



SAPGERIC

Structural Change Promoting Gender
Equality in Research Organisations

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Prof. Balahur carried out as coordinator or partner several European research projects in the field of Gender and Science in Society: FP6 Understanding and Providing a Developmental Approach to Technology Education; FP7 project Meta-analysis of gender and science research. Currently, prof. Balahur develops at the UAIC the FP7 project Structural Transformation to Achieve Gender Equality in Science (STAGES,). She was also EC/DG EAC consultant on Gender and science education. Prof. Balahur has implemented as well European research project on gender issue funded by ESF and Phare and also educational ones.

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Structural transformation to achieve gender equality in science the experience and good practice from the oldest university in Romania. From talks to action in real life

Reviewing the impressive body of knowledge accumulated on the issue of women under-representation in science we may observe, based on the facts, once with She Figures (2012), that there is no evidence of spontaneous reduction of gender inequality over time. That is why it remains to ask (once) again on the causes of this de facto situation so as many talks about it do: “why so few, why so low, why slow?” But an important step could be done through action aiming at exploring the road from ‘WHY’ to ‘HOW’ can we bring more women in science as well as in science management, leading positions in research bodies and universities.

This new direction, from why to how (from facts and talks to acting) has been initiated by the European Commission once with the launching of the new programme on structural transformation to achieve gender equality in research institutions and universities. With this new instrument the EC put at the disposal of the scientific community the opportunity and possibility to really challenge and tackle gender equality in science. In spite of this precious policy guide on gender mainstreaming in science transformation, and also of relevant research findings on these issues, a brief critical review of some of the existing endeavors on structural transformation makes clear that the tribute paid to obsolete visions is still high and that many times they remain rooted in unproductive approaches.

Our paper presents the real processes of structural transformation developed within the frame of the FP7 STAGES project in an advanced research university from Romania (the oldest one, with a history of over 150 years) and proposes an operational model for the methodology of structural transformation that proved to be successful at the UAIC. Based on the field action-research-communication and continuously participatory evaluation we succeeded, in 1,5 years, to set up new organizational structures like the UAIC Centre for Gender Equality in science and UAIC Network of women academics and researchers, and to introduce new institutional practices and alternative cultural models for supporting and empowering women presence in the university and finely improving their representativeness in decision-making positions (please, see www.stages.csmcd.ro). Based on this experience in “real life” we gained a practical understanding of structural transformation processes and realized how could be filled in the ‘missing links’ between policies/ recommendations/ guidelines and the effective institutional transformation aiming at achieving gender equality in universities and research institutions.