

# **Gender mentoring programme INFN: promoting equity in research**

Webinar CATALISI project  
23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023

Sabina Pellizzoni  
INFN - Roma

# Our concern

How can we **achieve gender equality** in academia and research?

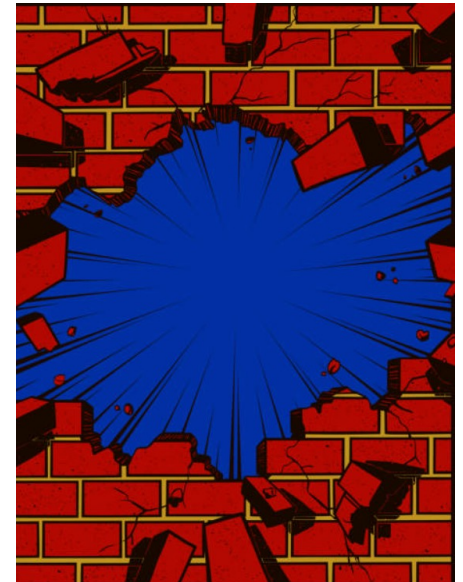
How we could **raise awareness** about the persisting gendered dimension inside academia and research?

**What gender equity practices** might counter the many gender inequalities?



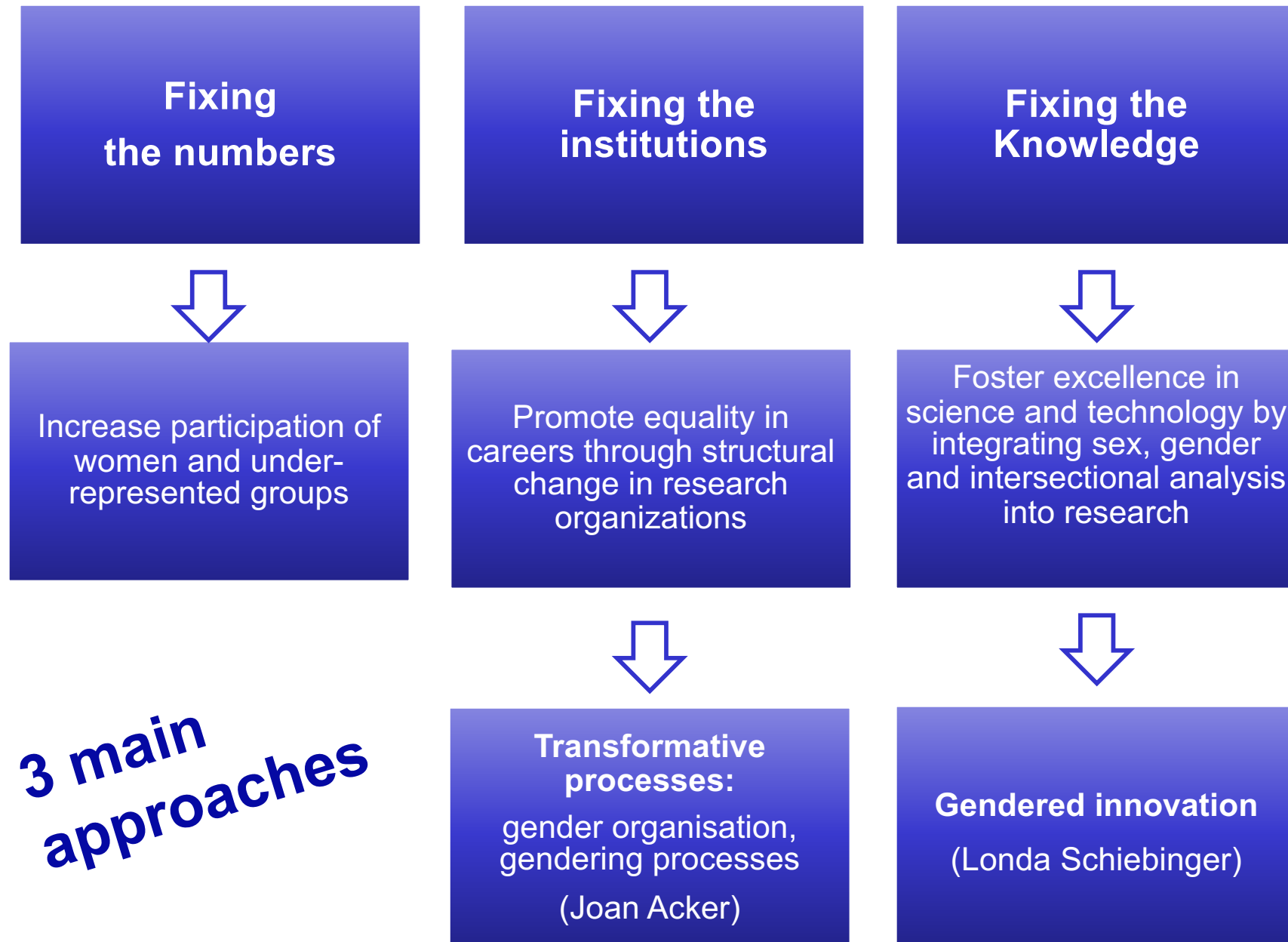
# Objective

**Deconstructing** stereotypes and implicit biases **to create** a generation of women and men who are more **aware** and sensitive to gender issues



**Focus on early stage researcher phase**  
A critical phase when career precariousness coincides with the time of life when women are often forced to choose between profession and private life

# Promote gender equality in research



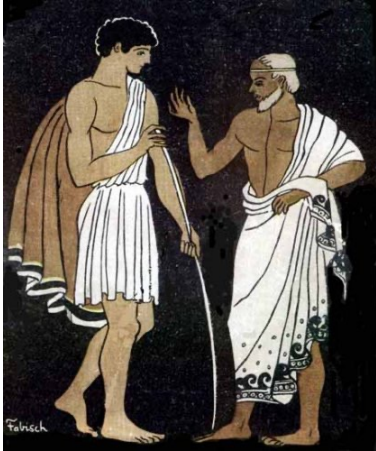
# Mentoring programme

**Internationally, mentoring programs are quite widespread and recognized as useful tools for women to overcome obstacles towards their career progression.**

**These actions  
can support and  
trigger transformative  
processes!**



# Mentoring: the origins



In Homer's *Odyssey*, Mentor was the character to whom Odysseus entrusted his home and son Telemachus before leaving for the Trojan War.

His role was that of a **trusted advisor**, in charge of protecting the Homeric hero's family during his absence

The literature has gradually shifted toward a differentiation of approaches to mentoring



# The mentoring continuum

## Mentoring Continuum

**Fixing the numbers**

### Instrumental

Career / promotion  
Knowledge transfer  
Institutional need  
'Sage on Stage'

### Developmental

Broader development  
Guiding / supporting  
Mentee need  
'Guide on the Side'

**Fixing the institution**

**The limit** of "instrumental mentoring" is supporting individual careers but **perpetuating male models of success**. Therefore not changing the way as the **power reproduces inequity** by maintaining a de facto status quo.

Counting and acting to improve the presence of women reveals the existence of prejudices, but won't help us to understand the causes of those biases or how to remove them

