



**Structural Transformation to Achieve Gender Equality in Science**  
(GA 289051)

Mid-term workshop

***Gender and science: Advancements and resistances in  
fighting structural inequality***

**Outline for discussion**

*Draft version*

*Brussels, March 25<sup>th</sup> 2014*



Under the project *Structural Transformation to Achieve Gender Equality in Science* (STAGES), a mid-term workshop will be held in Brussels on March 25<sup>th</sup> 2014, titled “**Gender and science: Advancements and resistances in fighting structural inequality**”.

This document represents the discussion outline of the workshop. Its aim is that of presenting the structure and contents of the event as well as providing the participants with useful information for developing their own contribution.

The document is divided into **three sections**.

In **Section One**, the background and the objectives of the workshop are briefly presented. **Section Two** offers a description of the different sessions of the event. Finally, **Section Three** briefly presents a list of topics emerging from the STAGES experience which can become the subject of exchange and debate during the workshop.

## **1. Background and objectives**

By launching a programme, in 2010, aimed at supporting projects focused on the implementation of **structural change** in research organisations and universities, the European Commission explicitly left the logic of pilot projects behind in order to foster the development of broad strategies addressing the many and interconnected layers of the problem of gender inequality in science from an integrated perspective. In this way, a shift has also occurred, called for by many, from programmes mostly aimed at supporting women scientists to programmes mostly aimed at inducing structural (i.e. profound, systemic and irreversible) modifications within research organisations and universities.

After the launch of the first waves of structural change projects, the need is felt to start a parallel process geared to **increasing and capitalising on knowledge and practical experience** about how structural change dynamics can be actually activated, which are the hindering factors that come into play when an effort in this direction is made, and which approaches and tools can be usefully applied to make the structural change perspective feasible and sustainable.

The **workshop** has been convened and designed to provide an opportunity for a discussion and an exchange of ideas on these issues.

In this perspective, the event is aimed at strengthening and widening the scope of the mutual learning process on structural change already activated among the partners of STAGES. In the first two years of implementation of the project, mutual learning sessions were increasingly devoted to identifying and discussing a set of **cross-cutting issues**, that is, challenges concerning – albeit to a different extent and with particular features – all the action plans and thus probably connected to any structural change-oriented programme. The output of this effort is offered to workshop participants as a common basis for discussion (see below, Section Three).

In the same vein, the mid-term results of the **accompanying research**, carried out under STAGES, will be presented and discussed during the workshop. The research is mainly aimed at following the implementation of the Action Plans so as to collect first-hand information on what is going on in the participating organisations and, in a broader perspective, to generate new knowledge about structural change dynamics in research institutions. Through a coordinated use of multiple information sources, an **empirical platform** was developed, composed of five subsets for the different partner institutions, collecting and describing meaningful situations and relevant phenomena pertaining to the structural change process emerging from STAGES.

As STAGES is part of a larger European strategy, it was decided, in coordination with the EC, to also seek the contribution in the workshop of other key players, including, first of all, the promoters of the other EC-funded structural change projects, as well as European and non-European experts in gender equality in science. In this way, an area will be offered for an open reflection on the implementation of structural change, in terms of constraints, opportunities, and tools for action.

## 2. The structure of the workshop

The workshop is organised as follows:

- Opening speeches;
- First session: “Negotiating change in five research institutions: The STAGES experience at mid-term”;
- Second session: “Dialogue on structural change”;
- Roundtable.

### *Opening speeches (9:00 - 9:30)*

The **opening speeches** will be given by **Michele Palma**, General Director of the Italian Department of Equal Opportunities of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, coordinating and co-funding the STAGES Project, and by **Gilles Laroche**, Head of the Gender and Ethics Unit of the EC DG Research and Innovation. The speeches will help to frame the issues of the workshop within the gender and science policies developed at European and national levels over the last few years and in the light of the new Horizon 2020 strategy.

### *First Session (9:30 - 11:30)*

The **First Session** "*Negotiating change in five research institutions: the STAGES experience at mid-term*" is aimed at presenting the outputs of the mutual learning process under STAGES. Rather than only focusing on their own action plan, each partner institution will, in fact, deal with a specific cross-cutting issue (among the many emerging from the implementation of the project) on the basis of both their own experience and the information collected through interviews and exchanges with the other partners, or through comparisons with other similar projects.

