

**THE LEAKY PIPELINE AT CBS:  
THE CASE OF FEMALE ACADEMICS**



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY  
8 MARCH 2019

**FIGHT THE MYTH, PRODUCE SOLUTIONS!**  
GENDERLAB – COLLABORATION BETWEEN COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL AND KVINFO

This case was written for Copenhagen Business School. It is based on quantitative and qualitative research on the issue. However, to ensure anonymity of the study participants, some parts have been adapted. The case is intended to be used as the basis for discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of situations of gender issues. No part of this case may be copied, stored, transmitted, reproduced, or distributed in any form or medium whatsoever without the permission of the authors.

# Introduction<sup>1</sup>

It was the last meeting of the year for the Council for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI) at Copenhagen Business School. While darkness was already setting in on this December night in Denmark, the members sat down to discuss not only the year that had passed but also to agree on the big strokes for the years to come. Just some days before, the name of the new incoming President of the school had been announced. Given the importance of senior management support and active engagement for the continued existence and work of the CDI, this was number one on the agenda. Despite the CDI's continuous efforts, to date only a few concrete actions had seen the light of day, and their effects and efficiency were still to be established. In particular the leaking pipeline, that is to say, the fact that there are fewer and fewer women the higher up you go in the hierarchy, had still no convincing fix in view. The CDI know they have conducted good and important work - and still are! - but they also know that they only touched the tip of the iceberg.

How can CDI and the new senior management team together formulate and drive the agenda that diversity and inclusion in all functions and at all levels are essential to maintaining a strong, innovative and relevant Copenhagen Business School? How can the CDI engage both employees and students to actively support their work? What initiatives, policies or cultural changes should be taken up in the next couple of years that would help fix the leaking pipeline and ensure a more equal distribution of male and female scholars in all positions?

## The leaky pipeline at Copenhagen Business School: where are the female professors?

Copenhagen Business School (CBS) was founded in 1917 by the Society for the Education of Young *Tradesmen* to educate *businessmen*. It took about ten years until the first woman was admitted to the school. However, in the subsequent decades, the university opened up to a more diverse student body, with a slowly improving gender balance as well as an internationalization in both student and faculty intake. Celebrating its centennial in 2017, CBS could proudly state that 50% of students, on both Bachelor and Master level, were women - although the gender distribution varied highly depending on study areas and programs. However, the drive towards equal gender distribution had stalled, and this was similar within Faculty. While there was still almost gender balance across Ph.D. students, the numbers drifted apart more and more dramatically at assistant, associate, professor WSR<sup>2</sup> and full professor level. In the last 20 years, the number of female full professors had stagnated below 20%, with 15% of female full professors in 1999 and still only 17% in 2017. The most likely explanation was that there was a leak in the pipeline somewhere at CBS, that stalled women's progress into the highest academic ranks. Although the metaphor of the leaky pipeline in research had been around since the 1990s, it seemed that even in the Nordics, otherwise seen as global role models for gender equality, it was a challenge to diagnose and fix the problem.

CBS was well aware of the relevance of the issue. In particular, it meant that CBS was losing out on recruiting and retaining faculty members from the whole pool of talent. As the (now former) CBS president Per Holten-Andersen declared in 2014: "This is a loss of talent, diversity, thoughts, and

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<sup>1</sup> This case was written for Copenhagen Business School. It is based on research on the issue. To ensure confidentiality where necessary, some parts have been adapted and fragments of the different individual narratives have been combined to create the stories. The case is intended to be used as the basis for discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of the discussed problems. No part of this case may be copied, stored, transmitted, reproduced, or distributed in any form or medium whatsoever without the permission of the authors.

