

## **Laura Bassi Centres of Expertise**

As women are seriously underrepresented in the field of research and the natural sciences, particular emphasis was given to the issue of women in research and technology as early as 2002 (see Recommendation of 14/15 February 2002). In both its Strategy 2010 and its Strategy for Excellence, the Austrian Council has underlined the importance of offering women better career opportunities and eliminating structural barriers which prevent them from carrying out excellent research.

The concept upon which the Laura Bassi Centres of Expertise programme is based directly tackles the structural problems that have been identified as putting women at a disadvantage. It breaks new ground in terms of selection procedures and as well as evaluating the scientific quality of the research work also assesses the quality of the research management in relation to the arrangements for cooperation with the company partner(s) and with regard to human resources. In doing so, the programme not only makes promising female research and management work visible to industry. Its experimental nature also makes it possible to use the results for other programmes.

The Austrian Council therefore emphatically welcomes the pilot programme Laura Bassi Centres of Expertise that will be run by the Ministry for Economic Affairs and Labour and the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG). It recommends the implementation of the programme once the duration and the corporate structure of the Laura Bassi Centres of Expertise have been established.