

2022 Minerva Informatics Equality Award

Developing the Careers of Female Faculty, Including Retention and Promotion

at the Faculty of Informatics

of the Vienna University of Technology (TU Wien)

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Abstract:

With tailored funding, mentoring programs, dual-career support, and family-friendly working environment, our faculty constantly improves its gender-balance. Already now, 7 out of our 28 full professors are female, resulting in a proportion of female professors of 25%. Our faculty allocates special funds for PhD and postdoctoral positions for women, and implements a tenure-track program for women academics. Since 2017, our faculty has hired 6 female tenure-track professors, yielding a 54% gender quota on the tenure-track level. With the 2022 Minerva Award, public awareness and support would be raised for our further efforts in promoting women in computer science.

1. Description of Gender-Equality Initiatives at the Faculty of Informatics of the TU Wien

According to the recent EU statistics on Women in the Digital Age, only 18% of computer scientists in the EU are female. Our faculty commits to go against this state-of-the-art, and implements several measures to actively promote and support female scientists. Our faculty strongly opposes the idea that there are topics in computer science, and even in general, that are “less suitable” for women. Starting with 2006, our faculty has therefore introduced many new measures within its development plan, including active support for recruiting, promoting and retaining female academics. With dedicated funding, career mentoring programs, dual-career support, and a family-friendly working environment, we constantly improve the gender-balance in early-career development and faculty positions.

Recruiting and Promoting Female Faculty. Starting with 2006, our faculty actively supports the career development of female researchers with dedicated positions for women academics.

Between 2006-2016, on a bi-yearly basis, our faculty announced two ***postdoc positions for highly-qualified female academics***, with each position for a period of six years. As a result, since 2006, our faculty has recruited 10 exceptional female postdocs and nurtured the career of these rising talents towards internationally competitive faculty positions. For example, three of our female postdocs from 2010-2012 are by now full professors at our faculty (see accompanying support letter of this application).

Based on the success of our female postdoctoral program, in 2017 our faculty convinced the central management of the TU Wien that implementing ***tenure-track positions for female researchers*** are the best way to recruit top female talents in the respective scientific areas. These gender-specific positions are very competitive, internationally announced, and we take scientific excellence as the main criteria of hiring. Since 2017, our faculty announces two tenure-track positions for female researchers on a bi-yearly basis, resulting by now in the hiring of 5 tenure-track female scientists.

We are however aware that there are more excellent female researchers than our tenure-track model can support and accommodate. Our faculty therefore implements additional, ***excellence-driven career-funding for women academics***. Starting with 2019, our faculty is in the privileged position to offer additional tenure-track positions to female scientists who have been awarded competitive and excellence-based career grants by the European Research Council (ERC), the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), and the Vienna Science and Technology Fund (WWTF). These positions have been proved especially important to retain and promote our own young female superstars (incl. graduated PhD students and postdocs). Thanks to these funding measures, since 2019 our faculty has hired 2 tenure-track female scientists, with a clear commitment to further hire additional 6 tenure-track women academics by 2023.

Our faculty implements a **gender-sensitive hiring procedure**. As such, any application call for faculty positions includes dedicated advertisement text on diversity-support and work-life balance descriptions at our faculty. In addition, our hiring committees actively contact potential female applicants, encouraging them to apply for the open call. Moreover, in case a faculty

position call did not receive sufficiently many applications from female academics, the call is reannounced for the second time. Based on the aforementioned measures, as of now, 7 full professors out of our 28 full professors are female at our faculty.

Retaining and Promoting Female Faculty. Our faculty firmly believes that “*supporting women and nurturing their talents can happen if we embed good practices into everyday work*”, as stated by Ms. Claire Bury, Deputy Director-General of the European Commission. Our faculty is therefore engaged to establish a family-friendly working environment, and offer dual-career support for all its researchers, and in particular to its female researchers, as follows.

- **Good maternity solutions:** In 2007, our faculty initiated the TU Kindergarden of our university, offering since then an **on-site child care program** for children, aged 1-6, of students and employees of our faculty and university. Since 2018, our faculty also offers **on-site nursery as flexible child care** to its students and employees, allowing for example our (PhD) students to attend two hours lectures while their children (aged > 6 months) are enrolled in our flexible child care program. In addition, our faculty provides **extra financial support** for our female researchers to organize child care **while attending scientific events**.
- **Work-life balance:** Research seminars and meetings are organized at our faculty during regular working hours, that is between 9am-5pm. In case of faculty events organized outside of these hours, our faculty offers **child-care at faculty events and retreats**, easing the participation of our female researchers in faculty events. This way, our faculty actively signals a general departmental support towards faculty members who are young parents. In addition, our faculty offers **flexible working hours** and **home office possibilities**; these conditions have been particularly important for female scientists during the COVID pandemic.
- **Dual career:** As part of its recruitment strategy, our faculty offers **dual-career and relocation support** for all its employees, making thus, in particular, possible that the families of female academics are fully integrated in Austria.
- **Mentoring:** Our faculty organizes **mentoring events** for our female postdocs, tenure-track faculty, and professors, providing a platform for our female researchers to share their work and achievements, and foster mutual support among our faculty members. Such events take place usually in the form of working breakfasts/lunches at our dean’s office. In addition, each member of our tenure-track faculty has a **tailored mentoring program**, including individual meetings with a tenured faculty mentor, aiming to help tenure-track faculty in career planning and prioritizing academic commitments.
- **Promotion:** Our faculty implements a **transparent promotion process**, with clearly defined criterias to fulfill. In addition, early-career faculty members actively revise their respective **career plans** during mentoring events. Together with our university, our faculty also offers **workshops on fellowship writing**, such as ERC career grants. Moreover, support on **reviewing grant applications** and **training for grant interviews** are run by our faculty members who have been successful at attracting similar fundings.

