



GALAXIES
Gender Guidance pathways in
EDUCATION and VOCATIONAL
TRAINING SYSTEMS
for free sexism choices



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In brief

The 27th September 2011 took place in Lecce, at the venues of "Istituto Statale Antonietta De Pace" - State Secondary High School -, the final conference of the Galaxies project. The event has concluded a two-years long pathway that involved, in five different European countries, teachers and trainers who have experienced the pleasure of working together and exchanging with other colleagues, starting from their own national reality and personal experience. The international meeting held in Lecce was attended, beyond by the partners, even by male and female students of "Istituto Statale Antonietta De Pace" - State Secondary High School - and by the citizens of Lecce interested in a project that focus its attention on gender-sensitive vocational guidance. It was an opportunity to share the experimentations carried out by the partners, to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the Project, as well as for the dissemination of the experience itself and for the valorisation of what has been achieved till that moment. In this fourth and last issue of the Galaxies newsletter, therefore, we mean to get into the core of the closing conference of Lecce. A goodbye and not a farewell.



From Galaxy to Galaxies, a pathway at its conclusion

The project "GALAXY - Gender Guidance for Employment choices: pathways against sexism for equality" had had the aim to identify an approach to vocational guidance that took account of the gender perspective, identifying the tools to overcome implicit stereotypes that doggedly affect educational and vocational guidance for girls and boys. The experimentation, conducted on the target audience consisting of male and female teachers, trainers, counselors/vocational guidance operators involved in guidance activities, had shown that the main critical points concern the area of education and vocational training, that in all partner countries has been revealed as an area where it mostly continues to prevail a neutral concept of knowledge, with training and teaching practices yet influenced by feminine and masculine stereotypes which are often overcome by the reality of the labour market and its professions itself. GALAXIES has proposed to adapt and enhance the Good Practice of the previous GALAXY project further strengthening the gender perspective with greater actions for the identification and removal of stereotypes and for the development of the awareness of the extent to which the training actions affect the construction of identity pathways.

Partners telling about: the Best Practice during the experimentation phase

Five Vocation and Education Training Institutions in Italy, France, Belgium, Spain, Portugal and Romania have had the opportunity to compare their experimentations of the Galaxies Good Practice. During the conference held in Lecce, each partner has, in fact, introduced their own experimentation highlighting the peculiar features which emerged in the different local contexts. What has emerged?



The Turkish partner, Trabzon Directorate of National Education, has adapted and implemented the tools for the Good Practice in order to perform a comprehensive version of the Good Practice. It was necessary for both guidance operators and other stakeholders. The Need Analysis during the first phase of the project has also been translated also in Turkish. It was so useful to give value to students and trainers' contributions. So, how was it going the transfer of innovation?

Firstly, the Training for Trainers has been implemented, most of all to teachers in high schools or in VET system. The total amount of time was sixteen hours divided into three meetings. During the meetings, some doubts had been raised. In some cases, it would be important to have a general gender guidance background. The teachers directly involved in the process underlined the importance of having some practical examples. Three teachers (one male and two females) and fourteen students (10 girls and 4 boys) have directly experienced the Good Practice. It is not an easy task to choose a suitable profession. Furthermore, students involved in the training were surprised that, for the first time, they were able to raise specific topics related to gender. In some occasions there could be stereotype.



The Belgian partner Siréas related its experience of testing the Good Practice that has involved eight participants (social workers, coordinators and facilitators).

A feature of Sireas experience is that they have contacts with young women and adult men, in vocational training and involved in activities strongly characterized, socially and culturally, by the male/female dimension, but at the same time also showing the need to revise their role and stereotypes in the perspective of new transformations involving labour and professional markets. The testing was even more effective since Sireas has a kind of target audience composed by immigrant men and women facing choices for new pathways of their lives and facing new stereotypes.



Gabriela Schroffenegger working for FBI, the Austrian partner, presented the gender guidance scenario in Austria. The main decisions about high school or professional careers are usually taken under constraints or ambitions experienced by the individual at ten years old.

The parents' level of education, such as their work experience, seems to have an important influence on future professional decisions for the son/daughter. Over the past few years in Austria some projects such as "girls days" have been introduced. The aim of these programmes is to increase girls involvement in technical issues that are usually defined as being more suitable for males. In the last four years a diminishing rate of female presence (from 75% to 49%) has been registered particularly in sectors such as hairdressing, shop assistant and secretarial work. These jobs are usually considered more suitable for women than for men. According to the data reported by FBI, in Austria, it has been registered that wages are increasing for higher skilled jobs. Furthermore, in the last years the wage gap between men and women decreased by ten percentage points. However, there is still much to do...



Gabriela also presented some data from the Needs Analysis. The sample was quite large: 257 surveys completed, 73% girls and 27% boys. Some results seem to be interesting. The 62% in the sample agree with the division between “female careers” and “male careers”. From this point of view, plumber, policeman and fireman seem to be typical masculine professions. On the contrary, lawyer, teacher or interior design seem to be “female professions”. Despite the existence of this stereotype, the Austrian students do not believe in the gender guidance, they have some doubts about its use. Maybe it is because they are ignoring, or are ignorant of, what it really means. However, the students interviewed believe in an autonomous choice, that has to be taken without any kind of influence or psychological constraints.

