



Project Number 036653

ENCOUWOMSCI

Encouragement to Advance – Training Seminars for Women Scientists

Instrument: Specific Support Action

FP6-2004-Science-and-society-17

Publishable Final Activity Report

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Project coordinator:
Center of Excellence Women and Science CEWS

Project coordinator organisation:
Gesellschaft Sozialwissenschaftlicher Infrastruktureinrichtungen e.V. (GESIS)

1. Project execution

Women are still underrepresented in leading positions in science and research. Although half of the student population in the European Union is female, only 13.2%¹ of women scientists are senior academic staff. The project 'Encouragement to Advance – Training Seminars for Women Scientists' aimed at encouraging and empowering women scientists to apply for professorships. ENCOUWOMSCI intended to raise the proportion of female scientists in senior positions at universities and in research. Encouraging women scientists for further mobility in the European Research Area (ERA) is also an objective of the project and thereby raising the chances towards a supranational career. Interdisciplinary contacts between women scientists from different European countries are enhanced, facilitating cross-discipline, and cross-national research projects. The project targets at indicating potential funding in FP7 as well as providing advice on resources and funding possibilities for female scientists. To encourage and sensitize the women scientists for their participation in the European Research Policy Debate background information on policy making processes in the European Union were provided.

ENCOUWOMSCI constitutes a novum and unique approach for female post-docs intending to apply for senior positions in academia, as career support for women scientists mostly focuses on national structures and are carried out on a national level. As a first time project, ENCOUWOMSCI aims at encouraging and empowering female post-docs to apply for professorships on a European level, gathering experts and knowledge from six selected European countries (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland) and thereby striving to enhance mobility in the European Research Area. Career trainings have long been used in the fields of economics, politics and society to encourage women for further career development, while the field of academia and research has long neglected this instrument of career support. This situation has started to change in the last years as some European countries have developed specific training programmes on a national level for women in academia².

Promoting gender equality in science in the ERA is a guiding principle in the Commission work programme of 2006 in the field of 'Science and Society'³. The project ENCOUWOMSCI is concordant with the Science & Society Action Plan and its objective 'to boost gender equality in research, through stimulating the participation of women in science and technological development; and fostering the integration of the gender dimension throughout European research'.

Training seminars

ENCOUWOMSCI offered twelve four-day long application and career training seminars in Brussels for women scientists holding their Ph.D. for at least four years and intending to apply for professorships. Between April 2007 and April 2008 112 participants took part in one of twelve seminars. In small groups of up to 14 women scientists, the participants took part in an intensive training on application procedures in the six target countries – Austria, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic – as these countries have similar appointment structures. An international team of trainers accompanied the group, experts from the target countries were invited to give further information on application procedures in informal evening lectures. By role-plays, exchange and information on application procedures and different scientific cultural communities in the target countries all participants were coached intensively and developed career strategies and ways to strengthen their own scientific profile. The European orientation raised awareness towards mobility among the

¹ Cf. European Commission, 2006: She Figures 2006. Women and Science - Statistics and Indicators.

² E. g. initiatives like Uni-Ruf (Germany) and 'Anstoß zum Aufstieg' (Encouragement to Advance). The latter project was coordinated by CEWS and offered 52 training seminars for women scientists in Germany between 2001 and 2005.

³ <http://old.euresearch.ch/de/2090.htm>

researchers and enhanced striving for an international career and to apply in different countries. Since international work experience and raising European funds adds weight to an application for a senior position in academia, a strong focus is put on aspects of international research cooperation and European research policy by providing information about European Unions' 7th Research Framework Programme in each seminar. Thus, one day of each seminar is specially designed for European aspects, including information on funding in FP7, networking, and meeting network representatives. A better understanding of the European Union's research policy and key players in Europe is aspired to encourage women scientists to play a more active role in the research policy debate both on a national and European level.

A project amendment was passed in October 2007, including a cost free alteration of the project: The number of training seminars was reduced from 16 to 12, grants covering the travel costs and seminar fees were established, giving participants from low remuneration countries the possibility to apply for it, and the evaluation was expanded towards qualitative telephone interviews. The amendment was necessary due to a lack of applications for 16 seminars and the financially high threshold for women scientists especially from Eastern European countries.

Evaluation

The project was evaluated quantitatively and qualitatively. Data was collected in different steps: participants applied for the project by submitting an application form containing data on personal and professional development and a letter of motivation. Directly at the end and additionally four months after the seminar participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire (paper and four months later online; response rates 88% resp. 79%), covering the assessment of the training seminar, their application activity resp. their plans for future career progression, and their attitude towards mobility. Participants assessed their taking part in the project to 99% as worthwhile and 94% stated that they felt encouraged by the seminar. Assessing single items of the training, the simulation of the interview with the appointment committee as well as the personal consultation with a trainer were rated most attractive both in the seminar and the online questionnaire. 89% stated that they would recommend participation in the project to other women scientists in a comparable situation. Despite the short duration of the project the outcome in terms of encouraged women scientists was high: 68% of the participants from Humanities, Social and Cultural Sciences and 48% of the participants from Natural Sciences and Medicine stated that they applied either further or for the first time for professorships after taking part in the training. They felt empowered by being trained in essential parts of application processes and well informed about appointment procedures in different countries.

To support and extend the quantitative data, qualitative telephone interviews were carried out with a sample of ten participants. Here, the women scientists reported in detail about their activities and attitudes after participating in the project, whether they felt encouraged and how the further career development had proceeded. Furthermore, the qualitative interviews allowed additional insights and assessments of participants previously not covered by the quantitative evaluation. The interviewed participants felt highly encouraged after the training seminar, the application activity among the sample was high: seven out of ten applied for one or more professorships since their participation in the project. Considering the short duration between participation and date of evaluation, the encouragement expressed in application activity can be regarded as high. In order to extract items of the seminars most important to the scientists, the qualitative evaluation as well asked for assessing single items of the training, but without closed questions. Months after the participation, the simulation of the interview situation was still the most frequently mentioned item. According to the evaluation's results, rehearsing the talk and interview with the appointment committee in the group helped the participants to view the situation from a different perspective and thereby gave confidence.

