



DFG

# Implicit Bias

Equal opportunities in the evaluation and decision process

TRR 257 Annual Meeting: Soft Skills and Gender Training

Cosima Schuster, DFG Head Office

# Agenda

- ▶ The DFG – an introduction
- ▶ Why and how does the DFG promote gender equality in research?
- ▶ Implicit bias

# The German Research Foundation - DFG

Germany's largest and independent funding organization

Deutsche  
Forschungsgemeinschaft



Researchers in Germany

# DFG

SFB

FOR

SPP

SBH

ENP



DFG head office  
in Bonn

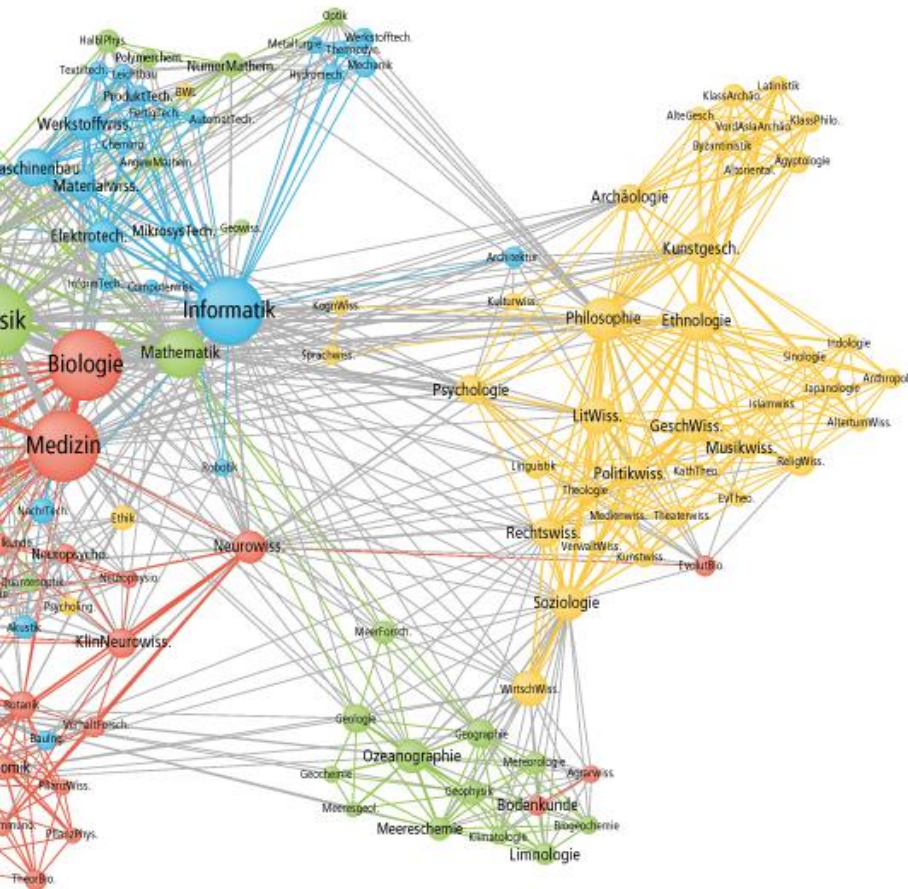
# The DFG – About Us

It is an **association** under private law. Its **member organisations** include German universities, non-university research institutions, academies of sciences and humanities, ...

- ▶ It serves **all branches** of science and the humanities by
- ▶ **funding research projects** to support
- ▶ **the best scientific ideas**
- ▶ on a **bottom up competitive basis**



# The DFG – In Numbers



In **2018**, the DFG's budget totalled approximately **€ 3.4 billion**.

In that year, the DFG funded around **33,200** projects:

- ▶ Individual research projects
- ▶ Research collaborations
- ▶ Research infrastructure
- ▶ Coordinated programmes