In particular: **Daniela Falcinelli** (University of Milan, Italy) will focus on tools and strategies to support women at the early stage of their careers; **Jürgen Wilke** (Fraunhofer Institute for Industrial Engineering - IAO, Germany) will speak about the involvement of internal organisational structures dealing with equality and diversity issues and of their male component; **Evanthia Kalpazidou Schmidt** (Aarhus University, Denmark) will address the issue of the involvement of management and research leadership in structural change activities; **Doina Balahur** (Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Romania) will reflect on different strategies for achieving structural transformations; **Inge Bleijenbergh** (Radboud University of Nijmegen, the Netherlands) will deal with the awareness-raising process on gender issues and the conscious and unconscious resistances towards gender-oriented actions.

Another contribution to the discussion will be given by **Marina Cacace** (ASDO, Italy), who will provide some food for thought emerging from the accompanying research carried out under STAGES at its mid-term.

The session will be chaired by **Caroline Bélan-Ménagier** (MIPADI, Ministry of Research, France).

### *Second Session (12:00 - 13:30)*

The **Second Session** “*Dialogue on structural change*” is organised into different thematic groups and offers an opportunity for collecting and discussing the contribution and advice of people involved with the other structural change projects in research institutions. It is suggested that the speakers keep the same approach adopted in the First Session, mostly focusing their 10-minute presentation on one or more relevant cross-cutting issues connected to the implementation of structural change initiatives.

The organisation of the session into thematic groups – each one introduced by one or more speakers – has been conceived to allow for an informal discussion around a table. The emerging outputs will be reported by the speakers in the plenary at the end of the session.

The speakers will be: **Anne Pépin** (CNRS, France) for the INTEGER Project; **Flavia Zucco** (Donne e Scienza, Italy) and **Barbara De Micheli** (Fondazione Brodolini, Italy) for the GENISLAB Project; **Pat O’Connor** (University of Limerick, Ireland) for the FESTA Project; **Silvana Badaloni** (Padua University, Italy) and **Yvonne Pourrat** (ECEPIE, France) for the GENDER TIME Project; **Uduak Archibong** (Bradford University, United Kingdom) for the GENOVATE Project. Representatives of the newly launched structural change projects EGERA, TRIGGER and GARCIA have also been invited to attend, and will have the occasion to participate in these roundtable discussions.

The session will be chaired by **Viviane Willis-Mazzichi** (Head of Sector “Gender”, Gender and Ethics Unit, of the EC DG Research and Innovation).

### *Roundtable (14:15 –17:00)*

The final **roundtable**, in the general structure of the workshop, will be mainly aimed at promoting debate among a group of invited experts and the other participants on the different aspects of the gender and science issue, also based on the inputs from the workshop’s previous sessions. The roundtable foresees a keynote address and the presentation of a set of contributions, followed by an open discussion.

#### **Keynote address**

In order to provide the roundtable with a broader theoretical scope, and one which has proved particularly fruitful in supporting the design and practical implementation of gender equality policies and actions, **Virginia Valian** will give a **keynote address** on

the dynamics underlying women's limited access to senior positions in science, as well as on strategies and tools for actions. Distinguished professor at the Department of Psychology at the Hunter College of The City University of New York, she is well known for her seminal work on women's advancement in professional settings (her book "Why so slow?", published in 1998, stands as a landmark in the field), and in academia in particular.

Virginia Valian has been analysing for many years now the multiple factors, especially those of a cognitive nature (that she calls *gender schemas*), hampering the professional advancement of women and determining, step by step all along the career path, a progressive accumulation of apparently small disadvantages eventually resulting in a large and systemic gap between men and women in all the aspects of professional life (access to top positions, salary, professional reputation, etc.).

#### **Contributions and discussion**

To stimulate debate, a group of experts have been invited to give a short initial speech (10 minutes). Then, a discussion involving both speakers and attendees will follow.

Chaired by **Inés Sanchez de Madariaga** (UMYC, Ministry of Economy, Spain), the roundtable will involve: **Katrien Maes** (Chief Policy Officer of the League of European Research Universities, Belgium); **Jadranka Gvozdanovic** (Ruprecht-Karls-University of Heidelberg, Germany); **Alice Hogan** (independent consultant, founding Director of the National Science Foundation's ADVANCE Program, United States); **Claudine Hermann** (European Platform of Women Scientists, Belgium); **Paul Walton** (University of York, United Kingdom). **Virginia Valian** will also take part in the roundtable.

