Gender-equality committee at IRISA and Inria Rennes center, France

Elisa Fromont, Nicolas Markey, Camille Maumet, Anne Siegel

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Gender-equality and harassment-prevention committees
IRISA lab & Inria center of Rennes University

One of the largest computer-science lab in France

- **ca. 800 members**, of which
  - 300+ permanent researchers;
  - 270+ PhD students, 100+ postdocs, engineers.

- organized as ca. **40 research teams**:
  - various size (**8 to 50 members**);
  - **wide range of topics**: cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, bio-info, robotics, networks, ...

- sponsored by **9 institutions**:
Some figures

French national statistics in computer and information sciences (2021):

- Universities research (prof) staff: 23% women, masculine advantage index 1.56;
- CNRS and Inria (full) research staff: 19% women, masculine advantage index 1.05

Local statistics (IRISA + Inria Rennes):

- 20% of women in the permanent scientific staff, 15% of women in the senior staff
- Masculine advantage index: 1.50 in 2018, 1.25 in 2021.

2017: creation of the gender-equality working group
2019: creation of the harassment-prevention working group
A team effort

Members of the gender-equality committee
Michèle Basseville, Nathalie Bertrand, Louis Béziaud, Tassadit Bouadi, Peggy Cellier, Bertrand Coüasnon, Énora Denimal, Jamal El Hachem, Élisa Fromont, Camille Juigné, Nicolas Markey (resp.), Camille Maumet (resp.), Anne-Cécile Orgerie, Charlotte Pelletier, Martin Quinson, Patrice Quinton, Anne Siegel.

As well as many lab members who join from times to times and support team (admin, audio, comm').

Members of the harassment-prevention committee
Michèle Basseville, Anne Buzaré, Karine Chatel, Nicolas Courty, Elisa Fromont (resp.), Enora Denimal, Valérie Gouranton, Gwendal Patat, François Schwarzentuber, Geraldine, Valerie Viet Triem Tong.

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Birth and life of our committees

Realization that individual feelings are in fact systemic and deserve collective solutions

3 main phases
- Observation, **diagnosis**; liberation of speech
- **Propositions** of actions
- **Implementation** with ambitious and long-term objectives

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Birth and life of our committees

Realization that individual feelings are in fact systemic and deserve collective solutions

3 main phases
- Feb. 2017: Observation, diagnosis; liberation of speech
- Feb. 2018: Propositions of actions
- Sept. 2018: Implementation with ambitious and long-term objectives

Lab decisions
- gender-equality working group created
- gender-equity committee made permanent
- anti-harassment working group created
- anti-harassment committee made permanent

3 main actions
- Awareness Animation: quiz, girls-only meetings
- Career evolution: Draft of mentoring program, mentoring program launched
- Scientific mediation: JPPJAI: breaking down stereotypes for secondary-school pupils, LCLC: python programming for secondary-school girls
- Inclusive workplace: Lactation room, Harassment-prevention training

Propositions of actions
- Feb. 2017: Draft of mentoring program
- Sept. 2018: JPPJAI: breaking down stereotypes for secondary-school pupils

Implementation with ambitious and long-term objectives
- Sept. 2019: Harassment-prevention training
- Nov. 2020: “fifty-fifty” seminars
- Nov. 2021: feminist library for computer scientists
**Did we make any progress? (2017-2022)**

**Learning and training**
- Harassment prevention training for more than 90% of the lab.
- 6 “fifty-fifty” seminars with 60 attendees on average
- Stereotype training for 160 secondary-school pupils and 75 secondary-school teachers
- 20+ 100%-women lunch meetings
- 100+ mentor-mentee pairs

**Sharing experiences**

**Careers**
- Feminisation rate increased from 19.5% to 21.6% over 5 years
- 40% of habilitation theses defended by women over 5 years
- 9 women among 26 promoted in 2017-2022, vs. only 2/28 in 2008-2016
Working towards gender-equality through concrete actions

Group philosophy

- Identify problems
- Target concrete actions
- Share both successes and difficulties
- **Be ambitious**: there is nothing to lose by trying, and you may even be surprised by the results.
Breaking down stereotypes for secondary-school pupils... and teachers!