**Programs more centred on mentees and their not only professional needs**

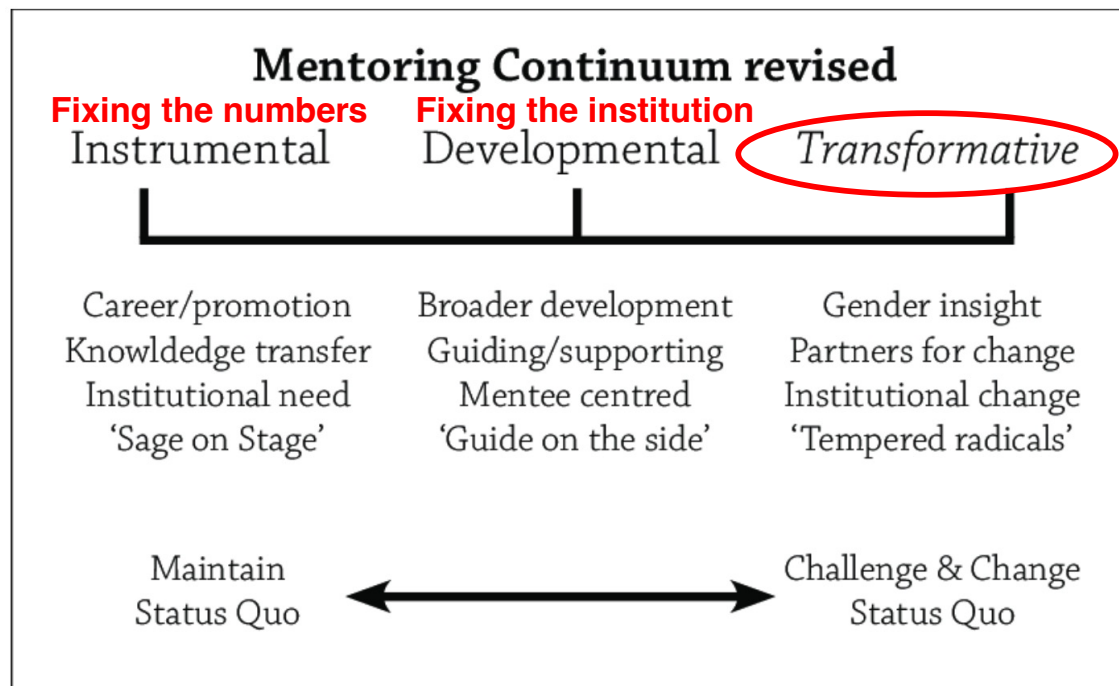
**Reciprocity of the relationship**

**Critical reflection**



# Transformative mentoring

In 2010 Jennifer De Vries proposed **a new mentoring model: 'the bifocal approach'**, to emphasise the need for programmes to focus on both women and the organisation.

