

Discorso Palma 7/Novembre/ 2011 Conferenza Finale WHIST, Brussels.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Morning.....

I'm glad to welcome all of you to the Final Conference of the project WHIST- Women Career Hitting the target.

First of all ..I would like to thank the representative of the European Commission, Mr Laroche to be here, your presence reinforces our willingness to continue to work with the Directorate General that you represent, and is a boost in order to continue to give our contribution to the achievement of gender equality, a common mission in which we have been engaged in during the last years.

A special thanks to all the partners of the Consortium of the project ..namely Ms Elomri and Mr Brazzale from ESA, Mr Wilke, Ms Spitzley and Ms Klemisch from Fraunhofer IAO, Ms Kalpazidou Schmidt and Ms Thidemann Faber from Aarhus University , Ms Beccalli, Mr Chiesi and their colleagues, from University of Milan and Ms Cacace and Ms Declich from ASDO Association, for the great job you done !!All your efforts have been fundamental in order to obtain the good results of the Project Whist that today will be illustrated.

I would like also to thank the members of the International Board of advisors, the Professor Bailyn and the Professor Ercoli-Finzi for the great support given to the project evaluation all along its duration.

Last but not least a special thanks to all the speakers that will intervene during the day.

Be here today represents a great opportunity for us to share with you information and experiences on gender equality issues in science and a moment to create a debate on this important subject.

As you know the situation of women in science in Italy is quite similar to the European trend, there is a positive evolution in the number of women students and graduates but the gender gap is still present during the career evolution and is particularly striking at the top level. It is time to change this attitude. I think that in this time of global economic crisis, eliminating disparities between women and men in access to science and technologies must become a fundamental priority for all the countries.

I'm convinced that only with the full participation of women to the scientific and technological sector, it will be possible to support the economic growth and create a society based on knowledge and excellence.

In this scenario the Department for Equal Opportunities during the past years has carried out several actions in order to improve the role of women in scientific field and fight against the discrimination that women suffer in this strategic sector.

I would like to remember to you the first important project we have coordinated.. co-financed by the Italian Government and by the European Commission within the 7^o Framework programme for research.

The project PRA.G.E.S. – “PRActising Gender Equality in Science”

It was an action of coordination aimed at comparing the various strategies implemented for promoting the presence of women in decision-making positions relating to scientific research in public institutions ended in 2009.

PRAGES has represented for us the first step of our path. I can say that for us it has been fundamental to implement this action which has permitted to us to analyse and study more than 100 Gender equality programmes realised by Universities and research institutions all around the world, capitalising the existent knowledge on the issue, and we have learned an important lesson: "changes may happen", successful strategies and concrete actions to promote gender equality in science and technology they exist and make the differences of male and female researchers the main strength of the European Research area is not a mission impossible.

All the outcomes of the project have been collected in the Guidelines for Gender Equality Programmes in Science which afterwards have inspired the project WHIST, our second step.

WHIST is born with the aim to better understand the problem of the under representation of women in Science, through the implementation of experimental activities concerning gender diversity management policies in the organisations involved in the project, and today we are going to listen directly from the representatives of these organisations in which way this experimental activities have been implemented and what kind of results they have produced.

After this presentation Ms Declich from ASDO, who , will illustrate to us the Guidelines on gender diversity in S&T organisation. ASDO is the partner who starting with PRAGES has been supporting the DPO in the design and implementation of projects on women in science. I really hope this guidelines will help to deepen the knowledge on gender gap in science and technology and possible ways out, thanks to the direct observation of the WHIST experimental activities.

In the afternoon Ms Locatelli will chair the second session opening a debate on how structural change policies can improve the situation of women in research institutions, in the light of our new project STAGES " structural transformation to achieve gender equality in science", which will start probably on January 2012, and I invite all of you to stay until the end of the Conference..and actively participate in the discussion.

I would like to conclude my intervention underling again the importance that these two projects have had for us and stressing on how European funds can represent an incredible stimulus for the member states in implementing new actions and strategies.

I think that when a member state is the coordinator of a pan-european project, when a member state has the possibility to share information with other member states and learn lessons from this process , the most important goal for the member state is to pass from the "theory" to "practice" through the elaboration of concrete measures also at national level.

In this regard, after the experience started with Prages, the Minister for Equal Opportunities signed in September 2010 a **Memorandum of Understanding** with the Ministry for Education, University and Scientific Research aimed to promote equal opportunities in science, creating for the first time in Italy, a national strategy aimed at increasing the participation of women and girls in science and technology education, training, research and employment.

The Memorandum has been conceived as an innovative tool which has foreseen the full collaboration between the two Ministries involved that have worked together adopting a

multidisciplinary approach in order to define new policies in a gender perspective aimed at create not only high standards of equal opportunities for women but also high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion in line with the new Europe 2020 strategy.

The Memorandum has provided also the institution of a **Consultation Panel** composed by experts coming from Ministries, other public administrations, Universities , research institutions..and the civil society, aimed to elaborate concrete measures on specific priority areas of intervention as for example :

The elaboration of the Italian proposal for the drafting of the forthcoming Common Strategic Framework for Research and Innovation in order to include the gender perspective in all the policies, programs, topics, human resources and calls for proposals.

Together with the Minister for Education we have planned to **promote the gender culture in all kind of schools**...through a document aimed at fighting gender stereotypes, and providing a gender sensitive training for teachers

I would like to remind to you that the Memorandum represents a commitment for the Italian Government...it has been introduced in the “National Programme for the Reforms” approved by the Council of Ministers which represents the Italian strategy for the future economic growth.

I think that it represents a strong signal for all the young and talented Italian women who want to start a career in the world of science, they are resource that we can not longer loose.

Thanks!!!