



Centre for Social Management
and Community Development



Structural Transformation to Achieve Gender Equality in Science: Experience and Good Practice from the Oldest Romanian University. From Talks to Action in Real Life

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Centre for Gender Equality in Science

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Overview

- Introduction
- Theoretical framework
- Transformative praxis
 - ▣ Action
 - ▣ Research
 - ▣ Communication
 - ▣ Innovation
- Lessons learned

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Introduction – “A. I. Cuza” University

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- ❑ **Founded in 1860 – the oldest from Romania**
- ❑ **Located in Iasi – the “cultural capital of Romania”**
- ❑ **Category A: education /comprehensive and advanced research university**
- ❑ **15 faculties – biology, chemistry, computer sciences, economics and business administration, geography and geology, history, letters, mathematics, philosophy and social-sciences, psychology and education sciences, physics, physical education and sports, orthodox theology, catholic theology**
- ❑ **11 doctoral schools**
- ❑ **Number of students: 30000 students**
- ❑ **Number of staff: 1000 academic and researchers**
- ❑ **Membership: Coimbra group, Utrecht network, Francophone network**



The STAGES Project

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- FP7 STAGES project number 289051
- Duration: 2012-2015
- Consortium:
 - Department for Equal Opportunities, Presidency of the Italian Council of Ministers (Coordinator),
 - Aarhus University (Denmark),
 - Fraunhofer Gesellschaft zur Förderung der angewandten Forschung e.V. (Germany)
 - Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi (Romania),
 - Radboud University Nijmegen (Netherlands),
 - University of Milan (Italy),
 - ASDO (Italy).



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STAGES at UAIC: Theoretical framework (I)

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- **Focus on structural change (from talks to actions)**
- Previous changes in EU policy/DG Research projects orientation:
 - ▣ From “Fixing the women” to “Fixing the institutions”
- But “Fixing the institutions” was mainly understood as:
 - ▣ Involving the management (aim: top-down changes)
 - ▣ Transfer of “good practice” (effect: imitative actions/canonical approach)
 - ▣ Rigid outside coordination in projects (sometimes totally missing the direct experience in Universities)
- Results: rather poor/scarce/minor
 - ▣ Resistance and backlash (due to marginalization or exclusion of some actors in the academic field)

STAGES at UAIC: Theoretical framework (II)

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- A new approach:
 - ▣ Involve the whole academic and research community (participatory integrative action)
 - ▣ Initiate transformative practice (based on community of practice/ and organizational learning)
 - ▣ Proactive attitude (cultivated through communicative action)
 - ▣ Flexible inside coordination (based on direct and irreplaceable experience of the real life in own Universities)

Fixing the transformative praxis/participatory innovative praxis

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The concept of transformative praxis

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- **Action:**
 - ▣ Focus on actions as a transformative practice involving the whole organization: proactive and integrative approach
- **Research:**
 - ▣ Focus on knowledge produced by action (action research); active knowing through research and learning from practice: knowledge production based on praxis
- **Communication:**
 - ▣ Focus on active participation (participatory action research) and communication (communicative action): communicative practice
- **Innovation:**
 - ▣ Focus on creating new organizational structures and practices (transformative praxis) and by this process developing competences for knowing and acting to promote gender equality in science (formative praxis)

Action: transformative praxis (I)

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- **Stages and objectives:**
 - ▣ Self-tailored Action Plan (initiating practice)
 - ▣ Reflecting on practice (reflective practice)
 - ▣ Learning from practice (organizational learning)
 - ▣ Turning the transformative practice into a continuous formative practice
 - ▣ Building a community of practice as a committed transformative agent

Action: transformative praxis (II)

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□ Strategic action areas:

- Actions promoting gender awareness in organization
- Actions promoting change in organizational culture
- Actions challenging gender stereotypes embedded in institutional practices
- Actions supporting empowerment of women
- Actions promoting work-life balance
- Actions mentoring young researchers' career development
- Actions aimed at gendering content and methods of science
- Actions promoting women's presence on managerial boards

New organizational structures: Transformative agency

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- The "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi is the first university in Romania that created new organizational structures for initiating and supporting structural changes in the domain of gender equality in science:
- **UAIC Network of Women in Academia and Research**
set up on the 5th July 2012 as an institutional association of women and men academics, researchers and PhD students committed to action for gender equality in science.
- **UAIC Centre for Gender Equality in Science**
created on the 24th July 2013 as a university centre for gender analysis, monitoring, counseling and promoting policy proposals and strategic actions/ measures on gender equal opportunities in academia and research.



