

**Interview of Gilles Laroche, Head of Unit “Ethics and Gender”, for EPWS Newsletter
by Claudine Hermann (14-2-2011)**

Since 1st January 2011, I am the Head of the Unit “Ethics and Gender”, part of the Directorate "European Research Area" (ERA). This new Unit regroups the entire "Science in Society" programme which was formerly managed jointly by the Units "Governance and Ethics" and "Scientific Culture and Gender Issues". Being in the ERA Directorate offers new opportunities to the "Science in Society" programme to build on the experience acquired during the past 10 years.

For the final three years of the 7th Framework Programme, "Science in Society" will be oriented towards responsible research and innovation: this implies stronger civil society participation in these areas. It includes dimensions such as public participation, ethics, gender, education and public access to research results in a renewed governance framework. I intend to work closely with our stakeholders, including civil society organisations, research organisations, policy makers, public authorities of the Member States and the associated countries participating in European Research programmes, and industries. In particular, civil society organisations have an essential role to play. They have the possibility not only to express their views, but also to actively participate in the process. I am convinced that we will not be able to tackle the societal challenges on the horizon of 2020 without the engagement of researchers, civil society, industry and policy-makers working together at the earliest stage of the process.

Regarding the Gender dimension in research, this question will continue to have an important place within the "Science in Society" programme under my responsibility. This covers addressing the issue of the unequal representation of women and men in scientific research, as well as developing the gender content of research and innovation, using the new opportunities provided by the ERA Framework and the Lisbon Treaty. In relation to this, building on the knowledge and experience acquired, a Commission Communication is planned for 2012 (soft law approach). It is intended that this Communication will be accompanied by a two-year information campaign which will address stereotypes, and an expert group, including gender experts and communicators, is currently helping us to prepare this campaign in terms of content and target groups.

As you can see, the 10 years of progress mentioned by Luisa Prista will not be forgotten and the Unit “Ethics and Gender” is already at work to pave a new road opened by the Lisbon Treaty. But to make it a clear success we definitely need the active participation of all actors. I look forward to receiving suggestions and comments from the EPWS.