EIGE
European Institute
for Gender Equality

Gender Mainstreaming

Gender Equality in Academia and Research

GEAR tool step-by-step guide

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Acknowledgements

European Institute for Gender Equality

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is an autonomous body of the European Union established to strengthen gender equality across the EU. Equality between women and men is a fundamental value of the EU, and EIGE's task is to make this a reality in Europe and beyond. This includes becoming a European knowledge centre on gender equality issues, supporting gender mainstreaming in all EU and Member State policies, and fighting discrimination based on sex.

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Abbreviations

ACT	Communities of Practice for Accelerating Gender Equality and Institutional Change in Research and Innovation across Europe
C4S	Communities for Sciences
CALIPER	Gender Equality in STEM Research
CV	curriculum vitae
DFG	Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German research foundation)
EFFORTI	Evaluation Framework for Promoting Gender Equality in Research and Innovation
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
ERA	European research area
FESTA	Female Empowerment in Science and Technology Academia
GEAR	Gender Equality in Academia and Research
GEARING ROLES	Gender Equality Actions in Research Institutions to Transform Gender Roles
GENDERACTION	Gender Equality in the ERA Community to Innovate Policy Implementation
GEP	gender equality plan
HR	human resources
LeTSGEPs	Leading Towards Sustainable Gender Equality Plans in Research Performing Organisations
R & I	research and innovation
RESET	Redesigning Equality and Scientific Excellence Together
RFO	research funding organisation
RPO	research-performing organisation
SMART	specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time related
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
SUPERA	Supporting the Promotion of Equality in Research and Academia
TARGET	Taking a Reflexive Approach to Gender Equality for Institutional Transformation

Executive summary

Promoting gender equality and inclusiveness is a priority of the European Commission's framework for establishing a more effective and coordinated European research area (ERA). It is also a priority of the Commission's new key funding programme for research and innovation (R & I) entitled Horizon Europe. The latest edition of *She Figures* (European Commission, 2021a) has made evident that R & I is still characterised by significant gender inequalities, although slow progress is visible. For instance, the proportion of women among doctoral graduates (48 %) in the EU-27 is nearly equal to that of men, and nearly 42 % of all members of academic staff are women. However, women are still under-represented among researchers in the business sector (20.9 %), among professors and senior-level staff in academia (26 %) and in decision-making positions in higher education (24 %). Gender inequalities are also evident between scientific disciplines and across the EU Member States. Gender inequalities in R & I do not follow the same patterns in all countries (European Commission, 2021b; see also the European Commission's web page on *She Figures 2021*).

Promoting gender equality in research and innovation

There are various reasons why the area of R & I does not offer a level playing field for researchers, with women in particular facing multiple barriers in the early stages of their careers and in their career advancement. Combating these gender inequalities and barriers to equal chances for career advancement will contribute to a fairer R & I system, and has several other benefits and advantages. Tackling such inequalities can enhance R & I performance through more gender-diverse teams, which are likely to reach more creative and innovative solutions to problems and issues. Furthermore, it can contribute to more valid and reliable research methodologies and results, thereby enhancing the quality and excellence of research. This is also recognised by Horizon Europe, which re-

quires research proposals to have a sex/gender analysis integrated into their approach, where applicable, and has included this analysis as a criterion for assessing the excellence of these proposals. Increased gender equality and inclusiveness will change the work and study climate in organisations to one in which people feel safe, valued and comfortable. This will increase well-being, work satisfaction and the motivation of staff; contribute to higher retention rates; and enable organisations to attract new talent. Consequently, by promoting gender equality, broader cultural changes can be triggered in organisations, which will contribute to a more flexible, creative and sustainable working culture and climate.

Using gender equality plans as a strategy for change in research and innovation

To reap the benefits of increased levels of gender equality and to tackle the existing inequalities, the European Commission declared that gender equality and equal opportunities for all were central values that needed to be upheld in all R & I policies in the ERA. Therefore, gender equality is a key priority and cross-cutting issue in Horizon Europe, which requires all public bodies, research organisations and higher education establishments in the Member States and associated countries to have a gender equality plan (GEP) in place: having a GEP is an eligibility criterion for participation in its research framework programme.

