

Challenges in creating gendered organization change

Female Empowerment in Science and Technology Academia

FESTA

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Today's agenda

- Introduction
- Exercise
- FESTA Challenges and Changes
- Discussion
- Key findings.

Introduction

- Introduce yourself and your organization.

Exercise

- Analyse the scenario you have been given
 - What would you do in that situation?
 - Is that resistance?

FESTA

- FP7 Project: February 2012-2017. €4.3m
- Bulgaria; Denmark; Germany; Ireland; Italy; Sweden; Turkey.
- Action Research Project. Work packages:
Awareness Raising; Decision Making and Communication; Excellence; Interactional patterns; Resistance.
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FESTA: aims and objectives

- To analyse **gender gap phenomena** in science and technology academia (quantitative and qualitative indicators)
- To identify **specific mechanisms which create and sustain disadvantages** for women
- To introduce **permanent changes** in science and technology academia to address these mechanisms and to create environments where women's careers can flourish.

FESTA: Challenges

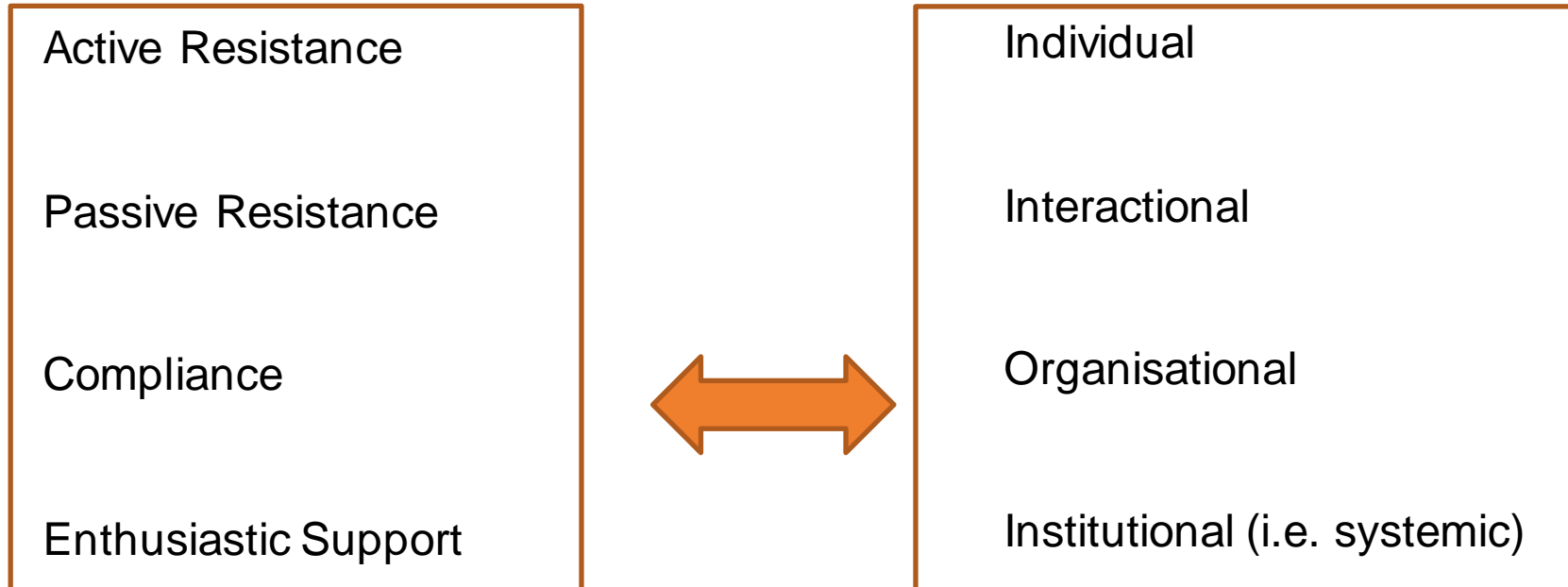
Gender equality strategies involve changing processes of power and therefore invoke resistance (Benshop and van den Brink, 2014).

Creating change always involves competing interests and inevitably creates resistance from the power holders (Acker, 2006)

Typology of Resistance



Typology and Levels of Resistance



Risman (2004) and Wharton's (2012) focus on sites of gendered change

Please classify the behaviours we have encountered

FESTA: Challenges

Some challenges met in FESTA partner institutions

Gender equality is about the numbers of women and men. Discussing gender in any other way with the Head of Department meets a wall of resistance. It is the male dominated environment, not the individual.

We tried to obtain the necessary information several times. We initially tried the departments, then we tried the secretariat and eventually tried individual professors. It is the confidentiality of hiring processes – not resistance to gender/FESTA.

Identify type and level of resistance



LISTEN, WE 'VE GOT PROBLEMS
THAT ARE FAR MORE URGENT
THAN THE 'GLASS CEILING' !



FESTA: Challenges

Some challenges met in FESTA partner institutions

At the weekly management meeting, the projects who received EU research funding were mentioned and the recipients congratulated. FESTA was omitted.

The departments write gender equality plans for three years and follow them up every year. Gender equality action plans are created, but not followed-up. They just do it because they have to.

