴ In Annex III, the directives and basis for action are summed up.

to rebalancing the situation of the tenured professorial staff and decision-making bodies. It must nonetheless be said that statistical data (see Area of intervention 2) show – unmistakably – that especially over the past five years there has been a steady increase in the number of women appointed as full professors (4/55), associate professors (5/20) and assistant professors (6/18). Their number currently reaches 16,1% of total tenure-track professorial staff of the University. This increase is significant compared to other Swiss universities, where the percentage of women academics is indeed higher, but has been stuck for some time at the same unsatisfactory levels.

USI is determined to further strengthen its professorial staff by encouraging female careers. This objective clearly tops the agenda in the University's Plans 2012-2016⁵. To this end, the presence of equal-opportunities observers on the Selecting Committees for the appointment of tenured professors and for the allocation of research grants has been invaluable. Besides guaranteeing transparency to these processes, this facilitates the collection of quantitative and qualitative information, relevant for directing the EOS action on behalf of women's academic careers. All USI job advertisements include explicit reference to the University's welcoming the application of women candidates. Besides, USI favours them in the hiring process, all qualifications being equal.

CURRENT POSITION	EXPECTATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proportion of women professors in tenure-track positions lower than the national average and federal targets - Advertisements for vacant positions warmly welcome female applicants - Presence of Equal Opportunity observer on selecting committees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Higher number of tenure-track women professors in all USI Faculties - Minimum quota of 25% of women out of the total new appointments of tenured professors at USI (including any recruitment done in 2012) - Further campaigning with supervisors and executive, managerial staff, for more awareness of the value of diversity (see Area 1)

▪ **Promoting the academic career of women**

Since 2001, USI has been supporting a one-to-one mentoring scheme, to further female academic careers. Through this scheme, young women mentees are teamed up with resource persons capable of steering them in the conduct and pursuit of their academic career and helping them broaden their contact network, in a way that complements the guidance received from their thesis supervisors. The scheme, institutionalised by USI in 2006, has been enriched over the years by complementary activities (co-funded by the federal programme), and women of the new generation of academics in Ticino can boast an even more attractive application file as a result. Under the mentoring banner, in fact, we organise training workshops, information and awareness events, and shadowing periods to spend in another university.

Mentoring is an invaluable instrument, and USI intends to go on investing in it, as it does help promote women's careers, and therefore boost, in the medium-to-long term, women's presence on the tenured professorial staff. To optimise its provision in this area USI has decided, over the next four years, to join as a partner two major mentoring schemes active in Switzerland: the *Réseau romand de mentoring pour femmes* and the *Mentoring Deutschschweiz*.

CURRENT POSITION	EXPECTATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - USI's one-to-one mentoring programme institutionalised in 2006 - Collaboration with francophone mentoring schemes since 2002 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continued implementation of complementary activities proposed under the aegis of USI mentoring (shadowing, workshops, events) - Collaboration with major networks for academic mentoring operating in Switzerland (see Area 2)

▪ **Work-life balance and human resources management**

Since 2001 USI has been providing financial assistance to members of its academic community (on low income) by subsidizing the costs of placing children in a nursery or with day families. Since 2009, it has been paying a share of the costs of extra-school services run by the Cantonal authorities (infant schools with extended hours, canteens, after-school, and activities during school vacations). In addition, as the University does not run its own crèche yet (one is planned as part of the new university campus which is due to be built), it has secured some places reserved for the members of its community in nurseries managed by the City of Lugano and the Mendrisio Council, and located in the proximity of the university campuses. Over the 2013-2016 period, USI

⁵The document was discussed and approved by the University Council on 3 December 2010. For further details, please read also the booklet "A glimpse into the future of USI", <http://www.usi.ch/en/aural/dies-uno-sguardo-sul-futuro-en-178668.pdf>

plans to guarantee an average of 10 places set aside for the university community: 2 financed by the federal subsidies (see, strategy implementation).

