



*The issues women in science face are not new. Solutions borrowed from the corporate world or the field of politics such as quota could be a solution. There are also many more options to try and move the line between genders. EuroScientist would like to know what its readers think about quota. Could they challenge the quality of academic work?*

## **Quota or no quota**



## **Gender imbalance is not a fatality, but could require a temporary balancing measure**

What do politics and science have in common? They are no alien to controversy. Take for example, the use of quota for gender balancing. Politics has previously relied such quotas to improve the way political representation mirrors that of society it governs. Yet, suggestions that gender quota should be introduced in science to redress the imbalances between the number of women and men at the highest levels of academia, have led to controversy. Some believe the move lessens the merit of women who cross the highest echelons of the career ladder. Their only [selection criterion is excellence](#).

Experience in other sectors proves otherwise. Looking into the field of politics or corporate boards helps. In both cases, gender quota have been introduced in the past. Results have received mixed reviews. But overall, once the habit of bringing more women onboard has been established, the need for quota is less pressing. And women find their place more naturally in these sectors.

In academia, quota are not common practice. In 2015, EMBO published the results of a [year-long study on quota](#). It gives a synthesis of literature related to binding and voluntary quotas as well as the outcome of consultation with people who have experienced them. The report's verdict is not clear cut. Instead of making recommendation on the use quota, it merely outlines the positive and negative aspects of the implementation of different types of quotas. But it does not reach a definite conclusion on their usefulness.

Although quota are designed to bypass career constraints faced by women, they can help bring women further along the career ladder; even though that [ladder is typically designed for men](#). There is always the risk that when measures of that nature are in place, women could be undermined. But this temporary discomfort, may be the necessary price to pay to kick-start future good habits. Now, it would be great to know what [EuroScientist](#) readers think of it. Let us know.

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