How to get started: Get inspired by the Gender Equality in Academia and Research tool

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) Gender Equality in Academia and Research (GEAR) tool provides concrete and practical guidelines for developing GEPs that are tailored to an organisation's specific context

and conditions, and that are compatible with the Horizon Europe requirements. Based on practical experience and examples, it provides detailed information on **what** a GEP is and **which** stakeholders should be involved, **why** gender equality is important and relevant for organisations, and **how** an effective and sustainable GEP can be developed and implemented in six steps, from getting started and implementing the GEP to monitoring and evaluation.

A specific section of the GEAR tool (the GEAR action toolbox) provides information on promising practices from organisations that have already implemented gender equality measures and/or are planning such measures. It is a comprehensive collection of measures and advice from universities, research-performing organisations and research funding organisations across the EU-27 that aim to inspire and motivate others to start their own GEP and be part of a community of practitioners and change agents. While some examples are from organisations with established gender equality structures, there are also examples from organisations that have only recently started to promote gender equality and to develop a GEP. Finally, in the section entitled **where**, the GEAR tool provides up-to-date information on legal and policy frameworks on gender equality in R & I in the EU Member States. Indeed, national contexts are important framework conditions for developing and implementing GEPs. Strong legal and policy frameworks can support or even require GEP establishment and can predefine which objectives and measures should be implemented.

This publication summarises the main results set out on the updated GEAR tool website, which provides a greater level of detail than this guide, along with further information and resources (good practice examples, webinars and videos) targeted at the different needs of research-performing organisations and research funding organisations not included here.

1. What

1.1. What is a gender equality plan?

With the introduction/start of Horizon Europe, the European Commission made gender equality plans (GEPs) a basic requirement for participation in its research framework programme ([1]). According to the Commission's definition, GEPs are a set of commitments and actions that aim to promote gender equality in an organisation through a process of structural change.

For a brief introduction to GEPs, watch the video produced by the EU-funded project Communities of Practice for Accelerating Gender Equality and Institutional Change in Research and Innovation across Europe (ACT).

The Horizon Europe policy instrument strives to sustainably transform organisational processes, cultures and structures within the field of research and innovation (R & I) to combat and reduce gender imbalances and inequalities. This transformation should be holistic and comprehensive in the way that it addresses the whole organisation, engages all relevant stakeholders and tackles several gender equality issues in your organisation. Therefore, GEPs should not focus on promoting career opportunities and equal access to resources for only one gender; rather, they should be inclusive and target women and men in all their diversity.

You should also take into account that GEPs are to be designed as tools for promoting reflection and learning by encompassing monitoring and evaluation activities. Finally, a GEP needs to establish clear responsibilities for different activities and must specify the general governance and leadership accountability for steering the GEP's implementation and for the GEP's progress and results.

For more information, watch the video produced by the EU-funded project Gender Equality in the European Research Area (ERA) Community to Innovate Policy Implementation (GENDERACTION) on good practice criteria in gender equality policies in European research.

1.2. Framework for an effective and sustainable gender equality plan

An effective GEP that drives structural and cultural change towards gender equality in your organisation should work at the following five levels. By considering these levels in each of the main steps of the GEP cycle (see Chapter 3, which sets out a step-by-step guide; the main steps are status quo assessment (step 2), setting up a GEP (step 3), implementing a GEP (step 4) and monitoring and evaluation (step 5)), you will be able to produce a holistic GEP promoting sustainable change.

1. **Structure.** Your change process should focus on organisational policies and practices that govern, for instance, hiring, promotion and research assessment, and you should provide evidence on how they may or may not contribute to gender inequalities in your organisation. In addition, ground your gender equality work in formal organisational structures and governance mechanisms.

2. **Personnel.** Each organisation has a specific sociodemographic structure. Make sure that you are familiar with the structure of the staff

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working in your organisation (or the students receiving training or the applicants applying for grants or stipends) and that your GEP takes this structure into account.

3. **Power.** Each organisation has a formal, but also an informal, structure of power and influence. As described in step 1 of the step-by-step guide, mapping stakeholders in your organisation is important for identifying those who are potential allies or possible gatekeepers. Keep the power relations within your organisation in mind when you are designing and implementing a GEP, and when you are engaging stakeholders.

4. **Culture.** Organisations also have a specific culture, which is more than just the working culture and climate; it is also visible in the values and messages communicated internally and externally, for instance how women and men are represented on an organisation's website and in other communication materials, as well as how gender equality is valued in these communications.

