

Welcome address

Prof. Atanass Atanassov,

Scientific Secretary of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Dear participants of the Regional Conference **EUMENT - NET**,

First of all I would like to extend a warm welcome to Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, where you will have the opportunity to discuss and exchange opinions on the role of women scientists in research decision making and policy definition, and on widening of mentoring programs and the accession of the countries of southeast Europe and Balkan region to these programmes.

Bulgarian Academy of Sciences is a suitable place for such discussions at least for two reasons. Firstly, women scientists in Academy are about 1700, which make nearly 47 % of the researchers staff, and this means a considerable research potential. Secondly, they become more and more active in outlining the role of women in scientific research and their contribution to the present-day scientific achievements. Good examples of this are my colleagues from the Academy institutes, which are organizers and participants of this regional conference.

The history of science knows many examples of women scientists devoted to research achievements, which outlined the summits of European and world science. Bulgaria also has its women scientists that left deep traces in Bulgarian science and Bulgarian research achievements. I will mention only their number – 3 women academicians and 8 correspondent members, 81 professors and 694 associate professors. Definitely they are strong role models for the early career of junior women scientists, which have decided to devote their life to the science and scientific research.

And yet we have to admit that Bulgaria is no exception of the situation of certain underestimation of the role and place of women in research decision making and policy definition. In the scientific councils of the institutes and laboratories and their governing bodies, man scientists predominate in many cases of research decision making and women scientists are left behind. Today

this tradition is constantly changing, and women scientists slowly but steadily come forward, particularly young researchers. That is why the BAS management decisively adopts and supports the EU Research & Development Framework Programmes, aimed at increasing the number of women and their role in research policies and the processes of research decision making.

Definitely the idea of building the **eument-net** deserves high appreciation. This project will enhance the knowledge transfer of mentoring at European and local level as an instrument of widening the priority of women in research activities in academic units and research centers. **Eument-net** can really turn into a powerful platform for building of role models of women scientists at European level.

The practice has long since shown that when beginning to create something new, the best thing to start with is to exchange opinions and ideas in order to seek the useful and efficient decision which satisfies all participants in the creative process. Now you are following this good practice.

I would like to wish you a fruitful discussion and really hope that you will reach the desired action plan for the future joint work on the building of **eument-net** as a means of implementation of mentoring programmes in the Balkan region and in Bulgaria.

Once again, I wish you all success in your work!