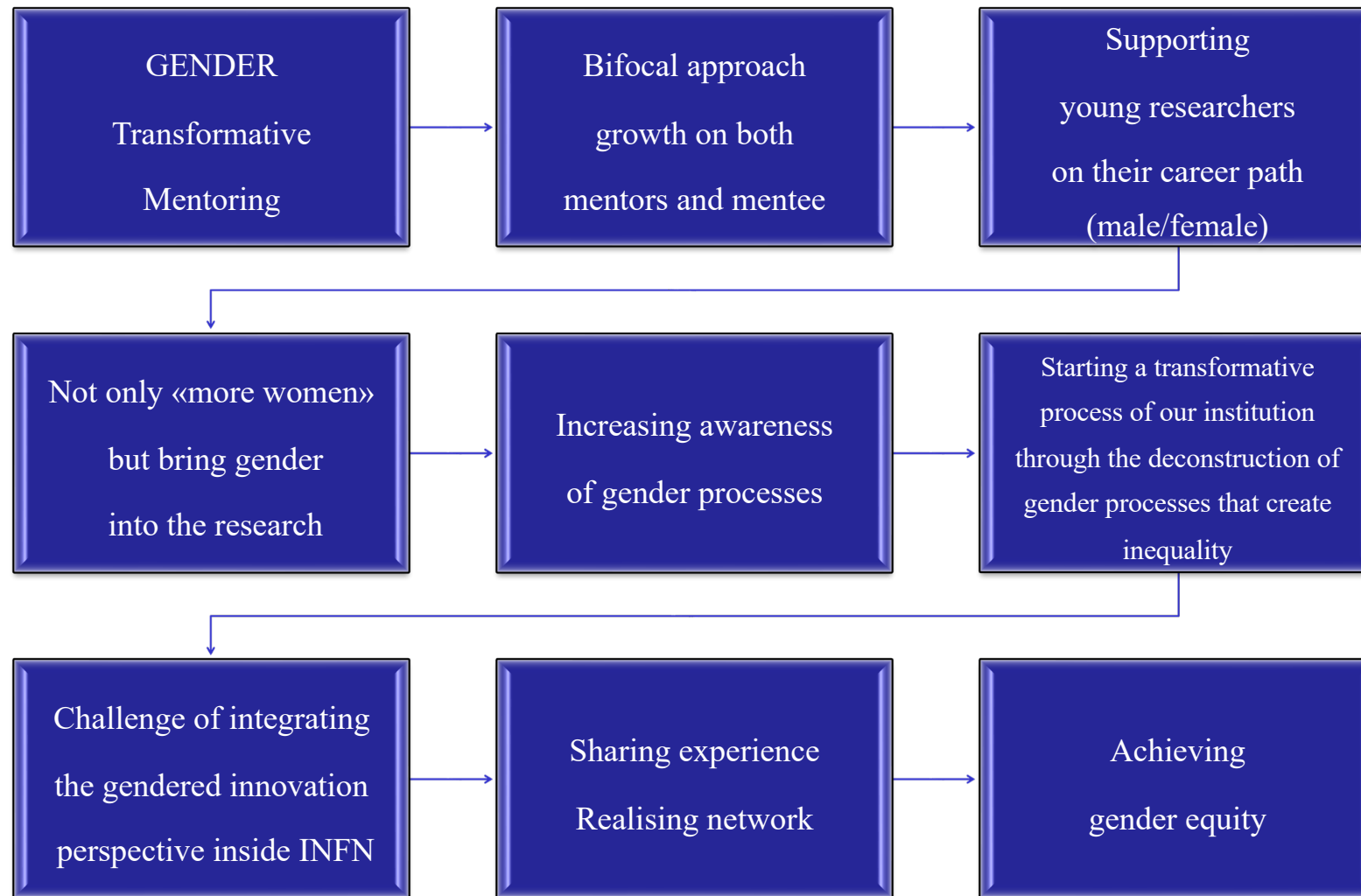


- Enhancing the gender perspective
- Short-term changes: supporting women's careers
- Long-term changes: transformation of institutions

- Removing institutional obstacles that create inequality
- Focus on both mentors and mentees



# INFN Gender Mentoring Programme



**The first programme in an Italian Research Institute!**

## GENDER MENTORING



## PROGRAMME

# Gender mentoring programme 1<sup>st</sup> edition

## Mentoring as a transformative practice for gender equity



## Profiles

### Mentees

young INFN researchers and technologists who are not staff (including postdoctoral fellows) or recently recruited distributed within the different National Scientific Commissions (CSN) and service technologists

17 couples

### Mentors

women physicists or technologists, senior or at the top INFN career or university associates INFN (grade A)

## Objectives

### Mentees

- Improve the ability to identify, face, and **overcome obstacles** found in the early stages of the career path through discussion with mentors and other mentees
- Provide a tool for **identifying career goals** through critical reflection of one's choices and **be aware of the gender processes/practices in research**

### Mentors

- Be a **«mirror»** for mentees
- Reflect on: **gender dimensions, practices and processes in research to trigger the change**
- Promote **transformative processes in mentors to produce changes in research structures, toward greater gender inclusion and equality**

### Coordination group

INFN: Angela Gargano (Naples), Maria Rosaria Masullo (Naples) Sabina Pellizzoni (Rome)

UniNa: Ilenia Picardi, Emanuele Madonia

**Teachers** : Ilenia Picardi Emanuele Madonia (Univ. of Naples Federico II)

# GMP - Metodology

Tipology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <b>women only (1<sup>st</sup> ed.) – women and men (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)</b></li> <li>➤ <b>one-to-one mentoring</b></li> <li>➤ <b>one-to-many openness:</b> possibility of exchanges with other mentors according to their expertise (online portal with thematic forums and "couples lounges")</li> </ul>
