Concluding Remarks – Lorenza Perini

Bruxelles, 25th march 2014

“Resilient unawareness in front of the evidence of data:

the most common behavior of all the institutions”

(from the workshop)

The “Cafè scientifique”

TABLE 1: INTEGER: small consortium of three and an external evaluator (Germany). They treat the engagement of decision makers: Dean, Director generals, University Counsellors, Dept. chairs, board of the Committees for evaluation, Human Resources, Senior management: how to involve them in a gender equality strategy for the University

TABLE 2: GENISLAB focus on stereotypes that make an obstacle for women’s leadership in research. Target on recognize and take away stereotypes. The project deals also with the problem of space for women in research: women need their own space. Battle for space for research is good and necessary. Money: women are resistant to manage money (they know and they have been taught that money is a big risk factor). The management usually is aware of a minor position of women in these environment but they do nothing, they do not chose the right person to solve the problems. Resilient behavior, not hostility, just resilience.

TABLE 3: FESTA on involving top leadership in structural change of the institutions. The strategy of intervention vary among countries. They use Interviews most of all. Because of diversity, each partner institution work at a different level of action (from individual strategy to action addressed to the whole university). Priority on fighting the stereotype that “women things” are considered -by default- a problem. They strongly stress on “gender diversity” as a concept that can “bypass” the cultural stereotype of gender as “women things”.

TABLE 4: GENOVATE – partners from all disciplines, not just STEM– diversity as a key word – very similar to FESTA for the approach. No “one size fit all” approach. The actions of the project are all very self tailored. Every institution can concentrate only on its situation. There are only some general overviews, the rest is local, very much situated.

TABLE 5: GENDERTIME The mail subject of the table is rising awareness and addressing resistance: how to monitor gender equality in research institutions. As reported in the slides distributed as printed material at the table, the items proposed are

* internal surveys on sensitive issues: gender culture survey,
* gender monitoring tools and lab: TA Workshop and UNIPD-GML and
* gender equality indicators

Table discussion mainly focused on the problem that is beyond indicators. The issue of data: how to deal with them. Why and how we are accumulating data? reconfiguring existing set of data or gathering new data? We have a huge amount of data, and our task is to choose the right variable to interpret them and deciding what to do with them. They have been mostly collected for other purpose and sometimes although they exist, we cannot use them for Gender Equality analysis… Institutions usually hold disaggregated data but they do not show them in a proper and useful way. There are different problem in collecting data if you are at national level (as well at regional and municipal level) or if you are at European level. Each level has different rules. There is also a big problem of overlapping requests of data: we don’t have to ask for data just for the purpose of collecting them.

Adding the variable “sex” to questionnaires is not enough for us. There are different variable we must take into consideration when we talk about research in academia. Data are important also because they convince people: “no data no problem” is a very common attitude.

Moreover: the data we gather are not always reliable. This is a big problem. We cannot build a proper index for measuring equality in academia since we don’t’ even have common data to compare! We are still at a first stage of things. We don’t have a common thesaurus neither.

So, even if we are able to build very sophisticated machines to process data since the technologies allow us to do it, the problem is one step before: is collecting data in a proper way and make them fully available.