# EQUAL4EUROPE
## GENDER EQUALITY PLANS

# HANDBOOK FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER EQUALITY PLANS BY AHMSSBL INSTITUTIONS

**EQUAL4EUROPE**
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**Main Authors**

Matteo Avogaro
Victoria Cochrane
Anna Ginès Fabrellas
Athanasia Panoutsou
María Quílez Sartaguda
Christophe Terrasse

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# FOREWORD

There is no place in the world, in any sphere of life, where women are not treated worse than men, according to The World's Women report. Unfortunately, academia is no exception. Women represent approximately 50% of PhDs, however they only represent around 30% of researchers, 20% of full professorships and 20% of leaders of research organizations. Furthermore, there is a gender wage gap in academia, practically half of research teams are all male and there is a slight gap in access to funding in favor our men. Although the phenomenon of the leaky pipeline has ben widely studied in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) disciplines, it is also present in Arts, Humanities, Medicine, Social Sciences, Business and Law (AHMSSBL) disciplines, where, strangely enough, the presence of women is and has been higher than men in undergraduate courses for a very long time now.

There are important barriers for women when pursuing an academic career, also in AHMSSBL disciplines. The existence of unconscious or implicit gender bias, vertical and horizontal segregation in research institutions, the challenges of work-life balance in academia and the existence of gender-science stereotypes lead to more difficulties for women in climbing the academic ladder. Research and higher education institutions are gendered settings that, for better or for worse, reproduce our social values and, unfortunately, also existing discriminations.

In this context, the **EQUAL4EUROPE** project aims at addressing the leaky pipeline in AHMSSBL research institutions throughout Europe by adopting gender equality standards specially designed for the academic context. In this sense, the six research institutions participating in the project have adopted tailored specific Gender Equality Plans, after a complete and holistic diagnosis of the situation on gender equality. These Gender Equality Plans include specific measures designed to remove barriers to recruitment, retention, and career progression of female researchers, promote the presence of women in decision-making bodies and processes and integrate the gender perspective in research and teaching.

The results of this process are included in this Handbook, where the **EQUAL4EUROPE** consortium shares its experiences, recommendations, and best practices regarding the adoption of Gender Equality Plans in AHMSSBL research institutions. The most valuable lesson learnt, however, is that the adoption of a Gender Equality Plan is not, by itself, guarantee of adequately addressing the gender issue in research institutions (or any type of institution, for that matter). It is essential to adopt measures that not only hold on paper but, rather, transform the organization by embedding the gender equality issue within the university's bodies and decision processes. Only by engaging with stakeholders and increasing gender awareness at the organizational level will it be possible to achieve the desired and needed cultural and sustainable change within the institution.

**Anna Ginès i Fabrellas**
*Project Coordinator EQUAL4EUROPE*

This document serves as a practical guide for developing and implementing Gender Equality Plans within Higher Education Institutions, specifically in Arts, Humanities, Medicine, Social Sciences, Business, and Law (AHMSSBL).

Drawing from the research and results of the **EQUAL4EUROPE** project, it aims to offer a comprehensive perspective on gender equality. It explores the gender disparities within AHMSSBL institutions and presents the strategies deployed to mitigate the challenges faced by women.This project brought together six research institutions, a consulting firm and an international network of higher education institutions. Special thanks are extended to all consortium partners and to the EFMD team in charge of the realisation of the handbook.

This handbook is intended for a diverse audience, encompassing individuals within higher education wishing to comprehend the significance and challenges of gender equality, gender equality managers needing practical tools and exemplary practices, and researchers and faculty members interested in integrating the gender dimension into their teaching and research. Each chapter presents the primary outcomes and recommendations derived from the **EQUAL4EUROPE** project and highlights best practices and replicable actions. It also underscores potential challenges that can slow the adoption of gender equality plans or dilute their impact.

This document is conceived as a practical guide aimed at streamlining decision-making processes and facilitating the implementation of gender equality strategies within institutions.

We trust that this handbook will be a valuable resource in fostering a more equitable and inclusive environment within higher education institutions.

**Christophe Terrasse**
*Director, EFMD International Projects*

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 THE EQUAL4EUROPE PROJECT IN A NUTSHELL

The EQUAL4EUROPE project is an H2020-funded project that implemented its activities between January 2020 and December 2023. The consortium consisted of the following six Research Performing Institutions (RPIs):

- ESADE (Spain)
- Erasmus University Rotterdam (The Netherlands)
- Comenius University in Bratislava (Slovakia)
- IEDC – Bled School of Managament (Slovenia)
- ESMT BERLIN (Germany)
- INSEAD (France)

It also included the international association of universities & business schools and accreditation agency, EFMD Global (Belgium), and the consultancy bureau, NEHEM (The Netherlands).

Putting their focus on the faculties of arts, humanities, medicine, social sciences, business and law (AHMSSBL), the partnership implemented collaborative and institutional activities that aimed at:

- Removing barriers to the recruitment, retention and career progression of female researchers;
- Addressing gender imbalance in decision-making processes;
- Integrating the gender dimension in research and innovation content.

Each of the participating RPIs developed a tailor-made Gender Equality Plan (GEP) based on an institution-wide data collection and analysis. The development and implementation of the GEPs was supported by comparative studies between the partners and best practices from other similar initiatives. During the last year of the project, the partners participated in an in-depth assessment of the impact of their GEPs. This allowed objective monitoring, benchmarking and quality implementation of the GEPs for the coming years.

In parallel, the consortium organised online and face-to-face workshops to support faculty, HR professionals, researchers and other academic stakeholders to identify and address gender imbalances at their institutions. EQUAL4EUROPE established and accompanied the growth of the Gender Equality & Diversity Officers Network (GE&DO), an online platform to share knowledge and discuss issues of inequality. In addition, the partners participated in high-level international events to promote their efforts.

> You can find all the results of the project on the EQUAL4EUROPE website as well as the CORDIS site.

## 1.2 GENDER INEQUALITY IN ACADEMIA

Gender equality in academia has long been a persistent issue that has garnered attention and efforts towards improvement. While progress has been made over the years, there are still significant challenges and areas where gender

equality remains problematic. According to the She Figures Study of 2021[2], the representation of women in academia varies across different levels and disciplines.

In terms of doctoral graduates, women are nearing gender parity, accounting for 48.1% of the total. Similarly, at the researcher grade C level, women make up 46.6% of the workforce. However, when we consider the grade A level (equivalent to full professorship), women are significantly underrepresented, constituting only 26.2% of the positions.

Definition of **"Gender Equality"**.

For the purposes of this Handbook, "gender equality" "does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born female or male. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, thereby recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development." [1]

Furthermore, women face disparities in accessing research funding. On average, women researchers receive 3.9% less funding compared to their male counterparts. Additionally, women are more likely to work under precarious contracts while men tend to enjoy 1.3% higher salaries.

Although women constitute 42.3% of the academic staff in Europe, only 23.6% of heads of European institutions are women. While there has been a slight increase in this number compared to 2015 (20%), it still confirms the existence of the "leaky pipeline" phenomenon, which has been evident in academia and other sectors for decades.

The term "leaky pipeline" refers to the trend observed in academic institutions where there is a disproportionate attrition of women at various stages of their academic careers, resulting in fewer women progressing to higher positions. It highlights the loss of talented women as they advance through academic ranks, leading to a lack of gender diversity at senior levels. As explained, the pipeline begins with a relatively balanced representation of women and men at the entry level. However, as individuals progress to higher levels, such as postdoctoral positions, faculty appointments, and leadership roles, the representation of women diminishes. Several factors contribute to the leaky pipeline such

as gender bias, work-life balance challenges, inadequate institutional policies and practices, and others explained in chapter 2.1 of this Handbook.

Further reading
EQUAL4EUROPE's Lexicon on gender in research

## 1.2.1 GENDER INEQUALITY IN AHMSSBL INSTITUTIONS

The progress towards gender parity among doctoral graduates, with women accounting for 48.1% of the total, is a significant advancement in achieving a balanced research workforce. However, women are still overrepresented in the field of Education while being underrepresented in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction, and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields at both the European and country level. This disparity has led to increased recognition of gender equality as a pressing issue within STEM RPIs resulting in numerous dedicated research projects in recent years.[3]

On the other hand, when examining tertiary education students and doctoral students in the faculties of arts, humanities, medicine, social sciences, business and law (AHMSSBL), a more equitable division is observed. Conse-

quently, the fact that the balance seen at the student level is not reflected in the higher career levels, creates an ironic and paradoxical situation.

According to the 2018 Financial Times Global Business School rankings[4], only 30% of faculty members and 33% of advisory board members are female, despite women making up 40% of the student population.

Among the top 100 EU-based business schools, only five had a female Dean. Furthermore, the gender pay gap three years after graduation is a concerning issue, with women earning only 86% of what their male counterparts earn.

These numbers have led to recognising gender equality in AHMSSBL institutions as an important issue that must be analysed and addressed carefully, taking into consideration the specificities of these institutions and, specifically, the high level of women in undergraduate courses. Consistent with this, as long ago as May 2015, Athena SWAN[5] expanded its charter to include AHMSSBL across the UK and Ireland recognising the fact that the situation in such institutions requires equal attention and consideration.

Definition of **"Gender".**

For the purposes of this Handbook, "gender" refers to "the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context / time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a women or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context. Other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis include class, race, poverty level, ethnic group and age." [6]

# ADDRESSING GENDER INEQUALITY IN ACADEMIA

**2.1 BARRIERS FACED BY WOMEN & STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED BY ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS**

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## 2.1 BARRIERS FACED BY WOMEN & STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED BY ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

Women face societal, cultural and systemic barriers throughout their academic career, and the last few years this issue has been studied from different perspectives informing new strategies and policies at institutional and national levels. Among others, we often see the following "obstacles":

- Inadequate institutional policies that neither promote equal opportunities nor ensure accountability at all levels;

- Difficulty in balancing work and personal life, particularly due to the unequal distribution of family responsibilities between women and men and the absence of family-friendly policies, such as parental leave and flexible work arrangements;

- The ever present implicit bias and stereotypes influencing hiring decisions and career prospects;[7]

- The gender pay gap which persists in academia impacting career progression;

- Lack of representation in leadership positions hindering career guidance and perpetuating the perception that academia is a male-dominated field;

- Disparities in research funding, publication rates, and citation impacting visibility and career advancement.[8]

In recent years, academic institutions have made significant strides in ad-dressing these issues by adopting policies and implementing various actions. They have updated their gender equality policies, including areas such as human resources, work-life balance and equal pay. Moreover, there has been a notable rise in data collection activities and training programmes aimed at raising awareness and promoting gender equality. Additionally, mentoring and sponsorship programmes have gained prominence as essential tools for supporting women in academia. The following chapters describe these initiatives in more detail.

It is worth highlighting the efforts made at international level by organisations that specifically target academic institutions and their activities. For instance, the European Commission announced that *"having a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) in place that meets a set of mandatory requirements becomes an eligibility criterion for all public bodies, higher education institutions and research organisations from Member States and Associated Countries wishing to participate in Horizon Europe, for calls with deadlines in 2022 and onwards"*.[9]

Furthermore, several international accreditation bodies have taken a proactive stance by incorporating standards and criteria that encourage academic institutions to introspect, critically examine their policies and practices, and make necessary adjustments to foster a more inclusive and gender-equal environment.

