

**The Enwise Valorisation Conference:
Enlarging Europe with/for Women
Scientists – Tallinn 2004**

In September 2004, in Tallinn, the Estonian Ministry of Education and the Estonian Archimedes Foundation organised the conference 'Enlarging Europe with/for Women Scientists'. The day-and-a-half conference set out to present and discuss with the main stakeholders in politics and science the key findings and policy recommendations of a report entitled 'Waste of Talents: Turning Private Struggles into a Public Issue – Women and Science in the Enwise Countries' [Blagović et al. 2004]. In the words of the conference organisers the event sought to 'valorise' the insights gained from the report, that is, to enhance their value and (political) status.¹ Thus, apart from raising awareness about the particular configurations of gender inequalities in research and the 'double exclusion' women scientists face with respect to 'male-dominated scientific structures' and to the 'science centre' (Ben-David) that provides the norms and ideals of scientific activity, the organisers envisioned committing national decision makers from ministries of science and education to endorse measures to promote women in science in the Enwise countries.

The Enwise expert group of fourteen senior scientists, who co-authored the report and contributed to the organisation of the conference, was set up by the European Commission in 2002 with the mission of investigating the current situation of women scientists in the Enwise countries in order to provide a solid basis for formulating science policy. The experts were also asked to submit recommendations on how the awareness of gender equality in scientific research can be raised and how the situation of women scientists and their participation in European research and decision-making bodies can be improved. This project is part of the Commission's wider effort to build a prospering competitive European Research Area, in

which investment in research and development is promoted, researcher mobility is encouraged, and the talent of women and young scientists are put to full use. The Commission holds that, thus transformed, European research cultures and infrastructures will benefit European societies even more and end the current trend of the emigration of scientists from Europe to, mainly, the United States.

The organisers invited participants from national delegations in the 33 countries associated with the EU Framework Programmes for Research and Technical Development, along with a delegation of women scientists from the Western Balkans and from Georgia, Russia and Ukraine. Overall, nearly 250 delegates from 44 countries participated in the conference, comprising a heterogeneous (predominantly female) audience of administrators of research institutions, working scientists, gender experts, members of the European Commission, and ministers responsible for research, science and education.

The conference was divided into four plenary sessions and four parallel half-day workshops, which were intended to explore in depth the key issues raised in the Enwise Report. Plenary sessions included three keynote addresses by members of the European Parliament and a prominent feminist philosopher of science; an overview and personal memories of the Enwise project; the screening of a French documentary film 'Femmes de têtes' [Nisic and Julienne 2004], and a round-table discussion with the EU Commissioner for Research.

Despite generous funding the conference only partially succeeded in accentuating the key findings of the Enwise Report, explicating its methods, and discussing and supporting concrete policy measures. One major challenge from the outset was the generation of a level of debate that was accessible to and enriching for both experts in the field, and politicians and scientists with little knowledge of gender issues in science, so that a dialogue between these groups can be initiated.

The plenary speeches

Paradoxically, the conference did not sufficiently engage the specific findings of the Enwise Report.² This was most evident perhaps in the three keynote speeches. It was not clear what the present and former MEPs from Estonia and Greece, Marianne Mikko and Anna Karamanou, had to contribute to reflecting on the situation of women scientists in Europe's semi-periphery. Drawing largely on reports commissioned by the European Parliament's Women's Rights Committee Karamanou presented some general figures: on the persistent under-representation of Western women in science and technology, in research funding, and in positions of decision-making in these sectors; on a 'masculine' research culture with long working hours and networks of promotion that often exclude women; on the systematic under-valuation of research published under a female name and the relative lack of research expenditure in fields that are of particular relevance to women (e.g. breast cancer and osteoporosis). While highlighting additional handicaps for women scientists in the Enwise countries, such as low wages and underdeveloped research infrastructures, the speakers largely failed to examine whether the inequalities found in these countries are simply compounded or are differently configured than in Western Europe.