<sup>2</sup> Professor WSR, With Special Responsibilities (MSO - med særlige opgaver in Danish), is a fixed-term position (3 to 8 years) to carry out special responsibilities with regards to a core or priority research area for a given university. After that time period, one either moves to a full professor or associate professor position.

opinions. And in the end, it is a loss of quality and competitive power for CBS and Denmark.” Moreover, a large body of research shows that diversity in teams and organizations, in particular in knowledge-intensive ones, played an important role to increase creativity and innovative potential<sup>3</sup>. Per Holten-Andersen stressed that including more women in the organization would also mean having more “talented women to act as role models and opinion makers in education, in research and in the academic and administrative management”. Finally, from an ethical or social justice perspective, the current unbalance did not appear as fair. As a public institution and a business school that aspired to do ‘business in the service of society’ CBS saw it as its responsibility to promote diversity and inclusion and to make equal opportunities not only a possibility but a reality.

Despite this awareness, CBS has historically not been very good at tackling this challenge. While all Danish universities face similar challenges and the average number of female full professors at Danish universities was about 21% (with a range from about 10% in STEM fields to 28% in Humanities), CBS was still among the worst in class. And as numbers from the latest EU report<sup>4</sup> show, Danish universities fall far behind universities in other EU countries when it comes to women in top academic positions, ranking #21 out of 28 and scoring below the EU average of 24%. Denmark’s Nordic partners Finland, Norway, and Sweden currently had 29, 28 and 25% of female full professors and scored #7, 9 and 12 in the ranking.

However, CBS never saw this as an excuse but rather as a further wake-up-call to act for improved gender balance. Accordingly, in 2014 the school’s management launched the Council for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI). The CDI functions as an advisory board to CBS senior management. While it has no executive powers, its operation scope encompasses collecting relevant data, making recommendations, monitoring implementation and progress, as well as raising awareness at CBS. It consists of ten members, including the deans of research and education, the president, the Equal Opportunities Officer (EOO), as well as faculty, admin and student representatives<sup>5</sup>. With regards to gender-related issues, the CDI’s main mandate is to ensure a better gender balance in both academic and administrative leadership and to ensure equal opportunities for staff and students more generally. In the last few years, there had been a specific focus on attracting and retaining more women in top research and management.

In the four years since its inception, the CDI had introduced a variety of initiatives. In the fall of 2018, CDI members conducted a roadshow through all departments during which they presented CBS staff with numbers and reflections about gender and international diversity and inclusion in the school’s faculty. The reactions to this roadshow ranged from indifference to perplexity or even rejection but also to explicit eagerness to engage with change. The CDI also encouraged (then) CBS president Per Holten-Andersen to join the ‘Gender Diversity Roundtable Denmark’, a new United Nations initiative to promote equality. In 2017, it initiated CBS’ participation in Copenhagen Pride celebrations under the motto ‘Love suits everyone’, thus acknowledging that the norm is not only masculine but also heterosexual and binary more generally. In the same vein, EOO Alex Klinge stated that the main goal, in the long run, is to change CBS’s culture altogether: “Looking at it historically, CBS was a man’s world for a very long time. Our culture is formed by this, and it generates a backlog. But we are working on altering this culture through our intake of students and through the recruitment of researchers.”

## How to fix the leaky pipeline? An overview of the work to date

As there were 50% of female Ph.D. students in 1999, should there not already be a more numerically balanced gender representation in top positions 20 years later? All CDI members were well aware that

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<sup>3</sup> To further explore this topic please see the suggested readings in the appendix.

<sup>4</sup> She Figures 2018: <https://www.altinget.dk/misc/EC%20%20kvinder%20i%20akademiske%20topstillinger.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> See full composition of the CDI in the appendix.

the problem would not just solve itself over time. CDI discussed existing scientific literature and mandated an internal report on gender and leadership practices at CBS<sup>6</sup>. The lessons learned were rather diverse. For example, there is an evident lack of female role models. Also, there appear to be resilient patriarchal cultures in academia and society that hindered or discouraged women from advancing in their academic careers and reproduced gendered career paths. This means that, overall, women encounter implicit and explicit gender bias that create barriers in the selection, evaluation, and promotion process. Another recurring explanation is that women are socialized so as not to desire leadership positions, but also that they do not ‘lean in’ or that they even opt out by their own choice. Finally, issues of work-life balance for highly demanding careers also appears to be a key issue. When consulting the report written about CBS, the CDI realized that even in a country that prides itself as being highly equal, ensuring the work-life balance of the family was essentially understood as a ‘female issue’.

