

# Beyond the Glass Ceiling

Women Rectors Across Europe  
Role of Leadership in Structural Changes

## ISTANBUL RECOMMENDATIONS

4<sup>th</sup> European Women Rectors Conference: 15-17 May 2014, ISTANBUL

### AIM and SCOPE

Gender inequality is a problem which is as old as human history and we have reasons not to be overoptimistic in our expectations for leadership when we remember that women were accepted to colleges and universities only 150 years ago. Data for academic staff by gender show patterns of both horizontal segregation which describe women's asymmetrical participation in scientific areas and vertical segregation which is used to define the difficulties women face in their career progressions.

European Commission's SHE Figures show that women stand less chance of reaching senior levels in higher education and research institutions, and also of holding positions of influence through membership in scientific boards. Structural as well as cultural barriers appear to be the major factors explaining the reproduction of traditional structures and patterns which support a masculine domination in the universities.

In the Communication on the ERA 2012 "Gender" is one of 5 priorities and member states are invited to create a legal and policy environment to provide incentives and engage in partnerships with funding agencies, research organizations and universities to foster cultural and institutional change on gender. On the other hand Horizon 2020, Art. 15 states that there is a strong need for "Structural change for ensuring equal opportunities and promoting women's careers, promoting integration of gender dimensions in research and innovation"

We are in a position of making substantial changes in our higher education and research institutions towards achieving gender equality across the world. Academic leaders/leadership play a key role in all change processes in universities and research institutions. Therefore, we need leaders (men and women) who are ready to take the initiative for gender equality to create capacity for change in their institutions and to recruit and retain talent for reaching excellence in their achievements. Holistic approaches are needed for changing the culture in research institutions and universities to provide equal opportunities for women and men. There is a strong need to combine top down and bottom up strategies to make the changes happen at institutional, national and global levels.

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The theme of the fourth European Women Rectors Conference is **the role of leadership in structural changes for achieving gender equality in academia**. The aim of the conference is to articulate a set of recommendations for different bodies such as European Commission, nation states and academic institutions. During the plenary sessions invaluable contributions were made by the keynote speakers and along the parallel sessions distinguished women leaders coming from 30 different countries shared their experiences and discussed the questions of: What are the structural changes that we need to promote gender equality in higher education and research? How are we going to initiate these changes? How are we going to monitor change processes? Participants who are or have been leaders in academic institutions have crafted and designed recommendations on the bases of their career experiences as well as the contributions of the experts.

## In summary: what are the facts?

- o Gender inequality in academia is still an urgent problem
- o Horizontal and vertical segregation impact negatively on women's academic careers
- o Inequality is even more drastic at decision making levels
- o Asymmetric distribution of research funding still persists among female and male researchers in many funding systems
- o Excellence initiatives of various kind have not benefited male and female academics equally
- o Asymmetric work-life balance arrangements impact negatively women's advancement in academic careers

## Therefore we need

- o Substantial structural changes for promoting gender equality in academia
- o Strong leadership that is well-informed, engaged and willing to act in gender equality issues, as it plays a crucial role in change processes
- o Holistic and comprehensive approaches to improve the conditions step by step
- o Concrete but flexible road maps as well as regular and close monitoring – evaluation – feedback mechanisms within institutions, nationally and regionally.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Recommendations for Academic Leaders / Leadership

- Creating awareness among decision makers to make them recognize, observe, analyze and understand the mechanisms of horizontal and vertical segregation in their institutions, and forms of resistance against removing this segregation and other inequalities
- Making visible the external and internal constraints for gender equality and giving them priority according to their impact on the problem and also the institution's and leadership's capabilities to remove these constraints.
- Showing leadership in making the university community aware of the importance of this problem and persuading them to foster the idea of gender equality
- Planning and preparing a social environment for change to remove cultural barriers for gender equality by the participation of all constituencies by
  - o Organizing informal meetings to discuss the gender equality issue at department, faculty and university levels
  - o Including questions on realization of gender equality in university level workplace surveys
  - o Inviting inspiring role models to the university to meet with the academics and students
  - o Sharing and disseminating good practices with academics in suitable events nationally and internationally
  - o Being an active member of NGOs for gender equality in academia
- Developing innovative and creative approaches for designing and crafting a new legal environment to speed up the change process by
  - o preparing and implementing gender action plans at university and faculty level
  - o allocating resources for drafting, implementing and monitoring of gender equality action plans and related actions
  - o offering incentives and recognitions for achievements related to gender equality
  - o providing/taking care of transparency in promotion and recruitment processes
  - o securing equal opportunities for research funding and regularly monitoring success rates by gender
  - o designing work-life balance measures for all academic activities

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- o forming gender balanced decision-making bodies in the university
  - o organizing leadership training opportunities for women academics
  - o including gender equality issues in all leadership training, for women and men
  - o institutionalization and support of gender equality knowledge production by forming research centers, undergraduate/ graduate degree programs, advisory groups, etc. on the subject area
- Monitoring the change process, measuring the impact of the strategy applied for structural changes to improve the conditions for gender equality and making the necessary adjustment for further steps. Clarifying and specifying the responsibilities and division of tasks in gender equality promotion within the institution.
  - Preparing proposals for national and supra-national organizations to remove the external constraints and establishing strong networks to be influential on these authorities

## Recommendations for National Authorities

- In fact, several EC funded projects have already started to work on databases on different aspects of gender equality in Europe. There is a lack of information about women leadership across Europe. Therefore, there is a need for creating a database on gender equality for leadership positions in higher education and research, keeping it updated and sharing it at national and international levels.
- Forming Advisory Groups and Observatories including all the constituencies/stakeholders and making them a part of new developments for gender equality
- Creating and supporting NGOs which have a mission for gender equality in academia
- Design strategies to improve the gender equality in higher education and research areas in order to utilize the whole capacity of the society by new legislation for
  - o Providing transparency in all recruitment and promotion processes
  - o Providing transparency in allocation of research funding in all research funding institutions across the country
  - o Implementing a certain percentage for women's participation in decision making bodies -at least 40% as it has been defined by Horizon2020

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- o Providing facilities for the elderly and sick dependents of academics
  - o Recognizing and making visible the outstanding achievements of women academics for presenting “Role Models” for young generations
  - o Recognizing and making visible the outstanding achievements of institutions towards gender equality
  - o Designing and supporting efficient and effective communication tools to make the society to be aware of the importance of gender equality in academia and in all other fields as well.
- Monitoring– measuring – evaluating these processes and making the necessary adjustments for further improvements
  - Disseminating the achievements within national community and internationally
  - Providing extensive funding for research on strengthening the role of women in academia

## Recommendations for Supra-National Organizations

- Creating databases for gender equality, keeping them updated and sharing them with the member organizations and nation states
- Establishing and supporting international Networks and Advisory Boards for gender equality
- Identifying best practices and giving them recognition at international levels to create incentives for institutions to develop themselves in that direction
- Publishing Communications for helping national organizations – institutions to design their own strategies according to shared/common values and standards.
- Organizing high-profile events to address gender inequality in higher education and research on global scale, in co-operation with other Supra-National Organizations and national stakeholders
- Including and addressing gender equality issues in all major conferences and events
- Providing extensive funding for research on gender equality in higher education, science and research.
- Monitoring – measuring – evaluating these actions and projects to make the necessary adjustments for further steps.