5. **R & I context.** What are the societal and policy contexts and the regional, national and international policies governing gender equality in R & I? What are the main features of the regional and national R & I system in which your organisation is embedded? How can you make use of these framework conditions to strengthen your GEP and to gain support for your objectives?

Box 1. Terms and definitions

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) Gender Equality in Academia and Research (GEAR) tool provides definitions of terms related to GEPs. If not stated otherwise, they are taken from EIGE's glossary and thesaurus, which is a terminology tool focusing on the area of gender equality. If you cannot find the term you are looking for in the terms and definitions, please consult the EIGE glossary and thesaurus. Note that the GEAR tool follows an intersectional approach. Intersectionality allows an understanding to be gained of the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics/identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination; this approach also shapes responses to these intersections. Within the broad categories of women and men, other additional sociodemographic attributes such as age, socioeconomic background, poverty, race, ethnicity, location (rural/urban), disability, sexual orientation (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and others) and religion need to be taken into consideration. Therefore, when referring to women and men, we refer to them always in all of their diversity.

1.3. Which stakeholders to involve in gender equality plans and how

As a matter of principle, you should involve all stakeholders of your organisation in developing and implementing a GEP. Their involvement, which can be direct or indirect (depending on the stakeholder profile), will create a sense of belonging that will help overcome challenges and resistance throughout the process. In this way, your GEP will represent the diverse needs and situations of the different areas of your or-ganisation (e.g. faculties, departments, disciplines and funding programmes) and will promote bottom-up processes (i.e. activities are proposed and implemented not only at the top of the organisation, but also by employees or departments).

Although the organisational structures of European universities, research-performing organisations (RPOs), research funding bodies and other public bodies differ, there are some similarities, and the various types of stakeholders listed in Sections 1.3.1–1.3.3 can or should be in-

volved in a GEP (if they are present in the institution). Their responsibilities need to be negotiated, mutually agreed on and made clear from the very beginning. Their cooperation and engagement are crucial for the successful development and implementation of a GEP (for more information and resources on the impact that stakeholders can have, see the GEAR section on success factors for GEPs).

How to involve stakeholders. During the GEP development phase, stakeholders can be involved through, for example, focus groups, workshops, group discussions, seminars, interviews, written feedback circles or one-on-one meetings with the team/person responsible for the development of the GEP. To ensure further stakeholder involvement, you could think about establishing structures or processes that promote participatory, bottom-up or co-creation/co-design approaches or that consider the local context. Examples of such approaches include having GEPs or action plans in place at faculty level, providing faculties or departments with the option of choosing their own gender equality activities that fit their local context, and installing gender equality committees in which faculties, departments or other stakeholder groups (e.g. students, young researchers and unions) are represented. In addition, you could establish a gender equality network throughout the entire organisation.

How to address stakeholders. In the following subsections, you will find boxes that provide examples of speaking notes to support advocacy for gender equality. These short notes (usually no longer than two paragraphs) aim to provide persuasive arguments to advance gender equality in organisations. They can be helpful for convincing a key staff member or colleague in just a couple of minutes of the benefits of working towards gender equality.

These notes are provided here for inspiration. They are tailored to addressing different staff profiles, including senior executives, managers and human resources (HR) teams. It is advisable to customise your own speaking notes and to make them fit your institution and the person(s) you will be addressing (see also step 4 of the step-by-step guide (Chapter 3) on involving stakeholders in the implementation of the GEP). You can also find more information on building arguments to convince stakeholders in the 'why', section of the GEAR tool.

1.3.1. Internal stakeholders

The process of developing a GEP should be led by the body or person explicitly dedicated to gender equality work, such as the gender equality team, officer/office or committee. If you do not have such structures in place, the process of establishing them can be part of the GEP. For more information on gender equality structures and bodies, their role and what should be considered when establishing them, consult the GEAR action toolbox.

Other internal stakeholders who should be included by the gender equality body are senior management, middle management and leadership, research and/or teaching staff, administrative/non-academic units and staff (especially the HR department), and students.

Senior management

People in senior management are responsible for governing your organisation. While, in higher education institutions, they can be rectors or chancellors, in research organisations and funding bodies, they can be board members (or chairs of the board) or directors. They have the power to make decisions that target the whole organisation and are therefore very important change agents when setting up and implementing a GEP. Therefore, their support and commitment are invaluable for success, for example when engaging other stakeholders and overcoming resistance.

