

Interview of Luisa Prista on February 14th 2011

Luisa Prista : Head of the unit “Scientific culture and gender issues”, until 31-12-2011, Now in charge of the unit "Environmental Technologies":

My mandate as head of the “Scientific Culture and Gender issues” unit was very short, a little more than one and a half year but I fully enjoyed it.

Among the most important achievements, I think that the Stocktaking exercise for the 10 years of Women and Science activities was one the most useful. If you read it and use it since it is really a tool, you understand that the work done during the last 10 years by the Commission and Member States was impressive. But it is also with a little of sadness that we can see that the progress at European level was not proportionate to the effort. The issue of Women in Science is far from being completed and a more *"bold and radical approach"* as our Commissioner expressed once would probably be the way out.

In terms of implementation at the Commission level, the Women and Science issues are part of the Science and Society programme. In my view the issue deserves to be an activity of its own to avoid any risk of dilution and of going backwards. As a matter of fact, countries that are making more progress have dedicated programmes and resources to the issue, in particular, to encourage structural changes. This is the case for the ADVANCE programme in the USA. I consider that Member States had already made considerable steps and it is really the moment to take stock and go forward.

Although there is a positive evolution in the number of women students and graduates, discrimination is still present during the career evolution and is particularly striking at the top level including in the public system. Unfortunately, still now women remain more present in less paid and less valued jobs.

Another achievement from last year was that Women and Science issues were again on the political agenda. Indeed it was part of two Council conclusions. We clearly related the gender issue to innovation, not only in terms of women participation in research and technology but also in terms of gender content in research and technology. We set the basis to include gender dimension into the innovation indicators, a work that is now followed by my colleague. We have now all the demonstrations that gender in research produces new innovations and the lack of its consideration is narrowing the potential for innovated products, processes and methodologies. It is a huge potential that Europe cannot afford to loose!

The 10 years of progress should not be forgotten, the Women and Science issue should be pursued and the impetus at Member States level should be increased. I am fully convinced that all the bases are there to take this issue to a very positive end. Networks will have a crucial role in this process.