In 2009, responding to an initiative of the equal opportunities working group, USI extended the period of paternity leave to five consecutive days. A father's role is vitally important at the time of the birth of a child, and if a father becomes more actively involved in domestic life, work and family cares, this will greatly benefit the cause of equality between the sexes. All the essential information for (future) parents regarding parental leave, entitlement to benefits, and all the measures or procedures put in place by the University and by appropriate associations in the Canton, is contained in the brochure *"La famiglia s'ingrandisce"*. The brochure was first published in 2007, has since then been updated at regular intervals, and is distributed to the entire academic community (since 2011 also in English: *"The family is getting bigger"*).

The equal opportunities Representative is also available for one-to-one counselling, and can provide guidance on issues such as maternity, placing children into care, Ticino's school system, labour law, adapting / re-inventing one's study and/or professional curriculum as a result of changes affecting one's private life and, more generally, on all aspects of life-work balance.

Furthermore, the EOS has also sponsored information and awareness events on topics such as parenthood, education, planning one's personal and private life, work-life balance. Every year, it organises recreational events and social gatherings for the families of the university, and these are always very popular and successful.

Maintaining and further reinforcing the actions and instruments created to ensure work-life balance is vitally important to guarantee equal opportunities.

CURRENT POSITION	EXPECTATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Places reserved in nurseries close to the campus, in Lugano and Mendrisio - A subsidy scheme to help pay for nursery fees (2001) extra-school services (2009) in the event of limited income - Up-to-date database on services providing support to families (canteens, after-school, etc.) and information material on the issue (e.g. list of nurseries) - Family-friendly management of human resources and of academic community members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing the number of places set aside for members of USI's academic community - Allocation of financial assistance to families of insufficient income (to run until the new single USI-SUPSI campus is built with its own nursery facilities, as planned) - Reinforcement of policies helping administrative staff and members of the academic community with family responsibilities and/or disabilities (see Area 3)

▪ **Raising awareness on issues related to equality and integration of the gender aspect in teaching and research**

Through its EOS, USI organises on a regular basis courses, seminars and events to inform and make the academic community more sympathetic to issues of equal opportunity. In this task, the EOS often works in collaboration with USI's Faculties and Services, as well as with other institutions and associations committed to gender equality in Ticino. Networking, in fact, boosts the effectiveness and the impact of awareness and information campaigns, and multiplies the EOS's chances to get through to a broader public.

Over the past 10 years, the EOS has set up fruitful collaborative projects with Offices for Equal Opportunity operating in other Swiss Universities. In synergy with these, it has encouraged significant projects and measures mostly on behalf of women at the junior academic rank (mentoring schemes) and of couples living in a dual-career situation.

Attending the meetings of KOFRAH (National Conference of equal-opportunity representatives in Swiss Universities) and of BuLa (*Bureaux latins de l'égalité*) greatly benefits the EOS's networking strategy. The EOS makes use of a number of instruments to publicise its activities, for example: the Equality Newsletter (circulated at the beginning of each term to the whole academic community and to the network of external contacts); its web site (which gives a full and detailed overview of the organisation and of its objectives and assures an adequate and continuous presentation of all the initiatives in progress, in Italian and in English); flyers describing projects and introducing individual initiatives; publications on specific issues or events.

CURRENT POSITION	EXPECTATIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organization of courses, recreation/social occasions, and events to publicise equal opportunities, also in collaboration and/or partnership with other (cantonal, national, and international) organisations. - One-to-one counselling and targeted communication instruments to meet diverse equal-opportunity needs of USI users. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spreading the culture of equal opportunities and diversity inside and outside USI (see Area 5) - Further appreciation and integration of the gender and diversity perspectives into teaching and research (see Area 6) - Continuing education for EOS staff (see Area 7)

SWOT Analysis

In addition to the *endogenous factors* (SW) highlighted earlier, to complete our analysis we will perform a SWOT Analysis to draw attention also to the *exogenous factors* (OT) at work in the context of equal opportunities at USI. The findings will help us make the most of positive chances and avert negative incidents.