### **3. Cross-cutting issues**

As mentioned above, the workshop aims to promote debate not just on single structural change initiatives but also and above all on **cross-cutting issues**, that is, issues emerging as relevant in the implementation of projects aimed at activating structural transformations within research institutions. The commonalities and specific features of recurrent challenges and effective strategies in the different organisational, normative and cultural settings provide in fact inspiring insights for action design and the identification of the most suitable local solutions.

A list of potentially relevant issues in structural change project implementation could, however, be very long, given the **wealth of scientific literature and documentation** produced on the causes of gender inequality in scientific environments and the ways to possibly address them.

The choice has been made, instead, of just proposing for the discussion the **issues which have been met in the actual implementation of the STAGES Action Plans**, highlighted and discussed in mutual learning and monitoring sessions. In this way, both the relative weight of the various problems and the effectiveness of the proposed solutions are put to the test in a real setting, and a clear-cut criterion for selecting the issues to discuss is provided.

In the following paragraphs **a set of 14 cross-cutting issues** will be briefly presented, directly arising from the practical experience gained in these last two years by the institutions participating in STAGES and consolidated through the mutual learning activities conducted under the project.

This set of cross-cutting issues is obviously **far from being exhaustive**. Rather, it is expected to continuously grow as ongoing projects progress and new projects start. However, it can be viewed as a first tool for establishing a common ground for facilitating exchange and debate among the participants in the workshop. In particular, the presentation of the cross-cutting issues may be used by the speakers to develop their contribution, by focusing on one (or more) of them or proposing new ones.

### *a. Gaining transformational capacities*

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As the player in charge of setting structural change in motion, the project team plays a crucial role and faces specific internal and external challenges. Among these: building **cohesion** and effective **working arrangements** in the complex and often dispersed academic environment; acquiring internal and external **visibility**; being able to **connect** with existing poles of change-oriented agency within the university / research institution; **being authoritative** enough to negotiate with leaders and managers at all levels. Finally, one of the greatest challenges, to be particularly stressed, is that of institutionalisation. Achieving the **sustainability** of a person/group of persons in charge with enduring project activities, in fact, even if through different institutional and organisational solutions, makes it possible that the functions of the team are not lost after the end of the funding period. How the project teams can address these challenges could be the subject of discussion in this topic.

## *b. Raising awareness and addressing resistances*

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**Lack of awareness** of and **indifference** to women's and gender issues affect both men and women in the organisation, often hiding **conscious/unconscious resistances** towards actions aiming at highlighting and countering inequality. Resistances sometimes derive from the clash of different sets of values: those typical of S&T settings (for instance, total commitment), and those related to equal opportunities (for instance, the option to work part-time). Acceptance of equality measures at the **formal** level may, thus, be matched by **informal** rejection, also because of the fear of **stigmatisation**. Reluctance to engage in this kind of issues may also hide **negative connotations** (gender equality as a second-class topic or even an "extremist" leftist or feminist concern). Different kinds of strategies may be employed to address these issues, depending on local context and circumstances: awareness raising initiatives presenting evidence of unequal outputs in careers or aimed at raising awareness of the existence of unconscious bias in evaluation; internal surveys on sensitive issues; seminars at different organisational levels; the creation of internal networks (see below), etc. These and others could be discussed under this topic, based on the different experiences of the participants in the workshop.

## *c. Creating internal networks*

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**More or less inclusive internal networks** (networks open to researchers, professors, the whole staff, female researchers, young female researchers, etc.) can be set up to provide **services** of different kinds to their members (for instance, career development advice) and also for **awareness raising** purposes and **organised pressure or action**, thus supporting the aims of structural change. More in general, networks often serve as a tool for coupling a bottom-up perspective (by channelling the demands and the collective action of members and stakeholders) with the direct involvement of management and leadership (top-down perspective). However, establishing a new network often faces **difficulties of various kinds**, some of them coinciding with those in point b, some others including, e.g., the tendency of many women not to get involved in initiatives exclusively labelled as women-oriented; competitive attitudes on the part of already existing groups directly or indirectly concerned with gender equality; the difficulty in keeping a network alive in the long run; or simply the lack of time of the members to promote or even to participate in the network's activities. How to manage these and other kinds of obstacles can be the subject of discussion under this issue.



