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EPWS Short Conference and Seventh General Assembly

Jahresversammlung der European Platform of Women Scientists am 27.06.2013 im Haus der Technik Essen



Die Teilnehmenden der EPWS Short Conference in der Diskussion (Fotos: Yuri Sousa/EPWS).



Dr. Maren A. Jochimsen.

Die European Platform of Women Scientists EPWS (www.epws.org), ein europäischer Dachverband von Wissenschaftlerinnennetzwerken und Organisationen, die sich für Chancengleichheit in der Wissenschaft einsetzen, veranstaltete am 27.06.2013 ihre Generalversammlung in Essen. Dazu kamen Vertreterinnen nationaler und europäischer Netzwerke aus elf Nationen im Haus der Technik zusammen. Im Rahmen der jährlich vorangehenden Konferenz stellte die Universität Duisburg-Essen (UDE) als eine auf dem Gebiet der Chancengleichheit besonders aktive Universität in Deutschland ihren Umgang mit den Aufgaben und Herausforderungen in diesem Zusammenhang vor. Die TeilnehmerInnen verfolgten mit Interesse die Präsentation der Strategie der UDE im Hinblick auf Gender und Diversität durch die Prorektorin für Diversity Management. Diese wie auch die anschließende Vorstellung der Arbeit des Gleichstellungsbüros und des Gender-Portals, des Programms ProDiversität und des Diversity-Portals, des Essener Kollegs für Geschlechterforschung EKfG sowie der Koordinations- und Forschungsstelle des Netzwerks Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung NRW durch die jeweils verantwortlichen Kolleginnen führten zu lebhaften Nachfragen und internationalen Vergleichen. Im zweiten Teil der Veranstaltung berichtete die Vizevorsitzende des genderSTE Management Committees über die Vernetzungsaktivitäten des neuen COST Targeted Network genderSTE – Gender, Science, Technology and Environment auf europäischer Ebene. Nähere Informationen und das Programm der Veranstaltung sind zu finden unter: www.uni-due.de/ekfg/general-assembly-epws2013.shtml.

In diesem Zusammenhang stellte auch Prof. Dr. Anne Schlüter das Netzwerk mit folgendem Beitrag vor:

Introduction

The Network has existed for round about 25 years. Last year, in fact, we had our twenty-fifth anniversary. My main objective today is to present the Women's Research Network as a science institution, which has been successful in organizing the interests of many academic women in different disciplines with special topics in gender research. I have divided the presentation into four parts.

- First of all, I would like to give you some information about the objectives, which are connected with the organisational background.
- Secondly, I will talk about the main issues, which are the current priorities of our work.
- The third point is to stress our main topics.
- Finally, I'm going to say some words about our perspectives.

1. Objectives and the organisational background of this science institution

The Network is an association of currently round about 250 scientists at the thirty universities of North-Rhine Westphalia. All members are scientists, of these 105 are professors and 141 are lecturers. The heart of Network is the "Network professorships" consisting of gender studies professors on the one hand and, on the other, colleagues in other subjects also concentrating in

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gender studies. That means, their focus is united on gender studies in their research and teaching. And the group of mid-level academics – lecturers and others – in their various places and positions. Some members are even men. You can count them on one hand: four.

Moreover, there are specific institutions like gender studies, women's studies and centres of research at twelve universities in the federal state. So I can summarize: three subgroups – one network. The "Coordination Office" for the Network links all these persons and all these institutions. Most of the members work in the fields of sociology, linguistic and cultural studies. But also for instance: biology, theology, architecture, law, care management, medicine, computer science, engineering and design. Our history began in 1986 with the appointment of Annette Kuhn as the professor of "Women's History" at the University of Bonn. Anke Brunn, at that time minister of science in North Rhine-Westphalia, established this network as a reaction to the debates about the lack of topics which deal with women's lives and the context of women's experiences in various science disciplines. From today's point of view: The Network's history exemplifies the special and historical situation of those days, which was made use of by women scientists in connection with political support. It shows us a configuration with more than one area of interest converging. But when I look back: The real beginning of this network was the activities of a group of female scientists, named "Working group female scientists in North Rhine-Westphalia" in 1980, who wrote and published a number of Memoranda and declarations about the situation of women in science and at universities (see: Uta C. Schmidt 2012). Secondly, at the same time, there were a number of women in political institutions, who in general wanted to change the situation for women in society. In the 1980s, when Anke Brunn was minister, she decided to support the ideas of this group of women scientists – they were organized as a working group with the target to minimize discrimination against women and

