Application for 2022 Minerva Informatics Equality Award

Gender-equality and anti-harassment committees
of IRISA and Inria Center of University of Rennes

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1 Contact information

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1.1 Directors of the applying department

- Director of IRISA:
  Mr. Guillaume Gravier (guillaume.gravier@irisa.fr)

- Director of Inria Center of Rennes University:
  Mr. Patrick Gros (patrick.gros@inria.fr)

1.2 Gender-equality and anti-harassment committees

- Directors of the gender-equality committee:
  Mr. Nicolas Markey (nicolas.markey@irisa.fr)
  Ms. Camille Maumet (camille.maumet@inria.fr)
  Ms. Anne Siegel (anne.siegel@irisa.fr; former director)

- Director of the anti-harassment committee;
  Ms. Élisa Fromont (elisa.fromont@irisa.fr)

2 Summary of the application

The gender-equality committee of IRISA and Inria Center of Univ. Rennes was created in 2017. It gathers ca. 20 active members, who have initiated numerous actions to help women blossom and develop their careers in our 80%-masculine laboratory; these actions include a mentoring programme, coaching for applications, women-only discussions, a library of feminist books, a series of conferences, ... The anti-harassment committee is a *spin-off* of the gender-equality committee, whose aim is to propose actions preventing moral and sexual harassment. We present in details several of the actions of both committees below.

Remark. This 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.

3   Description of the initiative

IRISA and Inria Center of Univ. Rennes are two interlocking computer-science laboratories gathering 800+ staff including 300+ researchers in computed sciences and 300+ PhD students (and an overall rate of 20% women). This research structure is mainly located on Beaulieu Campus in Rennes, with satellites in other cities of the Brittany regions: Lannion, Vannes and Nantes.

The gender-equality committee of IRISA and Inria Center of Univ. Rennes was created in early 2017 at the initiative of a small group of women. The committee has grown and now gathers ca. 25 members, with regular meetings every 6 weeks.

The committee proposes different types of events and actions that are grouped in 5 themes: **1- Training and careers:** these actions aim at helping young colleagues develop their careers either within the lab or outside including mentoring activities, coaching to apply to awards amongst other actions. **2- Awareness-raising:** the main aim of this group of actions is to advertise the actions of committee to all members of the lab, as well as to raise awareness to remaining barrier that prevent gender equality; **3- Animation:** we organised various events about gender equality, including a regular seminar, the organisation of and participation to several conferences, and women-only meetings; **4- Inclusive workplace:** as the name indicates, this set of actions aims at creating an open, inclusive and friendly environment in the laboratory and includes the actions of the anti-harassment committee; **5- Science outreach:** we believe that stereotypes (and especially gender stereotypes) in computer science have to be fought as early as possible. The committee therefore proposes several actions towards pupils in primary and secondary schools.

We highlight a few of our actions as illustrations of the work that is done by the IRISA and Inria Center of Univ. Rennes gender-equality and anti-harassment committees, focused on three main themes. More details about these and other actions can be found (in French) on our websites, at https://egalite-fh.irisa.fr/ and https://nonauharcelement.irisa.fr/.

3.1   Supporting women faculty in their career development

Mentoring programme: the gender-equality committee has been running a mentoring programme since 2018. This programme pairs each year around 25 young scientists with 25 more experienced colleagues. For a (renewable) period of one year, they meet regularly at a pace that is set by them. Typically mentor-mentee meet every 6 to 8 weeks, although the formats have been different between different mentor-mentee pairs, they often choose to meet at lunch time, a time that is typically devoted for more relaxed conversation that can also leave more room to discuss personal aspects such as work-life balance. Although this programme was designed with boosting the career of women in mind, we decided to leave this opportunity open to all members of the lab, both men and women, and both students and permanent members.

Coaching for award applications: the gender-equality committee is on the lookout for calls for awards and prizes dedicated to women in (computer) science. When a new opportunity is identified, it is shared using the `women@irisa` mailing list (see below) that reaches out to all women scientists in the laboratory. In addition to sharing information about existing awards, we have a dedicated team of 3 senior researchers who are available to coach interested candidates to build their applications and help them check if their profile is a good fit.

3.2 Creating a greater sense of community for women in the lab

Because most women in the lab encounter similar difficulties related to their under-representation in the lab, we believe it is important for them to know each other and have places for discussing and freely expressing their feelings and hassles.

women@irisa mailing list: we created a mailing-list gathering all women of the lab, where they can exchange freely. This list is also an efficient way of broadcasting announcements for events or awards for women, such as the L'Oréal-UNESCO programme "*For Women in Science*" or the Séphora Berrebi scholarships for Women in Advanced Mathematics & Computer Science.

lunch discussion: the committee organizes regular women-only lunches, with (or sometimes without) a specific topic to discuss. This again brings women closer together and provides them with occasions to freely discuss on subjects such as the impostor syndrome, inclusive communication, or examples of successful experiences.

3.3 Informing all lab members w.r.t gender equality at work

Beyond supporting women in their career development, it is equally important to act on the environment itself. We offer multiple opportunities—some optional and some mandatory—for all lab members to engage and learn about gender equality at work.

Fifty-fifty conference series: we initiated a regular series of conferences on various aspects of gender equality. The series started in 2020 and invited high-profile speakers in the topic of gender equality, including Isabelle Collet from University of Lausanne, or Jeria Quesenberry from Carnegie Mellon University.