Dissemination

To disseminate experiences and intermediary results of the project, a final conference was organised and carried out in cooperation with the EU-project 'Advanced Training for Women in Scientific Research' (ADVANCE, coordinated by Danube University Krems, Austria). On June 26th and 27th, 2008 the conference 'Supporting Women in Scientific Careers' took place in Brussels. The conference enabled participants, experts, and organizers as well as those interested in career-supportive measures for women scientists in general to have discussions on individual work steps during the implementation of a project, good practices and on personal experiences of former participants as well as of trainers and mentors. Keynotes were presented by experts on career-supportive measures, in round table discussions topics were deepened and debated in detail. A concluding expert talk on the second day of the conference gathered six experts and displaying their opinions on obstacles and chances for women scientists in the ERA.

The results are published in a final publication in the series cews.Beiträge no. 5, edited by Anke Lipinsky (CEWS). The publication contains a description of the project concept, an article of the training concept of the training seminars developed by Dr. Margarete Hubrath, an article about the quantitative and one about the qualitative evaluation. Contacts for disseminating the final publication were established, including National Contact Points, key stakeholders, networks of women scientists and post-docs in several countries, members of national and international research organisations, experts on women and science in the ERA, and persons from HRD.

Networking

Networking and raising the awareness towards the importance of networking was also an objective of ENCOUWOMSCI. An online communication platform was offered to the project's participants over the duration of the project on the CEWS-website. It was accessible only for women scientists from the training seminars, providing a closed forum for exchange and networking. Documents on application procedures, mobility, the European Research Area, funding possibilities and job offers were posted by CEWS and could be downloaded. Furthermore, 12 subgroups accessible only for each of the 12 seminar groups were designed to enhance maintaining contact and to keep informed about developments concerning application procedures of other participants. As this platform was rarely used, an internal final networking event was planned to ensure that networking among the participants will proceed after the end of the project. All 112 participants were invited to join the networking event on November 28th-30th, 2008 in Brussels, 45 women scientists followed the invitation.

An informal network and new projects were initiated during an internal networking event in November 2008 by the participants. The objective is to maintain contact and to facilitate cross-national and cross-disciplinary cooperations and projects. Networking across disciplines and across nationalities was facilitated. An informal network of participants was initiated during the networking event and will be further maintained by the participants.

Management

Implementing the project was supported by a board of experts, bringing in expertise of application procedures of their respective home countries, supporting the dissemination strategy of the project and helping to put into practice the recommendations of the programme in their countries. The following experts were on the board:

- **Dr. Barbara Hey**, Koordinationsstelle fuer Geschlechterstudien, Frauenforschung und Frauenfoerderung, University of Graz, Austria
- **Elisabeth Maurer**, Gleichstellungsbeauftragte, University of Zurich, Switzerland
- **Prof. Dr. Maria Lukacova**, Institut fuer Numerische Simulation, Technical University of Hamburg-Harburg, Germany and Czech Republic
- **Prof. Dr. Magda Michielsens**, Women's Studies, University of Antwerp, Belgium

The training was carried out by an international team of trainers on behalf of *Unisupport – Institut fuer Hochschulberatung*. Dr. **Margarete Hubrath** is owner-manager of Unisupport (www.uni-support.de) which has been subcontracted for the project.

CEWS was the sole contractor of this Specific Support Action. The Project-Coordinator is:

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2.

Dissemination and Use

Publishable results of the final plan for using and disseminating the knowledge

Information on the project was disseminated via the coordinator's website (<http://www.cews.org>), as ENCOUWOMSCI has no own logo nor website.

Results of the projects' evaluation, the general concept, work plans and budget calculations for the seminars were published in the publication *cews.Beiträge* no. 5 in a cost-free volume in February 2009. Through the publication 'Encouragement to Advance - supporting women in European science careers', edited by Anke Lipinsky (CEWS), the management and organisational structure and the concept of the project is documented and will be used for lobbying the implementation of the seminars into policies of other European countries. The cost free publication was disseminated concerted to key players in European research, National Contact Points, the board of experts, key stakeholders in Europe, and contacts established during the final conference. Thus a target-oriented dissemination is assured.

The project offered counselling to persons interested in the general concept. The final conference served as a platform for establishing contacts to potentially interested persons from Human Resource Development, National Contact Points, and European universities. First steps were made by the project's coordinators in terms of offering counselling to a Romanian group of women scientists all working as teaching staff in Bucharest. Though the offer was repeated twice no further interest was signalled by the Romanian group. Contacts to France were maintained via the CNRS in Brussels. Victoire Teisserenc attended the project's final conference and signalled interest in leadership seminars, but no further requests were posed from her to the project. Furthermore, potentially interested contact persons are listed, for example Dr. Georgi Apostolov in Bulgaria, project partner of ADVANCE, who is currently establishing a Gender Studies Centre at his faculty and signalled interest for adapting the projects concept. These among other contacts were informed especially on the final publication.

Participants of the project formed an informal network, initiated by the internal networking event in November 2008 organised by CEWS. They decided to stay in contact and to meet on a regular basis. This informal network also serves as a knowledge basis, disseminating the idea and concept. The initiative kicked off during the networking event is a promising result of ENCOUWOMSCI and connects 112 highly qualified women scientists in the European Research Area after the end of the project.