Matching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ carried out by the coordinating group on the base of the entrance questionnaire results</li> <li>➤ crossing different physical disciplines and work types (transdisciplinary mentoring)</li> <li>➤ attention to avoid bias and possible interferences</li> </ul>
Duration	<b>1 year (3<sup>rd</sup> 18 months)</b>
Meetings	<b>6 meetings</b> mentee/mentor possibly in-person (bimonthly frequency)
3 plenary meetings	<p><b>One-day meetings with separate sessions (mentors and mentees) and a joint one</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Kick-off meeting</b> about the programme and operational tools, seminar session on mentoring, "gender processes" and expected goals</li> <li><b>2. Mid-term monitoring</b> of the programme, sharing and reflections of mentors and mentees on the pathway and their relationship, verification of the network construction of both cohorts</li> <li><b>3. Overall programme evaluation</b> session: achievement of objectives, reflection on changes needed in the institution</li> </ol>
Seminars	On gender issues (within the INFN National Training Plan)



# GMP - Tools

Surveys	Initial, mid-term, final
Handbook	On both mentees and mentors
Logbook	For mentees to annotate their reflections and insights from one-to-one meetings
Reports	Mentors' Reports
Time log of activities	Time use monitoring
On-line portal	Open thematic forums dedicated "lounges" for couples The corner: «the mentor answers»



*The first  
meeting  
Rome 2018*



# Gender Mentoring programme II<sup>nd</sup> edition

## Virtual meeting because of the pandemic



- + attention to the transformative capacity of mentoring
- + care in communicating expected objectives and roles (mentors/mentees)
- + seminars: project writing, outreach, project management, women's leadership



# Gender Mentoring programme II<sup>nd</sup> edition

**2022 March last meeting in Naples finally in presence!**

Reflection about the capacity of generating changes in the organisation, starting from the identification of behaviours and practices that hinder them.