ISSUE	STRENGTHS (S)	WEAKNESSES (W)	OPPORTUNITIES (O)	RISKS (T)
Promotion and enhancement of equal opportunities at USI: 2013-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for USI's decision-making bodies Institutionalisation of the EOS Boosted the EOS's promotional programmes Satisfied users and proven expertise of the EOS Staff Raised awareness of EO principles and issues A multi-cultural academic community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women representation on the tenure-track professorial and decision-making staffs Raising awareness in the professorial and managerial staff of the value of <i>diversity management</i> Emphasis on gender aspects in teaching and research Collecting and analysing data sorted by gender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaboration and partnership at cantonal, national and international levels Institutional determination to root out all gender-related stereotypes in education and on the career ladder Increasing women's employment and awareness of risks involved in horizontal and vertical segregation Gradual improvement of childcare services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Geographically "removed" location and people's mobility difficulties Belonging to a cultural minority "Conservative" culture and full involvement of women in the economy and in social life Still unsatisfactory offer extra-school services by the Canton Poor appreciation of Equal Opportunities

Our analysis suggests that the main chances for furthering equal opportunities at USI consist in partnerships with outside institutions as well as a clear awareness of the importance of related issues. More energy needs to be spent in further promoting the culture of Italian-speaking Switzerland at the federal level: language barriers too often hinder the full participation of university members in inter-university projects working on women's academic careers.

Action Plan 2013-2016

Directions and objectives

The Action Plan we are submitting covers the 2013-2016 period. To ensure continuity with what has been achieved over the past few years, also with the backing of federal funds, our objective is to continue to promote programmes and actions designed to safeguard equal opportunities within the University.

Over the next four years USI intends to:

1. Consolidate the tenure-track professorial staff of the University, by increasing the number of female full professors;
2. Strengthen the number and role of academic researchers (male and female), by boosting women's careers more particularly;
3. Guarantee to all members of the academic community a work or study environment characterized by fairness, inclusion and harmony;
4. Further and consolidate any policy that benefits all equal opportunities promoted so far.

Although equal rights and opportunities for men and women have been given top priority, USI also wishes to broaden the scope of the Action Plan by taking in the principle of the management of *diversity*. Besides gender, USI wants to address ethnic origins, cultural background, age, family situation and professional experience. The aim is to make the most of differences within one's own academic community, and to build up a sense of *inclusion* in such a way as to make study and work environments more welcoming and productive.

Areas of intervention and measures

In line with the general objectives described above and the demands highlighted by previous surveys, we have identified the following priorities for action over the next four years:

1. Increasing the proportion of tenure-track women professors
2. Promoting the career of women academics
3. Reconciling home life with work time and wellbeing at work
4. Monitoring and auditing gender equality by means of indicators, statistics and surveys
5. Spreading a culture of equal opportunities
6. Promoting and maximising the impact of taught subjects and research on matters of gender and cultural diversity
7. Developing the Equal Opportunities Service (EOS)

Examining each of these areas of intervention in the order, we present the specific goals pursued by USI and the various steps that the University plans to take to reach such objectives⁶.