The role of senior management in a GEP is to:

- publicly support the principle of gender equality in/for the organisation;

- publicly endorse and sign the GEP, and endorse the structure responsible for its implementation (e.g. the gender equality team);

- make available sufficient human and financial resources to implement the GEP;

- participate in the GEP development process as stakeholders when invited by the unit responsible for the GEP;

- approve relevant documentation, procedures and activities supporting structural change towards gender equality in the organisation;

- request regular updates regarding the implementation of the plan and regarding progress (by monitoring results) towards gender equality.

Box 2. Example speaking notes for addressing senior management

International comparison. *In [country A], 70 % of research organisations such as ours have set up a GEP, and their performance in dealing with gender equality is regularly assessed. They now consider investing in gender equality as a strategic issue and a matter of competitiveness and excellence. This is also true of some research agencies, which have included scores to that effect in their reference evaluation frameworks. We should follow that example, and anticipate future trends in [country B].*

Liability. *As stated by law, our institution is responsible for preventing and reporting on cases of sexual harassment. In accordance with EU directives, our national legislation has become very clear on this matter. We have reported cases of sexual harassment, but have no procedures or skills to comprehensively deal with them. This is, first of all, terrible for the victims. In addition, if we want to avoid potential legal liabilities, we should invest in prevention through dedicated procedures, mechanisms and staff training.*

Broader organisational change. *Our recruitment and internal evaluation procedures have been described as not being transparent by our policy authority. Meanwhile, our gender equality unit has detected gender bias in our recruitment and evaluation practices. Tackling this gender bias could be a good entry point into challenging and upgrading our procedures.*

Middle management and leadership

These stakeholders are in charge of the day-to-day management of your organisation's units, for example departments or research groups. In the context of research organisations, these stakeholders include faculty deans, heads of departments/institutes and directors of services. In the context of funding bodies, heads of departments and programme managers are relevant. They may have a closer relationship than senior management with teaching and/or research staff, students, and funding applicants and reviewers (depending on the organisation), and can thus be valuable allies in disseminating the messages of gender equality work to the local units and in the practical aspects of implementation.

The role of middle management in a GEP is to:

- publicly support the GEP and its activities;

- participate in the GEP development/implementation process as stakeholders when invited by the entity in charge of the GEP to contribute their local perspective;

- ensure the practical implementation of the measures, procedures and activities required by senior management and listed in the GEP;

- ensure the integration of a sex/gender dimension in research and teaching in their unit;

- instruct the relevant units to provide information and data to monitor the implementa-

tion of the GEP and progress towards gender equality.

Box 3. Example speaking notes for addressing middle management

Valuing managers' contributions as agents of change and highlighting their potential benefits. *Our institution has committed to high standards with respect to gender equality and our rector made a nice speech about this last week. And yet, without your knowledge of the organisation and of the people who work in it, we have no chance of succeeding. You are best placed to help us detect where there is room for improvement in your area, and to co-create and test effective solutions with us. By participating in the next meeting, we can make sure that the issues and topics of your department are addressed and that your staff benefit from the actions.*

Internal stimulation. *Since our communication department adopted a gender-sensitive communication, our institution has been quoted as an example at national level; women colleagues acknowledge that their work is better reflected; and news articles about gender equality issues, which are now more frequently displayed on the website, are the most tweeted and shared on Facebook. It would be great to develop a similar situation in our departments and faculties and to engage in discussion with students.*

Referring to specific cases of management. *If we look at it objectively, the case of harassment we had to deal with last year has been extremely costly for us. The case was largely commented on within and outside the institution; we appeared to be insensitive and not proactive, and eventually our liability was mentioned in legal proceedings. We knew this could happen. Let's start dealing with this seriously, by securing expertise, investing in prevention and providing assistance.*

For research organisations: Access to funding and competitiveness. *Giving attention to the sex/gender dimension in research content and to gender balance in teams and in decision-making is extensively referred to in Horizon Europe, and this is reflected in the current work programme. Seriously tackling these issues in our proposals could increase our competitiveness and our chances of being funded. Researchers should be involved in this process. We already know about training sessions to support the integration of gender equality and a gender perspective in proposals, but let's create awareness among researchers and project managers. In addition, having a GEP is now mandatory for all research organisations and public bodies that receive funding, so we should put that at the top of our agenda.*