Nevertheless, despite the efforts made by many academic institutions to promote gender equality, we often see a lack of coordination and consistency in the different institutional approaches. Gender equality efforts tend to be decentralised and dispersed among various departments, committees and programmes. This hinders effective coordination and communication. As a result, comprehensive and impactful strategies are sometimes challenging to implement.

We often see academic institutions focusing on addressing gender imbalances at the entry level, such as undergraduate admissions. They often fail to address the rather structural issues and systemic biases that continue to impact women throughout their academic careers including disparities in promotion and tenure processes and inadequate support for achieving a healthy work-life balance.[10]

To effectively address the multiple dimensions of gender inequality and promote a more equitable academic environment, academic insitutions must implement a combination of approaches based on their specific context and needs. The goal is to create a comprehensive and coherent framework that will guide an institution through the assessment of their situation with regards to gender equality, the elaboaration of the respective activities as well as an evidence-based monitoring and adjustment process.

## 2.2 THE EQUAL4EUROPE APPROACH TO GENDER EQUALITY PLANS

### 2.2.1 WHAT IS A GENDER EQUALITY PLAN?

Gender Equality Plans are designed to promote fairness, diversity and inclusion by creating a more equitable environment for all individuals regardless of their gender. The European Institute for Gender Equality defines GEPs as *"a systematic and strategic instrument that establishes priorities and concrete objectives (based on a thorough status quo assessment), and the specific measures that will be implemented to improve gender equality within organisations and in the field of research and innovation"*. [11]

The **objectives of a GEP** can differ from one institution to another. However, all GEPs ultimately aim at:

- Correcting the gender biases or sex-discriminations existing in the organisation;

- Guaranteeing equal treatment and equal opportunities for women and men.

A GEP must be context-specific, directly linked to institutional data with regards to gender equality. It builds on data collection and analysis that often tackle sensitive and confidential issues. A GEP is usually the result of a negotiation, involving the team who developed the plan, high management, stakeholders or even workers' representatives.

## 2.2.2 ELABORATING A GEP

### A. INSTITUTIONAL DIAGNOSIS

The "diagnosis" is the starting point of the GEP. It is the baseline for the adoption of the GEP and for defining specific objectives and measures. It reinforces an objective and data-driven understanding of the current state of the institution, based on the collection of quantitative and qualitative data.

- **Qualitative data** includes: workforce composition, promotion and recruitment practices, pay gaps, career progression, work-life balance policies, access to resources and any existing gender-related complaints. A comprehensive list of indicators can be found in EQUAL4EUROPE's Gender Equality Index;[12]
- **Qualitative data** could be collected through <u>interviews</u>, focus groups, surveys, or consultations with stakeholders such as faculty, staff and students. It captures subjective experiences, perspectives, and feedback on gender-related issues, concerns and recommendations;

- **Policy analysis** reviews existing institutional and national policies, procedures and practices to determine their impact on gender equality. It can examines areas such as allocation of resources, provision of support and mentoring, evaluation and recognition systems and the overall organisational culture.

### B. PREPARING THE DESIGN OF THE GEP

There are other preliminary activities that are crucial for a successful implementation of the GEP. The next steps in the process could be:

- Forming the Equality Committee or Team, responsible for leading the negotiations and executing the GEP;
- Engaging with key stakeholders and ensuring their active participation throughout the process, including individuals at all levels of the organisation, across departments and schools;
- Studying the regulatory framework in higher education institutions and national legal requirements;
- Understanding the institutional context by utilising the findings from the diagnosis phase;
- Facilitating the negotiation process defining formal procedures and a reasonable timeframe.

### C. DESIGN AND STRUCTURE OF THE GEP

With the institutional diagnosis results in hand, and having ensured the comple-

tion of the necessary preliminary steps, the GEP will seek to integrate new principles and measures of gender equality into the organisation. To achieve this goal, the GEP committee must initiate the design phase, meticulously crafting the structure and content of the GEP.

Each section of the GEP must entail a clear presentation of the diagnosis results and their direct connections with the GEP objectives, as well as the respective measures towards achieving these objectives. By substantiating each step with compelling evidence, the GEP gains credibility and reinforces its commitment to promoting gender equality.

**The introductory section** must provide essential information such as the objectives, legal frameworks, and the process of negotiation and implementation. The **GEP objectives** must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-oriented (SMART) and with a clear link to the results of the diagnosis.

**The second section** starts outlining the main results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis conducted as part of the diagnosis. It can refer to sex-disaggregated quantitative data related to teaching load, publications, research project participation and student supervision as well as qualitative data on engagement with research and career motivations and other. This section highlights the priorities and focal areas that have emerged from the diagnosis, drawing attention to the critical aspects that demand immediate attention and action.

**The main section** of the GEP focuses on the action plan and the specific measures

for promoting gender equality within the institution. They are all linked to the priorities and focal areas that have emerged from the diagnosis and are designed to help achieve the GEP objectives.

This section must outline the **timeframe of the GEP**, including the start date of the GEP's application and the final assessment date.

**For AHMSSBL research institutions**, while keeping in mind the results of the diagnosis specific to the institution, the GEP action plan could integrate the following areas:

- Removing barriers to recruitment, retention, and career progression, including addressing the gender pay gap and promoting work-life balance;
- Addressing gender imbalances in leadership and decision-making processes, involving professional and academic decision-making bodies;
- Integrating the gender dimension in research and innovation content through trainings or workshops;
- Implementing measures against sexual misconduct, gender-based violence and sexual harassment, including training, zero tolerance policy, specific procedures for handling claims, disciplinary measures, and support for victims' reintegration;
- Raising gender awareness and engagement with stakeholders through the appointment of a Gender Equality Officer and awareness-raising activities for various stakeholders.

The measures should be prioritised based on their difficulty of implemen-

tation, impact on gender equality and time required for implementation. They must also include a description of the content, target group, indicators for assessing impact, responsible department, available resources and implementation timeframe.

**Further reading**

The Horizon Europe Programme has announced that the existence of an institutional GEP that meets certain standards will be a requirement for the participation of an institution in the programme. These standards are themselves very helpful directions for the structure and content of the GEP action plan.

## D. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE GEP

**Periodic monitoring and reporting** of the GEP should be included to review the implemented measures and their potential to help reach the set objectives. The GEP should include a commitment to periodic monitoring and reporting and data gathering for impact assessment. A department, body, or person should be responsible for information gathering and supervision.

A GEP should also include a provision for **interpretation and dispute resolution**. An Equality Committee or existing body should be designated to handle discrepancies and offer binding interpretations.

A section in the plan can also address the need for **revisions**. Reasons for revision can include monitoring results indicating the need for changes, changes in national gender equality regulations, or significant shifts in working conditions. The process for revising the GEP varies depending on internal regulations, but key aspects to consider include listing events that may trigger a revision, identifying individuals or bodies authorized to initiate the process, determining those involved in the revision, and establishing criteria for approving or rejecting the revised version.

## E. DISSEMINATION STRATEGY OF THE GEP

The dissemination strategy for the GEP must be outlined taking into consideration specific goals and the expected impact. Some of the actions that could be undertaken are:

• Publish the GEP on the institutional channels;
• Organise information campaigns among workforce with information on how the institution will inform employees, make the plan available to them, and which channels will be used;
• Organise training on the implementation of the GEP;
• Promote the GEP among external stakeholders, such as partner institutions and academic conferences.

## 2.2.3 ENGAGING WITH RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS

The engagement with key stakeholders is crucial because it fosters mutual involvement, strengthens the internal community, and promotes a proactive combination of expertise and knowledge. It also contributes to increasing the potential impact of mainstreaming the gender perspective into policies, programmes, and projects, as well as fostering a sense of ownership and commitment to implementing gender equality actions.

Considering the GEAR tool and other EU gender equality projects, the following stakeholders should be involved when preparing a Gender Equality Plan:

• Gender-equality bodies
• High management and leadership positions
• Managers
• Academic staff
• Administrative staff and human resources
• Workers' representatives
• Students
• External stakeholders

**Further reading**

The EQUAL4EUROPE "Toolkit: Engaging stakeholders and tackling resistances to mainstream gender equality in AHMSSBL research institutions"

## 2.3. USING THIS HANDBOOK

The following chapters provide examples and guidelines on the different steps in the process of elaborating a GEP. The Handbook has been structured according to five topics:

1. Identification and evaluation of gender issues.
2. Investigation of career prospects for women.
3. Addressing gender imbalances in decision-making bodies.
4. Integrating the gender dimension in research and teaching.
5. Generating and implementing GEPs.

The Handbook does not provide a sequential guide on how to develop and implement a GEP and does not follow a strict order or progression for implementation. The examples and activities have been structured according to the previous topics. Examples and activities regarding the institutional diagnosis can be found in chapters 1 to 4. Examples on how to design and structure a GEP can be found in Chapters 1 to 5.

The following chapters serve as guidelines and offer examples of activities implemented by the EQUAL4EUROPE partners based on their institutional assessments.

# CHAPTER 1:
## IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF GENDER ISSUES

## INTRODUCTION

This first chapter is dedicated to the identification and evaluation of gender issues. This is the first phase in the development and implementation of Gender Equality Plans in AHMSSBL research institutions.

The objectives of this first phase are to:

• Organise an institution-wide assessment of the situation with regards to gender equality and report on the state of gender equality in the institution;

• Identify the areas wich need for future intervention and guide the development of a GEP that is custom-made to the specific needs of the institution.

## ACTIVITY 1: SELECTION OF THE ASSESSMENT TOOLS

The institution must first decide on the tools for the data collection process, the content and structure of the assessment report. The data collection can include, but might not be limited to contextual data, legislation and policies, quantitative sex-aggregated data and qualitative data. This is an evolving and dynamic process.

In order to prepare their institutional reports on the current gender equality situation, the academic partners of the EQUAL4EUROPE consortium used the following methodology and data collection tools:

• **Methodology:** the GEAR tool, developed by the European Institute for

Gender Equality, was adapted and modified to fit the business school environment and new indicators were added based on recent research on gender equality.

• **Data collection tools:**

- Gender equality index: this tool assesses female representation across significant domains in the institution. The data collected serves as a diagnosis of where the institution stands in the different dimensions of gender equality in absolute terms and relative to each other. It includes data on numbers of male/female personnel in faculty, staff, students (including PhDs and postdocs), governing bodies as well as institutional policies. The GEI could comprised of the following domains:

1. Faculty: Demographics, job market, gender pay gap, family related leaves, promotions, supervision of students, part-time work, recruitment committees, promotion committees, turnover and add-on to turnover for systems with tenure track.

2. Staff: Demographics.

3. PhD Students: Demographics, PhD programme enrolment, family related leaves, part-time PhD, graduations, turnover.

4. Postdocs: Demographics, gender pay gap, part-time working, family related leaves, turnover.

5. Students: Demographics, student enrolment, graduation, turnover.

6. Institutional governance: Visiting professors, decision-making

bodies, gender in research and training.

