

18 September 2022

Equalities

Objective & topic of the exhibition

The exhibition is intended to make the public aware of the benefits of equality and inclusion, stimulate discussion and provide information in the form of facts and figures. Advance believes that gender equality goes hand-in-hand with a greater freedom to choose an independent life and brings benefits for everyone: men, women, children and society as a whole.

The figure of the 'Advancine' represents 'equalities' – the freedom of choice and the freedom to live an independent life.

Equality in the Swiss world of work

The glass ceiling is thicker in Switzerland than almost anywhere else in the world. The Glass Ceiling Index measures how hard it is for women to climb the career ladder from the bottom to the top: the higher the index, the harder this is. In Switzerland, only a very small proportion of women make it to upper management at Swiss companies, meaning that influence and the power to make decisions are primarily held by men (see GIR 2022, enclosed).

The Gender Intelligence Report (GIR) 2022 – published by Advance and the Competence Centre for Diversity & Inclusion at the University of St. Gallen – illustrates that we simply cannot take for granted that women will have careers in business within Switzerland. Swiss culture seems to be a major factor preventing this from taking place, with the proportion of women that make it from the lower rungs of the ladder to the upper echelons of management 3.5 times smaller (!) for Swiss women than for foreigners.

Why? There are many reasons for this: patterns from previous patriarchal eras are firmly established in structures and minds alike, replicating themselves (often unconsciously) in people's day-to-day behaviour. It is important to Advance that the objective is not about finding a scapegoat. Men are often trapped in structures that they did not invent. They are simply passing them on as a legacy – but they could also deliberately break free from them if they wanted to do so and were courageous enough to do so. Many young men no longer see their 'career' as the primary element of their identity. If we want to drive change forward, we first need awareness and a vision of how things could be better if they were different, along with the inspiration and motivation to set out on this journey together. This is the ambition of the planned exhibition, symbolised by the 'Advancines' designed by the artists.

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Equality in child-rearing & education

This situation starts from an early age: as before, little boys are still socialised as leaders and decision-makers, while little girls are praised when they work hard, are well-behaved and keep calm. Women tend to choose jobs in the care, services or pedagogical sectors that enable them to work part-time, and thereby balance their job with their family. These jobs have a smaller sphere of influence per se and are often associated with lower levels of pay. Conversely, men are only seen as 'real men' when they have power and status. Family time and socialising often fall by the wayside or are delegated to their partner. In Switzerland, jobs are highly segregated by gender; the traditional division of roles remains very widespread.

As a result, both genders experience an imbalance when it comes to child-rearing with respect to social expectations and the role models at hand.

Equality in domestic and family labour

As previously, traditional roles are firmly entrenched in Swiss society. This is reflected in the unequal distribution of labour within the home and family: 77% of all unpaid domestic and family labour is undertaken by women (GIR 2021). The man is the main breadwinner and the mother the primary carer for the child's wellbeing.

This is exacerbated by the challenging, expensive art of striking a balance between work and family.

People need to justify themselves when they don't correspond to the expected roles – and that goes for men and women alike: men working part-time, fathers looking after their children or women earning more than their spouses, mothers working full-time (or practically full-time).

Equality in influence, power & money

In the Swiss world of work and finances, power and influence are primarily held by men: 75% of all roles with staffing responsibility in upper/top levels of management are held by men (GIR 2022). In addition, 56% (!) of women in Switzerland are not in a position to provide for themselves financially (elleXX). This power imbalance can be found at every stage of life, right through to retirement, where it is women, above all, who need to deal with gaps in pension coverage.

One reason for this is that many women work fewer hours, which reduces their chances of promotion and, by extension, of acquiring a greater sphere of responsibility and influence – and in turn, a higher salary. Swiss women are the world champions when it comes to working part-time. Furthermore, the discrepancy between women in (low-level) part-time positions and men in full-time roles is greater in Switzerland than anywhere else (see Advance White Paper 1-2022, enclosure).

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Gender equality starts with every individual

If we want to make gender equality a reality in our day-to-day lives, we need equality in all the areas mentioned above: we need 'equalities' in child-rearing & education, in domestic & family labour, in influence, power & money.

As part of this, the overarching goal is to ensure that every person is always seen and respected when they express themselves in their unique, diverse way, that they are always included and appreciated in line with their abilities. This creates the freedom for everyone to choose an independent life.

To reach this goal, everyone needs to ask themselves the following questions:

- 'To what extent am I guided by the expectations of others, such as my parents or society?'
- 'To what extent am I living a fulfilling life?'
- 'To what extent am I aware of my own influences and patterns?'
- 'What can I do if I want to break free of patterns?'

The exhibition is intended to spark these kinds of questions and stimulate debate. As part of this, the figure of the 'Advancine' acts as a symbol of equal worth and equal value, the freedom of choice, and an independent life for everyone (men, women and the generations to come) who wants to make their own professional and personal dreams a reality.

Sources and further information

Advance website: <https://weadvance.ch/>

Gender Intelligence Report, published by Advance in collaboration with the Competence Centre for Diversity & Inclusion (CCDI) at the University of St. Gallen (HSG)

Gender Intelligence Report 2022: <https://www.advance-hsg-report.ch/en/>

Gender Intelligence Report 2021 (detailed version): https://www.advance-hsg-report.ch/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/GIR_2021_FullReport.pdf

Gender Intelligence Report 2021 exec. version: https://www.advance-hsg-report.ch/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Gender-Intelligence-Report-2021_Executive-Version.pdf

Advance White Paper 2022-1: Steuern wir in Richtung Gleichstellung? [Are we heading towards equality?] <https://weadvance.ch/advance-whitepaper-1-2022-steuern-wir-in-richtung-gleichstellung/>

Tages Anzeigerin podcast: 'Warum Schweizer Frauen im Karrierenachteil sind – mit Dr. Petra Jantzer' [Why Swiss women are disadvantaged in their careers – with Dr Petra Jantzer]: <https://tagesanzeigerin.simplecast.com/episodes/warum-schweizer-frauen-im-karrierenachteil-sind-mit-dr-petra-jantzer-XRnsWzno>

Article in Tages Anzeiger by Edith Hollenstein 'Sie schafften den Aufstieg in die Männerwelt' [They managed to make it in a man's world]: <https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/sie-schaffte-den-aufstieg-in-der-maennerwelt-des-bankings-762684821961>

elleXX: www.ellex.com/de/close-the-gaps/finanzbildung/

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