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Recommendations of the Equality&Diversity taskforce in light of a survey of LHCb members

Preamble

Numerous surveys of modern particle physics indicate that the discipline is still largely a male pursuit, and one in which women and other marginalized groups continue to face discriminatory practices. A recent study of LHCb scientists, documented in the LHCb Internal Note 2013-031, confirmed this general picture. The main findings are that only 13% of the collaboration is female; there is a lack of substantial female representation in senior management positions, and there has been no evidence of a substantial improvement in the proportion of female LHCb scientists over the past 14 years.

In light of this data, LHCb management decided to form an Equality&Diversity taskforce (V.Gibson, V.V.Gligorov and M.Pepe-Altarelli) to examine ways in which the current situation could be improved. In the period between December 20 2013 and January 20 2014, this taskforce carried out a survey of LHCb scientists, the results of which will be documented in an upcoming Internal Note.

Equality & Diversity (E&D) covers many aspects of good practice in the workplace. These include elimination of discrimination, harassment and victimization; the advancement of equality of opportunity and the fostering of good relations between different parts of the community. The LHCb taskforce encourages the management to remind participating institutes and team members to be aware of and continually engage with their countries and local practices (e.g the Equality Challenge Unit in the UK has instigated the Athena SWAN Charter to address gender inequalities, <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charter-marks/athena-swan/>). The taskforce also encourages all members of the LHCb Collaboration to comply with the general Code of Conduct encompassed by the recommendations given in this report.

This document summarizes recommendations made by the Equality&Diversity taskforce to the LHCb management in light of the results of the aforementioned survey, and with a view to improving the gender balance of the experiment and the working conditions of LHCb scientists more generally.

Types of recommendations

In what follows, we distinguish two types of recommendations:

1. Recommendations to management that are LHCb-specific ; and
2. General good practice i.e. suggested actions/behaviours that we encourage LHCb institutes to implement.

Type 1 recommendations

- I. LHCb should become proactive in E&D fora, in particular for the sharing of good practice by engaging with CERN and other experiments E&D activities.
- II. It is proposed that one or more people be appointed to address issues of harassment/bullying within the collaboration. The contacts' primary role would be to provide a confidential sounding board for LHCb members who experienced harassing or bullying behavior, and to provide impartial advice or guidance. This should be carried out in-line with CERN's and the participating institute's recognized procedures. Zero tolerance for abusive and discriminatory behaviour has to be the norm.
- III. Gender-neutral language should become the norm, in particular in all written LHCb documents, and when addressing future jobs or positions of responsibility.
- IV. The procedure for assigning convenorships and other positions of responsibility should be defined and made open and transparent for all members of the collaboration. The management is encouraged to take an overview and not just present individuals for approval. In addition, a complete set of working group conveners should be presented for approval together to prevent biases in the selection, since such a bias would be immediately evident to anyone looking at the list.
- V. The progress of E&D should be regularly monitored, for example through the collection of annual statistics and actions from the Project Leaders and WG Conveners'.
- VI. Circumstantial leave (e.g. maternity/paternity, caring and illness) for people in a position of responsibility should be alleviated by the management explicitly mandating their deputies/replacements to step down once the original responsible returns from leave, unless the original responsible themselves asks for a reduced set of responsibilities.
- VII. The management should organize regular informal meetings with early career personnel (PhD students and postdoc), e.g. during the analysis week, in order to gain their views, feedback and identify problems etc. Such meetings would also serve as a visible token of the management's continued commitment to Equality&Diversity on LHCb.
- VIII. An annual review of LHCb's E&D activities and recommendations should take place and reported to the collaboration.

Type 2 recommendations

- I. LHCb institutes should provide individual career advice to young people, e.g. support in CV writing, interview preparation.
- II. LHCb institutes as prospective employers should commit themselves to provide feedback to all interview candidates, whether successful or not.

Conclusions

The LHCb E&D taskforce has presented a set of recommended actions by which the LHCb management and the participating institutes can proactively improve the gender balance, and more generally diversity, of the collaboration. While we do not pretend that implementing these actions will in itself lead to a perfect world, we do believe that it would lead to a substantially better working environment for all LHCb members, and build a platform for further progress in the future.