EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON GENDER AND INNOVATION – MAXIMISING INNOVATION POTENTIAL THROUGH DIVERSITY IN RESEARCH ORGANISATIONS

Discussion Panel
Stuttgart 19.3.2012
The presentations we are about to hear will describe valuable work done in different parts of the world. All are examples of good practices to enable more women to become involved in research, and contribute diverse points of view.

Just as we expect diverse voices in a research group to contribute to the outcome, we need to be attentive to the diverse cultural settings of these practices if we are to learn from them.
1. Programmes and interventions always need to be tailor made
2. Replication is never a viable option; adaptation & variations in accordance with the culture and the circumstances are obligatory
3. Women’s lives vary from place to place due to numerous interrelated factors
Some variables that influence gender issues:

- Norms concerning sex roles and parental roles
- Support systems for women
- Policies concerning fertility, childbirth and childcare, and expected fertility rates
- Attitude to positive discrimination
- Notable presence of women in decision making positions and the existence of women's lobbies
More cultural issues:

• Involvement of grassroots organizations

• Power of religion in determining family matters and gender roles

• Living conditions and the support system of families
How hidden might a hidden message be?
How blind are we to accepted norms in our own cultures?

Here’s a local example:
Where are all the women?
What are they busy doing?
Does the sign refer to women in science too?
Do men object to this sign?
What is a woman to do when she realizes she is out of her permitted zone?
• Lessons learnt:
• We must turn the familiar into the strange
• Never underestimate the power of hidden messages
• No norm should be considered “normal”
Let’s change our images of women and men’s academic lives:

Illustrations by Stephanie Freese
JOIN THE DEBATE ON GENDER EQUALITY IN RESEARCH!

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Thanks for your attention

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