Training on prevention and awareness of moral and sexual harassment: This 3-hour training provides general information on moral and sexual harassment and practical examples. This training was made compulsory to all lab members who have supervision activities by the head of the laboratory.

Library of books about women in (computer) science: In our main cafeteria, we have a library with about 25 books about women in computer science. Those books can be borrowed by any member of the lab. This library was created by PhD students of the gender-equality committee who regularly organize 'reading circles' in which early career scientists meet to discuss a book of their choice.

4 Evidence of impact

4.1 Overall impact

Measuring the impact of our actions is difficult, for numerous reasons. First, not everything can be measured: we believe that several of our actions increase well-being (for all, but especially for women) in the lab, but this is hard to quantify; Second, even though our lab is relatively large, the numbers are relatively small, and their evolutions are slow and not always statistically significant; finally, the changes that we can observe are the effect of several factors, which (we hope) include our actions, but also obviously include societal changes such as the #metoo movement.

Still, we believe that our actions do have positive impacts towards gender equality, as we illustrate with the following figures:

- *proportion of women among researchers:* our lab is around 80% masculine. We observe that this proportion slowly evolves over the years—but at this pace it would take 60 years to reach parity. In the table below, we also give the ratio for all computer-science labs in France, showing that we are catching up.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
women	62	60	62	65	68
men	256	244	244	251	247
ratio	19.5%	19.7%	20.3%	20.6%	21.6%
ratio (France)	22.2%	n.a.	22.4%	22.6%	22.8%

- *the number of women who defend their habilitation theses:* habilitation in France is the highest academic qualification; it allows assistant professor to apply for full-professor positions, and is required to supervise PhD students. As such, it is an important step in the career of a researcher.

  Since 2017, we observed an increase in the number of feminine colleagues defending their habilitation theses (for 2022 we only include defenses until 1st June):

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	*2022*
women	0	1	4	4	4	*2*
men	5	5	7	5	5	*4*

- *the number of women who are team leaders:* while ca. 20% of researchers in our lab are women, only ca. 10% of team leaders are women; but again, this number slowly evolves in the right direction:
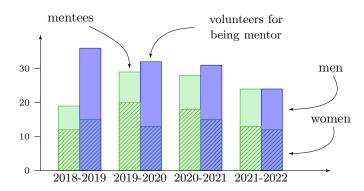
	2018	2019	2020	2021
women	4	4	4	5
men	35	34	33	31
ratio	10.3%	10.5%	10.8%	13.9%

4.2   Impact of the mentoring programme

Over its 4+ years of existence, the mentoring programme has attracted a total of 92 mentees and 54 mentors. One benefit of the mentoring programme is that it creates new links between colleagues that would in most cases not have met otherwise. This tends to create a more open and friendly atmosphere in the lab. More concretely, we receive very positive feedback from the mentees (and from the mentors!) each year. To quote a few (translated from French):

- *"The mentoring programme is the tool I was hoping for for a long time [...] It precisely addresses my concerns: finding significance to my work, finding my place in the research world with extreme expectations, and understanding and acting with hindsight."*

- *"The mentoring programme has been a wonderful experience for me. I have learnt a lot. Thanks to my mentor, I could gain hindsight and find meaning in my work. I got relevant answers to almost all the questions I had about my professional project. In addition, it is always great to be able to get out of your team, where you are locked in, and to open up to other research teams. It helps to develop a professional and human network."*

- *"The mentoring programme fully met my expectations. I am a young permanent researcher, and I could find a good perspective on the career of a researcher, and advices on how to avoid complete burn-out. I also get advices from the researchers in my own team, but it is a good experience to see how other teams run."*

For the first 4 years, the participation can be summarized as follows:

4.3 Inspirations for national initiatives

In the last four years, the lab have received quite a large number of solicitations in order to describe how the gender-equality committee was created and could be used as an inspiration for the development of similar initiatives.

At the national and international levels, several of our initiatives were presented (1) at the workshop "Women in Informatics Research and Education" (WIRE) (presentation of the mentoring programme), (2) in a panel talk at the 11th conference on "*Gender Equality in Higher Education*" (2021), (3) as an example of how a local initiative may inspire national initiatives in the anniversary meeting of the CNRS "*Mission pour la Place des Femmes*", (4) at the first meeting of gender-equality committees in computer-science labs of CNRS (2020) (5) at the Journée Fondation Blaise Pascal 2019.

In addition, the functioning of our gender-equality committee and the mentoring programme were described in different labs talks (IRIF, LIP6, Inria centers of Paris, Grenoble, Lille), leading to the creation and/or the reinforcment of gender-equality committees in these labs, especially based on woman-only lunch meetings (IRIF, CRIStAL, LaBRI, ...). Since then, several labs have also launched their own mentoring initiatives (IRIF, Inria Saclay, LaBRI...).

Based on this initiative, Nicolas Markey has co-leaded (with Pierre Chanais at CRIStAL) a working group involving gender-equality referents of computer-science labs's (under the supervision of CNRS) in order to set up guidelines for mentoring programmes. The recommendations of the working group will be published during summer 2022, and they already inspired new mentoring programmes (LAMSADE, CRIStAL, ...). We are therefore very proud of being the first French laboratory in computer science with a mentoring programme, and that other labs developed their own mentoring programmes based on our experience.

5 Supporting letters

We attach two supporting letters: one from Guillaume Gravier, director of IRISA, and one from Aline Roumy, an Inria researcher who participated in the mentoring programme and obtained a promotion as *research director*.