**Focus on:**

- Gender integration in research and teaching programmes
- Gender Balance in: Senior Positions, Recruitment & Career Progressions
- Work/life balance and the organisation's culture



**Output**

A participative document with concrete ideas and solutions presented to management  
(February 2023)

# First achievement

---

**Evaluating the results of a mentoring programme needs long time to be measured, however:**

- **some mentors have become directors of INFN Structures, bringing with them the importance of listening, a new focus on "diversity" and taking care to create more inclusive environments**
- **Many mentees have also achieved significant career advancements in recent years (permanent positions, grants, roles of responsibilities)**
- **For all, awareness of gender issues, the importance of networks and proper time management increased**

## Gender Equality in Academia and Research<sup>(i)</sup>

[Back to toolkit page](#)

WHERE /

Italy

### RELEVANT EXAMPLES OF PRACTICES

#### Transformative mentoring scheme at University of Naples Federico II<sup>[8]</sup>

Recent studies have confirmed a glass ceiling in Italian academia, or, rather, segregation processes that negatively affect women's access to academic and scientific careers. The University of Naples Federico II Gender Observatory on University and Research developed a mentoring scheme to combat the practices and mechanisms that foster gender inequalities in academia. The model takes a dual approach to mentoring, as proposed by Jennifer De Vries (2010), simultaneously working to support women's careers and create institutional change. It was designed following research to identify gender mechanisms in academia and research. The study by Ilenia Picardi<sup>[9]</sup> enabled the design of a transformative mentoring scheme, which was specially designed to create greater awareness of the gender dimension in research and innovation, and to change the mechanisms for gender segregation. Several mentoring programmes were implemented: GENOVATE @ UNINA Mentoring (2015-2017), IN Mentoring (2018-2019, 2020-2021), UNINA Athena Mentoring (2021-2022)<sup>[10]</sup>.

i) <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gear/legislative-policy-backgrounds/italy>

ii) Reference: Gender mentoring inside INFN: a transformative path towards inclusion and equity in the research. Pellizzoni, S., Gargano, A., & Masullo, M. R.. Proceedings of the 41st International Conference on High Energy physics - ICHEP2022



6-13 Jul 2022  
Bologna, Italy  
Europe/Rome timezone

Enter your search term

Overview

Scientific Programme

Timetable

My Conference

My Contributions

Conference Registration

Financial Support  
Application

Participant List

Participant Support

Free Circulation of  
Scientists and Code of  
Conduct

Covid-19 Updates

Previous Editions

ICHEP 2022 Website

Conference Secretariat

ichep2022-info@bo.infn.it

Gender mentoring inside INFN: a transformative path towards inclusion and equity in the research<sup>(ii)</sup>

8 Jul 2022, 17:25

Parallel Talk Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

25m

Bologna, Italy

Speaker

Sabina Pellizzoni (INFN)

Description

How to foster gender equity in academia and in the research? Which gender equity practices could be able to counter the many gender inequality ones? Many measures are focused on the women, trying to increase the number of women at all career levels. In this framework, known as "fix the women", the measures work from the equal opportunities side and help women to adjust to the male world. Among these practices, mentoring programs are quite diffused for enlarging women's ambitions and making them visible for career progressions. These programs meet the organization needs without disrupting the gendered status quo. The masculine model of the ideal academic remains unquestioned. More women enter in the institutions, going also to top positions, but only when they conform to existing image of the ideal scientist, and this is especially true for the Physics cultural model. Even if important, these measures cannot be implemented alone. Gender transformative mentoring programs work both on mentees and mentors with the idea of raising awareness, especially among mentors, about the persisting gendered dimension of academia and research. These programs work on two lines: empower the individual and at the same time generate transformative process inside the institutions. In this process the role of mentors is crucial.

