

Transforming academic culture for gender equality in research and innovation: UNINA's case study

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Introduction

The University of Naples Federico II (UNINA) is partner of **GENOVATE**, an action-research project based on the implementation of **Gender Equality Action Plans (GEAPs)** in six European universities.

The project, coordinated by the University of Bradford (UK), brings together universities with diverse experience with gender equality mainstreaming approaches, with varying institutional and disciplinary backgrounds and located in different national contexts.

Since the first stages of the project, GENOVATE partners have shared some common challenges for women engaged in research and have identified common areas for intervention, but each partner university addresses these areas through their individually tailored GEAPs, built on existing structures and policies or developing new systems and practices.

This **contextualised approach** is supported by an ongoing knowledge-exchange system within the consortium and an ongoing evaluation.

UNINA GEAP

The **main objectives** of the UNINA GEAP are:

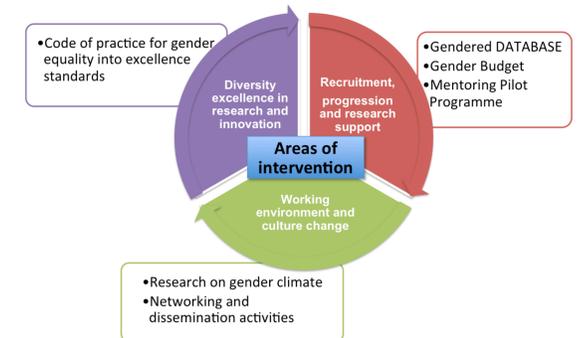
- to increase the number of women in senior academic positions and at high-level research posts
- to raise awareness about gender issues
- to introduce the gender dimension in research and innovation representation and contents.

Following the indications on the **Change Academy Model (CAM)** provided by UNIBRAD, the GENOVATE@UNINA team has established the competent boards needed to ensure a real engagement and participation at GEAP implementation within the institution:

- an **Institutional Advisory Board**, composed of UNINA representatives of the academic and administrative senior management,
- a network of **Gender Equality Change Academy Teams (GeCAT's)** spread in several departments of UNINA to support the GEAP implementation.

Area of intervention and main actions

Even if the GEAP actions refer to different areas of intervention (**Recruitment, progression and research support - Working environment and culture change - Diversity excellence into research and innovation**) each action is supported and enriched by the others: this feature makes the UNINA GEAP a **synergistic plan**.



A case study: the Science and Technology School of UNINA

In the **scientific field** the case study of the **Science & Technology School of UNINA** (the most important university in Southern Italy, with more than 7000 staff and 96.000 students) shows some interesting features.

Unlike the European trend, the analysis on the presence of women in science departments at UNINA indicate that **many women attend scientific courses**.

Figure 1 illustrates a comparison between the UNINA and EU scissor charts showing the proportion of women to men at different stages of their academic careers in the scientific sectors (data 2011).

In the **EU case**, the diagram points to a greater proportion of male to female presence in all phases of a scientific career.

A different trend is observed in the **UNINA case**, where the number of female students undertaking scientific studies is almost the same as men: data show that at the master degree level women have almost achieved parity (almost 48%), and at the PhD level women outnumber men (almost 58%).

Despite this success of gender equality in higher education boasted by UNINA, the analysis of the gender composition of academic staff found that women give up their careers in science: this abandonment takes

place mainly post PhD, and in later stages of their career (researcher, associate professor, full professor) there is a rapid and progressive decrease in women (almost 16% for full professor).

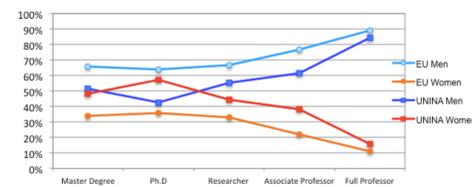


Figure 1: Proportion of men and women (students and academic staff) in a typical academic career in the scientific sector. The diagram shows a comparison between the UNINA and EU data (2011).

A comparison between the 2002 and 2011 data confirms that in recent years the number of women have been increasing rapidly to the higher education stages and very slowly in the later career stages (Figure 2).

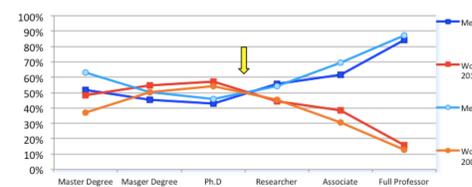


Figure 2: A comparison between the 2002 and 2011 data of the S&T School of UNINA.

Conclusions

The project is nearly halfway through its life cycle. At this stage, more than drawing conclusions, we can rather report the main difficulties, strengths and successes encountered so far in dealing with the GEAP implementation.

The blocking of funds by the Ministry of Research in the last years has caused an increase in the average age of university professors and created a bottleneck at the entrance to Italian research. Also there is very little awareness of gender issues in research at the university. In fact, Italian academia seems to have considerable **institutional and individual resistance** to change. In this context it is not easy to predict the **real impact** of the GEAP actions.

Nevertheless, all the GEAP actions carried out so far have been viewed with enthusiasm by the governing bodies of the university and the networking and dissemination activities raised great interest in the institution. Great efforts have already been made to collect the data describing the present scenario and for setting up the realization of the UNINA database, while the program of mentoring will begin with the new academic year.

Moreover, the **Code of practice for embedding gender equality and diversity into research and innovation excellence standards** appears to have significant potential. In order to carry it out UNINA is creating a working group that includes other stakeholders, such as the Board for Equal Opportunity of important Italian research centres, representatives of ANVUR (Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes) and Ministry of Education, University and Research. This collaboration could encourage this Code of Practice to be adopted by other Italian academic and research organizations.

GENOVATE (Transforming organisational Culture for gender equality in research and Innovation) is founded by the European Commission within the Seventh Framework Programme.

The project started on the 1st January 2013 and will finish on 31st December 2016.

For further information www.genovate.eu



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