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Dnevi enakosti spolov, kot dobra praksa¹

Days of Gender Equality as a Tool for Developing Institutional and Community Awareness and Building Co-creative Atmosphere for the Introduction of gender Topics into Curricula

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1. What they did?

University of Ljubljana Faculty of Arts (UL FF) decided to raise awareness in the institutional community on the importance of mainstreaming gender issues in academic curricula and research and to sensitize the larger public on the importance of gender equality issues as such. At the different departments there were wide spectrum of already-existent activities in this field that have been carried on – from obligatory and optional courses and research project on one side, to special issues and books that

1 Predstavitev DES je po mnenju urednic priročnika o različnih dejavnostih pri ureničevanju načrtov enakosti spolov, da si je zaslužila objavo v priročniku. Povezavo na celoten priročnik (v angl. jeziku) najdete tu: <https://gearingroles.eu/gearing-roles-new-handbook/>.

thematised gender in the specific context. There were also initiatives to change undesirable and toxic practices in different areas of public and private life that were mostly known to a small number of the interested internal public. This was intended to change and to open the field and spread the knowledge more widely.

During the planning and strategy phase of the events, different possible types of approaches were discussed concerning the actors and scope of activities. There were some ideas focused on institutional activities (with UL FF researchers and professors only) and others that suggested inclusion of wider actors and actions that were present outside the academic field. There were also suggestions to organise events on one specific thematic area or include several; whether to have a short and condensed activities or to include wider spectrum of topics and participants, to keep it more theoretical or to also include topics that are important in the everyday life of individuals. At the end we decided to do the later and to include wide spectrum of activities, spectrum, topics, actors and to cooperate with civil society and other important actors in society.

From March to mid-May 2021 a series of events on gender equality in academia were organized for the first time. The organisers were amazed at how many activities and initiatives were proposed and performed. Any fears they have had about the lack of interest for Days of Gender Equality was quickly forgotten.

2. Why they did it this way?

UL FF is a community of 23 departments, and it has 24 research groups around 450 researchers. There are therefore on the one hand many departments in which professors and researchers are thoroughly involved in issues on gender equality, and on the other, there are departments where gender issues are not present at all in the curricula or depend only on the individual sensibility for these issues. Above all there are still many professors that think that we do not need to deal with gender issues at all, as they think gender is not applicable in their fields or that we already achieved gender equality in the law and that we do not need more incentives. We therefore still face a wide range of gender blindness.

To spread knowledge on the topic to other departments and to different layers at the faculty (professors, researchers, management, administrative staff, students) we decided to organise a series of events and to show what we are already doing and what else should be done, developed, organised or changed at our institution.

We also opened these activities to wider public to include them (NGOs, private institutes, public offices, schools, ministries) in our efforts to change our institutional culture to a more inclusive one and gender sensitive; and to make our academic field and our faculty more open to a wider public, to inform them what we research and teach, and also to create a nationwide discussion among ourselves on different good practices in this field.

3. How it went?

15 events with 80 speakers and more than 500 participants are much more than we expected at the beginning. We organised talks, round tables, lectures and presentations with active scholars, established individuals in the field, students, researchers and early career researchers who talked about their work and research projects; and also, how gender equality has inspired them, impacted their worldview, work, and their daily lives. Days of Gender Equality also demonstrated that gender equality is a broad and dynamic field of research within the humanities and social sciences. The participatory structure of the Days was crucial for the series of events to be successful and sustainable and to become a part of institutional practice in the future. The organizers are planning to maintain this approach.

From the whole programme some of the events deserve special mention. There was a discussion about the first postgraduate program on Women's Studies and Feminist Theory in Slovenia, where the founding mothers of the program described their memories and insights.

Fresh perspectives on gender equality were provided by students of pedagogy and non-binary individuals from the NGO TransAkcija. They explored new themes in gender equality studies and discussed individuals who break the gender binary framework of men and women.

One of the most resounding topics of this event was also the institutional actions to ensure the prevention of sexual harassment. The

renowned scholar Marta Soler Gallart gave an inspiring lecture on “Successful measures against sexual harassment in academia”.

The event on Inclusive Grammar, was also very informative. Slovenian NGOs and other institutions were invited to share their visions (and issues) of the use of gender-sensitive language in Slovenian.

Finally, there was a very inspiring speech by world-renowned feminist Prof. Dr Lynne Segal, known for her book ‘Why feminism’ and ‘Is the future female?’. She spoke on the topic of the language and politics of care.

The event ended with a roundtable discussion on best practices for implementing a Gender Equality Plan in which two Gearing Roles project partners participated, Sabanci University (Istanbul) and Deusto University (Spain).

4. Suggestions to use

We, the organisers, think that this is an effective practice on how to sensitize the larger public and raise awareness on the importance of gender equality in the academic field without being invasive or aggressive, but being inclusive, opened and participatory.

Some students’ reflections on the Days of Gender Equality

“Days of Gender Equality address important issues, and I therefore feel it is particularly important that these are discussed among both employees and students. As a moderator of one of the student events, I am glad to see that students are undertaking research on gender equality issues and are willing to share their findings with others.” (Neža Jagodic)

“In 2020, my colleagues and I conducted a small pilot study on sexual harassment in the academic field. The research represents one of the first insights into the incidence of sexual harassment at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. I am happy we were offered the opportunity to report on the results of the research and to publicly point out the absence of formal

frameworks governing this area. Giving voice to such initiatives and opening space for discussion is a step towards achieving positive change, so I understand the Gender Equality Days and the topics they cover, are a necessary part of the operation of any educational institution.” (Sara Ugrin)

“I presented the issue of the increase in intimate partner violence, care work and the restriction of women’s reproductive rights during the pandemic. It is necessary to talk about all these topics because it is precisely in these areas gender inequality still strongly manifested. The Gender Equality Days were an opportunity for me, as MA student and a young woman, to present the results of our research with my colleagues. I am glad that, in addition, many other young women took part in Gender Equality Days, but I would like that also young men take a more active role in the coming years. The issue of gender equality is a matter for everyone.” (Mojca Suhovršnik)

“I was very happy that I had an opportunity to present my experiences as a young high school teacher of sociology. My presentation was based on personal experience with problems, challenges and the beauty of teaching in technical high school, where students learn for professions such as computer science, electrical engineering and mechatronics. Unfortunately, many more boys than girls are still enrolled. I hope that with my experience I have managed to bring closer to all future teachers the importance of addressing these topics, regardless of where and whom they teach.” (Sara Rihtaršič)

“I remember last year’s Days of Gender Equality as an event that broadened my horizons and opened up discussions that I had never even considered before. What I appreciated most was the diversity of speakers and topics addressed – from established academics to young researchers, students and more – this multiplicity of perspectives was refreshing, especially after the very monotonous state the world had fallen into during a

period of isolation. I see the diverse events as a great way to address the intersectional nature of the struggle for gender equality, especially within the academic space.” (Zala Julija Kavčič)

Objavljeno v:

Handbook for Creating a Gender-Sensitive Curriculum: Teaching and Learning Strategies, Mary Kitchener in Anne Laure Humbert, ur. https://gearingroles.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/GEARING-HANDBOOK_OUTLINE_final-draft-revisions-MK_300622.pdf.