



### INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE "WOMEN'S WAY INTO SCIENCE"

On 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> December 2009, in Rome, at the Sala Polifunzionale of the Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri the following International meeting was held: "Women's way into science: Lessons learned and new challenges for gender equality", which was the final conference of the "PRA.G.E.S." – "PRActising Gender Equality in Science" project. This event, organised by the Department for Equal Opportunities with the assistance of ASDO, was the final step in 21 months of work that has seen the participation of the project's partners, of scholars coming from every corner of the globe and many attendees. The Conference was an important moment of reflection on the current situation of women in the world of science, it was an occasion to find out the critical state of the system and to identify future paths and new tools to be given to policymakers. The Conference included an opening session and a working session, the latter articulated into three séances ([see program](#)).

The opening session introduced the core issues of the Conference, by offering the opportunity for an introductory exchange on the reasons behind women's under-representation in scientific and technological research, progress made and the factors still hindering women's advancement.

During the opening session, coordinated by Michele Palma, General Director of the Office for Interventions in Economical and Social fields of the Department for Equal Opportunities, there were speeches by the representatives of national institutions, such as Isabella Rauti, Head of the Department for Equal Opportunities, Rina Larizza from the Ministry for Education and University, and Mariella Cozzolino from the Secretariat of the Ministry for Public Administration and Innovation. There was also a speech by Marina Marchetti, from the European Commission, member of the L4 Unit "Scientific culture and gender issues" of the General Directorate for research. The session was concluded, with updated data and reflections upon the female presence in European scientific research, by Rossella Palomba of CNR and by Samantha Cristoforetti, the first Italian astronaut currently on duty at the European Space Agency, who shared her experience. The second part of the opening session, chaired by Pia Locatelli, formerly European MP and President of the Foundation A.J. Zaninoni, was attended by internationally-renowned experts coming from the United States (Lotte Bailyn), from Europe (Dora Gróo and Jacqueline Scott) and from Australia (Gillian Whitehouse), who have outlined the condition of women in science in their respective countries or geographical areas, supplying information on ongoing policies for gender balancing in science.

The **first working session**, titled "The gender and diversity challenge: practices for a changing science", was dedicated to the best practices that have been developed in the last decade to support gender equality and, more generally to promote diversity in science and technology.

The session was chaired by Paola Paduano, General Director of the Department for Equal Opportunities, and opened with the presentation of the Programmes Athena SWAN in the UK, by Julie Ashdown, and ADVANCE/WISELI, an ongoing project in the US, by Molly Carnes.



The work continued with other speeches including one by Giovanna Declich from ASDO Association, the scientific partner of the Department for Equal Opportunities in coordinating the project, who presented the database for good practices realised in the context of the PRAGES project. This is a database of programmes for the promotion of a more balanced female presence in sciences and technology, which can be accessed freely online at [www.retepariopportunita.it/prages](http://www.retepariopportunita.it/prages). The main purpose of the database is to facilitate the analytical knowledge of the experiences carried out and, as a result, their possible reproduction in other institutional and geographical contexts. Evanthia Schmidt from the University of Aarhus, another project partner, illustrated the importance of evaluation in contemporary scientific and technological research, an aspect of fundamental relevance for female careers, whilst Francesca Zajczyk, from the University of Milano-Bicocca, reminded us of some examples of good practice reported in the database of the Prages Project, demonstrating the possibility of their actual usage. The first working session also included testimony from scholars and university lecturers both from within and without Europe (Alice Hogan, Bronwyn Holland, Helene Füger, Liisa Husu) who have taken part in projects aimed at promoting and valorising women engineers, physicists and chemists, whilst the Spanish delegate, Montserrat Farrel Ferrer from the Autonomous University of Barcelona presented the Observatory against gender discrimination set up by the University. The session ended with speeches by Italian speakers (Flavia Zucco, Rita Bianchieri and Consuelo Corradi), from various structures and bodies, who reported on the initiatives for gender equality in Italian public research. It is important to remember, in this context, the agreement that the Department for Equal Opportunities has signed with the equal opportunities committees of Italian Universities to promote a balanced presence of the two genders in the academic world.

The second session, titled "Capitalising on experience: from practices to policies", dealt with some of the problems arising from going from the study of each good practice to the production of suggestions for action and political trends; this was done through the participation of scientists and experts in the field of science and technology studies, as well as persons who have activated projects aimed at promoting gender equality in science. The session was coordinated by Giulia Calvi, from the European University Institute, and opened with a speech by Marina Cacace, from the ASDO Association, presenting the Guidelines for the development of programmes supporting gender equality, the main end product of the PRAGES project. Other internationally renowned experts (Abigail Stewart, Ulrike Felt, Felicity Cooke, Martina Schraudner and Marcela Linková) contributed to the session with their personal reflections and testimony, relative to Europe and the US. The concluding session, headed "Accelerating the pace of change: future paths for a gender equal science", was a further advancement of the reflection; it focused its attention on both the future development of policies and on the efficacy of the measures already in place, and also on the possible strategies to adopt in order to make transformation processes more rapid.

