ABSTRACT

WOMEN’S ROLE AND STATUS IN LITHUANIAN SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY: do they change?

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We explore peculiarities of changing women’s status and role in Lithuanian scientific community during the last decade of XX c. and discuss the main social forces driving this phenomenon since 1990. Analysis of statistical data indicates significantly different participation patterns of female and male scientists. For example, time evolution of the number of obtained first and second scientific degrees is different and evolves on different pathways within female- and male-communities (i.e., the numbers of women obtaining first and second degree during 1990-2000 have slightly decreased and significantly increased, correspondingly; these numbers are considerably faster decreasing and slower increasing amongst men). A closer exploration of these tendencies suggests that they result from an interplay between different social factors, which arise out of macro social contexts (e.g., economical conditions), are being constructed by discourses which arise at mezo level (e.g. gender equality issues in scientific and/or academic institutions), and during the course of micro social interactions (e.g. behavioral practices with respect to law on gender equality). However, changing numbers of female scientists does not mean that women’s status in scientific community changes as well. Instead their career in science remains overwhelmingly influenced (even defined!) by largely prevailing patriarchal gender ideology. The analysis leads to conclude that the main factor which draw the phenomena during last decade was a decreasing general prestige of science in Lithuanian society, which ‘opened’ scientific community wider for female scientists.