to maximize the number of women in qualified academic positions. So the minister Anke Brunn – after discussing the targets I mentioned above – decided to establish professorships for various areas of gender research. At that time the main reason was that women's and gender studies should be better embedded in academic teaching and research as a central innovation in academic scholarship. In spite of many of our objectives being manifest and evident, resistance has been and, of course, still is encountered daily, not only professional and career issues but general aspects like child raising and housework.

2. Main issues and state of play

Since 1986 a "Coordination Office" of Women's and Gender Research Network has been implemented for reaching our aims. The Coordination Office contains, besides the spokesperson, an executive manager and some full-time scientists, who are working for the Network. And beyond that Coordination Office there is a committee of active scientists, who are supporting the politics of the Network. This advisory board contains ten professors and six mid-level-academics.

The Coordination Office works for networking in different ways: networking, research and journalism. For example there is a web-site, a publication series, which publishes results of gender research, circulars and a journal named "GENDER" – a journal of gender, culture and society – sometimes with English articles. In addition: Our association has annual meetings. Conferences, workshops and congresses about different topics take place. Every year we change the location of our meetings in North Rhine-Westphalia. Topics, for example, are the following: Gender and *gender curriculum development* in all academic subjects; scientific careers and professional appointments, leadership by women etc. The results of the study, "Gender in Bachelor and Master Courses – Integrate Women's and Gender Studies into the Curriculum", have been published in printed form and as

an online version. You can read the letter one even in English. This study covers information on 54 degree programmes sub-grouped by categories like Social Sciences, Engineering, Education etc. (see: Kortendiek 2011). Beate Kortendiek – our executive manager – comments this study: "The purpose of the study and the database is to contribute to the knowledge and ability dimension of gender competence, and, ultimately, to gender equality in higher education" (Kortendiek 2011: 213).

3. Main topics today

The *main project today*, which has received a lot of attention, is the "Gender-Report". The first issue was published in 2010, the follow-up issue will be ready at the end of 2013. That means, every third year, we have new data about gender (in) equality at universities in North Rhine-Westphalia. So, in spring 2014 there will be a congress about this new Gender-Report, which will give a lot of information on the situation of men and women at the universities in North Rhine-Westphalia. Some comparisons with other states and countries are included. With the enactment of the Higher Education Autonomy Act in 2007, universities, until then under state jurisdiction, changed to public law corporations. Since 2008, the Gender-Report – collected and evaluated by our Coordination Office – reports to the federal parliament. The Gender-Report 2013 includes two project areas:

1. Updating statistical trends
2. Results of a recent study on gender equality in professorial appointments.

Data from these official statistics is used to illustrate proportional changes in overall figures as well as specifically in the natural sciences or artistic faculties, also of students, graduates, doctorates and post-doctoral candidates. The second part of the Gender-Report is asking, which barriers women and men have to face in professorial ap-

pointments, and how these can overcome without bias. The Gender-Report 2013 will include feasible recommendations for the state, for the landscape of higher education and other multipliers.

4. Outlook/Perspective/prospective future

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to the results, to the impact of our networking. Involving a lot of also personal commitment a certain level of professionalism has been achieved. So I have to stress: Without the Coordination Office it would not be so easy to do networking. Nowadays the work of coordination is supported by all universities and of course by our current minister of innovation, science and research, Svenja Schulze. At the end of the day: It is a question of money, not only of good intentions. Therefore we have to make sure, that women's networking is going to be supported in and for the future. But also I have to summarize the general experience of all colleagues within the Network: In addition to the professional issues – it is also important and nice and pleasant to have partners for discussions and for support with interesting questions about gender and diversity. If you want more information, please use our website. "Gender in Bachelor and Master Courses – Integrate Women's and Gender Studies into the Curriculum", the Gender-Report and other publications can be downloaded or ordered as a print version.

References

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