Where to start fixing the leak, then? In general, CBS is quite proud of their recruitment procedure. For example, there always needs to be at least one person of the underrepresented gender on any assessment committee. Additionally, CBS has been working on the wording in their job announcements, to make them attractive for a diversity of candidates. Nevertheless, CDI learned from the mandated report that the problem might not (only) be the official recruitment process but rather anchored in the unofficial scouting practices that precede most formal hiring processes. The scouting of talent for promotion was a task usually taken up by senior academics and department heads, so that most ‘scouts’ at CBS are men. Thus, efforts towards unbiased wording and gender balanced assessment committees might be void if the winning candidate had already been chosen through networks of collaboration and contacts that tend to be gender-homogeneous.

Still, one could argue that this is not an issue as long as the best candidate is chosen by experienced ‘scouts’ who know how to identify talent and merit. However, the internal report shows that respondents interpreted talent and merit in different ways. While some referred to quantifiable measures, such as numbers of publications, others stressed criteria such as social intelligence, generosity, willingness to collaborate, the capability to inspire others, and ability to be part of ‘the culture’. Even the introduction of the REEAD evaluation model<sup>7</sup> to increase transparency in criteria for recruitment and promotion and did not yet have much impact. While the REEAD model outlined Research, Education, External Funding, Academic Citizenship and Dissemination as the evaluation criteria, each department interpret their meaning and weigh their importance quite differently. Also, still few women and even fewer men had applied to benefit from the new parental leave reintegration policy<sup>8</sup> to reduce the teaching and administration hours of parents who take long leaves.

A group of researchers had also started to collect the perspectives of CBS female faculty at WSR (MSO) and professor level, to get insights into their career path and how they interpret and experience their place in this context. This may be a starting point to understand also what it takes to ‘make it’ and not only to focus on what happens at the point of the leak. Certainly, these many stories remain to be fully collected, analyzed and complemented by other data to understand how these experiences constitute explicit patterns, if they are gender specific, and if the related issues can be integrated in change interventions. For now, the following stories represent a composite of some of the experiences of the respondents.

### *Story 1: Embodying the perfect professor*

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<sup>6</sup> <https://research.cbs.dk/en/publications/gender-and-academic-leadership-practices-at-copenhagen-business-s>

<sup>7</sup> See full description of the REEAD model in the appendix

<sup>8</sup> See the appendix for a more detailed description

*Today, Amanda works as a full professor in male-dominated discipline at CBS. To advance on the academic career ladder, Amanda believes she has learned to "play the game". She has learned to stop doing the invisible work that someone's got to do at the university, but that simply does not count at the department. For example, Amanda refuses to take the notes during meetings just because she is the only woman present. She avoids helping others all the time or performing the feminine role of the caring colleague that some men and women expect from her. "I've stopped being the nice girl", she promptly puts it. "I don't bring the home-baked cookies, and I don't make tea for everyone". Instead, she has learned to be more strategic about her work and "do what the boys have always done, anyway". "I've learned that nothing, nothing is more important than my research and my publications". What counts at her department is top-tier publications. However, Amanda feels that her level of ambition has, sometimes, been a problem for others. "As a woman, I've had to work twice as hard as the men to prove that I'm serious and competent". Also, the investment in her career has not come without personal sacrifices: "I will not get the mom of the year trophy! And I will not get the best colleague trophy".*