➔ Diversity of activities in computer science
➔ Gender stereotypes in computer science

➔ 2018 and 2019: **160 pupils**
➔ 2021 and 2022: **75 teachers**

**supported by**
Nathalie Lacaux, Catherine Jacques Orban.
Lessons learned

- Win-win :)  
- Beyond mediation, **structuring effect in the lab** (esp. through training the trainers)  
- Some secondary-school teachers had a very distorted view that gender-equality was improving  
- Even when started, **our actions can evolve** to better reach their goal (train the teachers) and to increase win-win effect as needed  

supported by Nathalie Lacaux, Catherine Jacques Orban.
She writes code, she creates... ("L codent, L créent")

PhD student teaching programming to secondary-school pupils to create artworks

- Initiated in Lille in 2016 by Philippe Marquet, Maude Pupin et Yann Secq
- women-only, 5 editions in Rennes: 2019 to 2023

- 2 to 3 schools, 10-15 pupils
- 6-9 PhD students, 3 organizers, 2 trainers

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Scientific mediation

🤔 Lessons learned

● Again, beyond mediation, **structuring effect in the lab** (link btw/ PhD students and faculty)
● Relying on schools that are **ready to get involved** is crucial (recruiting pupils, day-to-day organization, etc.)

A lactation room and free menstrual products

➔ A room available all day that can be locked and includes an armchair and a tap
➔ In the same room, free menstrual products

Pas de protection menstruelle avec vous ?
Serviettes et tampons sont à votre disposition gratuitement à l’infirmerie (A018)

No more menstrual products?
Pads and tampons are available free of charge in the infirmary (A018)

For any question related to this offer, please contact the Gender Equality Commission

and CLHSCT, supported by Agnès Cottais.
A lactation room and free menstrual products

🤔 Lessons learned

- Lactation room was one of the most “controversial” issue to address in the lab.
- Underlying question. Who is in charge of “girls’ things”? Individuals or collectivities such as laboratories?
- A tendency beyond our institute (e.g. many schools and university provide free menstrual products)
- Crucial for attractivity

and CLHSCT, supported by Agnès Cottais.
Feminist literature for computer scientists

➔ Freely available in our cafeteria
➔ Reading circle: discussions about those books, led by Early Career Researchers

➔ 35 books bought by IRISA since 2020;

and Véronne Yepmo, supported by Antoine L'Azou.
Feminist literature for computer scientists

Lessons learned

- Reading circle: **ECR-led** activity
- **Visibility**: the books are made available in a central space in our lab (the cafeteria!)
- Lab members can **borrow books for a week or just for a few minutes** to read with their coffee.
- **Collaborative list of books**: [https://egalite-fh.irisa.fr/sensibilisation/litterature-feministe-pour-les-informaticiennes/](https://egalite-fh.irisa.fr/sensibilisation/litterature-feministe-pour-les-informaticiennes/)
- Multi-site library

and Véronne Yepmo, **supported by** Antoine L’Azou.
Scientific seminars on gender equality

➔ Seminars led by scientific expert from different fields (e.g. education, history, economics, social sciences)

➔ Followed by a Q&A, discussions

➔ 3 to 4 seminars each year, ca. 60 attendees each time + recordings

Séminaire FIFTYFIFTY
La recherche en tout genre

and Laurent Amsaleg, supported by Alain Crenn, Frederic Bouvet.