#### *d. Involving top leadership*

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The involvement of the top leadership of the organisation is one of the key points for any project aiming to put structural transformations in motion. Even in favourable environments, it is difficult **to go beyond formal support** and to obtain active participation in the change process, entailing the personal commitment of the leaders and their direct engagement, which would be of crucial importance in triggering change and encouraging all the different constituents of the organisation to participate as well. At the same time, projects have to manage the effects of leadership **turnover**, which sometimes results in the withdrawal of institutional support. Even the personal commitment of leaders (once gained) is therefore not sufficient. Rather, it can serve as a “bridge” to attain irreversible institutional recognition and support, which are evidently crucial in the perspective of **sustainability**. Strategies that worked or obstacles / resistances met could be discussed under this topic.

#### *e. Involving middle management*

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Middle management is the group most concretely affected by “equality work”, which may result in what risks being interpreted as **further bureaucratic requirements**: changing language in communications and advertisements, gendering statistics, checking for the gender composition of committees, etc. Hence the need for what can be here referred to as “operational negotiation”, that is, negotiation aimed at ensuring that “things actually occur”, which necessarily implies the effort to **involve and motivate managers** and finding their stake in promoting gender-equal institutions. How to foster the process, preventing and managing explicit or hidden forms of disengagement by the managers are themes at the core of this cross-cutting issue and of the structural change process itself.

#### *f. Involving research leadership*

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As it is in departments and laboratories that researchers live their **daily life**, the attitude of their bosses is one of the factors that most directly affect their **career chances**, as well their **feelings and decisions about their work**. Very concrete issues depend on the attitudes of research leaders, both at the formal and at the informal level, so that their awareness of and involvement in the issues raised by the structural change process are to be addressed. Moreover, research leaders (as any other leader) can exercise forms of discretionary power which, even when legitimate, are not infrequently influenced by bias and *gender schemas*. The specific problems which arise

in this effort and what strategies seem to work better could be subjects to be discussed with reference to this issue.

### *g. Involving internal organisational structures dealing with equality and diversity issues*

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The involvement of **organisational units in charge of similar or relevant missions** to structural change is another emerging topic. Even though partially overlapping with those aiming at leadership, this cross-cutting issue deserves to be singled out because of the importance and the specific challenges it entails. Gender equality or diversity management units, gender studies departments or institutes, together with communication and human resources departments share common aims and competences, and may represent powerful **allies**, as well as representing crucial players for the institutionalisation, and therefore **sustainability**, of the actions included in the structural change effort. Specific challenges to focus on also include: **potential for conflict or competition** over the entitlement to gender equality programmes, with possible consequent lack of **recognition** of the project team; different **culture** as regards equality and diversity issues, including difficulties in harmonising **different conceptual and operational approaches, working models, procedures and schedules**. The experience gained by the participants in the workshop in this regard is expected to lead to a fruitful discussion.

### *h. Promoting male involvement*

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Strategies to fight **indifference**, hidden or overt **resistances** and **backlash** phenomena from the male component of the targeted institutions (including leaders, managers and researchers) can be presented and compared here, as well as the advantages and shortcomings of setting up different kinds of **measures** and services **for both males and females or only for women**. The impact of **male leaders and co-workers championing the structural change effort** can also be discussed under this topic.

### *i. Managing gender equality projects in changing environments*

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Promoters and leaders of gender equality projects have often to face considerable changes in the project's organisational environment, in terms of **restructuring** of

faculty and department arrangements, introduction of **new national laws on education**, and/or change of the **leadership** involving significant shifts in attitudes towards gender equality. This raises the issue of how to make the projects flexible enough to react rapidly to changes occurring in the internal environment, which are so common that they need to be considered the norm against which to test the functionality of the institutional mechanisms and negotiation praxes set up to support the change process. Problems caused by changes and strategies adopted are the subjects which could be discussed under this topic.