## *Story 2: Juggling with multiple roles*

*Nowadays, Michaela describes her work-life balance as decent. Having children in a way forces her not to work all the time, which is an imperative some of her colleagues seem to struggle with. Also, academic freedom and flexibility allowed her to pick up her children early from daycare when they were little. This is something Michaela takes pride in: "I didn't have children to have them stored and raised in daycare". She remembers liking to pick up her kids at three o'clock in the afternoon. The societal norm in Denmark indicates that 'good' parents pick up the kids early from daycare, at four o'clock the latest. In this sense, Michaela performs the 'good' mother who is available for her children. At home, gender roles are fairly traditional. Michaela's husband travels a lot for work and Michaela has always had the responsibility to organize and deal with family life matters.*

*Michaela enjoys teaching, especially at the MBA level where students come prepared. Having invested plenty of her time preparing each lecture, she expects motivated and devoted students, too. "As a woman, I think I always over-prepare", Michaela puts it. She believes that students judge her slightly differently compared to some of her male counterparts, "who can just turn up a couple of minutes before class and get away with playing or performing the unorganized intellectual". "As a woman, I can't get away with that. I'm always super prepared, well on time, making sure everything works". Having become more senior and experienced as an academic, Michaela no longer cares too much about her course evaluations, "that are really good anyway". She knows them to be gender-biased. "Smile a bit more, be happy!" the anonymous remarks have suggested. "Don't be so arrogant". "Relax, be chill". Actually, Michaela takes some pride in being judged as arrogant. She is tough and serious, she is no marionette performing or dancing for the students.*

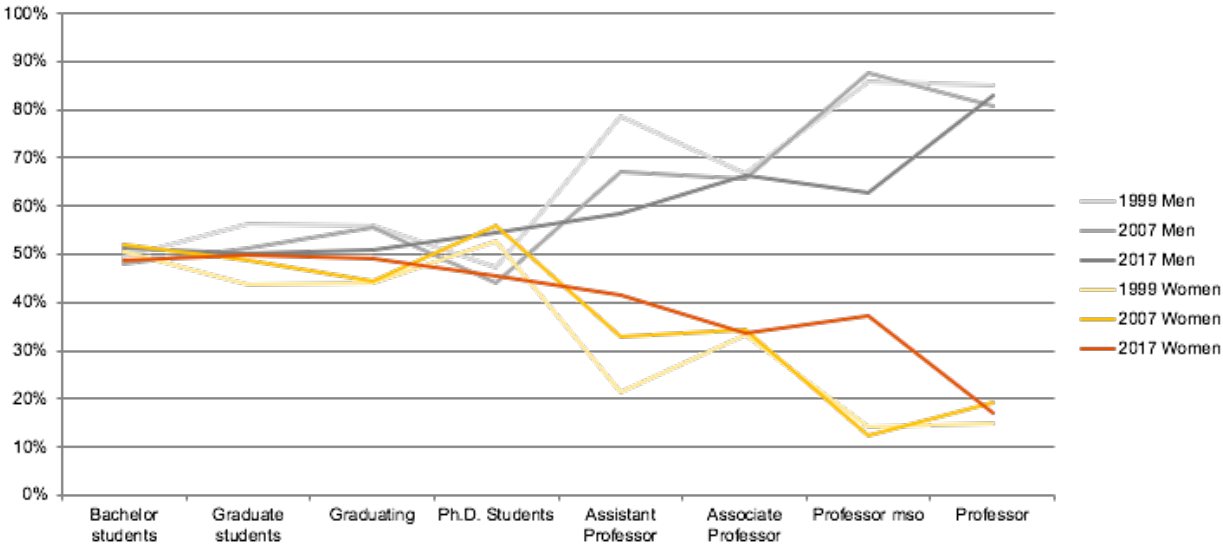
## *Story 3: Is it me or is it my gender*

