



Network of Excellence

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1. What is GA²LEN?
2. Gender activities
3. The Interviews: 'Tips for tipping the gender balance'



GA²LEN



- **Global Allergy and Asthma European Network**
- **Funded by the EU 6th framework programme for research**
 - Instrument: Network of Excellence
 - Funding period 2004 - 2009
 - Theme: Food quality and safety
 - Topic 42: allergy and asthma (2003)



Fact sheet



31 Partners	27 research organisations, 2 societies (EAACI, EFA) & 2 SMEs
More than 50 collaborating centres	Open call for participation
Researchers involved	About 500 from more than 20 European countries
Co-ordinator	Paul van Cauwenberge University of Ghent, Belgium
EC scientific officer	Dr. Ana Nieto Nuez
EC contract number	FOOD-CT-2004-506378



Allergy & Asthma: major health concern

- GA²LEN responds to the allergy epidemics
- Integrated platform for research
 - harmonised research methods, multi-centres research
 - training, communication platform
- Multidisciplinary network
 - Medicine: several main and sub- specialties (paediatrics, dermatology, family practice, nutrition, lung specialists, allergology, ENT,...)
 - Life sciences: epidemiology, genetics, environment immunology, ...
 - Support functions: management, dissemination, IT



Today, **1** child in **3**
is allergic

Some achievements

- GA²LEN Birth cohorts
- Pan-European standard Skin prick test
- Quality criteria set for Allergy centres of Excellence
- Training: GA²LEN-EAACI Allergy school
- Extension to 50 Collaborating Centres
- Allergic diseases in FP7



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Work packages organisation

1. Integration activities
 - **WP 1.8 Ethical and gender issues**
2. Joint research activities (9 topics)
 - **WP 2.5 Gender** (gender differences in research)
3. Dissemination & training
 - Scientific community; Health professionals; Patients; Public, Media & policy makers
4. Management



Achievements (1)

- WP Gender and Ethical issues
 - “Contribute to eliminate inequalities and promote gender equality within the network by implementation of a 'gender awareness' programme.”
 - Gender Task Force
- Report on gender distribution among GA²LEN members (2005)



Women in GA²LEN

- More women than men in the GA²LEN network (51%)
- But only 20% in leadership positions
 - WP leaders: 7F /23 >30%
 - Team leaders: 5F /28 <18%
 - Voting Members of the Executive Committee: 1F /7 >14%
- The ExComm:
 - 5 male permanent members
 - 1 female rotating member (with voting right)
 - Most « GA²LEN Office » staff is female



Achievements (2)

- More flexible rules introduced to elect ExCom members
 - Allowed a woman to be elected as rotating member for 2006/2007
- Series of interviews in GA²LEN
 - Identify a set of concrete measures and activities to be performed by the Gender Task Force & within GA²LEN
- Gender straps in GA²LEN newsletters



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Interviews

- Objectives
 - Snap shot of situation in GA²LEN
 - identify women who could be involved in the gender action plan
- 10 interviews (Jan. 2006 - Jan. 2007)
 - 3 Team leader, 3 WP leaders
 - 2 (more) junior researchers
 - ExComm: 1 permanent member, 1 rotating
 - 9 women, 1 man
 - B – F – D – Fi – NL – UK
- Publication in GA²LEN Newsletter
 - Gender strap in Newsletter
 - 3 interviews already published



Questions

- How can GA²LEN help more women to succeed?
- Relationship gender issues in research / women representation in GA²LEN
- Reason of gender imbalance in their opinion
- What can be done to help improve the situation?
 - European level & in GA²LEN
- Target quotas?
- A gender task force – Action plan

Interviews outcomes (1) where is the challenge

- More female students, less women at leadership level
 - Dilemma for women between career and building a family
 - Female doctors tend to favour of clinical practice?
 - More men at leadership level → reproduced within GA²LEN
- 'Gender discrimination' in the profession
 - Feeling that women need more (determination, persistence, competency...) for equivalent recognition
- Women added-value to a leadership team underestimated
 - different qualities than men's (integration and collaboration; facilitate compromise; can handle conflict...)
- Main challenges for the future
 - Social and professional context that favours career & family
 - Change mentalities in societies



Interviews outcomes (2) Barriers to overcome

- "Social contexts and mentalities need to change..."
 - Value of women's work
 - Conflict with raising children – feeling of guilt of being a 'bad mother'
 - Investment in a sound education and academic career – time and money
- but women should overcome barriers they build for themselves":
 - Put oneself forward, networking; self-confidence in question.
- "Women with children need incentive to stay in the game"
 - CV of a researcher involves the number of publications
 - Lack of infrastructures (eg. Crèches or day care)
 - Support at home, if in couple + good organisation needed
- Salary discrimination
 - Women's salaries at management level do not match
 - less financial reward → decrease in quality of life.



Interviews outcomes (3)

Tips for tipping the gender balance

- **Women should be confident and 'just do it'**
 - Role models and success stories needed
- **Young female scientists could benefit from networking training**
 - Coaching, mentoring programmes
- **Practical measures to support professionals with children**
 - taking into account the parental leave
 - allow parents to adapt their working rhythm
 - Grants for women with children who want to evolve in a scientific career
 - project management task of women in maternity leave should be covered
- **Awareness of gender issues**
 - Comparisons, best practices, role models
 - Prompted by political will for change at national, local and university levels.



Interviews outcomes (4)

What GA²LEN can do

- Quotas as temporary measure, not as a principle
- Several proposals at GA²LEN level to involve more women in the programme
 - female rotating professorship
 - mentoring programme for juniors
 - introduce gender issues in GA²LEN exchange programme
- Gender balance in high-profile publications



Next steps

- Check regularly the gender balance within GA²LEN
- Address the gender dimension at each at Ex-com meeting and Assembly
- Gender straps in GA²LEN newsletter
- Enrichment of the GA²LEN website
- Implement networking opportunities
 - mentoring programme
 - introducing the gender dimension in the exchange programme
- The GA²LEN Gender task force will define which tools are the more suitable for GA²LEN and will prepare a Gender Action Plan to be presented during next Assembly (April 2007).



Thank you

www.ga2len.net

