

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE / WORKING GROUP WOMEN in ASTRONOMY

CHAIR	Francesca Primas (Germany)
VICE-CHAIR	N/A
PAST CHAIR	Francesca Primas (Germany)
BOARD	Kate Brooks (Australia)
	Neil Gehrels (USA; <i>deceased</i>)
	Chanda Jog (India)
	Chiaki Kobayashi (UK/Japan)
	Daniela Lazzaro (Brasil)
	Cristina Mandrini (Argentina)
	Brenda Mathews (Canada)
	Dara Norman (USA)
	Karen Pollard (New Zealand)
	Ginevra Trinchieri (Italy)
	Feilu Wang (China)
	Patricia Whitelock (South Africa)

TRIENNIAL REPORT 2015-2018

1. Introduction

The Executive Committee Working Group of Women in Astronomy was established at the XXV IAU General Assembly in Sydney, Australia (July 2003). This year, therefore, marks its 15th Anniversary of activities.

An Organising Committee (OC) of typically 10-14 persons manages the activities of the WG. OC membership is ratified by the IAU Executive Committee, usually at its General Assembly. Being an EC WG, its OC also includes an EC-representative, who acts as a liaison between the EC and the OC. The OC is expected to elect two Office Bearers (a Chair and Deputy Chair for three-year terms). Unfortunately, the election of the Deputy Chair has failed during the past years, due to other commitments. The WG reports directly through the liaison person and/or the IAU General Secretary.

The mandate of the IAU Working Group of Women in Astronomy is to collect information, propose measures, and initiate actions in support of, or to advance equality of opportunity for achievement between women and men in astronomy, in the IAU and in the world at large. Through the geographical distribution of its OC members, it acts as a federation of national Women in Astronomy organisations, creating links and facilitating information exchanges worldwide.

Since its foundation, the mandate of the WG has focused mostly onto two main areas of activities:

1. Monitoring the status of women in astronomy via collection of gender statistics (namely, the gender distribution at different career levels in different countries). This has proven very challenging to achieve, as it usually relies on individuals who struggle to collect the proper information. Along the way, the IAU WG has also recommended collecting and

monitoring gender statistics related to IAU symposia via a dedicated report that has been part of the reporting requirements for all IAU Symposia organisers since 2009-2010. On average, approximately 50% of the symposia submitted their reports spontaneously, whereas the WG needs to collect the other half. Due to an unfortunate oversight during some re-haul of the Instructions for IAU Symposia Organisers, the form was inadvertently deleted without the WG OC noticing it, but it should still be possible to recuperate all data, in time for the next IAU GA in Vienna.

2. Organising WG meetings and events at the IAU General Assemblies in the form of business meetings, coordinated women lunches (WAM, usually attended by 300+ participants), special events (mentoring sessions for young astronomers, topical lunch talks), resources permitting. These can be very time consuming activities that not always can be supported.

2. Developments within the past triennium

The WG-WiA has slightly changed its core activities during the past three years, as its OC mostly focused on a cross-disciplinary project, "A Global Approach to the Gender Gap in Mathematical and Natural Sciences: How to Measure It, How to Reduce It?", funded by ICSU. The 3-years project is led by IMU (International Mathematical Union) and IUPAC (International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry) and has other unions (IAU, IUPAP, IUBS, ICIAM) as supporting partners.

The Chair of the WG WiA OC was tasked by the IAU EC to be the main contact person at IAU for the project, drafted the IAU part of the proposal, attended the kick-off meeting in June 2017 and presented the project at several venues and gender-related meetings. The project focuses on three main areas of action: the first Joint Global Survey (following the footsteps of the 2010 IUPAP/AIP Global Survey of Physicists) among STEM fields, the first Joint Data-backed Study on Publication Patterns (extending the work by Mihaljevic-Brandt, Santamaria & Tullney 2016[†] to other STEM fields), and the set-up of a database of good practices for girls and young women, for parents and for organisations. Among the main activities planned for Year1, Regional Workshops were organised in the three ICSU regions, with the goal of presenting a preliminary draft of the joint global survey and collect more localised input from the different geographical areas Year2 (2018) is expected to witness the launch of the joint global survey and the analysis of its results.

A few representatives of the WG WiA OC were invited to attend the regional workshops, that were organised respectively in Taipei (Taiwan, 2 IAU members), in Bogota' (Colombia, 2 WG OC members plus 1 more IAU member) and in Cape Town (South Africa, 1 WG OC member, 2 OAD members, 1 IAU member). Their feedback has been overall positive, in terms of networking, discussing the various topics of the joint global survey, and reflecting on the needs of the respective geographical areas. Some important criticism has also emerged that now needs to be followed up, within the project and within the WG WiA OC. Although not surprising, it is noteworthy to mention the lack of male scientists attending these workshops, a sign for an overall lack of engagement from the side of our male colleagues who could instead make a huge difference. At least, our union was among the very few to have 2 male representatives, at two workshops.

Moreover, the WG WiA OC provided feedback to and fully endorsed the new IAU

[†] <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0165367>

Executive Committee Statement on Sexual Harassment[‡] and submitted a letter of support for one of the proposed 2019 IAU Symposium, entitled "Astronomy for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion – a roadmap to action within the framework of IAU centennial anniversary" (submitted in mid December 2017).

The WG WiA OC was also contacted by the coordinator of the IAU 100th Anniversary Celebrations for ideas on how to celebrate next year IAU anniversary. We proposed to set-up an itinerant exhibition of female astronomer profiles, that will include women at all possible career stages, from students, post-docs and junior astronomers up to senior faculty, role models and retired scientists. It will be tailored and adapted to the geographical area where the exhibition will be shown. It will be simple, easy-to-print and to set-up. Every institute, organisation, astronomical association shall have the opportunity to use the material and display it. The WG WiA OC, together with the IAU EC, is also discussing other small projects, in celebration of women contributions to Astronomy during the past 100 years.

Finally, the WG WiA OC is still trying to bring to completion a few more goals that were discussed at the last General Assembly, namely a renewed WG website, a proper channel for WG membership, the collection of IAU Symposia statistics. These still ongoing actions will be completed before the GA in Vienna.

3. Closing remarks

The need to keep gender equality in astronomy at the top of as many countries/institutes future agendas as possible asks for a further extension of this working group, with its Organizing Committee having the main role of liaising between the IAU Executive Committee and the community at large. The WG OC shall strive to have the largest geographical and diverse coverage among its members, so that it can keep itself up-to-date on gender-equality related matters and challenges in the different areas, collect knowledge and expertise on best practices, thus acting as an advisory body to the EC on these matters. Within its next three years mandate, the WG and its OC shall bring this WG in line with the other working groups in the union (in terms of membership and nominations for its OC), follow-up the ICSU Gender Gap project and reflect on the main results of its activities in order to decide on the next set of useful measures for the astronomical union, and define how to best collect meaningful gender statistics. On the latter point, the WG WiA OC has been discussing to have a face-to-face meeting, as part of its GA Business Meeting (in the planning), to compare the needs and set-ups in different geographical areas and agree on how to proceed with a coordinated effort to collect gender statistics.

Francesca Primas
Chair of Working Group

[‡] <https://www.iau.org/news/announcements/detail/ann15036/>