*Marlene has been away for a few weeks, while offices and seatings were reorganized. When back, she discovers that she has been placed in a "tiny lousy dark office". Marlene takes a walk down the aisles of the Department and she realizes that all of the big offices have male names on them. She contemplates: "Do I really need a big office for my ego?", but decides that she anyway needs more space for meetings as she is also heading an important study program as well as in charge of some executive teaching. Marlene now sits in a big office but her fellow female colleagues "don't want to fight" she says and adds: "but you have to fight!". Some weeks later, while at a conference, Marlene is contacted to preside over a hiring committee. She accepts, although she just finished a similar task. The same day she runs into a former male colleague at a reception, who tells her: "I was taken off this*

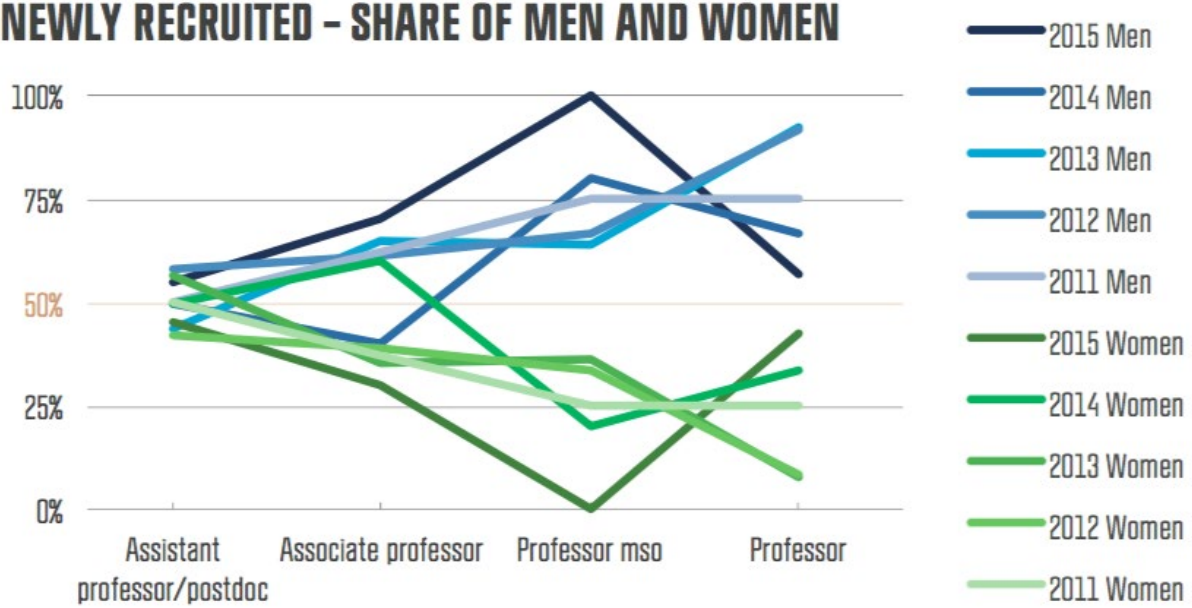
*committee because of you. The committee just needed a woman". He is upset but so is Marlene. She has experienced this before. One time a male colleague said to her: "You are so lucky you get to attend this because you are a woman. You really have it easy." Marlene doesn't want to be chosen to do something just because she is a woman. She wants to be chosen because she is good at her job. She doesn't like that some men think she is only there because of her gender.*