7. **Other:** Internal funding to support research, external funding to support research, teaching, invited academic speakers.

**Further reading**
The EQUAL4EUROPE Gender equality index

- Institutional survey: this tool assesses the barriers to gender diversity in business education and research. Some of the issues that can be addressed are: wellbeing in the workplace, mentoring, balancing work and family coommitments, and experience of sexual misconduct. In order to preserve the privacy and the confidentiality of information, it is advised to: limit to the maximum the access to IPs, remove or change any personal information that would be identifiable, and disseminate only aggregated data. The surveys were intended for faculty, staff, postdocs researchers and students and their structure is as follows:
  1. Informed consent
  2. Personal information
  3. Role and position within the organisation
  4. Perception of the institutional context
  5. Wellbeing in the workplace
  6. Mentoring and being mentored
  7. Balancing work and family commitments

8. Experience of sexual misconduct
9. Final comments

**Further reading**
The EQUAL4EUROPE Alternative Measures of Organizational Cultures and Individual Outcomes in ASHSSMBL Institutions

- Interviews with high and middle management, faculty members, staff and workers' representatives. It captures subjective experiences, perspectives, and feedback on gender-related issues and the institution's organizational culture, concerns and recommendations.

  For example, the interviews can include questions such as:

  • What is the organisational culture at your school like? Is the organisational culture inclusive for women, does it support gender equality?

  • In your view, do you think that there are differences in career aspiration among women and men?

  • Do you think that your current organisational culture is hindering women in their career progression at your school? If not, how do you explain the underrepresentation of

women in leadership positions in your institution?

  • Would you say women and men are equally represented at your school at all levels? e.g. leadership positions and decision-making bodies?

  • Is the recruitment process of leadership position and decision-making bodies transparent?

  • Do you think that women in leadership position are perceived differently than men? If yes, how?

  • Do female and male academics have equal access to supporting resources and staff, internal funding, conference funding, etc?

  • Is your workload allocation system transparent? (teaching, research, admin)

  • Have you observed any differences between career paths for female and male academics in your school?

  • How do you think one can explain the under representation of women being full professors at you school?

- Policy analysis reviews existing institutional and national policies, procedures and practices to determine their impact on gender equality. It can examine areas such as allocation of resources, provision of support and mentoring, evaluation and recognition systems and the overall organi-

sational culture. Specific policies analyzed could include:

1. Existing Gender Equality Plan
2. Gender Equality Officer or Unit
3. Equal pay policy
4. Sexual harassment policy
5. Gender parity in promotion
6. Childare solutions
7. Flexible working hours
8. Tenure clock freeze

## ACTIVITY 2: GATHERING OF DATA

Institutions may encounter significant challenges when collecting data. For example, during the course of the project, the consortium had to overcome the following problems:

• Lack of available data on the required indicators;

• Significant delays in obtaining data from relevant members of their organisation;

• Necessity to protect confidentiality of the data. When survey responses triggered the risk of identification, some specific fields (such as field of research) were recoded to protect the anonymity of respondents.

Strategies to overcome these difficulties or challenges when collecting data could be:

• Engage with relevant stakeholders throughout the entire phase of adopting a GEP, including the gathering of data;

- The structure of the GEI should serve as a guideline for data collection within the organisations on a more recurring basis. This might progressively alleviate the difficulties encountered in obtaining data at school level - for example, by introducing an internal data gathering tool based on the GEI to facilitate the process of tracking GE in the long run.

## ACTIVITY 3: STRUCTURE OF THE ASSESSMENT REPORT

Once the data is gathered and assessed, it has to be presented in a report. Any structure of an assessment report is valid, but the EQUAL4EUROPE consortium followed the following structure[13] for their reports:

1. Context characterization: general information about the location of the institution, number and location of campuses, staff, etc.
   a. Institutional characteristics
   b. Economic situation
   c. Relevant national and local legislation and policies
   d. Gender equality in academia in the country
2. Scope and methodology of the assessment
   a. Objectives (general and specific) of the assessment
   b. Methodology
   c. Assessed target groups
   d. Assessment tools
   e. Sample
   f. Description of the data analysis

3. Results of the assessment
   a. Composition of the staff, faculty and students by gender
   b. Recruitment, career progression and retention
   c. Gender mainstreaming in research, decision-making bodies and policy
4. Perceptions and experiences of staff and students
5. Conclusions
6. Recommendation for intervention
   a. Overview of the areas of intervention
   b. Priorization of areas of intervention
   c. Engagement of stakeholders

When defining the objectives in the assessment report, they should be presented as specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-oriented (SMART):

- Specific: brief description of the content of the objective and the results of the work that must be done so that it is clear and observable;
- Measurable: assessable terms, including quantitative measurements (for example a percentage or frequency) and/or qualitative measurements (for example, accuracy or compliance with legal regulations). It is essential to identify how their impact will be assessed in terms of achieving the objective;
- Achievable: objectives should be fixed considering the possibility of success in achieving such objectives given the time frame, opportunity and resources available, including budget;
- Relevant: objectives should be aligned with the institution's mission and vision as well as any legal requirement. In this context, the national/local legal requirements and the new HORIZON

EUROPE criteria regarding gender equality can be considered when defining the relevance of each objective;
- Time-oriented: objectives must include endpoints, with a specific timeframe or due date for their completion. It is important, however, to also include middle checkpoints or milestones regarding specific tasks within the overall objective.

## ACTIVITY 4: COMPARING RESULTS

Comparing results from data collected by various institutions can pose challenges due to differences in data availability, category definitions, calculations, and the absence of context or long-term data.

In order to overcome those challenges and make the comparison between the different measures at the academic institutions visually clearer, the EQUAL4EUROPE consortium created a tool for comparing institutional results in gender equality.

This tool comprends:

- A colour coding system to identify the degree of gender (in)equality in every measure;
- 5 categories corresponding to differences in the proportion of men and women in any measure from high inequality favouring men through a category of gender equality and ending with high inequality favouring women.

| Level of gender inequality | Differences in the proportion of men and women | Example | Colour Case |
|---|---|---|---|
| High inequality favouring men | Equal or above 30.1% | Men: 70%, Women: 30% | Dark red |
| Medium inequality favouring men | 15.1-30% | Men: 62%, Women: 38% | Light red |
| Gender equality or low inequality | 0-15% | Men: 55%, Women: 45% | Green |
| Medium inequality favouring women | 15.1-30% | Men: 38%, Women: 62% | Light blue |
| High inequality favouring women | Equal or above 30.1% | Men: 30%, Women: 70% | Dark blue |

**Further reading**
The EQUAL4EUROPE Tool for Comparing Institutional Results in Gender Equality

EQUAL4EUROPE
GENDER EQUALITY PLANS

# CHAPTER 2:
## SUPPORTING CAREER PROSPECTS FOR WOMEN

## INTRODUCTION

The objectives of this chapter are to provide examples or activities on how to:

- Support the creation of the assessment report by providing data with regards to the barriers to the recruitment, retention and career progression of female researchers at the institution;
- Support the development of respective actions for the GEP, that can help improve the working environment and career prospects for female researchers and academic staff at the institution.

For the development and implementation of a GEP, it is important to provide data on the organisational culture. The GEP should use an evidence-based approach and include measures on how to support womens' academic careers.

## ACTIVITY 1: GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF HR POLICIES

This refers to looking into the culture and working climate at the institution through the research and analysis of HR policies, and interviews with female academics, leadership, faculty, work council members and HR personnel. It requires an understanding of the literature relating to gender equality and organisational culture, decisions on the assessment methodology, data analysis, and finally reporting the findings.

The inclusion of a second level of data gathering, via semi-structured interviews with representatives from the institutions' main personnel cohorts (faculty, administrative personnel, young researchers, etc) is advised. The interviews could cover the following themes:

- Role and position within the organization;
- Perception of the institutional context.
- Wellbeing in the workplace / Career aspirations;
- Mentoring and being mentored.
- Balancing work and family commitments;
- Experience of sexual misconduct.

During interviews, information of a sensitive nature may be divulged. As such, the working team need to be prepared for how to deal with this. They should develop foresight measures on how to deal with particularly sensitive information. Ideally this should form part of your institutional ethics clearance request.

The following factors should be taken into special consideration:

- How to ensure participant anonymity (especially if the interview sample is small, or where it could be relatively easy to identify participants due to the particularities of the organisation of personnel/departments).
- How to deal with receipt of sensitive information – this is particularly relevant if you intend to ask questions surrounding experience of sexual misconduct in the workplace.

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In addition to the data collection team and/or the GEP team, the following people/departments should be involved too:

- The Dean or the Dean's office: Their role is to be informed of the planning and provide their agreement regarding the assessment tools and activities that will be used in this phase as well as the type of issues that will be investigated. Particularly for sensitive issues, such as sexual harassment and confidentiality;

- The HR department: Their role is to participate in the discussions about HR policies and support data collection and analysis of those policies internally;

- The Diversity & Inclusion Committee or other relevant bodies: Similarly to HR, their role is to provide access to data and encourage participation in the activities of this phase. In addition, they can have an advisory role considering their broader overview of such issues.

Often resistances might arise due to perception of implied extra workload for the department/people concerned. This can be overcome (at least partially) by sharing with them the wealth of information and tools already available which can help facilitate the process.

**Further reading**

- EQUAL4EUROPE's Culture and Working Climate for Women Assessment report: a report that presents key findings on the topic following the EQUAL4EUROPE partners' surveys and semi-structured interviews with female faculty, PhD students, Deans, HR and other key actors. It provides inspiration and directions for recent literature in the field and on appropriate quantitative and qualitative assessment tools.

- Gender Inclusive Recruitment & Selection Toolkit for HR Professionals: It includes tools for gender inclusive recruitment procedures and best practices in the field, for HR professionals and others involved in the recruitment and selection process.

- EQUAL4EUROPE's Gender Equality and Diversity Officers Network on LinkedIn

## ACTIVITY 2: IMPLEMENTATION OF A GENDER INCLUSIVE RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION TOOLKIT

A fair and robust recruitment and selection (R&S) process, which complies with current best practice, can aid universities in their ambition to create a gender-balanced and inclusive workforce. To start with, the vacancy text should be checked by the Gender/Diversity Officer before sending it to HR for publication.

A useful tool for that process is the EQUAL4EUROPE Gender Inclusive Recruitment & Selection Toolkit for HR professionals. This toolkit contains tips and good practices throughout three phases:

1. Composing an equitable R&S committee: the committee's ratio female/male should be at least 40/60, ideally 50/50. This gender diversed ratio will decrease the chance of unconscious bias in the R&S process and will increase the chance that the best person for the job will be selected.

2. Standardised and gender inclusive R&S processes: highlighting in the ad any existing relevant institutional policies such as work-life balance policies, child-care facilities, guidance and career development opportunities, parental leave, policies against sexism, sexual misconduct and harassment. Establishing the starting salary in the vacancy text can help narrowing existing gender pay gaps.

3. Evaluation, monitoring and reporting: one of the R&S committee members should document the gender diversity deliberations that take place during the decision-making process, which allows evaluation during the process, instead of a retrospective review. It is recommended to establish feedback mechanisms about the recruitment process for all candidates which can help identify any practices hampering gender equality.