Most disappointing for those interested in theories of knowledge was the keynote address from the feminist philosopher Sandra Harding. Harding had been asked by the conference organisers to relate her talk on feminist epistemologies to the first chapter of the Enwise Report, which explored contradictory gender regimes (or 'gender contracts') in Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic States. Under the promising title 'Gender and Knowledge: New Issues' Harding (reading her presentation, which was also printed in the conference programme) presented the well-rehearsed argument of standpoint epistemologies that previously exclud-

ed subordinated groups can bring new questions, 'gender-distinctive cognitive perspectives', and potentially transformative insights to the study of nature and social relations. Not only did Harding fall short of addressing 'new issues' for those familiar with her work, she also made no reference to how standpoint theories could be relevant for producing less distorted knowledge in Central and Eastern Europe. With the scheduling of her talk at the end of the conference, and with no time for the audience to ask questions, potentially interesting concerns were left unexamined, such as what kind of work would have to be produced for 'women ... to understand the conceptual practices of dominant institutions through which their exploitation [is] designed, maintained, and made to seem natural and desirable to everyone', and what would be the contours and implications of 'an overt pro-democratic counter-politics of science' in the Enwise countries [Harding 2004: 7].

The two plenary talks that centred on the Enwise project had their own shortcomings. Marina Blagojević, a member of the report's editorial group, introduced the report. Instead of contextualising and elaborating select findings that illustrate how the report takes into account differences between and among the Enwise and Western European countries, Blagojević's power-point presentation of nearly 92 slides (which were also printed in the conference programme) took listeners 'fast forward' through the entire report. In view of two of the report's key findings, that women researchers are concentrated in those scientific fields and employment sectors (higher education and other government research institutions) where research expenditure is lowest and thus far are substantially under-represented in high-level EU monitoring and evaluation bodies, Blagojević's (and the Enwise Report's) claim that the recognition of women's abundant talents and excellence would create a 'powerful win-win logic' for Europe perhaps prematurely forestalled any discussion of possible resis-

tance to gender equality measures on the part of those who benefit from the current organisation of science.

Brigitte Degen, a member of the Women and Science unit at DG Research and a key supporter of the Enwise project, chose a poetic format to remember and reflect on the project and its contributors. While certainly evocative and moving, Degen's 'Enwise Memories' did not reflect on the history of the report's making and currently or potentially difficult aspects of working with a diverse group of women scientists (neither does the report). Apart from being a methodological desideratum, reflections on the difficulties involved in working across national and cultural differences and the strategies for managing them could have provided valuable insights for everyone trying to foster collaboration among women scientists in the region.

The workshop sessions

According to the conference programme the four parallel workshop sessions were intended to offer a 'detailed analysis of the Enwise Report'. Three of these sessions took as a point of departure presentations by authors of the Enwise Report, which were complemented with presentations from other experts in the region. Session 1 focused on the 'Enwise Specific Gender Contexts' (i.e. the first chapter of the report that analyses the simultaneity of 'modern' and 'traditional' elements in present and past gender relations). The session dealt with the relevance of gender studies and the integration of a gender perspective in science. Based on the second and third chapter of the Enwise Report, Session 2 presented structural changes in R&D systems in the Enwise countries and statistical findings of vertical and horizontal gender segregation in different scientific fields and employment sectors, and it reflected on brain-drain/brain-gain issues. Session 3 focused on the participation of women from the Enwise countries in the 5th

and 6th European Framework Programmes (based on the fourth chapter of the Enwise Report). Finally, Session 4 dealt with the relationship between science and society. Contributions looked at experiences in and with the science of pupils and young researchers and new transnational policy networks that promote women in science.