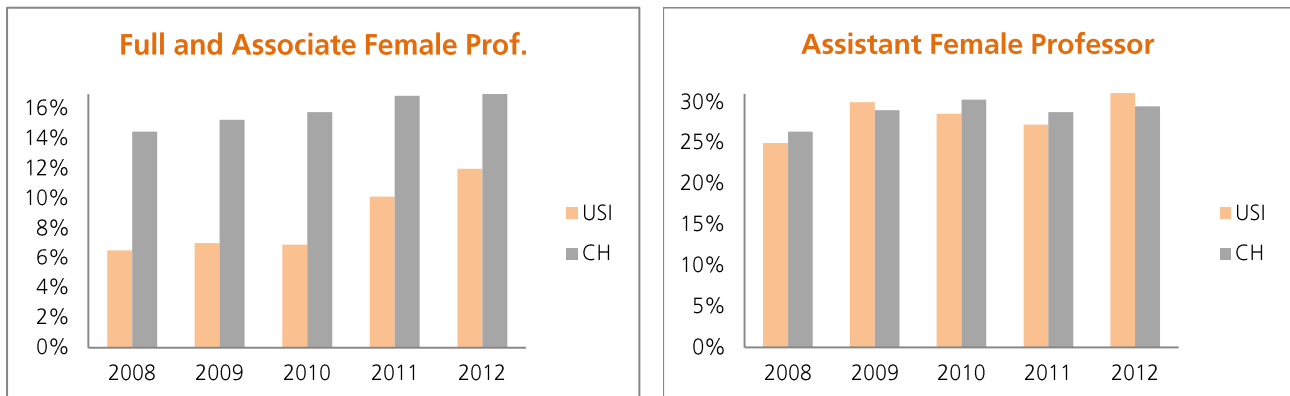
⁶In Annex I, the Plan of Action is summed up in a synoptic table. In addition to the goals and operative measures, the table shows the times of implementation and the key control indicators for the various initiatives, pointing out those which have not yet been put in place at USI (New).

Area of intervention 1

Increasing the proportion of tenure-track women professors

The presence of women may boost innovation, quality and competitiveness of academic research; thus it must be encouraged where it is perceived to be inadequate.

The proportion of women with full professor status at USI has risen significantly since 2008, reaching 12% today among tenured professors (Swiss national average: 17,8%) and 33,3% among assistant professors (Swiss national average: 29,5%).



As figures reported earlier show (31 July 2012 data), the proportion of women on the professorial staff of our University is now set at 16,1%. The national targets that the Confederation expects to be reached by the end of 2016 are as follows: 25% of tenured professors and 40% of assistant professors. USI plans to appoint 20 new full professors (this includes those appointed in 2012): at least 25% of these new positions is expected to be filled by women.

Specific goals

To consolidate its academic staff, over the next four years USI plans to:

- 1.1 Guarantee compliance with equal opportunities in the procedures for hiring and appointing tenure-track professors, by ensuring that appointment committee members are fully aware of the importance for the institution of diversity management and the impact of prejudice on the selection process;
- 1.2 Prepare information sorted by gender for all the successive stages of the selecting process of tenure-track professors.

Operative measures

- 1.1.1 Continue to do its reasonable best to promote each full professor position advertised and to encourage, in particular, women candidates.
- 1.1.2 Continue to delegate an equal-opportunities observer with no voting rights to take part in the work of each selecting committee for the appointment of a full professor.
- 1.1.3 Continue to delegate an equal-opportunities observer to take part in the work of each committee for the allocation of research grants.
- 1.1.4 To frame recommendations and/or guidelines for the attention of 'advisory committees' for the appointment of tenure-track professors and for the allocation of research grants, urging them to consider the objective of a fairer proportion of women at the top of the academic career ladder and become more aware of gender issues.
- 1.2.1 To continue a systematic collection of data subdivided by gender for individual applicants who: submit their application within the appointment procedure; are short-listed; are invited for a trial lecture and interview; are put forward for the appointment.

Area of intervention 2

Promoting the career of women academics

We need to address the fundamental question of the horizontal and vertical segregation of women in academia if we want to radically change the world of higher education, both in terms of content and its practical applications.

The table reproduced below (data refer to 31 July 2012) shows that women and men are equally represented within the student body and the junior academics of all USI Faculties, with the exception of the Faculty of Informatics.

