

**EQUALITY in INNOVATION,
INNOVATION for EQUALITY**

EU Policies in favour of better gender balance in science and technology

Pauleen Colligan Genova
Project Manager Research Policy
European Platform of Women Scientists EPWS

Good Morning, my name is Pauleen Colligan and I am the Project Manager Research Policy with the European Platform of Women Scientist, also know as EPWS.

EPWS is an initiative of the European Commission and is a membership organisation of networks of women scientists and seeks to promote the voice of women in science decision making and research policy. However before I speak further about EPWS and other EU initiatives on the topic of women and science, I would firstly like to thank the Basque Government and Emakunde for inviting me to speak at this extremely interesting conference.

The topic of the conference is also extremely relevant at this moment in time where in Brussels, where I work, the word “innovation” is very much in fashion. Within the European Commission the whole topic of boosting innovation in Europe is top of the agenda. However in most discourse and papers on the topic innovation is always defined in the classic, commodity-drive sense, innovation to create a product. What is mentioned less or rarely at all is the idea of innovation in terms of processes, it could be considered innovative to look at how to create more equality and gender diversity in science and research and as a number of recent studies have shown that teams of equal gender balance

experiment more, share knowledge more and are more productive, striving for equality in innovation would be to the benefit of innovation.

With this in mind, I greatly welcome the topic of this conference because it looks at the link between innovation and equality and this is something that thus far has not been explore enough, the relationship between equality and innovation and how they can work for each other.

Without further ado I'll move on to my presentation which looks at what the EU has done in terms of promoting greater participation of women in research, technology and science and as the organisation for which I work EPWS has been a key initiative in this project, I will also present our work in brief.

My first slide presents the famous "scissors diagram" from the European Commission's excellent publication the "She Figures 2006". This diagram shows that while the number of girls entering university in Europe is over 50% of the student population, at the highest decision making level, on average only 15% of those in top positions are women.

My second slide shows the situation in science and engineering, whereby fewer women enter these study-areas but the drop-off of participation in women in research and academia in these fields is equally significant.

There is of course variation between different disciplines with more women present in the Humanities and Social Sciences and variation between different countries with Romania for example leading the pack in terms of women in research decision-making positions but 14 out of 27 countries employ less senior female staff than the EU average of 15.3%.

The injustice of this situation is acute as clearly there exists equally educated, talented women in research and academia but for some reason they are being lost along the way. However placed in an economic context, this waste of potential is also striking. The EU's Lisbon Agenda aspires to make Europe the most competitive, knowledge-based economy in the world and as part of this

drive requires a further 700,000 more researchers to be working in Europe. If Europe could retain the women scientists it's losing at a dramatic rate, this would go along way towards meeting these targets.

In terms of EU initiatives to tackle the under-representation of women scientists, the drive to do so really started around 1999 with the European Commission Communication on 'Women and Science - Mobilising Women to Enrich European Research', which recognised the great loss of having such a low number of women in research careers and acknowledged that more diverse and excellent European research required more women involved at all levels of science. In the same year there was a European Council Resolution on Science and Society and on Women in Science. Actions by the European Council are always significant as the Council is composed of the ministers from Member States governments, thus meaning that at national level the issue is also recognised.

In the European Commission's "Science and Society Action Plan", 2002 the problem of under-representation of women scientists continued to be looked at in detail and for the first time the idea of setting up a European platform of women scientists was suggested. Another Resolution from the European Council again followed in 2003 on "Equal Access to and Participation of Women and Men in the Knowledge Society for Growth and Innovation".