This third session, coordinated by Marina Cacace, was attended by Henry Ezkowitz from Stanford University, Bianca Beccalli from Università Statale di Milano, Barbara Bagilhole from Loughborough University and Virginia Valian from Hunter College in New York. All the speeches focussed on current evolution dynamics that concern science and technology in society.

After a debate in the room, on all the topics covered in the two working days, Marina Marchetti, European Commission representative, has proposed some concluding considerations. First of all Ms Marchetti reminded all of the change of perspective summed up by the slogan "fixing the organisation, not the women", according to which the European Commission, in the second decade of policies on women and science, is aiming at working directly on organisations and their ways of handling human resources. Repeating once again the importance of actions aimed at an increased presence of women in scientific and political careers in Europe, Ms Marchetti summed up the projects already funded and ongoing to achieve this important objective, and talked about future funding for 2010.

## THE PRAGES GUIDELINES

The 'Guidelines for Gender Equality Programmes in Science' have been published at the beginning of December. The text – already available on-line – represents the final output of the PRAGES Project and is intended to favour the development of new programmes and initiatives to support women in scientific and technological careers in specific institutional settings, such as university faculties and departments, networks, enterprises or associations. The Guidelines are based on the analysis and assessment of 109 programmes of this kind carried out in Europe, North America and Australia, the results of which have been firstly organised in the PRAGES Database. The processing of the information contained in the database resulted in turn in the identification of some of the recurrent approaches and intervention schemes developed by the most impacting programmes and their translation into an organised set of recommendations and suggestions addressed to those interested in launching new initiatives or in improving the ones they are already carrying out.

Even when limited in scope, gender equality programmes in S&T tend to anchor their actions to a broader strategic framework and almost always to extend their range of action and become permanent over time. In this regard, three general strategies have been identified:

- making science and technology (and, more concretely, research institutions) an enabling environment for women's progression and working life;
- including the gender dimension in the very process of research and innovation design;
- promoting women in top level scientific leadership positions, including those positions dealing with management, scientific communication, innovation and evaluation of S&T.

These strategies provided the backbone of the Guidelines. They have been broken down into specific objectives (overall, nine of them have been singled out) which can be pursued resorting to a vast array of orientations and more specific lines of action (31 orientations and 61 lines of action have been identified). To facilitate the readers to understand how strategies, orientations and lines of action are concretely implemented, 219 examples drawn from the experience of gender equality programmes are offered in the Guidelines, each of them accompanied by at least one web address to allow a direct access to relevant information sources.

In addition to the strategies devised by the programmes, the text devotes a special attention to the ways in which programme promoters tend to ensure acceptable quality levels in their initiatives. In particular, a set of 30 different "action patterns", i.e. recurrent schemes of action addressing quality-related issues, has been recognised and grouped according to the four main quality dimensions, i.e., relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

Another aspect taken into consideration by the document are the tools or groups of tools prevalently used by the programmes. Needless to say, a tool can be applied to achieve different aims and to implement different strategies, and even several strategies at the same time. A total of 31 tools – including, for example, networking, mentoring, public communication tools, institutional arrangements or monitoring and evaluation procedures – have been singled out and presented accompanied by 138 relevant web addresses, to allow readers better understanding how the tools are applied.

On the basis of the entire analysis, the Guidelines come to propose seven overall methodological suggestions which can be followed by research institutions and other kinds of players to promote and set up new programmes and initiatives in support of gender equality in S&T.

The Guidelines have been submitted to a review process involving around 30 scholars and experts and as many programme promoters. The process also entailed the organisation of five working seminars held in different European countries. The text has been finally presented in the framework of the international conference held in Rome on December 3-4 2009.

## THE NATIONAL SEMINAR

In the framework of the activities of the PRA.G.E.S. project, national seminars in four European cities on «Practising gender equality in science» took place from November 5th till November 12th 2009. The Seminars has been devoted to the presentation of the first version of the «Guidelines for Gender Equality Programmes in Sciences» drafted on the basis of the main results of the evaluation and benchmarking activities of positive actions on the presence of women in decision making position of the public scientific and technological research.

The first seminar, jointly organised by the Centro Interdipartimentale «Centro Studi e Ricerche Donne e Differenze di Genere» of the Università degli studi di Milano and the Dipartimento di Sociologia e ricerca sociale dell'Università degli studi Milano Bicocca, took place in Milan (Italy) on November 5th 2009.

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The second seminar took place on November 9th 2009 in Manchester (United Kingdom) at the Manchester Business School. The seminar is jointly organised by the Cambridge University and the Manchester Business School of the Manchester University (h. 10.00 – 13.00).

Info: [www.genet.ac.uk/events/Prages/](http://www.genet.ac.uk/events/Prages/)

On November 10th 2009 took place in Aarhus (Denmark) the third seminar organised by the Danish Centre for Studies in Research and Research Policy of Aarhus University (Preben Hornungstuen – Room 132, building 1422 – h. 13.00 – 16.00).

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The cycle of events has been closed on November 12th 2009 in Budapest by the seminar organised by Tetalap – Hungarian Science and Technology Foundation (Hilton Budapest, Hess – Andràs tér 1-3 – h.9.00 – 13.00).

Info: <http://www.tetalap.hu/> - email: [tetalap@tetalap.hu](mailto:tetalap@tetalap.hu)