	ARCHITECTURE	COMMUNICATION	ECONOMICS	INFORMATICS
<i>Bachelor</i>	54%	67%	37%	17%
<i>Master</i>	40%	67%	48%	21%
<i>Phd</i>	50%	68%	34%	14%
<i>Post-doc</i>	100%	74%	54%	11%

To further boost the academic careers of women at all levels, USI intends to provide its female students, PhD students and post-doctoral researchers adequate information on the characteristics of a university career, and help them develop the necessary skills for undertaking this path.

Specific goals

Therefore, in 2013-2016 USI wants to launch projects and measures designed to:

- 2.1 Raise awareness among women of their own potential and their power to choose through mentoring programmes;
- 2.2 Facilitate networking and training opportunities;
- 2.3 Contribute to promote new academic guidance/counselling programmes breaking away from the influence exercised by social and family models (MINT area).

Operative measures

- 2.1.1 Continue to initiate mentoring and counselling initiatives for female researchers at the University.
- 2.1.2 Continue to collaborate with the two leading mentoring networks active in Switzerland, namely the *Réseau romand de mentoring pour femmes* and the *Mentoring Deutschschweiz*.
- 2.1.3 Work with partner universities on updating the two handbooks: *Getting your thesis off to a good start* and *Beyond the doctorate*.
- 2.1.4 Assure exposure and recognition of women's excellence by systematically publicising information on high profile female researchers.
- 2.1.5 Prepare an informative brochure detailing the role and impact of mentoring for an academic career.
- 2.2.1 Continue to promote *Gender Meetings* to create an ideal forum where peer groups can experience and swap ideas on equality issues in a relaxed, informal atmosphere.
- 2.2.2 Get involved in networking initiatives at the local, national, and international levels to encourage women's careers.
- 2.3.1 Advise the practice of 'shadowing' an expert to women researchers operating in scientific fields where women are under-represented and/or are carrying on studies in areas related to equal opportunities aspects.
- 2.3.2 Take advantage of career days as an ideal time to draw women's attention to the importance of a well-thought-out choice of training and profession.

Area of intervention 3

Reconciling home life with work time and wellbeing at work

Being able to reconcile study and work conditions with a satisfactory family life is a necessary prerequisite for anyone who is fully motivated, productive and ready to play different roles in society.

Policies to ensure work-life balance, which concern men and women alike, have a direct impact on individual career choices and academic couples strategies. Since its foundation, USI has tackled the question of work-life balance by acting simultaneously on different but complementary fronts: organisation of work and/or study, the culture of the university, information and guidance offered and the support services open to members of its academic community, and there it has been successful in an equal opportunities perspective.

Specific goals

Over the 2013-2016 period, too, the EOS wants to spearhead specific measures to facilitate work-life balance, to bring about an atmosphere in the workplace that is inclusive, harmonious, and alert to the particular needs of families, of Dual career couples, and of disabled people. To this end, USI has set itself the following goals:

- 3.1 To carry on monitoring and analyzing the demand for work-life balance by members of its own academic community, with a view to better organizing school and work activities;
- 3.2 To continue to inform and raise the awareness of our own academic community on questions of work-life balance;
- 3.3 To manage an array of appropriate solutions for childcare, care of the aged, and for people who are no longer self-sufficient;
- 3.4 To assure equal entitlement to study and work to all the members of its academic community.