## ACTIVITY 3: KEY SKILLS NEEDED FOR WOMEN TO ADVANCE THEIR CAREER PROSPECTS

To foster greater gender equality and an inclusive working environment, the EQUAL4EUROPE consortium identified five training areas which can be helpful for supporting organisational change and increasing the number of female academics in general, and in leadership positions in particular:[14]

- Leadership skills to lead, influence, or guide other individuals, teams, or organizations;

- Communication skills, in particular for interacting with leaders and giving feedback;

- Negotiation skills to resolve points of difference, gain an advantage, or craft outcomes to satisfy interests;

- Networking skills by building connections with others to exchange ideas;

- Self-promoting skills to gain visibility and enhance a professional reputation.

These five training areas are useful to support organisational top-down and bottom-up change processes, and aid female academics in their careers and navigating the current work environment. Such formal training programmes can be complemented with informal (leadership) training and mentoring programmes to train current leaders and prepare new ones, as well as helping to create a more inclusive environment.

These suggested training and mentoring programmes are only one pillar supporting sustainable organisational change towards a more equal and inclusive working environment and should be aligned with organisational change efforts.

## ACTIVITY 4: DEFINING A RETENTION STRATEGY FOR WOMEN ACADEMICS

Fiercer competition in the labour market increases the pressure for organisations to secure competent people, and greater employment fluidity in the form of job changes heightens the risks of high-performing employees leaving the organisation or switching to another sector.[15]

Turnover matters because it is costly, it negatively affects the organisational performance, and it may become increasingly difficult to manage due to the shortage of highly skilled employees.[16]

To foster greater gender equality, universities can focus on the retention and development of their female talent. While there are various reasons why employees leave an organisation, a retention strategy for employees revolves around employee satisfaction.

This is an overview of various retention practices collected in EQUAL4EURO-PE's Programmes and Materials for Retention and Development:

- Reflect on your retention policies/practices:
  - Identify the nature of the retention problems;
  - Select strategies and interventions to address those problems;
  - Identify what is and what is not working.
- Assess:
  - Retention and turnover in the organization:
    · To calculate the retention rate, divide the number of "stayers" (employees who remain at the end of calculation period) by the number of employees you had at the beginning of your calculation period times 100;
    · To calculate the turnover trate, divide the number of "leavers" (employees terminating during your calculation period) by the total number of people employed during your calculation period times 100;
    · The advancement of female academics as compared to male colleagues.

- Conduct stay and exit interviews with employees;
- Reflect on the following questions :
  - How big is your problem?
  - Is it a problem of the whole organization, of a certain department/team?
  - Do you need an immediate fix, or can you plan a longer intervention for a greater future outcome?
  - Do you have to be concerned with running out of resources for long-term interventions? Can you complete the intervention in stages?
  - Do you need to start with short-term objectives to show results and provide quick relief?
  - What intervention could produce the biggest impact for your problem?
  - What intervention could be the most realistic in terms of resources and successful task completion?
  - Does your organisation already focus on an inclusive work environment and retaining diverse staff members?
  - Do leaders receive coaching in diversity and inclusion as well as provide coaching to others?
  - Does your organization have and execute a talent retention strategy? If so, does it specifically address diverse talent retention?

## ACTIVITY 5: BEST PRACTICES FOR RETENTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN ACADEMICS

These are some retention and development policies and practices from EQUAL4EUROPE's Programmes and Materials for Retention and Development which could be included in a retention strategy plan:

- Policies supporting academics with childcare responsibilities:
  - Socialization and mentoring:
    · Typically, organisations experience higher turnover rates among new employees;
    · Socialization practices can help new employees become embedded in the company and thus more likely to stay;[18]
    · Mentoring programmes are especially effective in creating connections and networks between a range of talented members and maintaining transparent communication channels across various levels of the organization.

- Training and development policies:
  - The training process should be designed with the employees knowing their strengths and ambitions;
  - Managers should coach and support employees through regular and meaningful conversations and performance feedback;
  - Transparent and accessible policies and procedures for evaluation, pro-

motion, and tenure and training opportunities should be clearly communicated;
- Actual and measurable on-the-job performance measurements should be implemented.
- Recognition and benefits policies:
  - Recognising employee's contri-bution is important and has an impact on employees' satisfaction;
  - Some examples are: salary adjust-ments, career development funds, fellowships, leaves and fellowship leaves, bridge money, research support, childcare assistance or flexible work arrangements;
  - Fostering an inclusive working climate and culture where all iden-tities are respected.
- Policies supporting academics with childcare responsibilities like: organi-zaion of social gatherings for families, offer of support for personal health and wellbeing, establishment of a re-ference person/office for work-family reconciliation, etc.

## ACTIVITY 6: GENDER BUDGETING

Appropriate monitoring, target setting and disclosure methods are crucial to at-taining a transformed workplace that is entirely and sustainably gender equita-ble. Moreover, gender budgeting needs to be seen as an instrument for gender mainstreaming and monitoring.[19]

Gender budgeting involves the integra-tion of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures, and spending programmes, so it ensures promoting equality between women and men and tries to combat gender discrimination. It should be a continuous process in which a school reviews and adjusts bud-get targets during the financial year, and adjusts and allocates resources according to its objectives and deve-lopment goals. It means organisations should include a gender perspective at all levels of their budgetary processes.

For implementing and monitoring gen-der budgeting, the organisation must have access to various measures and data components like gender-disag-gregated data on personal, payment, promotion, and other HR practices. For this, EQUAL4EUROPE has created the Gender Equality Index Tool[20] with an overview of data points that should be collected and monitored annually.

Besides access to data, organisations also need analytical capacities and the inclusion of stakeholders within the or-ganisation that will help implement gender budgeting and monitoring.[21] A study by Costa et al. (2013) stated that gender budgeting participation and stakeholder integration must be part of the process, and a necessary antecedent to make gender budgeting work. Policy support and multistakeholder engage-ment is essential, as gender budgeting cannot be effective if support by crucial and influential stakeholders is missing.

Three stages in the gender budgeting process should be considered for moni-toring of progress throughout the year:

1. Pre-stage: starting with gender needs assessment and policies for budget allocations
2. Concurrent-stage: considering gender perspectives during resour-ce allocations on all items of the GEI tool
3. Post-stage: including spending re-views and gender audits and policy analyses.

These are some initiatives that could be developed: funds for the diversity officers, the implementation of Gender Equality Plans, specific gender research proposals, panels or conferences, wo-men business clubs.

**Further reading**
EQUAL4EUROPE's Monitoring and Budgeting Toolkit

# CHAPTER 3:
## ADDRESSING GENDER IMBALANCES IN DECISION-MAKING BODIES

## INTRODUCTION

Gender imbalance goes beyond numerical representation. Institutions must build a more inclusive leadership framework and engage in a culture shift.

This chapter is dedicated to addressing gender imbalances in decision-making bodies. Its objectives are to:

- Document gender imbalances at management and leadership positions;
- Propose and implement effective measures to improve gender balance in management and leadership positions;
- Help create an environment where leadership positions are truly accessible to all based on merit, skills, and capabilities, irrespective of gender.

## ACTIVITY 1: GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF DECISION-MAKING BODIES

The objective is to identify and review the existing institutional processes that influence the composition of decision-making bodies.

It starts by the analysis of the HR documents. The second step is to organise interviews with HR personnel as well as middle and upper management staff. The goal is to understand how existing organisational structures and practices can slow the progress towards gender equality, and how the situation could be improved.

**Further reading**
EQUAL4EUROPE report "Recommendations on improving gender-balance in decision-making bodies and actions to be included in the GEPs"

## POTENTIAL CHALLENGE

Top management sometimes portray their institution in a positive light to justify the lower priority given to gender equality reforms and initiatives. There can also be a lack of understanding or commitment on the improvement of gender equality in the institution.

It is important to realise that gender inequality does not only consist of the visible disparities such as pay gaps. It also includes intangible factors such as biases, cultural norms, and stereotypes.

Gender inequality is not an issue solely within the realm of HR or diversity departments but should be dealt with at all levels of the organisation.

## BEST PRACTICES

Interviews should be conducted with different leadership positions, including executive management, academic departments and heads of administrative departments. The interview protocols can be inspired by the interview guides from the EQUAL4EUROPE report "Recommendations on improving gen-

der-balance in decision-making bodies and actions to be included in the GEPs".

Complementary steps towards enhancing the leaders' gender equality awareness can be:

- Involving them in ongoing GEP implementation activities;
- Conducting knowledge-sharing workshops led by experts or gender-sensitive leaders;
- Encouraging peer learning with leaders that have successfully gone through this process before.

## ACTIVITY 2: DEVELOPING POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND SET GENDER TARGETS

The results of the gender impact assessment on decision-making bodies form the basis for the formulation of the "gender-targets" for the decision-making bodies. HR personnel as well as middle and top management should contribute to the process.

Developing policy recommendations involves a systematic and informed approach. These are the steps that could be followed:

- Analysis of the results: understanding of the specific areas where gender disparities, inequalities, or biases exist within decision-making bodies. Identification of both, strengths and weaknesses;

- Stakeholders engagement in the policy development process: representatives from decision-making bodies, civil society organizations, gender experts, and affected individuals. Their insights and perspectives could be invaluable;
- Definition of clear and measurable policy objectives;
- Consideration of legal and regulatory frameworks: ensuring that the policy recommendations align with existing laws, regulations, and international conventions related to gender equality. If necessary, changes to these frameworks could be recommended;
- Development of a monitoring and evaluation framework to track the progress and impact of the policy recommendations over time;
- Regular communication of the progress and impact of the policy recommendations to stakeholders, decision-makers, and the public.

Achieving gender equality and inclusivity in decision-making is a long-term effort that may require sustained commitment and advocacy. The policy development process should be flexible and responsive to changing circumstances and needs.

## POTENTIAL CHALLENGE

Institutions are often tempted to adopt generic gender equality targets in decision-making. These can be found easily in the literature, but they don't consider the specific national structures of academic promotion nor the institution's

positioning in the academic environment. This may weaken their relevance.

## BEST PRACTICES

The "change objectives" may deal with the underlying issues related to organisational culture. This approach goes beyond surface-level changes, and focuses on transforming the nature of leadership itself.

The "change objectives" are generally supported by information from:

- The identification of gender gaps in decision-making bodies and processes;
- A reference to previous experiments in the institution, and
- Workshops, pairing events, training initiatives or engagement sessions.

## ACTIVITY 3: IMPROVING GENDER BALANCE IN DECISION-MAKING

The objective of this activity is to improve the gender balance in decision-making bodies.

Women and men should have equal access to and participation in informal and formal leadership and decision-making. Decision-making itself needs to be gender sensitive (or gender equitable) as it should consider gender differences and promote gender equality.

EIGE's tool on Gender Mainstreaming reports on some of the best practises[22] and success stories about improving women's representation in

decision-making bodies and reaching gender parity.

