

Studies on Higher Education



Good Practice in Promoting Gender Equality in Higher Education in Central and Eastern Europe

Laura Grünberg

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Foreword

Education is a major means of empowerment, one through which both men and women realize their potentials. Higher education has a special responsibility in this process, and UNESCO, as the United Nations specialized agency responsible for education, science, culture, and communication, has always placed special emphasis on equality between men and women in the provision of basic, lifelong, technical, vocational, and higher education.

Over the last decade, significant changes in the field of higher education have taken place all over the world, including the countries of Central and Eastern Europe as well as those of the former Soviet Union. These changes have had a major impact on the mission and activity of the UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education (UNESCO-CEPES) which has acted, for almost thirty years, as a major platform for pan-European co-operation in the field of higher education as well as a center and repository of information on higher education. It should also be mentioned, that while being a decentralized unit of the UNESCO Secretariat, UNESCO-CEPES is the only international organization working in higher education that is actually based in Eastern Europe.

Beyond the undertaking of specific activities, foremost related to the work carried out by the various UNESCO Chairs, UNESCO-CEPES permanently collects, processes, and disseminates information on the access, participation, and promotion of women in higher education. UNESCO-CEPES also continues, on a regular basis, to devote issues of its review, *Higher Education in Europe*, to different aspects of the theme, women in higher education, and to publish relevant studies on it. See, for instance, *Gains and Losses: Women and Transition in Eastern and Central Europe* (Bucharest: UNESCO/ENWS, 1994); and three themed issues of the review: "Career Patterns of Men and Women in Research and Development: Conditions and Perspective" 17 2 (1992); "Careers for Women at European Universities: Obstacles and Opportunities" 18 4 (1993); and "Academe and Gender: What Has and What Has Not Changed" 25 2 (2000).

The present volume publishes the results of the UNESCO-CEPES project, Good Practice in Promoting Gender Equality in Higher Education in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Countries, part of the larger UNESCO Programme, Women, Higher Education, and Development. We consider it to be a fitting contribution by UNESCO-CEPES to the whole Beijing+5 process and to actual UNESCO strategies aimed at advancing, through knowledge, the condition of women in the Twenty-first Century.

This publication offers hope, by outlining concrete results, for a soon-to-come future in which gender discrepancies in the realm of higher education in the region under scrutiny will have been substantially

diminished. The publication benefits from the voices of a new generation of gender experts in this region who, as “models to follow”, and through their commitment to the issue of sexual equality, have contributed concretely to the implementation of a gender dimension within the educational reforms of their respective countries.

Circumstances beyond our control caused the publication of this volume to take place at a certain distance in time from the moment in which the case studies were written. Other than a few outdated figures, however, that do not affect the substance of the articles, we have every reason to reaffirm the optimistic picture outlined by them. Academe in this region is steadily gaining gender sensitivity at the level of its structure, content, and policies.

While thanking the authors of the case studies and all our collaborators in the project for their contributions to this volume, we anticipate that the potential emerging from the good practice described in this publication will increasingly become a reality.

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