



Round Table:
**“Better Leadership: Improving the gender diversity in
Materials Research Institutes”**

21 May 2011

DIVANI Corfu Palace Hotel, Corfu island, Greece



HYPATIA

Lets discuss on :

- *Life and/or career ?*
- *Best practice ?*
- *Successful initiatives ?*
- *Positive actions?*
- *How to improve women join leadership position ?*

Organizer: Ch.E. Lekka⁽¹⁾

Local Organizing committee:

G.B. Bokas⁽¹⁾, M. A. Gialampouki⁽¹⁾ and G.A. Evangelakis⁽²⁾

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With the auspices of the University of Ioannina

Saturday 21 March 2011

10:00-12:00	Round table “ <i>Better Leadership: Improving the gender diversity in Materials Research Institutes</i> ” (Chairs: <i>G.A. Evangelakis, UOI</i> and <i>P. Rizzi U. Torino</i>)
12:00-12:30	Concluding remarks (Chair: Ch. E. Lekka)
12:30	Closure - Lunch

Report on the round table: “Better Leadership: Improving the gender diversity in Materials Research Institutes”

21 May 2011, DIVANI Corfu Palace Hotel, Corfu Island Greece

An interesting discussion took place during the round table during which different opinions and topics were argued. The outline of the topics and ideas that each participant pointed out are summarized.

Prof. Evangelakis mentioned the different treatment of women in France and Greece that is mostly originated from the people’s mentality and tradition. In particular, in Greece and in most of the East European Countries the traditional training depends on a patriarchic way (moral) where the female prefers to be married, bring up children and gets a job in a public sector. In addition, the Scissors diagram exhibits an intersection at the age of 35-40 which could be explained by the preference of women to choose marriage over career or to take it easy since they are tired raising their children. In addition, a crucial role towards a female scientific career plays the selection of a supporting husband. It would be nice if people think of family as a symmetric hand of their career. Most possible a good infrastructure “kindergarten” system would help women scientists to raise their children and support their scientific career.

Prof. M. Calin mentioned that we do not need to help all women. We only wish to support those who want to make a career. One way is to invite women scientists in workshops, editorial board journals committees, funding organizations and include them in the “male” dominant networks. She argued that the modality of men is an important issue that makes waves around the problems and any solution that we may think will mainly be for the future generation. Nevertheless, women scientists should work towards scientific excellence, producing many publications and be scientifically active.

At this point, **Assoc. Prof. D. Caganova**, pointed out that mothers should re-educate their sons and daughters in order to succeed in changing the way of thinking and general the mentality of the new generation. In addition, women should make targets and not be destructed by something else.

Prof. G. A. Evangelakis talked about his personal experience upon recruitment. A major female characteristic is that they are generally emotionally weak. They usually appear fragile and even worse sometimes in order to succeed their goal they may use their sexy and charming side and for sure this does not help for their recruitment. Another important issue is that women are generally more destructive than men, which means that they do not focus on the target and have many ups and downs that are closely related to their personal life. Usually a decision maker besides the candidate’s CV takes into account also its character that is revealed once you stress him/her during the interview but nevertheless usually any recruitment has in the best case 1/3 female candidates.

Assoc. Prof. D. Caganova said that during the interview the person’s reaction depends on the personality while **Ch. E. Lekka** said that it also depends on general features that women keep their fillings while men are more aggressive.

Dr. Ulrike Wolff raised the question to Prof. Evangelakis: “What will happen if you have a project and the female scientist just got a baby?”

Prof. G. A. Evangelakis: A baby is not a problem; a problem could be the husband who expects his wife to do all the work (cooking, take care of children,.. etc). In case of divorced the situation becomes worst. Another important issue is that females are not ambitious. For example will a wife go to USA for research and leave behind the husband and the children? Nevertheless, I believe in women because: a) women can help men to survive, b) men are inspired by women and c) women have fantasy (it is like the restarting/rebooting the computer). First of all it depends on women and the outcome of this project will possibly help the next generation by changing the mentality, starting from the family and later on from the society. If the parents’ dream is not only to see their daughter married and pregnant then the women may change their way of thinking. But let’s see what happens in other countries. For example, in Germany Angela Merkel is the first female Chancellor, in England Margaret Thatcher was the first female prime minister and in France Christine Lagarde is the Economics minister.

Assoc. Prof. D. Caganova: So far in Slovakia, Iveta Radicova became the Prime Minister. In my opinion it is crucial to overcome the stereotypes and change the way of thinking. This is mainly the situation in Slovakia and most probably in Greece, as we could see from the statistics in presentations, the mutual discussions and the DIVERSITY project made it more visible.

Prof. G. A. Evangelakis: What communism tried to do in Slovakia was to change the mentality of people. On the other hand, it is amazing how in Germany the strong women support their men and work hard and peacefully without saying anything, especially after the war, bringing Germany to the top in 2010.

Dr. Paola Rizzi. In Italy the women situation is mainly a political problem and politicians need to decide to work on that. Although Italy had two female Nobel winners (1926 Delade, 1909 Montalcini-102 years old, 1986 Nobel price in medicine), today the educational programs in TV are over and media supports the idea that women are rated by their outfit and not their mind and knowledge as males are. In this way it is difficult for the people to start thinking and acknowledging the real values.

Dr. Ulrike Wolff : In Germany in 1960 the car exhibitions use to have beautiful ladies for their advertisements. This is a cultural problem and will never happen in Scandinavia or Germany today. It needs more than one generation time for things to start changing and the society needs to be trained even from kindergarten. In addition, in Germany the father was always helping in housekeeping and raising children, while in Italy or Greece the opposite is true. On the other hand, another question emerges if all women go to science how are we going to have children and therefore future scientists?

Prof. G. A. Evangelakis: The politicians should redefine priorities and have some actions. Mothers should let their daughters to take over their life and decide alone whether they wish to make a career or maternity. Having a child results in life changes but women can live their life with the child. Nowadays, we observe an increase in the number of divorces and a lot of women want to stop marriage and be free again. The best practice is to make your dreams true. Successful initiatives may cause successful results.

Assist. Prof. Ch. E. Lekka. It is indeed the mentality of people that should change and the results of this project may raise awareness and affect the way of thinking for the next generation. In Greece, the traditional way of thinking was the father to take care of the finances and the wife to stay home, raise the children and do the housekeeping. This is the way the young Greek ladies are raised and therefore the few that do PhD studies usually stop their career and proceed to have a family explaining the Greek Scissors diagram. This is in conjunction with the female low profile, less aggressive and less competitive characteristics compared to male and in agreement with the situation that exists in most of the European countries.

M.Sc. G. Bokas. Indeed most situations in Greece are the way Ch.E. Lekka described. However, the young boys think differently now and I believe the situation will change within the next generation.

M.Sc. M. Gialampouki. I would also like to mention that many young Greek ladies have changed the old way of thinking giving priority to their career in science instead of having family and children.

All agree that things can change but it takes time and work especially towards the influence of the next generation mentality. Each country may need different actions but raising awareness is what everybody needs.