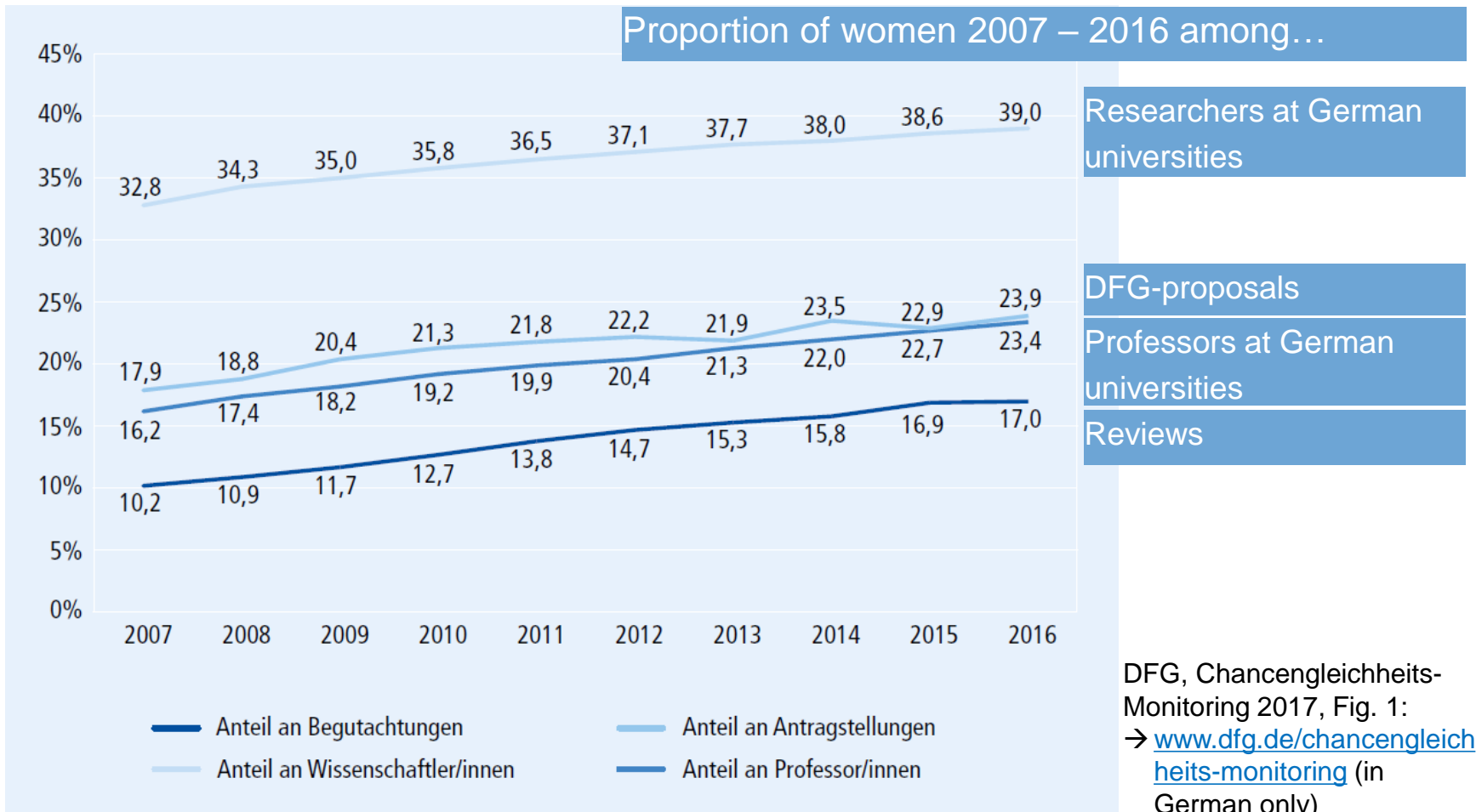
# The DFG – Our Mandate

- ▶ Facilitating **national and international cooperation** among researchers.
- ▶ Providing scientific **policy advice**.
- ▶ Promoting **gender equality** in the German scientific and academic communities.
- ▶ Encouraging the advancement and training of **early career researchers**.