Internal synergies. *Our department of sociology has a rich record in supporting work–life balance among its academic staff. Did you know that a small fund was created to support childcare for those with parental responsibilities who wish to actively participate in international projects and conferences? It contributed to changing the lens through which engaging in dissemination and other activities that require mobility is perceived. Let's plan a meeting with management and a few researchers to learn from their experiences.*

Research and/or teaching staff

Staff with research and/or teaching responsibilities can play a ground-breaking role in changing the way disciplines are taught and research is carried out. Integrating a sex/gender dimension into R & I content and teaching opens up new vistas and creates new knowledge. Considering a sex/gender dimension in research can have a positive and powerful impact on society and

can improve people's lives. Involving research and/or teaching staff in the GEP development process can also lead to a tailor-made GEP that represents the diverse needs of the different areas of the organisation and creates a sense of ownership. Perhaps there are also staff in your organisation who focus on gender research and can support the GEP team and implementation process through their knowledge and experience. Gender study researchers and scholars, as well as researchers who are part of structural change projects or networks, often play a vital role in developing GEPs. In addition, groups or representatives of certain categories of personnel (e.g. young researchers) should be involved.

The role of research and/or teaching staff in a GEP is to:

- integrate a sex/gender dimension within research and teaching;

- participate in the GEP development process as stakeholders when invited by the unit responsible for the GEP to contribute their local perspective;

- actively participate in the initiatives organised within the framework of the GEP (e.g. training on gender-based violence, including sexual harassment);

- instigate change through debating the status quo of the organisation and proposing measures to promote structural change;

- organise activities that focus on integrating a sex/gender dimension into R & I content and/or that contribute to promoting structural change to advance gender equality in the organisation.

Box 4. Example speaking notes for addressing researchers

Access to funding, competitiveness and mainstreaming gender knowledge among researchers.

1. *As a research centre carrying out research on climate change, we participated in the international conference held in Paris. Policymakers and non-governmental organisations underlined the need to address the prevention and mitigation of climate change impacts from a gender perspective. This eventually materialised in the final agreement signed by 194 countries. We realised that nobody addressed this issue in our team, and that the societal impacts of climate change in general were underinvestigated at our institution. We learnt that cross-disciplinary workshops were organised by a local university to integrate gender in our fields of interest. We might consider hosting a session and strengthening our ability to address societal challenges and gender aspects in future project applications.*

2. *When planning our gender equality strategy, we realised that, across the university, gender was central to nearly 10 % of ongoing PhD theses, and that gender was a relevant category for about 40 % of theses currently being carried out. However, apart from fields related to social sciences and humanities, we found little evidence of gender-sensitive research. Why could we not use the pool of knowledge accumulated in some fields or departments in other areas of knowledge? This would enhance transdisciplinarity, interdepartmental cooperation and knowledge circulation. It might also benefit our success rate in accessing public funding, which tends to decrease with growing competition.*

3. *Giving attention to the sex/gender dimension in research content and to gender balance in teams and in decision-making is extensively referred to in Horizon Europe, and this is reflected in the current work programme. Seriously tackling these issues in our proposals could increase*

our competitiveness and our chances of being funded. So let's get active and discuss the topic in one of our training sessions on gender in research and teaching.

Supporting women's contribution to knowledge production. *In a field such as ours, laboratory experiments are time-consuming, and international mobility is a prerequisite for a successful career. Women might both be given fewer opportunities to contribute to their full potential and be discouraged by external factors (such as work conditions or selection and appraisal criteria) from fully participating. If we do not change this, it is unlikely that our targets for improving the sex balance in our institute will ever be met. More change is needed: we need to put in place active schemes to encourage women's participation in collaborative projects and also as project leaders. This implies making mobility more inclusive and less costly. It may also require the better integration of career breaks or the provision of longer leave periods in their scientific careers for both women and men.*

Awarding gender-sensitive research. *Let's reward research projects or papers actively contributing to mainstreaming gender knowledge across academic disciplines. All fields should be encouraged to contest, and the call for participation should be put in a way that is also appealing to researchers working in technical fields. The same should apply to awards. The idea would be to make integrating gender an incentive for excellent and innovative research. Therefore, awards would not necessarily have to be related to gender issues or gender research itself, but to the fields of expertise of applicants. This is working well elsewhere. Why not here?*

Administrative/non-academic units and staff (especially human resources departments)

While administrative units and staff are the focus of GEP efforts in some organisations (e.g. funding bodies and public bodies), they may be overlooked in universities or RPOs. However, including their perspective and expertise leads to a GEP that covers the needs of the whole organisation, and is crucial for the implementation and dissemination of the GEP. Therefore, administrative staff should be included in participatory GEP development processes.

