



Newsletter

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This is the first issue of the Genis Lab newsletter, a web-tool aimed to inform people involved in the project and partner institutions on project activities and on how and what Europe is actually carrying out in the promotion of gender equality in science.

Genis Lab stands for Gender in Science and Technology Lab: a EU funded project, financed by the 7th Framework Programme. The aim of GENIS LAB is to create new working conditions in six European scientific organizations by using innovative methodologies of gender mainstreaming.

In this issue Majda Zigon (NIC) and Roberto Gomezel (INFN) answer to our questions about their scientific careers. Get to know better GENIS LAB project coordinator, Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini and discover what a "gender participatory audit" is. Find out how many women there are in scientific research in Europe and take a look on the next project activities and networking. ■

DOUBLE INTERVIEW. VOICES FROM GENIS LAB

In this issue we have interviewed Prof. **Majda Zigon**, who is Associated Professor and works at the Laboratory for Polymer Chemistry and Technology, National Institute of Chemistry in Ljubljana (Slovenia) and Dr. **Roberto Gomezel** who is the Computing and Networking Division Manager of the National Institute for Nuclear Physics in Trieste, Italy.

What do you enjoy the most about working in the scientific research field?

Majda: I work in the field of polymer science and, it is no need to say, that the world of large molecules is very interesting and in many ways different from the world of small molecules. Profession of researcher suits my nature

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PARTNERS:





very well. From an early age, I have had many interests and I wanted to know about everything a little more. Being enthusiastic about various ideas, I tried to realize them. This is in fact the essence and beauty of research. One starts from an idea (project) and on the way to reach the goals, a new knowledge, experience and expertise is gained. This is a basis for further research and collaboration with academia and industry as well as for involvement in educational process working with under- and graduate students. This is not a routine work; it gives a lot satisfaction and many opportunities to face new challenges. When choosing a research career one chooses a way of life. What could be better if you are able to connect your own interests and profession?

Roberto: I really appreciate the chance to get involved in a lot of interesting and stimulating projects. At the same time it is impossible to do the same things for a long time, research needs to keep you updated and educated in order to give answers to issues coming from the new challenges researchers want to cope with. If you have a flair for leading a project, you can have a high degree of freedom and autonomy in managing your work. That is very important to me, I need to be proactive; so this field offers me the chance to express myself without being restrained.

Do you think that being a man/woman had any impact on your carrier?

Majda: Yes, it had a strong impact on my career. After graduation, I had two children and devoted myself to the family. That is why I got PhD. late, in age of 39. Then I got a fellowship for a 6-months position of a visiting researcher in France and my real professional career began only afterwards. I also strengthened contacts with my supervisor in France and established contacts with colleagues from the Czech Republic, and became involved in bilateral and EU projects. In a research career, I had a strong support of my husband and parents.

Roberto: Personally I do not think so; scientific environment can be less discriminatory if compared with other ones. Actually I am a man so probably it can happen that I suffer from a privileged point of view about it.

Sometimes it is just a question of nuances in taking actions or making decisions and it can pass unnoticed. In a world still suffering from gender discrimination it is impossible for scientific research field to be immune.

Your organization experienced the gender audit, how was it for you? What are your expectations about it.

Majda: I believe that GenisLab project will be a successful one and will raise involvement of women in leading scientific positions at NIC. The GenisLab launching conference, taking place in March, was very well attended not only by employees of the NIC but also by representatives of various governmental bodies, such as Slovenian Research Agency, Slovenian Science Foundation, Office for Equal Opportunities, Commission Women in Science, UNESCO, University of Ljubljana and its faculties, Jožef Stefan Institute, and media representatives. Information about the project Genis Lab and its goals were very well accepted and warmly welcomed. The Participatory Gender Audit, performed by moderators from the International Training Centre of the ILO and Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini in April also went very well and I look forward to receiving their report with impressions and recommendations.

I expect some structural changes at NIC in order to improve the participation of women in science, since female researchers still face more obstacles in their career paths than male ones. Exchange of good practices with other partners in Genis Lab about gender equality in science will also be beneficial.

Roberto: I found it a great experience; even though I have a feeling for gender topics, it was really interesting to face this kind of process along with my colleagues. I often discuss about it with my friends but I really appreciated to do it at workplace. It allowed me to face different point of views and to have a deeper knowledge about their way of thinking about that. At the same time I appreciated the methods applied in order to get a precise picture of our environment related to this topic, using different kind of tools and interviews. It was much better than I expected and I had the chance to think about in a different way.



PARTNERS

The **Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini (FGB)** was established on the 9th April 1971 in memory of the former minister of Labour, Giacomo Brodolini, who was responsible for approving the Statute of Workers. The main subject of FGB's research and cultural promotion is labour, which is essential for achieving social inclusion, encouraging integration and participation of individuals in current events and which contributes to the growth and enhancement of the dignity of people.