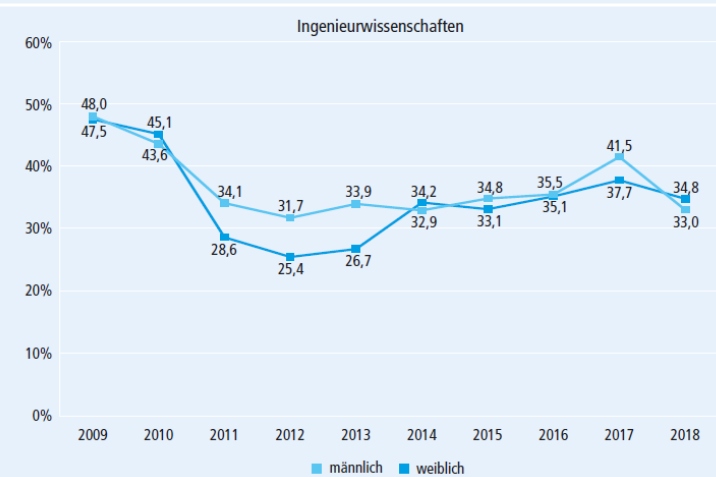
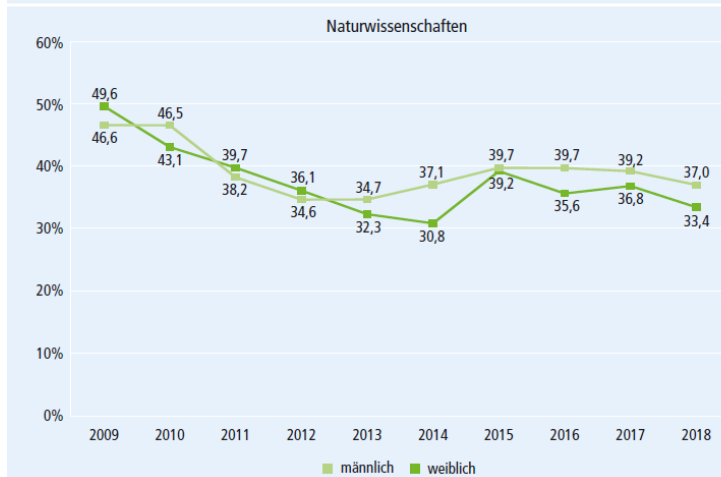
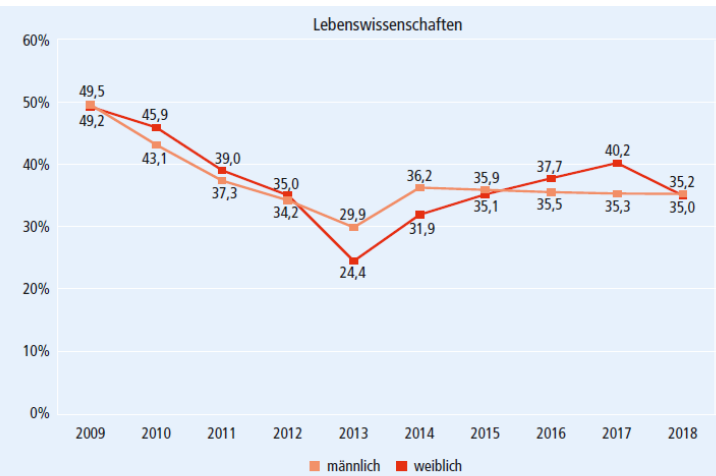
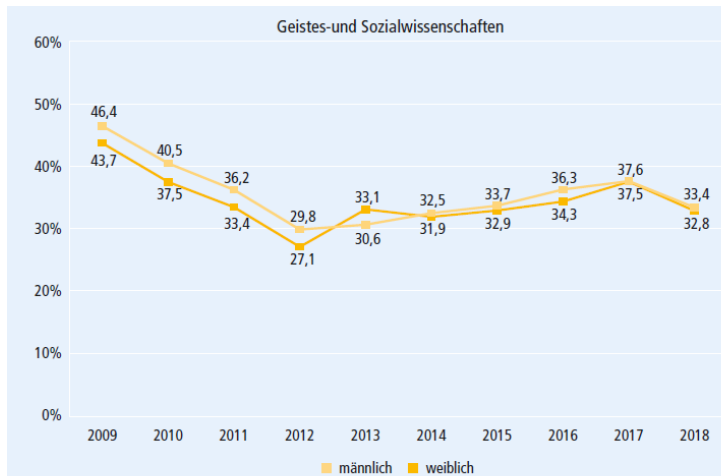
# Why does the DFG promote gender equality in research?

## Status quo: Research System & DFG-proposals



# Why does the DFG promote gender equality in research?

## Success rates in the individual grants program





# Why does the DFG promote gender equality in research?

DFG position on Diversity: [www.dfg.de/diversity/en](http://www.dfg.de/diversity/en)

*“Excellent research requires diversity and originality. To ensure long-term engagement with all socially relevant areas, it is crucial that science and academia adequately represent these areas. This applies not only in an abstract structural sense, but also to the people who research and teach in these fields.*

***The DFG believes that no one should be excluded from a career in research on the basis of academically irrelevant factors such as gender, ethnic origin, age or health.”***



# How does the DFG promote gender equality in its area of activity?

## Through a qualitative gender equality strategy – four action levels

▶ Principle of “challenge and support”