## BEST PRACTICES

These are some examples of how gender balance was improved in the institutions' decision-making:

1. Implementation of gender quotas in Belgian academia
2. Enhancing women's participation in management and research
3. Gender balance in the election procedure for the Board of a University

4. Reduction of gender inequality with tailor-made activities

5. Practices and programmes to promote female leadership in higher education

## ACTIVITY 4: ORGANISING WORKSHOPS FOR MANAGEMENT BODIES AND OTHER KEY STAKEHOLDERS

The objective is to engage the middle and highest management and to enhance their understanding of gender-related issues and solutions. This could be done by:

- Conducting face-to-face presentation sessions and workshops on "Equality and Diversity" with management representatives and other stakeholders, and providing an overview of the existing gender equality situation within the institution and the broader sector;

- Presenting the proposed GEP and allowing management and other stakeholders to provide feedback. This approach can foster a sense of understanding, ownership, and commitment among institutional leadership and relevant staff members;

- Engaging external stakeholders and organising panel discussions to share best practices and outcomes of institutionalising GEPs;

- Following up all actions with "facilitated discussions" with the leaders

to address their specific challenges and answer.

**Workshops on this area could tackle the following topics:**

- **Topics/modules to be covered in the workshop:**
  - **Mapping and assessing the situation:** reflection on the institution's current situation. The choice may be to maintain an already balanced composition or take measures for further positive developments. Mapping the situation may reveal imbalances in various sections and positions, having figures and statistics ready before workshops can challenge pre-existing notions and misconceptions;
  - **Targeted work for gender balance - strategy and action plan:** there is no one-size-fits-all solution. It is important to emphasise that measures for gender equality should be tailored to the institution's conditions. While presenting best practices and tools established by others, such as moderate gender quotas, inclusion measures, mobility schemes for young women academics, and award schemes like qualifying stipends, it is crucial to also highlight the need for adaptation and customisation based on individual circumstances;
  - **Creating readiness to change:** when evaluating the institution's readiness for change, it is crucial to examine several key areas:
    - Institutional capacity, skills, and knowledge: belief in the ability

of individuals and groups to effect change;
    - Principal support by key organizational leaders;
    - Discrepancy: A difference between the existing and ideal states;
    - Appropriateness: The appropriate response to close the gap highlighted by discrepancy;
    - Personal valence: Clarifies the inner and external advantages of the change.

- **Analysing barriers to women's progression:** Women globally face challenges and discrimination in the workplace, including occupational segregation and limited access to resources. Gender-based violence further exacerbates these obstacles, making it harder for women to achieve workplace parity. In order to explore such obstacles in the context of higher education, a gender-based barriers model[23] could be used;

- **Analysing gendered organisational culture, practices and processes:** when evaluating an organisation's culture, consider the following aspects: the culture, practices and processes in place, as well as the values, beliefs and actions demonstrated by leaders and employees. While some aspects of the organisational culture may be readily apparent, others may require deeper examination. It is important to recognise that an organisation's true values may be hidden and manifest as the

collective organisational culture over time;

- **Gender and leadership styles:** overall, studies indicate that men and women are equally effective leaders. However, gender disparities become apparent in leadership roles traditionally associated with each gender. Women may face challenges when occupying masculinised leadership positions, supervising predominantly male subordinates, or being evaluated by a higher proportion of male assessors. The "glass ceiling" concept highlights career advancement obstacles for women, but it has limitations as it overlooks challenges faced earlier in the leadership journey. The term "leadership labyrinth" is proposed to encompass challenges at all stages. Three sets of explanations are identified for the underrepresentation of women in leadership: investment in human capital, gender differences, and prejudice and discrimination against women leaders.

## POTENTIAL CHALLENGE

Passive resistance can pose a major challenge. Some individuals may not fully grasp the importance of gender equality initiatives, hindering their active engagement and support. People may resist gender equality efforts if they perceive them as disruptive or threatening to existing norms and routines, or they might not be interested in attending workshops if they perceive

them as unrelated to their roles. On the other hand, in cases where individuals are interested in the topic, they might be overburdened with other tasks and end up prioritising other responsibilities over participating in gender equality workshops or activities.

## BEST PRACTICES

Creating a change-oriented mentality towards gender equality requires time, effort and active engagement from change-drivers. To effectively drive this change within an institution, the following should be considered:

**Organisation of awareness-raising initiatives** that emphasize the importance and benefits of gender equality. These can include workshops, seminars, and campaigns to educate staff and stakeholders about the significance of gender equality in the context of business schools and society.

**Fostering a culture of ongoing dialogue** and open communication regarding gender equality. Creation of platforms, such as forums or discussion groups, that facilitate constructive conversations and encourage individuals to voice their concerns and ideas.

**The use of research-based arguments** to evidence and demonstrate the benefits of gender equality in academia and society at large. Data and case studies that highlight the positive outcomes such as improved organisational performance, innovation, and enhanced decision-making processes could be used too.

**Shedding light on the negative consequences of gender inequality** on individuals, organisations, and society as a whole.

**Further reading**
EQUAL4EUROPE's Training and Toolkit to Improve Gender Equality Related to Decision-Making

# CHAPTER 4:
**INTEGRATING THE GENDER DIMENSION IN RESEARCH AND TEACHING**

**INTRODUCTION**

**ACTIVITY 1: STUDYING THE CONTEXT AND EFFORTS OF INTEGRATING A GENDER DIMENSION IN RESEARCH AND TEACHING IN THE INSTITUTION**

**ACTIVITY 2: PROMOTING GENDER SENSITIVE RESEARCH**

**ACTIVITY 3: INTEGRATING GENDER EQUALITY IN RESEARCH PROJECTS**

**ACTIVITY 4: ORGANISING WORKSHOPS FOR RESEARCHERS AND PHD STUDENTS**

**ACTIVITY 5: PROMOTING THE INCLUSION OF THE GENDER DIMENSION IN STUDENTS' AND PHD CURRICULA**

## INTRODUCTION

The objectives of this chapter are to:

- Raise awareness about gender in research in all of its dimensions;
- Encourage researchers to include gender in research topic selection and design procedures;
- Foster gender sensitive research by the integrating gender dimension in research projects;
- Ensure gender-balanced research teams, supporting women's participation in research;
- Foster research focosuing on gender as a subject matter;
- Encourage researchers to include a gender perspective in teaching.

The activities proposed in this chapter aim to help institutions understand the importance of gender in research and teaching.

## ACTIVITY 1: STUDYING THE CONTEXT AND EFFORTS OF INTEGRATING A GENDER DIMENSION IN RESEARCH AND TEACHING IN THE INSTITUTION

The objective is to gain an overview of initiatives that support the integration of gender dimension in research.

The process starts by creating a shared understanding of the key concepts related to identifying the gender dimension in research. This will provide guidance for the collection of toolkits, recommendations and best practices from other initiatives.

> 👆 **Further reading**
> EQUAL4EUROPE's Gender in Research: A Reading List
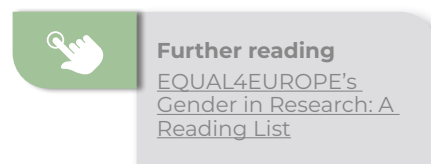
A working group comprising representatives from different departments should be assembled to assess the applicability of the gathered tools and resources in context of your institution. The conclusions of the diagnosis (see Chapter 1: Identification and Evaluation of Gender Issues) could be used as guidance to evaluate the relevance of each tool. Each tool should be reviewed by at least two individuals.

The selected tools should be compiled into a report that describes the relevance of each tool and links with the data that come from the institutional diagnosis. It should provide a categorisation of the tools according to the three areas:

- Gender dimension in research content:
  - Number of scientific outputs regarding gender equality;
  - Number of scientific outputs including a gender perspective
  - Existence of courses in the institution related to integrating the gender perspective in research;

- Gender dimension in education:
  - Number of teaching hours per women and men;
  - Number of teaching hours per women and men for student level: bachelor courses, Master courses, PhD courses, etc;
  - Number of courses taught by women and men;
  - Number of courses taught by women and men men for student level: bachelor courses, Master courses, PhD courses, etc;
  - Number of courses related to gender equality;
  - Existence of courses in the institution related to integrating the gender perspective in teaching;
- Creating gender-balanced research teams:
  - Number of women and men in research teams;
  - Number of women and mean leading research teams.

The report should be concluded with a summary that proposes key areas of actions to be addressed in the institutional GEP.

## POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

These are some of the challenges that might arise when carrying out the study:

- Lack of data and information: institutions may not have collected or reported this information systematically;
- Measuring impact: determining whether changes lead to greater gender equity can be challenging;

- Data privacy: the need for privacy and confidentiality should be carefully addressed.

## BEST PRACTICE

Some institutions from the EQUAL4EUROPE consortium decided to include the following questions in their periodical survey that they conducted with researchers in order to get some information about gender dimension in research. These can provide useful inspiration for similar surveys:[24]

- Gender is particularly relevant in my field of research (Yes/No or a sliding scale of responses);
- Does your institution have an active policy to track or help researchers address the role of gender in research?
- Does your institution have a policy to check the gender neutrality of the courses?
- Is there anything else your institution does to include gender in research that you would like to share with us?

## ACTIVITY 2: PROMOTING GENDER SENSITIVE RESEARCH

The objective of this activity is to create resources with real-world examples and guidance on integrating gender considerations into research. This could inspire researchers to adopt gender-sensitive approaches, foster inclusivity and contribute to advancing gender equality in the research community.

Faculty and/or researchers should collaborate identifying examples of research projects that incorporate gender analysis in their research processes. The identified good practices could be collected in the form of short case studies. A collaboration with an external expert could also be considered. The expert could develop a case with practical insights and actionable steps on different aspects of integrating gender into research projects.

All the case studies should be compiled and available online, ensuring easy accessibility for interested stakeholders.

## POTENTIAL CHALLENGE

A significant challenge is the transition from general principles to the practical application of gender integration in specific research projects. While there are overarching principles that apply to most projects, researchers often seek guidance on how to tailor gender integration to the unique methods and challenges within their particular disciplines.

## BEST PRACTICE

To address the (multi)disciplinary challenge of integrating gender perspectives into research, the solution could involve building a network of researchers from various disciplines.

An informal network can be established by inviting researchers who either conduct research on gender or apply gender perspectives in their work. The initial group could be identified based on information from the publication database and existing

personal contacts, opening to any researcher at the institution.

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👆 **Further reading**
EQUAL4EUROPE's case studies.

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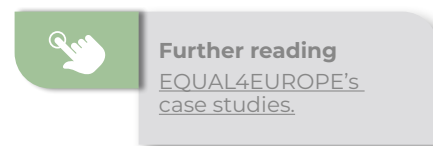
## ACTIVITY 3: INTEGRATE GENDER EQUALITY IN RESEARCH PROJECTS

The objective of this activity is to integrate gender equality in research projects. It is important to avoid approaching gender as an "add on" category to a research project, and integrate it – both during the data collection and the analysis – as a factor that shapes people's experiences.

There are 3 main questions to consider when carrying out that integration:

1. How does gender relate to the broader research question?
2. What are the mechanisms through which gender operates in the field of study?
3. What data is needed to unpack the operation of gender in the field of study?