Operative measures

- 3.1.1 To launch a study, in collaboration with the University's Faculty of Economics, to analyse the situation of parent-students at USI.
- 3.1.2 To launch a survey, in collaboration with the Personnel Office, designed to highlight existing demands for work-life balance among USI's academic and administrative staff.
- 3.2.1 To prepare a publication detailing the necessary information on all the possible forms of family-friendly employment (part-time, telework, person-hour database, planning of duration and timetables, etc.) and their repercussions on one's career.
- 3.2.2 Update *The Family is getting bigger* brochure, with additional useful information for parents-to-be, and more particularly on how to organize one's own work time and leave entitlement.
- 3.2.3 To continue to promote recreation and sports activities on behalf of families and the female staff of the University, believing in the need to enjoy time off with one's family, cultivating a spirit and sentiment of community.
- 3.2.4 To set up a programme called '*Mom4Mom programme*', whereby a mother-to-be is put in touch with another mother working at USI, who has already gone through the test of reconciling her private life with the demand of work and who can offer advice in this regard.
- 3.2.5 To continue updating the data bank on services supporting families (canteens, after-school, etc.) and circulating information material on the issue (e.g. List of nurseries).
- 3.3.1 To further improve the university's family-friendly resources, especially by examining the feasibility of extending further the parental leave period.
- 3.3.2 To renew the existing contracts with the crèches/nurseries of the City of Lugano and of Mendrisio to guarantee a number of places set aside for the university community, allowing for the possibility of increasing the number of places year by year.
- 3.3.3 To continue to pay a contribution to the costs of nursery and extra-school fees on behalf of the members of the academic community of insufficient financial means.
- 3.3.4 To introduce activities during the school vacations for the children of members of the academic community and/or conclude agreements with summer holiday associations and centres so as to make it easier for personnel or students of the University to use such services at preferential rates.

- 3.3.5 To produce a feasibility study, in collaboration with the Faculty of Informatics, on a “time data base” to encourage mutual assistance between families for the supply of care and recreation to the children, and possibly proceed to its implementation.
- 3.3.6 To update the practical items used by families (changing tables, microwave ovens, high chairs, cots) and improve the organisation of space dedicated to their needs (a room for breast-feeding, a corner dedicated to families in the Canteen, etc.).
- 3.3.7 To reserve parking spaces for pregnant women and families in the car parks on the campuses of Lugano and Mendrisio.
- 3.4.1 To further consolidate campaigns of information and prevention in cases of bullying and harassment in the workplace and in the classroom and other study space.
- 3.4.2 To update information (web site and Guide book) for researchers living in a dual-career situation.
- 3.4.3 To examine the *University Regulations* from an equal opportunities perspective, and if at all possible suggest adjustments in order to clear any hurdles of a didactic and practical nature.

Area of intervention 4

Monitoring and auditing gender equality by means of indicators, statistics, and surveys

Before we engage responsibly in activities to promote equal opportunities, it is indispensable to have a clear picture of how resources and opportunities are allocated in the University according to gender.

Specific goals

USI's Quality Assurance Service is responsible for regularly obtaining and updating batches of data and statistics on a variety of aspects of the University as an institution, divided also by gender (number of current students, graduate students and PhD students by Faculty; number of participants registered for Executive Master's degrees; members of the academic staff and of the administrative staff).

Besides this base of information, through the EOS, over the next four years, the University aims to:

- 4.1 Measure, with the help of statistics and indicators, the degree of success in reaching its gender equality targets;
- 4.2 Conduct surveys focused on equality issues, and frame proposals to rebalance situations of disadvantage.

Operative measures

- 4.1.1 To establish further indicators of achievement, outcome, and impact to enable us to monitor equality of gender and to assess the programmes and actions carried out in the field of equal opportunities.
- 4.1.2 To continue observing, using quantitative and qualitative methods, the level of satisfaction and of effectiveness obtained in the aftermath of initiatives and regarding the EOS staff.
- 4.1.3 To present an annual report on the activities carried out in the framework of the Action Plan 2013-16.
- 4.2.1 To promote, also in association with other appropriate Services of the University, a survey on the number of women entering a career and their actual achievements, also in terms of levels of pay and progress in decision-making/executive positions.
- 4.2.2 To promote, also in collaboration with other appropriate Services of the University, a survey on the rates of (candidate) applications and rates of success of men and women in terms of grant and fellowship allocation, funding and academic awards.

Area of intervention 5

Spreading a culture of equal opportunities

Planning events and educational activities on issues of equal opportunity, designed to give higher exposure to diversity. This is crucial in the fight against discrimination and can help to develop and establish a “culture of diversity”, as is appropriate for a University called on to compete in terms of attractiveness and excellence on the national and international stage.