This author attended Session 2 in the hope of learning more about the 'brain-drain' and 'brain-circulation' trends that were touched upon in the Enwise Report and on the statistical measures that were used, particularly the so-called 'honey pot indicator'.³ Unfortunately, the chairwoman, Rosela Palomba, decided to hold all six presentations in a row and have questions only after the coffee break, allowing only five minutes at the end for responses by the presenters. The first presenters, who might have explained the statistical indicators, took the audience through a stream of highly elaborate statistical tables that represented in graphs and columns how men and women scientists fared over time at different levels, in different scientific fields and in different countries. It was evidently not the aim of the session to disseminate and critically evaluate research methodologies but rather to 'prove' various degrees of 'odds' for women scientists – as if the data speak for themselves. The demands on the concentration and listening skills of the audience were aggravated by the largely formal statistical format of three of the presentations, the last-minute admission of yet another (statistical) presentation from Russia in the time assigned for discussion, and the masculine *habitus* of most speakers in the audience who delivered long-winded co-presentations rather than formulating questions or critical comments.

The two presentations addressing brain-drain issues were markedly more conceptual. The presentation from Michael Daxner, emeritus professor of sociology, was outstanding for his complex analytical (and gender-sensitive) approach to the brain drain, his political suggestions, and the controversy his

presentation created. Daxner advocates a comprehensive multi-dimensional approach to analysing brain drain and to policy making. Analytically he posits that the brain drain has to be linked to its twin, the brain gain, and to migration and displacement, and he distinguishes the effects of academic mobility on the life-world and the system level. Considering the migration of women scientists from the Enwise countries to Western Europe and the United States, Daxner suggests that at the system level 'each drain causes a bigger loss than the gain on the receiving side could be' and that 'the investment into the training of highly qualified women cannot be compensated by remittances [that they send to the country of origin] to the same extent as by male migrants' [Daxner 2004: 11] because women scientists are more likely than men to be supporting a family in their host country.

Arguing that so far policy makers at the national and the supranational level have not adequately dealt with academic migration, Daxner advocates 'new and committed forms of compensation for irreplaceable losses' [Daxner 2004: 13] on the part of Western countries, such as outsourcing a significant research capacity to a country where such a capacity has been 'drained out'. These suggestions were considered highly offensive to some scientists who worked in the Enwise countries, reminiscent of Daxner's observation that 'there is always a rude conflict between the returnees and those who have stayed. Both adopt different strategies of victimisation, and often also of a heroic aspect of their respective role' [Daxner 2004: 8]. With Daxner unable to respond directly, such differences in perspective could not be debated and concrete policy measures were left undiscussed.

Obviously, this workshop session may not be representative, and the other sessions were reportedly organised in a format that was more conducive to exchanges between and among the audience and experts. However, the well-intended attempt by the con-

ference organisers to include several young scientists as rapporteurs in the workshops rather than selecting them on the basis of presentation skills, resulted in some vagueness as to what had been discussed in the other workshops.

Raising gender awareness and generating political commitments

All participants that this author spoke to reported that some of the most important discussions and liaising occurred over the coffee and lunch breaks. While this is often the case at large conferences, it also indicates that the conference did not (or not sufficiently) provide a forum for discussing and exploring the first-hand experiences of working scientists or examining concrete policy initiatives. Thus, a discussion forum for young scientists was finally moved to the end of the conference, when most participants had already left. A focus on lived experiences could have usefully complemented the focus of the Enwise Report on macro-trends and shed some light on how gender inequalities are maintained and perpetuated in scientific institutions on a day-to-day level, and could also have helped to raise gender awareness. This could have followed the screening of the evocative documentary film 'Femmes de têtes' [Nisic and Julienne 2004], which presented the testimonies of eleven successful European women physicists, mathematicians, biologists and astrophysicists (among them a Nobel Prize winner) on their experiences of systematic discouragement and discrimination.

There was also little talk about gender-biased institutional protocols and procedures and the lack of transparency and accountability in many research institutions in the region. If women scientists are systematically underrated and underpaid, are predominantly located in higher education, and have a relatively low presence in the business and enterprise research sector, where 47% of research expenditure in the Enwise