In 2018 we decided to start an INFN gender mentoring program with the intention of operating a transformative process within the organization starting from the younger generations (mentees) and their mentors. The program, inserted in the national INFN training plan for young researchers and fellows and senior researchers, has been the first gender mentoring inside an Italian research institute. A transformative program requires a tailored training specially for mentors not only on the significance of gender issues, but also to help mentors developing a broader understanding of what mentoring is all about. For the second edition we included some men in both cohorts because whatever structural change we speak of, this cannot fail to include the male component both among the "mentees" and the "mentors". Each program lasted roughly one year with a fixed number of meetings one-to-one, several focus groups and training sessions. In order to foster an institutional change and better exploit the mentoring potential, during the 2020-2021 edition we worked, in a participatory approach, with mentee and mentors to bring concrete proposals to the management table for counteracting the multitude of gender inequality practices.

The mentoring model implemented inside INFN was designed, including some tools, by University of Naples "Federico II" researchers following an evaluation study conducted during the mentoring project inside the European GENOVATE project. Together with us, coordination group, the program has been adapted to our institute considering the INFN specific needs and organization.

Positive aspects and difficulties of the program will be discussed.



# Gender Mentoring programme III<sup>rd</sup> edition

## Launch day!

mixed in-  
person and  
online event!



## Promoting “Alumni” network!

Thanks!

Info and contacts:

[sabina.pellizzoni@roma1.infn.it](mailto:sabina.pellizzoni@roma1.infn.it)

# Transformative processes

---

Transformative  
processes:  
gender organisation,  
gendering processes

---

Gendering processes:

according to the theory of Joan Acker, **gender is not a static process but constantly redefined**, so gender organizations operate through **four dimensions**:

---

The gendered division of work

---

The gendered interaction

---

The gendered symbols

---

The gendered interpretations of self position inside the organisation

# Gendered Innovation and STEM

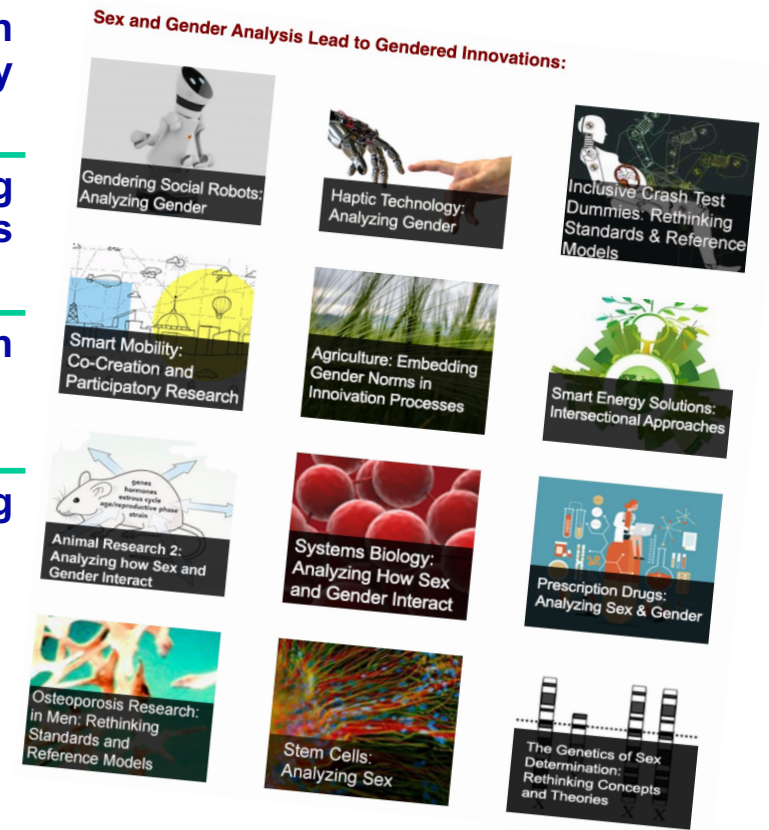
## Gendered innovation\*

Aims to integrate the gender dimension into research through a multidisciplinary approach

Adds value to research and engineering by ensuring excellence and great results and improving sustainability

Adds value to society by making research more responsive to social needs

Adds value to business by developing new ideas, patents and technologies



Over the years, this approach has revealed great potential, a driver for scientific excellence, for growth with significant effects in terms of innovation and production of goods and services