It is important to understand and value his/her own ability and to create a suitable environment to freely express his/her opinions.



The testing of the Good Practice has been carried out also in Finland by OMNIA, Galaxies’ partner project. The participants were sixteen and seventeen year old boys and girls. The Training for Trainers activities have been postponed to the next year due to the academic calendar. Three hundred and fifty teachers will be involved.

The Galaxies training pathways has been uploaded on OMNIA web site for teachers of the institution and other training organizations



Poster realized by the Partner OMNIA

As dissemination activity of the Galaxies project





In Italy, twenty teachers (16 women and 4 men) participated in the training and testing sessions conducted by the Italian partner, Institute Antonietta De Pace in Lecce. The teachers participating in the training and testing value the tools and the modules elaborated for us. Even if we are not really experts in the guidance, we usually provide this service in the school. Teachers therefore, asked many questions about guidance topics as it is considered essential for them to be competent, to cover the subject matter. The gender perspective is really interesting. During the testing, there was no difference between trainees both men (4) and women (16). They were all interested in debating issues related to the difference and gender topics.

The testing run by the Italian High school (Istituto Superiore A. De Pace) involved four classes, with different males and females of different ages. During the training some tools had been used, they were already presented in the third number of Galaxies newsletter such as “from the school to the world”, “What I can do”, “Introduce myself”

... which results?

“According to the results emerging from the testing run in some of our classes, the big problem of stereotype has risen as an important issue to deal with. It concerns the freedom of choice, and of expression of his/her own feelings. Sometimes the latter seems to be conditioned by sexual stereotypes in both age groups (14 and 16/18years old). Then, in most comments there was a typical assessment concerning gender stereotypes. For example, some female answers contain reference to typical “female activities” such as shopping, fashion, etc., but girls would also excel in some “male activities” such as “play football, drive a motorbike”, in this way they feel themselves more confident to act as a leader”, from the speech of Professor Giuseppina Antonaci.

She said more about students and their attitude towards “female activities”:

There are just a few boys having attitudes towards activities usually considered for women, some of them said to love cooking or cleaning the house. In this way, they seem to overcome gender stereotypes, however they tend to hide their love for female activities because they do not want to be judged by their mates.



The testing of the Good Practice has also involved adults, guidance operators, most of all teachers. Claudia Piccini from Cora related her personal experience in the “Leonardo da Vinci” high school in Cagliari. The seven teachers involved agreed with the overall aim of Galaxies, they seemed to interact with other colleagues after the testing and share opinions. The training was not formally recognized and this lack of formal validation was seen as a weak point. Finally, only women were present during the training sessions.

The social company A.R.S.A.P has also been involved in the testing, in more detail with five workers (one man and four women). They were all excited by the gender perspective of the training.

All of them said they were satisfied by the training. They hope to apply the Good Practice during the next academic year!

Dissemination of results

The Conference was a useful event to put together all the reflections raised by Galaxies’ stakeholders and to present the outcomes. Each country has disseminated its own results and the available materials are on the Galaxies website.

Based on the general results showing a lack of understanding about what gender mainstreaming means, FBI presented an additional module on gender issues, including training units and theoretical background information. FBI distributed the materials to three of the most frequented guidance centres

The Turkish partner promoted Galaxies by radio and some materials are now available in Turkish on the website of the National Education Office.

In Belgium, Galaxies has been presented during the event “two equal opportunity weeks”, or in local language “*Quinzaine de l’égalité des chances*”, organized by the Brussels Region.

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Given the international character of the project, it has been useful to collect opinions and contributions raised during the Conference in Lecce. There were some public authorities in the audience including Adriana Apollonio, Vice-President for the Equal Opportunity Commission in Lecce and Serenella Molendini who has a Regional responsibility for equal opportunity.

A good-bye, not a farewell

The Conference in Lecce jointly with this last newsletter ends Galaxies project. Anyway, this is not the end. We would like to keep working on gender issues related to guidance because there is still so much to do in order to provide effective gender guidance. The road is still quite long.

“The gender topic is really important most of all for those who work with teenagers, taking care of their feelings and thoughts. In this sense, big problems should be faced such as homologation and close-minded views. The latter could generate a feeling of loneliness perceived by pupils having revolutionary thoughts. Open-minded views are needed. They should focus on the individuals that even if externally similar, they have very different feelings and values. An effective guidance service should recognize this. Educational Policy should pay attention to the interpretation of specific feelings and “mis-behaviours” to transform them into strengths. Then, we need adults conscious of their choices and able to act without prejudices or stereotypes. This sounds like a new philosophy that could become a mission for new teachers and students. Galaxies GP plays an important role in this evolving scenario”.

Further Information

All documents related to Galaxies project are available on our website www.galaxiesproject.eu.

We look forward to welcoming you to Galaxies website where the video of the Conference will be soon available. It has been created by the participating students.

If you would like further information about Galaxies and its future development, please e-mail us! Our contacts are available on the website. If you have any ideas or suggestions, please share them with us! We are really interested in your opinions!

This is just the beginning...there is still so much to do.