# Appendix

**Exhibit 1.** Share of women and men in academic staff and students at Copenhagen Business School 1999 – 2017

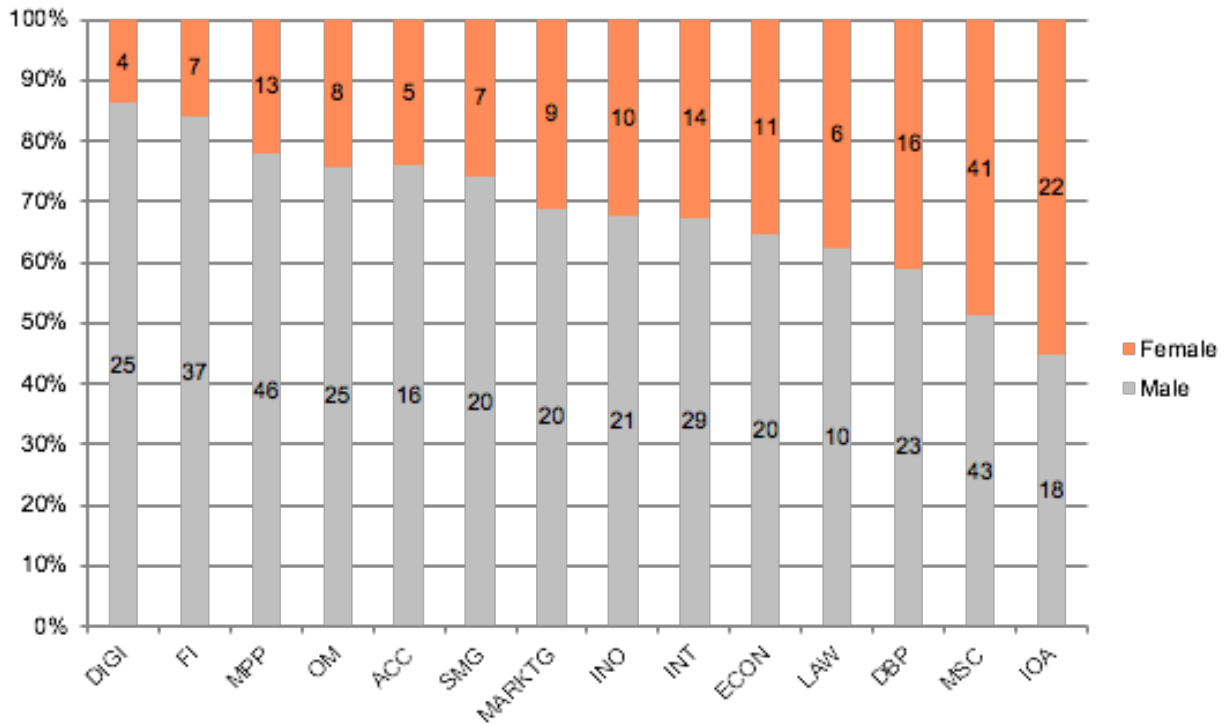


**Exhibit 2.** Newly recruited men and women at Copenhagen Business School 2011 – 2015



From: CBS Gender Statistics 2015: [https://www.cbs.dk/files/cbs.dk/call\\_to\\_action/gender-statistics-2015\\_fin.pdf](https://www.cbs.dk/files/cbs.dk/call_to_action/gender-statistics-2015_fin.pdf)

**Exhibit 3.** Share of women and men across academic department at Copenhagen Business School



Note: Data from early 2018, before the departmental merger – new data forthcoming

**Exhibit 4.** Composition of the CBS Council for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI) 2019

- CBS President (chair)
- Dean of Research
- Dean of Education
- Head of HR
- Equal Opportunities Officer
- Representative of Heads of Department
- Qualitative Diversity Scholar
- Quantitative Diversity Scholar
- Representative of students
- Representative of the administration

*Note: The key change from the previous CDI, whose term ended in October 2018, was that the two deans have been brought in to shorten the distance from recommendations to execution.*