#### *j. Negotiating change under non-flexible legal frameworks*

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Depending on country-specific legislative provisions regulating universities and research institutions, the problem may arise of the existence of **non-flexible national-level rules limiting space for possible negotiations** for better internal regulations and arrangements for gender equality. It may for instance be very difficult to promote internal policies aimed at increasing women's presence among associate or full professors if national competitive examinations are the only way to move forward, and no internal committees are charged with decisions about recruitment or promotion. In large research institutions, very **structured organisational regulations** may limit the negotiation and manoeuvring space as well (tight policies for the protection of personal data do hinder, for instance, internal surveys and other project activities). Problems of this kind as well as possible solutions may be discussed under this topic in the workshop.

#### *k. Understanding and adapting to the features of the organisation*

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**General organisational features** may constrain or enable change. As for **size**, very large organisations may cause decision-making processes to last longer and produce institutional stickiness or lack of coordination of internal bodies and committees. **Organisational culture** and **internal communication patterns** may obviously limit or enhance the impact of the actions and influence the style of acceptable negotiations. **Organisational effectiveness** is also relevant: overworked staff and overburdened managers will not be available as needed, for instance, while the presence or lack of effective **monitoring tools** will also make a difference, as well as the presence of **internal conflicts**. Moreover, the **specific profile of the organisation for gender equality** has to be considered, as concerns the general awareness of the issue, the presence of devoted measures and internal policies, etc. The impact of the specific

features of the organisation on structural change processes may be another significant cross-cutting issue to be presented and discussed at the workshop.

### *l. Making S&T settings friendly environments for women*

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Any initiative aiming at activating structural change in research institutions faces the challenge of **making the work environment structurally friendly for women**. As a matter of fact, modifying rules and organisational procedures is not likely to be effective in the long run if changes are not backed by more general **transformations affecting cultures and behaviours** creating the conditions for change to be socially accepted and supported. A friendly environment is also one where **work-life balance** issues are addressed for both men and women, by promoting specific arrangements and services. Moreover, a welcoming environment for women supports young researchers in the most delicate phase of their **career, at an early stage**, when the pipeline is leaking most. However, impacting the everyday working environment is one of the most difficult challenges. In fact, acting on cultural and cognitive representations and on widespread behaviours takes more time than the usual lifespan of a project and it is frequently ineffective, or it stops at the surface of the problems. On the other hand, promoting work-life balance-oriented services or procedures usually requires significant economic and organisational investments. Specific actions in support of women's career could instead be opposed, not only by men, but also by the women themselves. For these reasons, presenting shortcomings and good results in this domain would be particularly interesting.

### *m. Building gender-aware science and fighting male-centred stereotypes*

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Gendering S&T contents and methods is increasingly viewed as one of the most advanced frontiers in the structural change process. Actually, a full understanding and a systematic practice of the gender dimension of science are destined to modify the very **meaning of science and innovation**, both within and outside the scientific community, as well as to impact the **relationships between science and society**. The process has just started and a great and continuous effort to promote gender-aware research programmes in the different disciplinary domains will be needed. However, this is unlikely to occur if certain conditions are not met. It is necessary, for example: to **overcome the many cognitive resistances** based on a representation of science as gender-neutral; to **provide evidence** to counter the idea that a gender-aware science is purely ideological and not based on scientific arguments; to **fight stereotypes** of science based on the implicit assumption of male models, behaviours and priorities; to

foster an active **engagement of political and research leaderships** to put gender-aware research at the core of research policies and research funding schemes. How to make this happen is the key question at the basis of this cross-cutting issue.

#### *n. Promoting women in senior and decision-making positions*

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The **underrepresentation of women in senior and decision-making positions** surely represents another cross-cutting issue to address, if only because getting irreversible changes is practically impossible if the “head” of research institutions remain male-dominated. It should also be kept in mind that, in so called post-academic science, research institutions have **many “heads”**, not only as concerns research practice but also management of research, scientific communication, innovation and science-society relationships. In all these sectors, almost everywhere women are underrepresented. There is a vast literature about why this phenomenon occurs and why it is so difficult to eradicate. In this regard, a long-standing debate is running, especially over the fairness, viability and usefulness of different kinds of measures to redress the situation including, e.g., the mandatory increase of women in applicant pools, reserved positions and quotas. Under the perspective of structural change, however, all relevant measures deserve to be reconsidered anew and deepened.