



Press Release

Women and Gender in Science

Athens 18 May 2021

The Centre for Gender Studies of Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences organized in April an Online Guest Lecture and an Online Policy Discussion Panel about the third theme of the ProGender project “Women and Gender in Science”.

The first event, the Online Lecture entitled “**Women scientists during the pandemic**” which took place on **April 12 2021** was organized in collaboration with the Center for Gender Studies of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). In the lecture, the Ambassador of Norway to Greece, Frode Overland Andersen, gave a welcome speech, mentioning that the pandemic showed new facts about gender relations and revealed gender inequalities even amongst partners who thought they were equal.

The lecture was given by Sofia Moratti, Senior Researcher at the Center for Gender Research and Centre for Technology and Society at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). She referred to the biases against women and girls who pursue careers in scientific disciplines, as shown in the relevant literature. Due to the underestimation of women's abilities by male teachers, peers and even their own families, women and girls internalize prejudice and underestimate their abilities to progress in traditional "male" domains. Motherhood and childcare are also factors that trigger discrimination against women and burden women in science, more than men.

She also referred to surveys conducted during the pandemic that either measured women's scholarly productivity in the light of the pandemic or sought to investigate the impact of childcare and domestic labour on women's professional lives and opportunities. The most common question about the impact of women scientists during the pandemic was “How the pandemic affected women’s productivity?” The period of the lockdowns was presented as an opportunity to increase productivity in scientific publications, but no one wondered about the quality of the papers and the declining submission number of papers written by women authors. High productivity is the norm in science regardless of the circumstances and is measured by the number of publications, which from a gender perspective, should not be the main or the only criterion of productivity in science. Nevertheless, lower



publication outputs by female scientists during the pandemic were the clear expression of gender inequalities, as the impact of childcare impose a heavy burden on women much more than on men. However, as Morati argued, linking gender inequality in science with childcare implicitly reinforces images of childcare as a woman's duty and prevents discussions about care sharing amongst partners.

The second event, the Online Policy Discussion Panel entitled “**The impact of Covid-19 on women scientists**”, took place on April 26 2021. The following scholars participated in the discussion:

- **Eyja Margrét Brynjarsdóttir** (Professor of Philosophy and Applied Ethics at RIKK-Institute for Gender, Equality and Difference of University of Iceland) mentioned that during the pandemic the productivity of scientists decreased while their stress levels increased for various reasons, such as the closure of schools and childcare, distance learning and housework. In many cases, it was necessary to rearrange the space in the house so as to create a workplace. As a result, women in academia had less time and energy to devote to scientific productivity. Teaching became digital and remote and responsibilities were added for all academic staff, further exasperating female academics’ time squeeze.
- **Xenia Chrysochoou** (Professor of Social and Political Psychology at Panteion University, Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the Association of the Faculty Members of Panteion University and President of the Scientific Council of the Hellenic Foundation of Research and Innovation “ELIDEK/HFRI”) presented statistical data on male and female faculty members at Panteion University in three academic levels (Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor) and demonstrated horizontal and vertical gender inequalities in the distribution of positions. Men are overrepresented in professorships, while in the rank of Associate Professors there are more women than men in most departments of Panteion University. Also, from the data from ELIDEK/HFRI on research funding shows that although most women who are conducting research hold a PhD, men are overrepresented as faculty members. The coronavirus has been added to pre-existing inequalities. With teleworking, the separation of private and working life was lost, childcare and housework were added, and working conditions were neglected.
- **Ioanna Tzoulaki** (Associate Professor of Epidemiology at the Medical School at University of Ioannina and at the Imperial College of London) mentioned that at the



beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, everyone that works in the medical field had an interest to study the virus, but as it turned out, they had limited time. Scientists had funding opportunities, new knowledge networks, new publications, but the first scientific publications about Covid showed a significant demise in submissions by female scientists. She also referred to the representation of scientists in the media. Especially at the beginning there were very few female voices and male scientists who explained the situation dominated public debates. Even when women were represented in the media, many stereotypes were reproduced, and women from male-dominated scientific fields were absent from public debates.

- **Jorunn Dahl Norgård** (Representative of ForskerForbundet the Norwegian Researchers' Trade Union) presented a survey conducted in September 2020 on 10,000 members of Researchers' Trade Union. The key findings showed that PhD and Postdoctoral students have high levels of stress, frustration and isolation and 85% of PhD and Postdoctoral students are delayed in their research progress. Academic staff spends much more time on teaching, while research activities are reduced. Women more than men report high levels of uncertainty about digital skills and distance learning. They also have a high level of concern about the outcomes of learning procedures. Young researchers in Norway are vulnerable and face strong competition. Even before the pandemic, many women researchers were less likely to pursue a career as researchers than their male counterparts.
- **Angelina Penner** (Former President of DION, the Interest Organization for Temporary Employees at NTNU) reported from her experience the feelings and conditions that PhD and Postdoctoral students experienced at the beginning of the pandemic. On the one hand, PhD students faced problems in the separation of personal and professional life, on the other hand, practical problems such as guidance from their supervisors, lack of adequate workspace and ergonomic equipment. In addition, foreign students were worried about their families and experienced loneliness and isolation and this affected their professional progress.

ProGender: A Digital Hub on Gender, the Covid-19 Crisis and its Aftermath, is funded by the European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism 2014-2021 (EEA Grants 2014-2021). The EEA Grants represent the contribution of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway towards a green, competitive and inclusive Europe. There are two overall objectives: reduction of economic and social disparities in Europe, and to strengthen bilateral relations between the donor countries and 15 EU countries in Central and Southern Europe and the Baltics. The three donor countries cooperate closely with the EU



through the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA). For the period 2014-2021, the EEA Grants amount to €1.55 billion.

The video of the events are uploaded on Facebook page @[ProGenderproject](https://www.facebook.com/ProGenderproject)

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