## BEST PRACTICE

Not all research necessarily has the gender dimension included. Checklists for **gender-sensitive research** aim to prompt reflection on how to incorpora-

te the gender dimension effectively in research projects. They could tackle the phases of: designing the research, conducting the research and disseminating its outcomes, using a question-based approach to serve as guidance. The questions could be accompanied by short explanatory notes to help clarify the different concepts and may provide practical examples to illustrate their application.

The following questions could be self-asked when conducting research:

1. Have you checked if men and women or male and female subjects are differently related to the research problem?
2. Does the proposal explicitly and comprehensively explain how gender issues will be handled? If gender issues will not be included, is there a statement explaining why not?
3. Have you considered the possibility that there will be different outcomes and impacts of the research on all genders?
4. Are the groups involved in the project (e.g., samples, testing groups) sex/gender-balanced?
5. Are you using gender-sensitive language?

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👆 **Further reading**
EQUAL4EUROPE's Checklist for Gender-Sensitive Research

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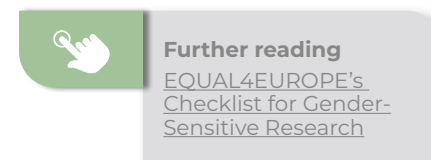
## ACTIVITY 4: ORGANISING WORKSHOPS FOR RESEARCHERS AND PHD STUDENTS

The objective of this activity is to design and implement an effective awareness-raising training specifically targeted at PhD candidates. The training should highlight the significance of integrating gender dimensions and gender analysis to enhance the quality and impact of research.

The composition of AHMSSBL disciplines, with a more gender-balanced representation of students and academic staff at lower and entry level compared to STEM fields, may lead to underestimating existing gender inequalities and lack of emphasis on gender awareness. The following steps should be considered when developing the training:

**Concept Development and Collaboration**
An external expert and/or an experienced trainer could collaborate in the development of the awareness-raising training ensuring that it is well-structured and addresses the specific needs of the institution's researchers.

**Pilot Testing and Feedback**
Before the full implementation of the training programme, it is advised to conduct a pilot test involving PhD students, postdoc researchers, and research managers. The feedback and insights gathered could refine and improve the training materials and content.

### Training Agenda and Modules

An agenda, including these thematic modules should be developed:

- Introduction to basic concepts related to gender equality in research;
- Integration of gender dimensions in research;
- Integration of gender dimensions in teaching;
- Case studies demonstrating the presented concepts;
- Understanding gender equality aspects in the Horizon Europe Programme.

### Train-the-Trainer Session

A "train-the-trainer" session should be organised to support departments and faculties in delivering the same training. In the session, practical examples and tips on how to structure the course and work with case studies should be provided.

## POTENTIAL CHALLENGE

The main challenge is to ensure that the participants are exposed to an adequate amount of content while allowed sufficient time to reflect on its relevance.

Recruiting PhD students as participants when the training is not mandatory might be challenging too.

## BEST PRACTICES

To address the challenge of providing researchers with tools for integrating gender considerations into their work, these two approaches could be explored:

### Faculty-specific tool review

The available tools should be reviewed, focusing first on those that have been applied by similar faculties or institutions. Researchers should assess the tools' relevance. Through this process, tools that do not significantly benefit researchers could be excluded.

### Development of simple checklists

To empower researchers who may have little prior knowledge of integrating gender dimensions, simple checklists that enable them to reflect on their research or teaching from a gender perspective could be created. They could include references to additional resources or short case studies.

The following are recommendations and best practices that could help motivate participation in the trainings, while allowing content customisation:

- Organisation of shorter training sessions.
- Experience sharing among participants.
- Sharing of examples that demonstrate how gender dimensions are implemented in specific research.
- Linking the training to the requirements of Horizon Europe.

## ACTIVITY 5: PROMOTING THE INCLUSION OF THE GENDER DIMENSION IN STUDENTS' AND PHD CURRICULA

The objective is to create tools that will help researchers and teachers ensure that they integrate gender dimension in their teaching. These tools will help them reflect on their teaching practice with respect to gender sensitivity.

## BEST PRACTICE

Checklists for **gender-sensitive teaching** are intended to assist teachers in fostering gender sensitivity within their teaching practices by encouraging reflection on their teaching methods and approaches. They could cover these areas where gender sensitivity could be integrated into teaching practices:

- course design;
- content development and classroom practices.

Question-based format accompanied by short explanatory notes could be very helpful.

These questions could be self-asked when designing the course and developing the content of the course curriculum or when reflecting on the classroom practices:

1. Are students made more aware of gender stereotypes connected to the field?
2. Do students use gender-sensitive language?

3. Is feedback collected from the students and, if so, are the responses analysed through a gender lens?
4. Is gender considered together with other forms of social identities?
5. Are participative and inclusive teaching methods used?

**Further reading**
EQUAL4EUROPE's Checklist for Gender-Sensitive Teaching

## POTENTIAL CHALLENGE

Admittedly, achieving a truly gender-sensitive approach to teaching is not a mere checkbox to be ticked; it requires a fundamental shift in the way educators perceive and deliver knowledge.

Embracing a gender-sensitive teaching approach involves going beyond the conventional norms of education and acknowledging that gender-related issues play a crucial role in shaping students' experiences and learning outcomes. Moreover, the challenge encompasses the broader institutional landscape.

Encouraging institutions to prioritize and invest in gender-sensitive teaching practices demands overcoming resource limitations, a possibly unfavorable organisational structure and overcoming potential resistance within the academic community.

## BEST PRACTICES

- Exploring innovative and attractive communication tools to address the challenge effectively. Using visually compelling formats or interactive mediums could serve as powerful attention-grabbers for both PhD students and educators in higher education institutions;

- Presenting the principles of inclusive teaching in such engaging ways could spark curiosity and encourage teachers to delve deeper into the topic independently;

- For the researchers interested in gender-sensitive teaching but lacking practical experience, the organization of targeted workshops could be considered. These workshops could provide a theoretical introduction to the topic and engage participants in interactive exercises to facilitate discussions and sharing of experiences. If open to all teachers at the institution, including PhD students, they could offer a platform for learning and collaboration;

- To enhance support for the integration of gender aspects into curricula, the development of a dedicated section on the institutional website is worth considering. This section could provide an overview of existing tools and resources to aid educators in their efforts to incorporate gender-sensitive content in their courses. It could also include references to courses across the university that focus on gender aspects in various disciplines.

**Further reading**
Gender (un)awareness in higher education: an EQUAL4EUROPE comic.

# CHAPTER 5:
**GENERATING AND IMPLEMENTING GENDER EQUALITY PLANS**

INTRODUCTION
ACTIVITY 1: PREPARING THE GENDER EQUALITY PLAN
ACTIVITY 2: ENGAGING WITH RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS
ACTIVITY 3: DEVELOPING THE POSITION OF THE "GENDER EQUALITY OFFICER"
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ACTIVITY 5: IMPLEMENTING A MENTORING PROGRAMME
ACTIVITY 6: ASSESSMENT OF GEP

## INTRODUCTION

The objectives of this chapter are to:

- Structure and organise the successful implementation of the institutional GEP;
- Propose actions and roles that could further enhance the sustainable implementation of the GEP.

The activities and tools proposed here are to facilitate organising work for preparing and implementing a GEP, overcoming potential resistances, and designing accompanying programmes.

## ACTIVITY 1: PREPARING THE GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

**The elaboration of the Gender Equality Plan should include a participatory approach** were all relevant actors and stakeholders participate in the elaboration of the Gender Equality Plan, including high management, middle management, academic staff, administrative staff, workers' representatives and students.

An important preliminary step essential for the adoption of the Gender Equality Plan is to **set-up an Equality Commission or Team**, identified as a temporary working group which coordinates the process of adopting a Gender Equality Plan.

The following checklist summarizes the most common steps that, under different levels of formality, are common to most institutions:

1. Inform all relevant decision-making bodies and relevant actors of the initiation of the process for the adoption of the Gender Equality Plan, including existing regulations or time restrictions, if any.
2. Set-up the Equality Committee or Team involved in the negotiations or process for adopting the Gender Equality Plan, formally registering its constitution, if necessary.
3. Elaborate a plan and schedule of the proceedings of the Equality Committee or Team and inform all members. In this sense, it is advisable to plan the following:
   a. Formally constituting the committee.
   b. Identify the main lines of action and main objectives of the Gender Equality Plan.
   c. Fix an approximate end date for the adoption of the Gender Equality Plan.
   d. Plan regular meetings of the committee, including meetings with decision-making bodies and stakeholders relevant to the adoption of the Gender Equality Plan.
   e. Distribute tasks among the different members of the committee.
4. Register the minutes of each meeting, identifying all relevant agreements and decisions adopted.
5. Adopt the necessary measures to guarantee that the negotiation or adoption process of the Gender Equality Plan follows the established time frame.

Other steps of the process are the following:

- **Involving key stakeholders:** management, academic and administrative staff and students. In order to gather their input and secure their support for the plan's approval;
- **Understanding the institutional and legal framework** to grasp the gender-equality situation within the institution and environment. Existing gender-related policies should be considered to design an effective plan addressing actual needs. Ensure compliance with national laws and EU provisions, which might be necessary for accessing funds like Horizon Europe.

**The next step is drafting the Gender Equality Plan** according to EU guidelines and recognised best practices. The plan should include:

- Introductory section aimed at providing an overview and the essential information about the Gender Equality Plan adopted in the institution: what is a GEP, relevant national and/or regional legal framework, process of negotiation, adoption, and implementation of the Gender Equality Plan, including (if this is the case) the parties that participated in this process, date of entry into force and period of application, summary of the contents and commitment of the institution towards gender equality, the integration of gender equality in the organisation and other relevant institutional forms of support of gender equality, including existing measures related to gender equality;

- Overview about the main conclusions of the gender equality analysis conducted as a preliminary step for the adoption of the Gender Equality Plan. Essentially, the main results of the analysis of the sex or gender-disaggregated data collected as an evidence-base for the Gender Equality Plan, the most important gender equality measures already implemented in the organization and the main areas of intervention and the priority areas for intervention identified on the basis of the gender equality analysis;
- Main objectives of the Gender Equality Plan, relating them with the situation of gender equality in the institution described in the previous section. Objectives should be presented as specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-oriented (SMART objectives);
- Action plan regarding the promotion of gender equality in the institution. It should include a description of all the specific measures adopted in the Gender Equality Plan, there should be a link between the SMART objectives and the measures adopted, and the measures should also be designed as SMART - indicating the content of the measure, target group, indicators to assess its impact, department responsible and available resources, implementation timeframe, etc;
   - For research institutions it is important to bear in mind the HORIZON EUROPE eligibility criteria which includes the publication of the GEP on the institution's website, the dedication of resources for the

design, implementation and monitoring of the GEP, the collection of sex or gender-disaggregated data as an evidence-base for the GEO, measures for monitoring the GEP implementation, the organization of training and capacity-building aimed, in particular, at developing gender competence and tackling unconscious gender bias among staff, leaders and decision-makers and measures addressing some recommended thematic areas: (i) work-life balance and organisational culture; (ii) gender balance in leadership and decision-making; (iii) gender equality in recruitment and career progression; (iv) integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content; (v) measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment.