2. Evidence of Impact of Gender-Equality Initiatives at the Faculty of Informatics of the TU Wien

We believe the outlined initiatives of our faculty have already been proved to be successful in supporting careers of female faculty. Already now,

- 7 out of our 28 full professors are female, resulting in a ***proportion of female full professors of 25% at our faculty***;
- 2 out of our 7 associated professors are female, yielding a ***29% female representation among our associated professors***;
- 6 out of our 11 tenure-track professors are female, resulting in a ***54% gender quota on the tenure-track level***.

We believe the numbers above speak for themselves, showcasing a clear commitment of our faculty towards changing the under-representation of women in computer science. This commitment is particular evidenced in the support of our next generation: not only have we already hired 6 women scientists on the tenure-track level, but our faculty is committed to hire (at least) 6 new outstanding female researchers (currently postdocs) at our faculty by 2023, ***doubling thus the current number of junior women academics at our faculty***.

The promotion and retention measures implemented at our faculty played a key role in reaching the current status-quo in gender-balance at our faculty. The impact of our gender-equality initiatives is also evidenced by the following facts:

- 3 out of our 7 female full professors started their academic career at the TU Wien thanks to our tailored ***postdoc positions for highly-qualified female academics*** (see their attached support letter);
- Our dedicated ***tenure-track positions for female researchers*** helped us recruit 5 international top scientists, out of which 1 is already promoted to an associated professor level, thanks to our ***promotion measures*** (see attached support letter);
- Our ***excellence-driven career-funding*** initiative yielded the hire and promotion of 1 female full professor and 2 tenure-track female faculty members;
- The ***gender-sensitive hiring procedure*** of our faculty attracted, since 2010, 6 female full professors, 10 female postdocs, and 6 tenure-track professors at our faculty;
- The ***mentoring*** and ***promotion*** measures supported all our female faculty members since 2010, in particular in the process of acquiring ERC grants (Starting Grant 2014, Proof of Concept Grant 2018, Consolidator Grant 2020), FWF START Career-Grants (in 2011 and 2015), FWF early-career grants for the promotion of female researchers (in 2013, 2018, and 2022), and WWTF young investigator grants (in 2018). Most recently, thanks to our mentoring support, 6 young female postdocs at our faculty have been

awarded with FWF early-career grants in 2021/2022, consolidating their long-term career perspective at our faculty. In addition to these individual grants, our female faculty has also been successful in participating in and leading larger research collaborations. For example, in a recently acquired special research program (SFB) of the FWF (in 2022), establishing a research network consolidating the top Austrian researchers in security and privacy, three out of five PIs at our faculty are female.

- The **work-life balance measures** and **good maternity solutions** supported our female scientists (see attached support letters).

We finally note that our faculty also promotes gender-balance in decision making on the faculty level. This is evidenced by the fact that:

- Our faculty has the first female dean in the history of the TU Wien;
- 1 out of our 4 institute leads is a female full professor;
- 1 out of 2 study deans is a female associate professor.

We believe that the relatively large proportion of women in our faculty, including leading roles, serves as a role model for any further activity in promoting gender-equality within our faculty and beyond. As such, we are determined to further support and improve our initiatives in supporting the career of female faculty. Our gender-equality initiatives are integrated in the development plan of our faculty, aiming to further improve gender-balance on all levels of seniority of our faculty. We are committed to continuously improve our gender-equality initiatives and policies by learning from good practices and personal experience reports from our own female scientific staff and beyond.

3. Link for Further Reference

<https://informatics.tuwien.ac.at/women-in-informatics/>

4. Letters of Support from Our Female Faculty (attached)

- **Support letter by 3 full professors (Brandic, Ciabattoni, Kovács)**
- **Support letter by 2 tenure-track professors (Andreeva, Lindorfer)**

5. Further Details

The present submission can be considered as a runner up (if it does not win the award) and be included as an exemplar of best practice in future Informatics Europe publications.