During nearly forty years of activity, the Foundation has focused in particular on labour issues based around three main areas: labour economics and sociology; labour legislation; industrial relations. Since 2000 the Fondazione has provided technical assistance to the European Commission DG Employment and Social Affairs regarding the evaluation of the Italian National Reform Program, as the Italian member of the System network of the European Employment Observatory (EEO).

The Foundation has sound experience of social inclusion and **gender mainstreaming** policies and during the last 3 years received funding from the European Commission for more than 30 projects. Eleven of these projects were on gender equality, involving public and private partners in Italy, Sweden, Ireland, France, Denmark, Portugal, Greece, the Netherlands, Spain, Finland, Poland, Latvia, Germany, Hungary and Bulgaria.

At present FGB is coordinating two European networks on social inclusion and employment from a gender perspective (EGGE and EGGSI Networks).

In addition to regular and occasional reports and research, the Foundation publishes two specialized journals in the field of labour economics: «Economia & Lavoro», a quarterly magazine on economic and social policy, in Italian; and «Labour», Review of Labour and Industrial Relations in English, edited by Blackwell. In 2009 the Foundation launched a web-magazine **www.ingener.it**, the first of its kind in Italy, dealing with the issues of gender equality from a socio-economic perspective.

TOOLS, TO MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN

The Participatory Gender Audit

A participatory gender audit ("PGA") is a social audit based on qualitative inquiry techniques. This makes it completely different from an audit in the traditional sense (e.g. financial audits): rather than an external "objective" evaluation, a PGA is an opportunity for the staff of an organization to discuss if and how gender equality is dealt with in their workplace. The process promotes organizational change towards gender equality. The basic idea behind it is that inequality results from structural inefficiencies and stereotypical behaviors which are unconsciously embedded in organizational practices and cultures. A PGA helps an organization become aware of its internal strengths and weaknesses in relation to gender equality. It also stimulates the organization to find feasible solutions to become a fairer and more productive place to work, thus making the best of all its available "human resource potential" and talent.

In order to identify the needs for structural change, GENIS LAB focuses on three priority organizational dimensions: organizational culture and stereotypes; human resource management policies and practices and gender; financial dimensions and gender budgeting.

The PGA process starts with preliminary phase in which an external team of "PGA facilitators" undertakes a desk review including gender analysis of statistical information and review of selected key policy, procedural, programme and budgetary documents. An on-line anonymous questionnaire is also sent to all staff of the institution, mapping career paths, work-life balance needs and perceptions about gender equality. The PGA team then visits the organization (five days) engaging a reference group of staff in open-ended confidential interviews and participatory workshops. Discussions focus on finding together the possible internal challenges to gender equality, on ways to improving workplace organization for all, building on existing strengths and good practice. Representatives of all categories of staff are involved in the discussions, top management, HR and finance, administration,



researchers, technical staff. Finally, a draft report is prepared by the PGA Team comprising: consolidated findings, gaps and good practices; conclusions and recommendations for future action. The Report is discussed and agreed with the management so that the final product is truly owned by the organization itself, which should be committed to follow up on the recommendations. A Summary Report is then prepared for sharing with partner institutions.

Four PGAs have already taken place as at 30 June, consulting and involving some 200 people altogether. All the institutions involved have actively participated in this phase and a wealth of information and ideas have already been collected. This is a promising step towards the experience-sharing event we will have in Madrid in September.

NUMBERS. IT'S EVIDENCE

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In Europe, within the science and technology field, women represent 31% of the students population at the first level.

They represent 36% of PHD students.

In grade C academic staff the proportion of women drops to 33%, and decreases to 22% in grade B. Arriving to grade A, the top of career, it becomes just the 11%.

Why? Find it out by following the Genis Lab project. A hint: is not, or not only, about critical mass.

COMING NEXT. NEWS FROM GENIS LAB

On 29th and 30th of September 2011, the first Genis Lab annual meeting is going to take place. We are going to discuss the PGA national results, launch the three virtual Labs taking place on the project website, and set the agenda for the following year.

The project website is on-line: follow us on www.genislab-fp7.eu/

NETWORKING

GENDERA - Changing the gender balance in research organisations

From 2010 – 2012, the Partners in the GENDERA initiative will strive to make a change to the balance of gender in research organisations in Europe. By raising awareness in a wide cross-section of today's society, GENDERA aims to re-address the balance of gender within research organisations and higher education organisations across Europe. The role of women in specific disciplines and in decision making positions will be strengthened through dialogue (the gender debate) and the implementation of best practices. From 2010 onwards, the GENDERA partners will collect, systemise and analyse existing policies and programmes in order to identify good practices that are already having a positive effect on ensuring that women get higher in research organisations and higher education institutions and achieve decision-making positions. ■