The European Commission has during this time also established a number of "Expert Groups" to look into the causes, effects of this problem and potential solutions. Each expert group is composed of external specialists who are charged with the task of looking at different aspects of the problem of under-representation of women in research and science. For example the Helsinki Group on Women and Science which is composed of representatives from the ministries of science of all countries affiliated to the Framework Programmes came together to create a publication on "*National Policies on Women and Science in Europe*", 2002. The ETAN (European Technology Assessment Network) Expert's Group work culminated in a report on "*Science Policies in the*

European Union: Promoting excellence through mainstreaming gender equality", 2000. The ENWISE (Enlarging Women in Science to the East) Expert Group which looked at the specific problems faced by women scientists in new Member States in Eastern Europe and the Baltic States created the publication *"Waste of Talents: Turning Private Struggles into Public Issue"*, 2003. The two reports *"A Wake Up Call for European Industry"*, 2003 and *"Women in Science and Technology – the Business Perspective"*, 2006 drawn up by the WIR (Women in Industrial Research) and WIST (Women in Science and Technology) groups respectively, looked at the waste of potential from an economic and industrial point of view.

Finally apart from these initiatives, the European Commission has also commissioned a number of other publications on the under-representation of women in science. Some of the most recent and most noteworthy are the following *"Benchmarking policy measures for gender equality in science"*, 2008, *"Mapping the Maze: Getting More women to the top in research"*, 2008, *"She Figures 2006 - Women & Science: Latest Statistics and Indicators"*, *Gender Action Plans – A compendium of good practices"*, 2005 and *"Women and Science – Excellence and Innovation - Gender Equality in Science"*, 2005

In 2002 the Commission had discovered through the Study on Networks of Women Scientists that networks are an important tool of empowerment. It had furthermore, in the 2002 Science and Society Action Plan, announced its intention to create a European platform of women scientists. As a result in the 2003 Work Programme a call was launched for the creation of the European Platform of Women Scientists (FP6 SSA). The Centre of Excellence Women in Science (CEWS) in Bonn were granted the contract in February 2005 and in November the same year EPWS was legally established in Brussels

The main goals of EPWS are to increase the participation of women scientists in European research policy and in the shaping of the EU research agenda, to enhance participation of women in science and its decision-making bodies as well as in national and European research programmes, especially in FP7 and

to promote a better understanding and integration of the gender dimension in science.

The working structure of EPWS is centred on the Secretariat based in Brussels, which is led by Secretary General, Dr Maren Jochimsen and focuses its work on Membership and Networking Activities - EPWS now represents over 12,000 scientists in and beyond Europe, Research Policy – EPWS tries to give women scientists a voice in EU research policy and inform members of important political decisions and processes, this is the area for which I am responsible, Public Private Partnerships – EPWS is working to develop a sound, long term financial strategy for the sustainability of the Association, and interacts with industry and finally Information Activities through which EPWS aims to enhance its visibility and that of its members. The work of the Secretariat is informed by its members, through the General Assembly and the Board of Administration, which is composed of twelve high-profile scientists from Europe and beyond and led by the Executive Committee of three members. The work of EPWS is supported by the Electronic Platform, the website of the organisation which also has a “member’s only” section for internal discussions between members and the secretariat.

The membership of EPWS is spread among 39 different countries and while some countries have a considerably higher proportion of members, this does not necessarily reflect a higher level of interest but more often reflects the different networking attitudes, histories and cultures. The membership by discipline is quite evenly distributed between Natural Science and Engineering, Social Sciences and Humanities and Multidisciplinary topics. EPWS also has mentoring networks and networks related to entrepreneurship amongst its members

To conclude therefore, while it would appear that the European institutions are well aware of the chronic under-representation of women in research and science and especially in decision making positions and while there have been some positive developments in this area with EPWS growing rapidly and

recently being appointed a seat on two prestigious European Boards – the ERAB (the European research Area Board) as created by DG Research and the Network of Women in Decision Making as led by DG Employment and Social Affairs, there is still work to be done. In the Seventh Framework Programme, Gender Action Plans, which were once obligatory for large projects, were abolished and while the statistics on this are not out yet, thus far it would appear there has been a reduction in the number of women working on EU-funded research projects. It is likely that the gender-dimension of research has also been less looked at as a result. Furthermore the fact that the Unit of DG Research that was once the “Women and Science” Unit has grown, been renamed to the Unit “Scientific Culture and Gender Issues” and now works on a large variety of topics other than issues relating to women and science has caused many to worry that the spotlight might be taken off the issue. We must therefore continue to be vigilant to keep the problem and the need for solutions high on the list of EU priorities.

Thank you