**Exhibit 5.** Description of the REEAD model

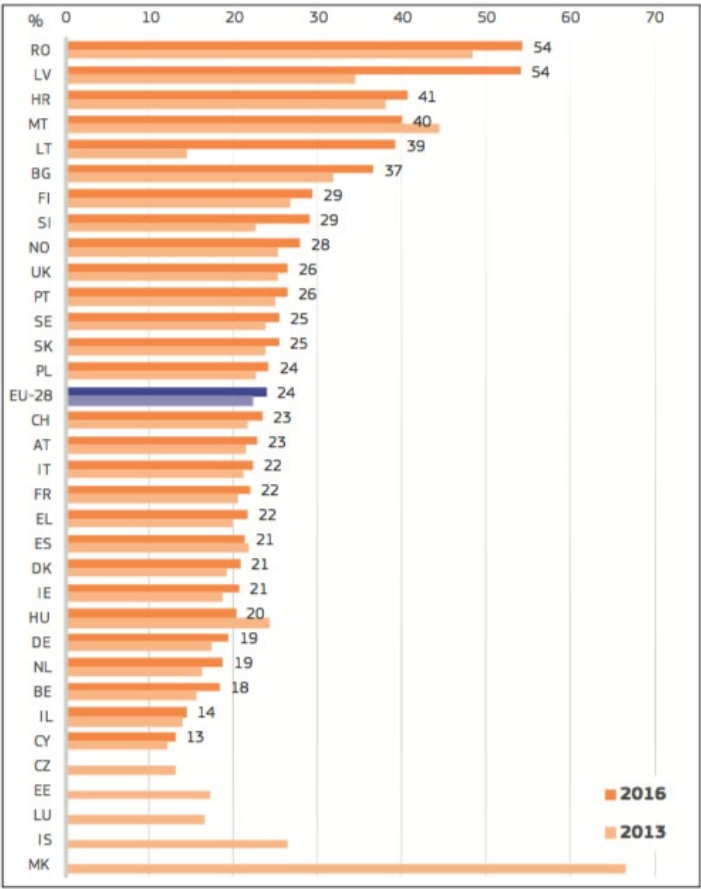
The REEAD model makes explicit what CBS expects of each faculty position and how to make transitions from PhD student to full professor. Based on strategy work of all CBS’ departments in



relation to job content and requirements for recruitment and promotion, a REEAD model has been developed that divides academic activities into the following five categories:

- **Research:** investigations and scholarly publications according to the tradition of the field
- **Education:** teaching and other educational activities
- **External funding:** fundraising for specific research projects and/or groups
- **Academic citizenship and leadership:** a variety of activities that include organising seminars and leading a research project
- **Dissemination:** explaining research in the media and engaging with the business world and society at large

**Exhibit 6.** Women in top academic positions across the EU, 2013 vs. 2016



From She Figures 2018 pre-release leaflet: <https://www.altinget.dk/misc/EC%20-%20kvinder%20i%20akademiske%20topstillinger.pdf>

**Exhibit 7.** Excerpts from the CBS policy *Boost hours for faculty upon return from parental leave*

**Job categories and types of leave**

All assistant professors, associate professors, professor MSO’s and full professors are covered by the policy, regardless of how the appointment is financed, and regardless of the duration of the employment. Other faculty members can be covered, fully or partially, by the policy by individual agreement with the Head of Department, and with local funding. If the job category changes between an included and a non-included category during the leave, the head of department decides whether the employee is

covered. All forms of leave after Parental Leave Agreement in connection with childbirth and adoption are covered by the policy.

**Framework**

Technically the employee is compensated for a number of hours of “teaching and other academic tasks” according to CBS’ standard rates agreement.

Length of leave	Compensation
24 weeks or more	216 hours
Between 12 and 24 weeks	9 hours per week of leave
Less than 12 weeks	None

**Local dialogue and agreement**

The Head of Department, together with the employee, assesses in which areas there may be a need to facilitate the employee's return and reintegration. The area could be e.g.:

- Updating teaching skills
- Development/preparation of teaching
- Completion of research publications
- Free research hours
- Conversion to research account (conferences, travel, student assistance etc.)

The list of examples is not exhaustive, and the use of the compensation hours at the department in general can be discussed by department fora or similar. The important thing is that employees feel that hours are used for the purpose.