▶ **Instruments:** Modules for researchers with clear gender equality objective

▶ **Processes:** More women in the review process; [awareness-raising on implicit bias effects](#); uniformity in taking relevant factors into consideration

▶ **Career/staff development:** Workshops, mentoring, examples of best practice, individual career development

▶ **Work-life balance:** Workload reduction for serving on statutory bodies, allowances for childcare costs

# How does the DFG promote gender equality in its area of activity?

## Through funding measures in DFG-funded projects

- ▶ **Making allowances for personal situations** when assessing academic achievements in proposals (periods of childcare, etc.)
- ▶ **Limitation of publication list** to a maximum of 10 items
- ▶ Support for **work-life balance**
- ▶ **Staff support for part-time work** by project leaders for family reasons (children, relatives in need of care)
- ▶ **Funding for temporary replacements** for project team members who take temporary leave or reduce working hours for family reasons
- ▶ **Career development measures** and **promotion of family-friendly structures** at funded institutions (remote working, additional childcare)



# Implicit bias

## Examples

- ▶ **Video of the Royal Society shown at the beginning of review panels**  
<http://blogs.royalsociety.org/in-verba/2015/11/17/implicit-and-unconscious-the-bias-in-us-all/>
- ▶ **Science, 27.05.2016**, report on „forum on implicit bias in peer review“
  - Gender ok, international representation not
  - → Broaden, diversity, and internationalize the pool of editor and reviewers
  - → Professional full-time editors compensate implicit bias
- ▶ Lindau Nobel Laureates Meeting 2016: Panel discussion „Glass Ceilings – Is German top research male-dominated? “
- ▶ Gender Bias in the Physics Classroom, Journal of Women and Minorities in Science and Engineering 23(1), 15-36 (2017)
- ▶ MQST Meeting 2020: Marika Tylor spoke on „Implicit bias in physics“

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# Implicit Bias

## Stereotypes and categorization

- » **Unconscious recourse to stereotypes affects all evaluations**
- » **Subconscious categorizations are made by everyone** - What is regarded scientific? What is regarded feminine? What is regarded European ...?
- » **Traditional role models can also be found in science** - How can research be reconciled with being a woman and a mother? Is competition a male behavior?
- » These **stereotypes, categories and role models** influence **judgements and decision-making behaviour**
- » Test your stereotypes: **Implicit Association Test**  
<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/swissde/>

# Implicit Bias

## Subconscious processes

Exposed to much more sensory information than can be handled consciously, we use mental shortcuts and past knowledge to make assumptions.

- ▶ automatic and unconscious process
- ▶ split-second decisions (friend or foe?)
- ▶ based on incomplete information

# Implicit bias

## Stereotypes in physics

What is considered a typical requirement to be successful in "physics"?

Experiment: test your stereotypes – what comes up first in your mind?

- Physicist
- Man
- Woman
- European
- Asian

# Implicit bias

## Stereotypes in physics

What is considered a typical requirement to be successful in "physics"?

- ▶ analytical thinking
- ▶ mathematical understanding
- ▶ pleasure in handling complex instruments
- ▶ creativity
- ▶ persistence



# Implicit bias

## Review and decision process

- The more **objectively** the decision process is structured by **explicit** criteria, the better an unprejudiced decision is possible.
- The more **comparably** the decision-relevant criteria are preprocessed, the less the danger of a judgement **bias** exists.
- An appropriate **self-observation** of the selection committees
- and **more time** for decision can compensate prejudice and bias.



# Reminder: Funding Principles

- ▶ Open, bottom-up choice of **research topics**
- ▶ **Basic research** in any field of science and the humanities
- ▶ No **age** restrictions
- ▶ Individual **career phases** and family-related career breaks are considered in the review process



# Implicit bias

What specific advice should be taken into account?

- The evaluation is based exclusively on **clearly defined** scientific criteria
- Age, gender, ethnic origin, sexual identity, disability, illness, are no criteria and must not be discussed!
- CVs are evaluated appropriately (qualification phases, publication record, stays abroad) in relation to the individual situation
- Information not relevant to the proposal is not considered in the decision process – no informal discussions!
- Possible biases are to be made explicit - all participants are called upon to observe carefully and critically





DFG

# Vielen Dank für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit

## Weitere Informationen

- ▶ zur DFG: <http://www.dfg.de>
- ▶ zum Förderatlas: <http://www.dfg.de/foerderatlas>
- ▶ zu allen geförderten Projekten: <http://www.dfg.de/gepris>
- ▶ zu den deutschen Forschungseinrichtungen: <http://gerit.org>