Specific goals

In line with projects and measures already launched in previous years, USI, through its EOS, wishes to:

- 5.1 Further improve knowledge and awareness of equal opportunities issues among the members of its community, encouraging the fulfilment of people’s potential;
- 5.2 Facilitate and promote a fair balance of gender in communication and the language;
- 5.3 Strengthen the network of equal opportunities contacts.

Operative measures

- 5.1.1 To organise, also in conjunction with the Faculties, USI Services and other institutions, meetings, events and communication campaigns on topics and personalities connected with equal opportunities.
- 5.1.2 To organise, also in conjunction with the Faculties, USI Services and other institutions, training workshops for the administrative staff and junior staff on equal opportunities topics and/or to acquire new professional and managerial skills.
- 5.1.3 To organise, also in conjunction with the Faculties, USI Services and other institutions, programmes of continuing education for the teaching staff on gender studies and for teaching methods sensitive to gender.
- 5.2.1 To promote a study, in association with the Faculty of Communication, to analyse pictures and contents used until now in the communication system of the University.
- 5.2.2 To lay out gender-conscious guidelines to be applied to all publications and to all promotional material as well as to all administrative documents.
- 5.3.1 To pursue and/or initiate collaborative ventures with institutions and firms resident in the region, in order to promote joint initiatives in favour of equal opportunities.

Area of intervention 6

Promoting and maximising the impact of taught subjects and research on issues of gender and cultural diversity

If we want to encourage a culture of equal opportunities and we want it to grow, we must put in place specific interventions designed to fight prejudice and stereotypes. Information and awareness initiatives can bring to light variables and aspects that are often hidden or taken for granted. Prejudice can seriously damage the development of individual characteristic and skills, and it could even lead to excluding those who are not acknowledged in traditional roles.

Specific goals

In line with projects and measures already launched in previous years, USI, through its EOS, wishes to:

- 6.1 Assure visibility to course subjects that integrate aspects of gender and cultural diversity;
- 6.2 Boost information and knowledge among the members of the academic community about research projects completed or in progress in the areas of equal opportunity and cultural diversity;
- 6.3 Assure an information and advisory service to carry out research on issues of equal rights.

Operative measures

- 6.1.1 To check through the subjects taught at the University to identify those whose content has an equal opportunity component; then draw attention to these subjects, promoting them through the various communication channels available to EOS (the web, flyers, 'focus' in the newsletter).
- 6.2.1 To examine any research projects in progress in order to identify those that are thematically akin to the equal opportunities question.
- 6.2.2 To organise seminars and study days devoted to research around topics of gender equality and cultural diversity.
- 6.2.3 To institute, in collaboration with the Faculties, an Award for the best Master's thesis on equal opportunities.
- 6.3.1 To prepare a publication stressing the importance and the added value of integrating the aspect of gender equality and equal opportunity in scientific research.

Area of intervention 7

Developing the Equal Opportunities Service (EOS)

If the EOS is to guarantee and strengthen the services supplied to its users, it needs to be given the adequate financial and human resources as well as communication tools that are constantly updated.

Specific goals

To this end, in the next four years USI aims to:

- 7.1 Support the implementation of strategies developed in the equal opportunities context, thereby anchoring the EOS deeper in the institution;
- 7.2 Update and/or improve all the tools that support the activities of the EOS.

Operating measures

- 7.1.1 Update the text of the *Directives for Equal Opportunities*, dated May 2006.
- 7.1.2 Continue to promote the EOS within the University as the strategic-operating point of reference in matters of equal opportunity.
- 7.1.3 Guarantee adequate staff provision to enable EOS to fulfil its duties and mandate, by hiring other staff members on particular projects, thus contributing to the realization of the Plan of Action.
- 7.2.1 Keep funding continuous training and the participation of EOS staff in meetings, conferences, seminars and workshops in Switzerland and possibly abroad too.
- 7.2.2 To make progress with the systematic updating of all the communication tools of EOS (paper-based and multimedia).

