

## Project presentation: Re-UNITA

In September 2021, the UNITA alliance started the Re-UNITA – Research for UNITA project, pursuing the goal of creating an environment conducive to the creation of innovative practices in the academic world. Specifically, within work package 3, which is focused on improving the training of researchers from a gender equality perspective, a formal mentoring program was designed to be implemented in the universities that are members of the Alliance: an internationally recognized practice for the development of women’s careers.

Mentoring is a relationship in which a more experienced person (mentor) guides and counsels a less experienced person (mentee) in order to support his or her career development. The mentor serves as a guide, role model and facilitator of change, in a relationship characterized by trust, openness and mutual exchange. While the mentee development is the priority, the relationship is collaborative and can be beneficial also to mentors.

The program has 3 main objectives:

- Support the socialization of young researchers to academia
- Support the micro-transitions and career choices of mentees
- Combat gender imbalance in academia and discussed gendered cultures and practices in science

Within the relationship, the mentor will support mentees’ awareness of the relevance of the structures, practices and norms that animate the academic world, offering help in defining and refining their academic and career perspectives, discussing the goals and strategies to design a development path. Additionally, mentoring will allow a “safe space” to question the gender dimensions embedded in the academic context, in order to explicate the horizontal and vertical segregation in universities and to discuss gendered norms and practices. Mentors will also receive specific training on this issue, improving their knowledge and helping in building the transformation process of research institution to increase gender equality.



### ***Who can participate***

Researchers corresponding to C level of the She Figures classification, i.e. with a permanent position (“Catedrática, Profesora Titular o Contratada Doctor”) are eligible to apply as mentees. There are 8 positions available, 4 for mentees from STEM disciplines and 4 from Social Sciences and Humanities in the Re-UNITA consortium.

Candidacy as mentor is open for female professors, preferably full professors, who are motivated to support the career development of young researchers and have an interest and commitment in gender issues and the discussion of mainstream portrayals of academic excellence. Four positions are available, 2 for STEM mentors and 2 for SSH in UNIZAR. Having successful women academics as mentors will allow mentees, both women and men, to experience an alternative role model, while also increasing the awareness of gender inequalities through vertical and horizontal comparisons between women and men.

### ***Structure of the program***

The program involves a one-year mentoring relationship, during which each mentor will follow two mentees. There will be two monthly meetings for each mentee, in-person or online at the participant’s discretion: one individual meeting between mentor and individual mentees and one where each mentor will meet with both mentees, which also allows moments of peer-mentoring.

Matching will be done following a transdisciplinary criterion, by pairing mentors and mentees who are not from the same research field, but rather belong to related scientific areas. This will reduce possible conflicts of interest and encourage the creation of a separate and confidential space where it will be possible to discuss individual and institutional issues outside regular work relationships.

The program will be formally launched on September 30<sup>th</sup>, in synergy with U\*Night. The event, hosted online and in English, will be an occasion to show the state of gender equality in the Re-UNITA universities and to present the mentoring project. Each partner will select one or two mentees to participate in the event, who will share their experience and their motivation for participating in the mentoring program and their expectations for the project. One high school class from each partner in the Alliance will be invited to the event to learn about the issues of gender equality in academia, with a dedicated space to ask questions to the mentees and the partners.

Before the start of the mentoring relationship, two training sessions are planned:

- “Train the mentors” workshop, to be held on October 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> 2022, in-person at the University of Turin. During this workshop, mentors will receive training on unconscious gender bias, about the gendered mechanism of production in academia, and on the

basics of mentoring. Mentees are invited to participate in second day, which is also hosted online.

- Orientation and training session for mentors and mentees in November 2022. The basics of mentoring will be further discussed by all mentors and mentees in separate groups. Participant's expectations and reflections will be collected, and contact between mentors and mentee will be formally initiated after the meeting.

Two monitoring and evaluation moments will be conducted during the program through focus groups that will take place in February and September 2023.

### ***How to apply***

Mentors and mentees can apply by **sending a letter of interest** to [info.reunita@unizar.es](mailto:info.reunita@unizar.es)

Candidates for Mentors should include the following information and attach a copy of CV:

- Biographical data (at least first and last name, age, date of birth)
- Academic position
- Scientific discipline
- Department of affiliation
- Research areas of interest
- Previously and currently held institutional positions

**Deadline to send the letter of interest by the candidates for Mentor is September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

Candidates for mentees should include in the letter of interest the following information and attach a copy of CV:

- Biographical data (first and last name, age, date of birth)
- Academic position
- Seniority in the position
- Scientific discipline
- Department of affiliation
- Research area of interest
- Inclusions in research groups, reporting the name of supervisors/tutors
- Motivation and interest in the program
- Expectations about one's commitment during the mentoring relationship
- 3 specific program outcomes to be expected at the end of the program
- 1. Career goals; 2. Expected obstacles in reaching the goals 3. Helpful actions to achieve the goals

**Deadline to the letter of interest by the candidates for mentee is September 29<sup>th</sup>.**