- Monitoring and evaluation of the measures and objectives adopted to assess the progress and impact of the Plan and the procedure to, if necessary, introduce the appropriate adjustments. In this context, it is recommended to create an Equality Committee in charge of the periodical monitoring and evaluation of the GEP, as well as offering interpretation and alternative dispute resolution;
- Timeline of the GEP, summarizing the information regarding the duration and timeline for the application of the Gender Equality Plan;
- Dissemination strategy.

**Further reading**
EQUAL4EUROPE's Toolkit for adopting GEPs in AHMSSBL research institutions and the related Template

## POTENTIAL CHALLENGE

Drafting a GEP is a complex task that necessitates a deep understanding of the fundamentals of gender equality principles and practices. It builds on the knowledge of the national and regulatory frameworks and best practices developed in other institutions.

This requires individuals to navigate through a plethora of information, synthesise diverse insights, and create a comprehensive plan that addresses the unique needs and goals of their institution. Finding the right balance and ensuring the GEP aligns with the institution's vision while adhering to national and regulatory guidelines could be a challenging process.

## BEST PRACTICE

Consider developing a "tracking tool". It ensures that every aspect of the GEP process is addressed. It covers the negotiation process with key stakeholders, the design of the plan, its approval and its dissemination throughout the institution.

**Further reading**
EQUAL4EUROPE 's Tracking tool for GEPs
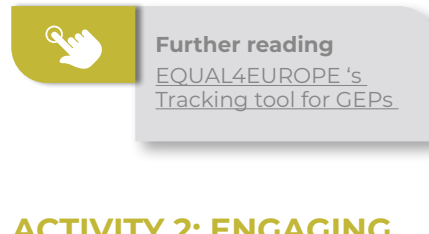
## ACTIVITY 2: ENGAGING WITH RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS

The introduction of the GEP goes beyond merely adding a few minor adjustments; it involves a substantial transformation of existing policies and practices. Addressing crucial aspects like wage policy, recruitment, promotions, and work organisation necessitates a deep re-evaluation of established norms and procedures. The magnitude of these changes could lead to resistance and pushback from various quarters within the institution.

The key to overcoming such challenge lies in actively involving key stakeholders[25] from the beginning of the elaboration process and fostering frequent engagement with them. By doing so, you could secure the approval of the plan and its effective implementation without encountering significant resistance regarding its contents.

It is crucial to keep high management well-informed about the setting-up process. Regularly updating them on the content development and seeking their input could help build a shared understanding and garner their support for the plan.

Frequent engagements and open discussions with high management could also prove beneficial. By addressing their concerns and incorporating their perspectives, you could create a sense of collaboration and ownership over the GEP, reducing the likelihood of resistance.

In addition, forming a task force responsible for drafting the GEP that includes representatives from middle management and workers, as well as of gender equality bodies/officers already existing in the institution, could further facilitate the approval and implementation process. Involving these stakeholders ensures that diverse viewpoints are considered, fostering a more inclusive and holistic approach to the plan's development. They may also have knowledge and resources useful for the implementation of the GEP, as well as data/information that could help carry out the preliminary diagnosis.

Furthermore, it is important not to forget to engage students. They can, indeed, have a key role in reporting relevant issues present in the institution, and in contributing to the success of some measures included in GEPs, like those for integrating gender equality in teaching and research and anti-harassment policies.

**EQUAL4EUROPE**
GENDER EQUALITY PLANS

## POTENTIAL CHALLENGE

Although not all of these challenges appear in every institution – and in some cases they do not appear at all – here below we reported a brief outline of the most common forms of obstacles and resistances that might arise while designing and implementing a GEP, following recommendations from the EIGE Gear tool.[26]

- **Lack of understanding of gender equality or tendency to consider it as a niche topic**. Some stakeholders may not have a full understanding of gender equality and of the importance of adopting GEPs. Others might minimize gender issues and consider they are an interesting matter just for a group of people. An approach

based on dialogue – also with the support of high management – and involving stakeholders and the workforce in periodical training on the importance of gender equality, can contribute to prevent this risk;

- **Gender equality intended as not required in a meritocratic environment** because performance is already measured on the basis of objective (and allegedly unbiased) criteria. Such a resistance can be contrasted through information and training sessions/campaigns highlighting how unconscious bias can prevent true merit to emerge. Or earmarking how a working environment with a balanced presence of women and men can reinforce the effects of meritocracy in fostering quality and innovation in research;

- **"Job done attitude" and "gender fatigue"**. The first dynamics often appear when gender sensitive policies start producing results, and people may think that no more effort is needed. Gender fatigue is more likely to emerge when measures to promote gender equality have been implemented since longtime. Possible solutions are emphasizing that implemented measures need continuous maintenance, or that an enduring effort towards gender equality is sometimes a requirement to access funds or to get prestigious awards.

Further forms of resistances – as pointed out also by the FESTA EU project[27] – may characterize more closely the implementation process of GEPs:

- **Individual/institutional resistance**. Individual resistance may appear when a group of stakeholders targeted by specific measures (like a training course) do not attend to activities, for instance if they do not receive a reward (like professional credits). Institutional resistance consists of a generalized lack of interest about gender equality, which could prevent even a well-developed GEP from producing significant effects;

- **Active/passive resistance:** Active resistance is easier to identify, corresponding to being critical, fault finding, raising objections and other similar behaviors. Agreeing verbally, but not following through with concrete practice, or standing by to make the change fail are signals of passive resistance.

Individual/institutional and active/passive resistances might be addressed first by **persuading people**. For instance, organizing meetings to give them motivation to embrace the gender equality cause. Furthermore, using the leverage of **network**, like gathering stakeholders already committed to gender equality, so to count on a first core group ensuring adequate support to the GEP. And, finally, acting **strategically**, by-passing individual resistances relating to specific gender equality initiatives utilizing formal events and more general meetings to address them.

## BEST PRACTICE

Here below we included some suggestions and best practices experienced in the EQUAL4EUROPE consortium and

that allowed to smooth the approval and implementation process of the GEPs.

- Consider involving key stakeholders (like institution's officers/bodies already dealing with gender equality, high and middle management, and relevant decision-making bodies) from the beginning of the diagnosis. Providing them with tasks and a role in the process, will lead to a stronger engagement;

- Present the GEP as a strategic document for pursuing gender equality, highlighting the positive impact it may have in the institution. Counting on a solid evidence-based diagnosis of gender imbalances could be very persuasive in fostering engagement;

- Talk with your Communication officer/department, to get support in designing a tailored communication strategy to keep informed and involved key stakeholders regarding the GEP setting-up process. Useful tools in this sense could be workshops to disseminate the results of the preliminary diagnosis; joint meetings between specific stakeholders and the team appointed to design the GEP; as well as specific training to emphasize the positive impact that the implementation of the GEP could have in the institution;

- Some stakeholders may be discouraged if they perceive initiatives to promote gender equality as the outcome of an external dynamic or the result of a top-down approach. In order to avoid this challenge, consider involving all relevant stakeholders in the composition of the working

group in charge of the elaboration of the GEP – as active members or advisors – and organize meetings to exchange experiences and suggestions. Moreover, encourage cooperation between different stakeholders in common tasks;

- When presenting the project for the GEP to a group of stakeholders, rely on benchmarks of implementation in other (national or foreign) institutions, containing measures in line with the interests of that group.

## ACTIVITY 3: DEVELOPING THE POSITION OF THE "GENDER EQUALITY OFFICER"

The objective is to create, establish and raise awareness about the role of the "Gender Equality Officer". Who fosters an environment free from discrimination and gender bias. His/her tasks could range from policy development and advocacy to data collection activities and ensuring policy compliance across the institution.

The process starts by defining the GE officer's main tasks and functions. The decision-making bodies should ensure that the GE officer has adequate support in terms of personnel, time, and resources to carry out this task effectively.

## POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

If the institution does not already have a GE officer, the task of appointing a suitable GE officer from among the exist-

ing employees could present a challenge. Mainly to precisely determine the roles and responsibilities of the GE officer and to establish the ideal qualifications and characteristics required for this crucial position.

Acknowledge and communicate this well in advance as a potential challenge to those responsible for hiring decisions. Prepare the ground for the creation of a new position which will not only relieved the burden on the GE officer but also enable them to work at full capacity on GEP-related tasks. Keep in mind that this is at the same time a strategic decision on behalf of the insitutuition and must be communicated as such.

## BEST PRACTICES

HEIs use different job titles to identify the work role responsible for different aspects of promoting gender equality. The most common job titles include:

- Gender equality officer
- Equality officer
- Gender and Equality officer
- Diversity officer
- Equality and Diversity officer
- Anti-discrimination officer
- Women´s representative
- Equality, diversity and inclusion officer
- Equality and diversity advisor
- Family support officer

Required qualifications and experience level depend on what is the expected scope of tasks and responsibilities.

Qualification requirements could include:

- Obtained a degree in social sciences or humanities;
- Received training and/or has experience in gender equality or diversity work;
- Has previous experience in conducting research on gender issues;
- Has experience with mediation/facilitation.

Tasks and responsibilities may include:

- Analytical and monitoring tasks:
  - Monitoring current legislation relating to equality and anti-discrimination;
  - Producing surveys and reports on equality and diversity aspects related to the organisation. Monitoring and assessing the organisation's equality and diversity policies (including the implementation of the Gender Equality Plan).
- Providing strategic advice:
  - Advising the institution's management regarding the gender equality strategy and its implementation;
  - Developing organisation's equality and diversity policies.
- Coordination and facilitation tasks:
  - Coordinating activities related to supporting gender equality across different organisational parts and units;
  - Identifying potential collaborators/contact points within different organisational units and facilitating their communication.
- Supporting recruitment and promotional processes:

- Promoting gender-sensitive organizational culture and staffing policy;
- Advising colleagues who are involved in the recruitment process (members of committees);
- Participating in staff appointment procedures and interviews;
- Monitoring the staffing procedures for academic employees.
- Supporting career development of female researchers:
  - Initiating and running mentoring programmes for female researchers;
  - Tracking and disseminating information about professional training and career development opportunities for female researchers.
- Communication and awareness raising:
  - Initiating and supporting the internal and external communication regarding gender equality;
  - Checking promotional materials produced by the organisation to ensure diversity is reflected;
  - Planning and implementation of events to promote gender equality, e. g. discussions, workshops, seminars.

**Further reading**
EQUAL4EUROPE's Training courses on integrating a gender perspective in research and education

## ACTIVITY 4: IMPLEMENTING THE GEP

The design and adoption of a Gender Equality Plan does not guarantee its effective implementation. It is essential to guarantee that all measures included in the GEP are effectively implemented.

To enhance the effectiveness of a GEP, the following steps could be considered:

1. Committee formation:
   - Initiation of a committee responsible for developing the GEP;
   - Encouraging the participation of key stakeholders within the organization, such as worker representatives, management delegates, and external advisors specializing in gender equality, as per institutional and legal requirements, might be explored.

2. Engagement of key stakeholders:
   - Meetings led by the committee could be arranged to inform relevant individuals within the institution about the GEP;
   - The request of input and support from various groups, including management, academic and administrative staff, and students to secure approval for the plan is advised.

