Report: Changing research landscapes to make the most of human potential

10 years of EU activities in "Women and Science", and BEYOND

http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society

This conference, held 15-16 May 2009 in Prague, aimed to encourage public and private research institutions to reflect on appropriate gender management in the provision of genuine equal opportunities, and the benefit that this could have for science and technology.

Human resource managers from universities and other research institutions, school-level science education experts, researchers, representatives from EU member states and non-European countries, policy makers and other stakeholders came together to look at how young people can be attracted into research in the first place, and then how research organisations can improve their working environments in order to keep these women and men in research careers.

Since the conference marked ten years of activities for the European Union in the field of Women and Science, the plenary sessions analysed the results of past activities and also looked to the future.

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I was invited and funded to attend as a plenary speaker on attracting girls to science. My PowerPoint presentation is attached separately.

The conference was opened by the Czech Minister of Education, Youth and Sports and the Commissioner for Science and Research, European Commission.

Prof. Teresa Rees, The Pro Vice Chancellor of Research at Cardiff University gave a talk on what she did to create change at her university:

1. Increased transparency
   a. Recruitment
   b. Promotions
   c. Committee make up
2. Training in governance
3. Equal pay audit
4. Put women up for prizes
5. Created women professor network and provided mentors for senior women
6. Women on committees
7. Positive work environment
   a. Work life balance
   b. Remove meanness on campus

She found it was not easy. There was ridicule, resistance and needed senior people to pull others into line. Basically her main point was that it was poor science to ignore gender.

Prof. Kelly Mack NSF and Patricia Hyer Virginia Tech talked about various programs funded and initiated by the NSF. These programs were to increase the number of women participating in research funded by the NSF program. Things done include faculty advocates, dual hire policies, opportunities and programs for women of colour, use of inclusive language. See: www.nsf.gov/advance.

Ideas include
- Stop the clock pre-term interruptions
- Standard language
- Modified duties to enable more flexible roles
- Expanded childcare
- Part time tenure track

Dual career program was mentioned by several speakers with different models operating in different places around the world. It was found from exit survey’s that 30% of staff left due to spouse issues.

Prof Kong-Ju-Bock Lee from NIS WIST gave the 5 year Korean experience in institutional transformation for women in S&T and plans for the next 5 years. In Korea they have developed a range of metrics to determine the effective of new programs.

Pierre Bismuth from Schlumberger presented the just released report on Women in Science and Technology (WiST). He started off with information that only 3% of Fortune 500 companies had women CEOs with another 5% who were potential CEOS. He discussed the “leaky pipe line” that sees women drop out from careers in science along the education and training process. He also introduced the “scissor” diagram which is standard for many organisations.

A survey of major companies found that work load and flexible time were the two major issues for ALL workers. He also discussed how flexible time was usually poorly implemented.

In the afternoon there were three workshops:
- How to attract young women into research?
• How to change organisations and the working environment (emphasis on national measures) and  
• How to change organisations and the working environment (emphasis on institutional measures)

Many talks were given about programs and approaches in many countries and institutions in Europe.

This was summarised by Prof Teresa Rees. She said that over the last 10 years there had been much research and effort understanding the issues relating to increasing the number of women in science but there was still not much change in real numbers. It was now necessary and urgent to have coherent strategies building on what works what is effective and what is “noise” and not helpful and does not work.

She said that it was necessary to make this issue main stream with policies that were designed to not necessarily assist women (such as the establishment of a minimum wage) benefited women inadvertently.

We need to package courses to make them more attractive for all students.  
We need more scientific literate citizens  
We need to prevent future teachers from dropping sine and making science in all subjects and stopping the early dropping of science so it is never exposed again and competencies are not present. This is more likely to be achieve is science is embedded in all subjects within the curriculum.

Teachers need to be trained in the management of diversity.

Things that make a difference are:  
Political support  
Champions for WiS  
Women in decision making  
Women on committees

The Velvet triangle was referred to.

Targets and quotas were considered. In Scandinavia this has been done. It was a divisive goal. The quota and target was 40% women on all committees, in government etc. This has been in place for many years now. It has not stopped the world as we know it. The countries involved continue to have excellent economies and social cohesion. Not all targets and quotas have been met but they are working on. This was initiated by the Helsinki group in 1999.

**Literature provided:**  
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4. Women in Science and technology, Creating sustainable careers, Report European
   Commission http://ec.europa.eu/research/research-eu
5. Science in School Winter 2008 (highlighting the bet in science teaching and
   research)
6. Queen’s gambit: Launch of a research career
7. Science studies opens the black box, Alice Cervinkova and Katerina Saldoa (eds)
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8. A room of one’s own: 10 views
10. Gender challenge in research funding, assessing the European national scenes,
    European Commission, 2009

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