Natalie Pigeard-Micault - Fifty/Fifty seminar - March 2023
Scientific seminars on gender equality

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Natalie Pigeard-Micault - Fifty/Fifty seminar - March 2023

Lessons learned

● Works well online (Covid), on-site and in hybrid format.
● Important to make recordings available.
● Structuring role in the lab to train lab members on gender equality (lower involvement required than for reading circle).
● Participants appreciate the scientific perspective

Communication

and Laurent Amsaleg, supported by Alain Crenn, Frederic Bouvet.
Mentoring program

➔ Senior lab members sharing their experience with younger colleagues
➔ Various topics: work-life balance, career, applications, …

➔ Ca. 25 mentees each year → 100+ mentors-mentees pairs!

and Elise Bannier, Ronan Gaugne, Anne Buzaré, Isabelle Monjaret, supported by Michèle Basseville, Nathalie Bertrand, Thierry Jéron, Sylvain Orain, …
Mentoring program

Lessons learned

- Beyond gender-equality, **mentoring is useful for all junior members**
- Works through a long period (5 years and we still have new candidates)
- Some mentees **come back for a second edition**.
- Structuring for the lab (many mentors beyond members of the committee).
- **Training of the mentors** is crucial (e.g. mentor is not here to solve everything!)

CAREERS

and Elise Bannier, Ronan Gaugne supported by Isabelle Monjaret, Isabelle Puaut, Thierry Jéron, Sylvain Orain, …
Harassment-prevention committee

➔ Liberation of speech, #metoo: numerous reactions and discussions about harassment
➔ Creation of a committee dedicated to harassment awareness and prevention

➔ 90% of the lab members have followed a (mandatory) training.
➔ Importance of day-to-day work environment (e.g. lactation room)

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and Michèle Basseville, Anne Buzaré, Karine Chatel, Nicolas Courty, Elisa Fromont (resp.), Enora Denimal, Valérie Gouranton, Gwendal Patat, François Schwarzentruber, Geraldine, Valerie Viet Triem Tong.
Harassment-prevention committee

Lesson learned

- It is possible to train **90% of faculty members**.
- Many discussions focused on (Ph-D student) moral harassment rather than sexual harassment.
- The decision was taken by the laboratory council, and this made a strong difference to bypass refractory people.
- **A lot of work to keep track** of who has been trained and who has not.
- Support from heads of lab was crucial (to ping people multiple times if necessary)
- There is still a lot **more work**.

and Michèle Basseville, Anne Buzaré, Karine Chatel, Nicolas Courty, Enora Denimal, Valérie Gouranton, Gwendal Patat, François Schwarzentruber, Geraldine, Valerie Viet Triem Tong.

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All actions are complementary and facilitate a non-directly targeted impact on women’s careers

Complementarity of actions

- **Communication**: make inclusivity actions visible.
- **100%-women lunches**
  - impostor syndrom debunking
  - collective awareness that carrier barriers are not explained by personal/individual reasons
- **Lab direction action**: make explicit and simple criteria for habilitation theses
- **Individual support**
  - Ph.D. student application for prizes,
  - opportunities and application for research semesters
  - Mentoring program for promotions, habilitation thesis
- **Spill-over effect**: women having their habilitation thesis/being promoted inspire other women

Visible results on promotions: 9 women among 26 promoted in 2017-2022, vs. only 2/28 in 2008-2016

(Still) so many things to do: recruitment committees, incoming flow of women applicants…
The key of durability: group dynamics

● **Discuss - discuss - discuss** on both success and difficulties
● **Target concrete actions**
● **Regularly update the action plan** and validate it with the direction and lab council
● **Accept that new people join the group to change viewpoints:**
  ○ Either by direct sollicitations on specific concrete actions to develop
  ○ On by identifying and discussing with people who have a personal motivation/curiosity on this topic
Whatever you do, the important thing is to talk about it

Communication (website, mail, reporting, posters, quizz, special days…) is essential

- To provide a general overview/connection between all the actions
- To hold on the group dynamics
- To show that the group is open to new contributions

Be aware that the topic is related to too many personal issues to be consensual

- It is normal that some people do not agree with gender-equality actions
- The group is also here to bypass personal attacks
- Most of the lab members are positive with gender-equality actions!
Gender-equality and harassment-prevention committees at IRISA and Inria Rennes center, France

Thank you!

- To all gender-equality and harassment-prevention committee members, lab members involved in our actions and support team for their motivation and willingness.
- To the directors of IRISA and Inria center of Rennes for their continuous support;

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