3. Understanding the institutional and legal context:
   - A thorough investigation, incorporating archival data, meetings, and surveys, could be undertaken to gain a comprehensive understanding of the gender equality landscape within the institution;

   - The consideration of existing gender-related policies and challenges to design a responsive plan that addresses genuine needs could be explored;
   - Familiarity with the applicable legal framework to ensure compliance with national laws and EU regulations could be part of the planning process.

4. Plan development in alignment with EU guidelines and widely accepted best practices:
   - Attention should be taken when creating the GEP in alignment with EU guidelines and widely accepted best practices;
   - Ensuring that the plan includes SMART objectives, measurement criteria, and provisions for continuous monitoring and potential adjustments could be part of the planning process;
   - The committee, in collaboration with external advisors, could deliberate on and enhance the initial draft.

5. The presentation of the finalized GEP to the relevant decision-making body for approval should be considered. A positive relationship established with senior management during the drafting phase might be instrumental in facilitating productive discussions and securing the approval.
   Organization of a training on the implementation of the GEP. This training could benefit three main groups: the GE officers, middle managers and staff members responsible for tasks relevant to the implementation of the GEP.

6. Monitoring of the implementation of the GEP. It is important for the owner of the GEP within the institution, whether it is the Department of Human Resources or the Gender Equality Officer, to regularly monitor the implementation process of the different measures included in the GEP and follow up on any obstacles encountered.

> **Further reading**
> EQUAL4EUROPE's Internal Reporting tool for Gender Equality Plans

## POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

The integration of gender equality in a higher education institution can be a sensitive process and encountering obstacles and resistances when engaging with key stakeholders is a possibility.

These are quick snapshots of the challenges that can occur when putting a Gender Equality Plan into action:

- Resistance to change as a result of the perception that gender equality is not a priority nor urgent matter, or by treating gender equality as a niche or secondary matter for the institution or an interesting matter for a group of people, but not applicable to the entire organization. Furthermore, the perception that gender equality is not required in a meritocratic environment such as higher education and research institutions can act as a true obstacle and resistance;

- Lack of understanding and institutional support: It is important for all key stakeholders to have a full understanding of gender equality and the importance of adopting a Gender Equality Plan. Training sessions involving stakeholders and the entire workforce explaining the importance of gender equality, specifically for the success of a higher education institution, can contribute to raise awareness and foster engagement;

- The existence of previous gender equality measures can also act as a resistance. The fact that important efforts and advancements have been made in the field of gender equality in the institution, sector or country can create the perception that no more intervention is needed ("job done attitude") or the existence of gender "fatigue", when after some years of commitment towards gender equality, institutions or people start weakening the effort.

## BEST PRACTICES

The adoption of a Gender Equality Plan should be carefully planned and tailored according to the specific characteristics of each organization. This will ensure that obstacles and resistances are duly addressed from the beginning, smoothing the implementation process.

The crucial importance of engaging key stakeholders in the process of designing and implementing a Gender Equality Plan requires acting timely. Training sessions involving stakeholders and the entire workforce explaining the impor-

tance of gender equality, specifically for the success of a higher education institution, can contribute to raising awareness and fostering engagement.

Furthermore, a public and clear endorsement of the Gender Equality Plan by high management has the potential to enhance the commitment of the entire institution, overcoming obstacles and resistances.

## ACTIVITY 5: IMPLEMENTING A MENTORING PROGRAMME

A mentoring programme supports the career advancement and professional growth of women within the institution. The setting-up of a mentoring programme can contribute to increase gender equality in a higher education institution as a result of (i) individual and short-term objectives of successful professional development of women (and, in a broader sense, of all underrepresented people in academia), and the (ii) organizational and long-term effort aimed at creating the conditions for a deeper structural change, tackling gender-biased dynamics and practices.

Mentors provide guidance, advice and networking opportunities to help individuals achieve their academic and career goals. This entails the capability to realize general mentoring tasks, like playing a role-model function, stimulating self-reflection and helping the mentees to find motivation to deal with career-related challenges, as well as a more specific assistance linked with the academic context. This includes support to strengthen academic performance of mentees, helping them to structure career strategies, achieve related goals, and to join national/international professional networks. Mentors provide ad hoc solutions to help people of the less represented gender - that currently, in the academic context, are frequently women - to address the most relevant obstacles on their career path.

Mentors can also be agents for gender equality and organizational change, operating both at individual and at institutional level addressing and removing gender biased norms and practices present in the institution, involving decision-making bodies and the whole community.

There are certain steps that an institution could consider while preparing a mentoring programme:

### Programme planning:
- High management and programme direction could approve the programme;
- The creation of a new mentoring programme specifically designed for young female scientists, which would also be open to male participants, or the adaptation of an existing programme to include gender-sensitive features could be discussed;
- The key features of the mentoring programme, such as the type (formal or informal), the mentoring model (one-to-one, group, cross-mentoring), and the target audience (PhD candidates, young researchers, expe-

rienced researchers, young professors) should be defined. The integration of supplementary elements such as workshops, seminars, or further training into the programme could also be considered.

### Recruitment and preparing participants:
- Making mentee participation mandatory could be considered;
- Training sessions for mentors to educate them on mentoring principles and best practices could be organised.

### Matching and programme initiation:
- A matching process between mentors and mentees based on their preferences and goals could be facilitated;
- Kick-off meetings to initiate the mentoring relationships could be organized;
- The programme's progress could be monitored;
- The HR department could be involved in the organisation and support of the programme, especially to ensure that gender-sensitive aspects are incorporated.

### Data collection and evaluation:
- Information could be collected through archival data, surveys and interviews;
- Feedback from mentors and mentees about their experience in the programme could be gathered;
- The impact of the mentoring programme on participants and the institution's gender diversity initiatives could be assessed.

**Further reading**
EQUAL4EUROPE's Toolkit for setting-up mentoring programmes

## POTENTIAL CHALLENGE 1

A challenge in organising a systematic mentoring programme, particularly if it aims to include all young researchers and/or young academics in the institution, is the necessity of having an adequate number of mentors. This becomes crucial when opting for the one-to-one mentoring model. The programme's success relies on recruiting a sufficient pool of qualified mentors who could provide personalised guidance and support to each mentee.

## BEST PRACTICE 1

A diagnosis of the institution could be conducted by:
- Determining the current state of the institutional environment, including existing mentoring programmes and the institution's goals related to mentoring;
- Organizing workshops and seminars involving stakeholders, as well as surveys and interviews with early-stage researchers and young academics;
- Identifying issues for prospective mentees, such as lack of information about research practices or insufficient support from supervisors;

- Carrying out a gender equality survey within the institution before starting the design of the programme to ensure that it is tailored to support and empower all participants.

A mentoring team could be appointed to lead the mentoring programme.

The objectives and activities could be defined by:

- Identifying the target group for the programme, considering whether it will be open to both men and women or exclusively to women as well as if it will focus on PhD candidates, postdocs, or young academics;
- Setting up the duration of the programme and the mentoring relationships;
- Considering the resources required to implement the plan.

The validation and approval from the decision-making bodies should be obtained.

## POTENTIAL CHALLENGE 2

Being a mentor presents a challenge. It requires understanding mentoring tasks and strategies, enough time to draft reports and mentoring agreements and the ability to build a relationship with mentees based on confidence and trust. In the context of a gender-sensitive mentoring programme, additional complexities arise such as addressing cases of discrimination or incidents of sexual misconduct. Moreover, tailoring the mentoring activity to suit the diverse requirements of female and male mentees presents a challen-

ge that requires consideration and sensitivity. Navigating these responsibilities calls for continuous learning and adaptability from the mentor.

## BEST PRACTICE 2

Mentors must be provided with the necessary knowledge and practical guidance. Experienced mentors could be very helpful in this. They could impart valuable insights and practical tips to foster fruitful mentoring relationships through the organisation of targeted trainings. By engaging in practical interactions and learning from experienced mentors, prospective mentors could develop the skills and understanding needed to navigate gender-related issues and tailor their approach to the diverse requirements of female and male mentees.

## ACTIVITY 6: ASSESSMENT OF GEP

A Gender Equality Plan is a complex instrument, composed of several objectives, many measures and addressing some key organizational issues. Therefore, monitoring and evaluation instruments are needed to check its progresses and, if necessary, introduce the appropriate adjustments.

The assessment of the GEP can be done by:

1. Setting clear objectives and indicators to track progress. These indicators could include metrics related to gender representation, pay equity, promotion rates, and employee satisfaction.

2. Gathering relevant data on gender-related issues within the organization. This may include gender-disaggregated data on recruitment, retention, promotions, and pay.

3. Conducting employee surveys and feedback to get their perceptions of gender equality within the organization.

4. Tracking the representation of women at different levels of the organization, including leadership positions. An assessment whether the organization is making progress in achieving gender balance could be done too.

5. Assessing the effectiveness of communication and awareness campaigns related to gender equality. In order to ensure that employees are informed about the gender equality plan and its objectives.

6. Regularly reviewing and updating the GEP to adapt to changing circumstances and priorities.

7. Comparing the organization's progress with industry benchmarks and best practices. This could help identify areas where the organization may be lagging behind or excelling.

8. Conducting external audits or assessments by independent experts to gather an unbiased evaluation of the gender equality plan's effectiveness.

9. Developing action plans to address areas of improvement and set new goals based on the assessment findings.

## POTENTIAL CHALLENGE

Data collection and (the lack of) sustainable commitment by high level management of the institutions can be challenging.

Gathering accurate and comprehensive gender-disaggregated data could be difficult. In some cases, organizations may lack sufficient data to assess progress effectively.

Some people/departments might be uncomfortable with the idea of external scrutiny.

## BEST PRACTICE

An impartial assessment tool, to evaluate the implementation of the GEP should be developed. The results of the assessment will not only provide insight into the GE situation at the time of assessment but will also lead to recommendations to further improve the efforts and impacts of the GEP.

The EQUAL4EUROPE consortium has developed an impartial assessment tool with a Logical Framework consisting of five Key Areas of Intervention (KAIs):

**EQUAL4EUROPE**
GENDER EQUALITY PLANS

**1** Work-life balance and organisational culture

**2** Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

**3** Mesures equality in recruitment and career progression

**4** Mesures against gender-based violence, incl. sexual harassment

**5** Integrating the gender dimension in teaching and research

For each KAI, activities, outputs, outcomes and the desired impacts are established.

As an example, for the activity "establishment of an extended tenure clock for young parents", part of the KAI "work-life balance and organisational culture":

- Activity: Establishment of an extended tenure clock for young parents
- Output: A policy on extended tenure-clock for young parents
- Outcome: Young parents experience improved work-life balance
- Impacts:
  - Sustainable institutional and cultural change
  - Change the stereotype AHMSSBL institutions in the EU

There are several methodological tools for data collection, some of which may include:

- Desk review: first, the GEP will be examined. Second, relevant docu-

mentation regarding (newly introduced) policies and measures in order to analyse the availability and implementation of the GEPs. Third, quantitative data on the levels of staff, students, and research & teaching

- Questionnaires to researchers, teachers and students
- Interviews to management, HR and the Gender Equality Officer

**Further reading**
EQUAL4EUROPE's Internal Reporting tool for Gender Equality Plans

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