Identify type and level of resistance

FESTA: Challenges

Some challenges met in FESTA partner institutions

Women are always in the minority on hiring and promotion committees and university policies allow for gender representation rather than gender balance.

We invited the newly appointed Dean of the faculty to join the FESTA steering committee. He accepted and asked what tangible actions he could take that would have a positive impact on women's under-representation in the faculty

Identify type and level of resistance

FESTA: Challenges

Some challenges met in FESTA partner institutions

Difficulty accessing gatekeepers and key personnel. On one occasion it took nine months to arrange meetings with three people.

Women's contributions in committee meetings are not given the same attention as their male colleagues.

Identify type and level of resistance



FESTA: Challenges

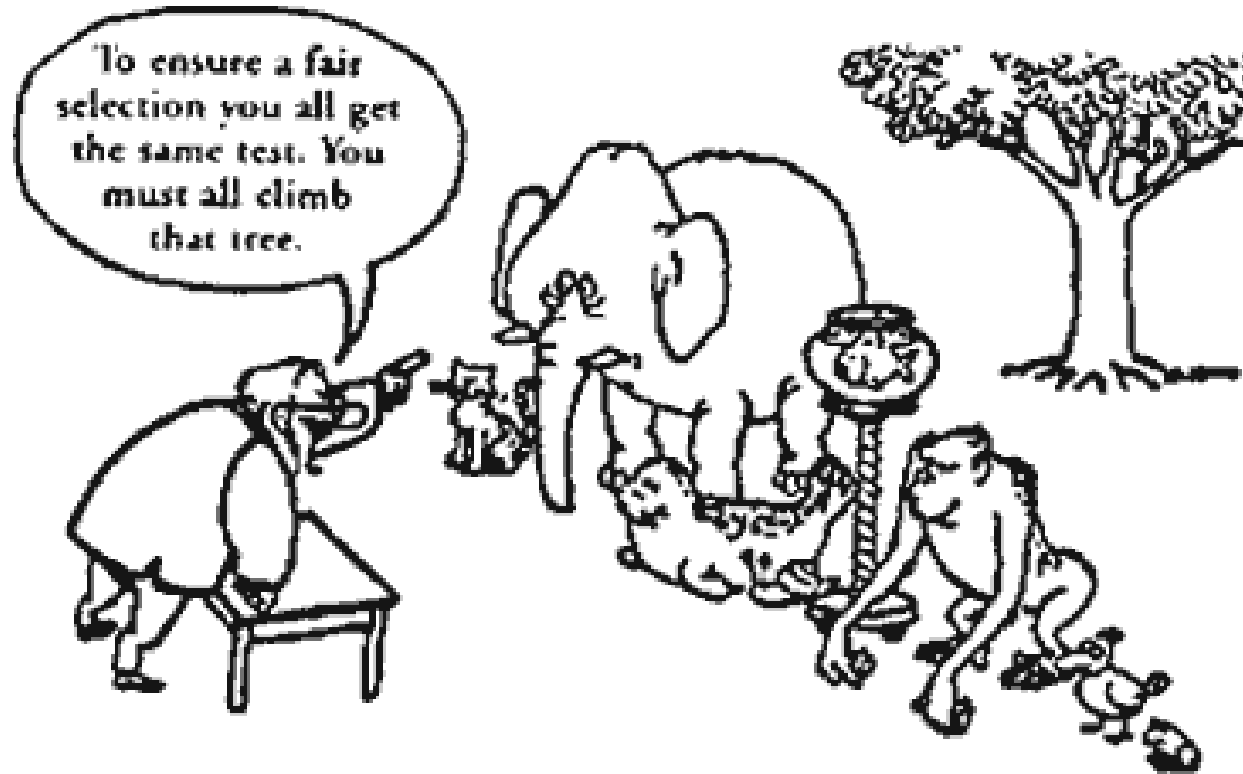
Some challenges met in FESTA partner institutions

When presenting the FESTA project at one department meeting, the topic of gender in STEM was ridiculed – ‘boys want to be engineers and girls just want to be nurses’

When a FESTA investigator attended a meeting, the speaker announced that he would not use gender sensitive language, and nobody at the meeting objected.

Identify type and level of resistance

FESTA: Challenges



Let's MAKE the CHANGE HAPPEN!

Today's challenge:

How can we move from resistance to support?

Let's MAKE the CHANGE HAPPEN

Consider a challenge in which the most active
resistance has been encountered

Questions

1. How can we transform this active resistance into enthusiastic support?
2. Who are the key persons?
3. What are the key activities needed to accomplish it?

Best Practice Recommendations

Institutional Level

EU (H2020) and National Bodies – demonstrate advantages

Organisational Level

Crucial importance of top leadership in influencing power holders

Interactional Level

Creating an interactional culture that is woman friendly.
Mainstreaming Hiring, Promotion Processes and Meeting Cultures

Individual Level

Gender awareness for men and women.

FESTA: Resistance is inevitable

All change creates resistance. The greater the change and the deeper the attachment to the status quo, the stronger the resistance will be.

The greater the **resistance to change**, the greater the **need for change**.

THANK YOU!

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References

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- Wharton, A. (2012) *The Sociology of Gender*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.