Strategy Implementation

Organisation, collaborations and funding

The present Plan of Action is cast as a directing instrument (pointing the way) but also as an instrument of execution, to launch a series of measures, working in synergy with the Faculties and the other Services of the University, on issues of equality and equal opportunity.

Our aim is to promote and launch interventions to contribute concretely to tackling and curbing inequalities, to meet the need, the demands and expectations of USI's academic community and its members, by initiating – where strategically appropriate – agreements and collaborations with other national and/or international organisations and agencies.

Funding for the measures is guaranteed in the framework of the ordinary financial planning process of the University, by federal subsidies and by other partners.

Managing and reporting

The EOS examines on a yearly basis the need to update or adjust the Action Plan to account for the degree of achievement of the set objectives and of any possible critical situation arising and brought to the attention of the Service. By regular controlling the implementation of the strategy, year after year, we can react promptly to any changes in the reference environment and, if necessary, suggest new routes for achieving the primary goals.

We expect to monitor each operating measure by means of a series of indicators and to evaluate it by analysing 'score cards' with reference to the following elements: checking the measure (target hit or missed); time necessary to implement the measure; resources used; collaboration launched; emergence of critical situations.

We have identified the indicators (see synoptic table, Annex I) on the basis of five main requirements: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (*SMART approach*⁷). It is moreover essential that there is agreement and understanding on the objectives, if the various stakeholders are to rally and contribute to their achievement.

On completion of the programme, outcomes are assessed and a final report prepared on the way the strategy was carried out.

Communication

Communication activities may be seen in the framework of a strategy aimed at raising the level of awareness of the academic community first, but also of the public at large. Content of such communication includes: actions set out by the University in favour of equal opportunity, how to facilitate life-and-work balance, encouraging the expansion of women's academic careers and boost the appeal that the University may exercise on (female and male) talented researchers.

These are the information and communication targets set out by the EOS:

- To supply accurate, regular, and clear information to the target public concerned on all the measures introduced and on the outcomes reached as a result of the Action Plan;
- To design and realise communication strategies designed to support the operative measures set out in the Action Plan, especially when the awareness and participation of the academic community (through events, campaigns and parties) is essential for the success of such measures);
- To make the most of synergies with internal and external partners to obtain better and more effective communication in terms of the joint measures set out in the Action Plan.

To this end, the EOS expects to resort to the following instruments:

- University portal, www.usi.ch and social network, www.socialmedia.usi.ch;
- The EOS website, www.equality.usi.ch;
- Equality Newsletter, published on the EOS web site and circulated at USI also in paper format;
- Targeted communication by email;
- Posters, flyers, exhibition panels and brochures;

⁷ Doran, G. T. (1981). Doran, George T. "There's a S.M.A.R.T. way to write management's goals and objectives." *Management Review*, Nov 1981, Volume 70 Issue 11. *Management Review*, 70 (11).

- Communication campaigns, aiming to promote the measures of the Action Plan and to increase visibility for the results obtained;
- Organisation of events, for instance conferences, seminars, and other;
- Creating and/or updating Publications on specific issues.

In addition to what has been detailed above, the EOS may identify possible instruments to meet other requirements that may emerge in the process of carrying out the Action Plan.

Concluding remarks

This Action Plan is all the stronger for being firmly sound backed by the University's top management and by the synergies with the other departments and sectors involved. This involvement, but also the recognition of the role of the EOS as a strategic-operative referent for equal opportunities, is essential for the implementation of all gender strategies and policies agreed upon for the realization of USI's objectives.

In addition to the positive collaboration of all the actors involved, the success of the Plan will depend largely on the adaptability of the context of reference to change. It will also depend on the capacity to react to predictable challenges and at the same time to recognise and exploit any positive opportunities for encouraging and further strengthening equality at USI.