Research: ACTION RESEARCH PRAXIS (I)

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Goals and stages:

- Involving the research force of the University in gender programmes as a characteristic asset of a research university
- Action based on research, research based on action (effect: increasing gender awareness through participatory action research)
- Learning by action research: developing gender competency (capacity of visioning the gender indirect/systemic discriminations)
- Extending the gender research at the national and international contexts

New organizational structure:

UAIC Interdisciplinary Research Group on Gender Equality in Science

- *Research studies:*
 - ▣ *UAIC's Organizational Climate Survey on gender equal opportunities (2012).*
 - ▣ *Gender disaggregated statistics and gender sensitive indicators (2012)*
 - ▣ *New transparent rules and procedures for appointing/electing women on management and scientific boards (2013)*
 - ▣ *National survey on women's participation in funded research (2013)*

Research: ACTION RESEARCH PRAXIS (II)

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New organizational structure: UAIC Interdisciplinary Research Group on Gender Equality in Science

□ *Scientific event:*

International Colloquium. Women in Scientific Research: Achievements and Challenges for Gender Equality Management, 15-16 May 2013



Communication: Communicative praxis (I)

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Goals and stages:

- Networking, informing and training the agents of participatory practice in order to constitute a community of decision-making through communicative action
- Increasing the women's visibility through activities and public events as new organizational practices
- Networking, training and mentoring for increasing the women's representation at all the organizational levels
- Communicative action for decision-making on GES
- Promoting participative democracy through communicative praxis



Communication: Communicative praxis (II)

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New organizational practices

- “UAIC Profiles of Women in Science”. Open Source Database
- “Women’s Researchers Day”. Annual Celebration of the UAIC Women in Science
- “Women’s Excellence Awards”. Annual public distinctions for outstanding women personalities in science from the UAIC
- “UAIC Profiles of Women in Science”: Promotional documentary films with the outstanding scientific personalities from the UAIC



Communication: Communicative praxis (III)

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New organizational practices (continued)

- Training modules on GES for HR department staff
- Training modules on Gender Equality Management (for managers and administrative staff)
- Training modules on GES for academic and research staff
- “Early career researchers day”. Mentoring programmes for young researchers
- Info services: providing online information on work-life balance legal arrangement and childcare services
- Introduction the GES theme in PhD research studies of the UAIC’s Doctoral School



Communication: New organizational structure

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UAIC Multi Media Communication and Public Relations Lab

- Information and dissemination through the UAIC STAGES project website (www.csmcd.stages.ro)
 - more than 150 articles
 - over 1250 unique visitors

Promoting PR campaigns in partnerships with TV national broadcasting companies and mass-media

<http://stages.csmcd.ro/index.php/media>



Innovation (results): participatory innovative praxis (I)

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Real structural changes:

- **Setting up 4 new organizational structures:**
 - ▣ Centre for Gender Equality in Science;
 - ▣ Network of Women in Academics and Research;
 - ▣ Interdisciplinary Research Group on Gender Equality in Science;
 - ▣ Multi Media Communications and PR Campaigns Lab

Innovation (results): participatory innovative praxis (II)

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Real structural changes:

□ Setting up 12 new organizational practices:

- ▣ Public actions/events as “Women’s Researchers Day”; “Women’s Excellence Awards”; “UAIC Profiles of Women in Science”.
- ▣ Training modules on GES for HR department staff; for managers and administrative staff; for academic and research staff; for young researchers.
- ▣ Mentoring programmes for young researchers (“Early career researchers day”)
- ▣ Info services: providing online information on work-life balance legal arrangement and childcare services
- ▣ Introduction the GES theme in PhD research studies of the UAIC’s Doctoral School
- ▣ Communication and PR campaigns through the UAIC-STAGES Website and partnerships with national, regional and local mass-media/and new media

Innovation (results): participatory innovative praxis (III)

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Real structural changes:

- **Creating a community of practice involving the whole University - so that the transformative praxis becomes a formative praxis**
 - ▣ More than 45 actions and events in 20 months.
 - ▣ Participants at the activities: over 1000 academic, research and managerial staff, PhD students, MA students and undergraduate students.
 - ▣ Speakers and other active participation: over 100 persons.
 - ▣ So, creating new organizational structures and practices (transformative praxis) becomes at the same time developing competences for knowing and acting to promote gender equality in science (formative praxis)

Fixing the transformative praxis.

Principles for an operational model

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Orientation	Means	Effects
Focus on actions as a transformative practice involving the whole organization	self-tailored plans, self-initiated actions, participatory action- research and self- evaluation of changes	An integrative and proactive approach based on transformative praxis
Focus on the own organization research accompanying and producing new practices	Action-research based knowledge Reflecting on practice Learning from practice	Increase gender awareness though action research within the organizational context
Focus on communication and active participation for decision-making	Developing new forms of communicative and participative practices	Change in organizational culture by mainstreaming GES in the University's programmes
Focus on innovation by creating new organizational structures and practices	Producing real structural changes to achieve gender equality in science	Developing the capacities to initiate, coordinate and evaluate the practice of GES

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Lessons/proposals/recommendations

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- Fixing the transformative praxis as a new paradigm for structural change in Universities –it represents **HOW** the structural transformations are really taking place in a university
- Orienting the funds for structural change programmes directly to the universities and research institutes – and not through the intermediate organizations (just like ADVANCE in USA)
- Introducing gender equality criteria in the evaluation and the classification of the European universities
- Support for networking the Centers for GES in universities and research institutes in an European Network
- Establishing the European Women Researchers Day to be celebrated in all European Universities and Research Institutions.



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