Besides the HR department, other important departments include communications or public relations departments for awareness-raising and dissemination purposes, legal and financial departments for feasibility questions, and research support departments or quality/development departments responsible for teaching and curricula in order to integrate the sex/gender dimension into research and teaching. However, the departments to be considered very much depend on the structure of your organisation. In addition, union representatives or work environment units can support the cause. Funders should pay special attention to their R & I analysis department

for materials and statistics or to their innovation department to rework funding schemes (depending on their structure, of course).

The HR department is key to promoting structural and cultural change towards gender equality. This department can promote unbiased and fairer procedures and measures that contribute to achieving a gender-balanced composition of the organisation's staff. In addition, it can implement measures that ensure equal career progression and a balanced reconciliation of work and family life.

The role of HR staff in a GEP is to:

• participate in the GEP development process as stakeholders when invited by the unit responsible for the GEP or coordinate the development/implementation of the GEP if the working group is located in the HR department;

• collect and report on sex-disaggregated data on the organisation's staff in a systematic way and deliver relevant data that can be used as a basis for GEP development;

- develop gender-sensitive and gender-specific indicators to monitor progress towards gender equality in the organisation;

- review and/or create recruitment and selection measures and procedures that contribute to a gender-balanced composition of the organisation's staff at all levels;

- review and/or set up measures aimed at a better reconciliation of professional and family life and working and caring duties, and a more gender-sensitive organisational culture;

- review and/or introduce a harassment prevention policy and a complaints procedure.

Box 5. Example speaking notes for addressing HR staff

Valuing HR management as central to any process of change. *Our institute applied to this gender equality scheme upon the initiative of our director. We have made a series of commitments and emphasised the work of our gender equality unit. Our chances of being selected are high. We have to be conscious that we are expected to challenge some of our processes, notably regarding recruitment and career management. Our director and their team cannot make this change happen without the support, expertise and assistance of the HR management department. And no action related to career management can be planned and undertaken without your knowledge of the institution. Should we establish a pilot group with your department to diagnose needs and potential challenges with respect to gender equality? We might also envisage how this gender equality scheme can fit with your current modernisation efforts regarding HR management.*

Securing gender expertise to increase knowledge. *Our data collection is quite exhaustive on aspects such as hiring, career breaks and access to lifelong learning. However, except for staff categories, we produce few sex-disaggregated data. And, yet, we know that career opportunities differ for our women and men staff, depending on their position, the scientific discipline and other factors. These differences are regularly discussed informally during talks with social partners and in management meetings in each department. It would be more appropriate to carry out a proper diagnosis to start solving potential issues regarding the actual situation, not based on subjective perceptions or standpoints. Producing such a diagnosis requires external expertise. We have plenty at hand in the department of gender studies, including people working on career management and gender equality in the workplace. Shall we convene a meeting on this?*

Challenging bias in recruitment and appraisal. *We are very selective about the profiles of applicants. We try to value different skills and experiences, yet we tend to receive fewer applications from women candidates, and our women staff have slightly lower chances of being promoted. I think we should consider this in the next review of our process. Perhaps an external audit would be useful to identify potential gender bias? Are our job announcements appealing irrespective of the sex of candidates? Do we pay enough attention to career breaks and to different experiences in research and research management? Let's clarify this.*

Improving work–life balance. *Work environments that pay greater attention to work–life balance are reported to attract more talented researchers and staff and to retain them for longer. The quality of time spent at work is also meant to enhance productivity and work relationships. Finally, as women and men still have to cope with family duties to different extents, improving work–life balance can help women to move up the career ladder and achieve their full potential. We have developed new tools to select and evaluate people, and to help them develop their skills. However, we have paid little attention to work–life issues. A survey or a forum could help us in assessing whether this has had an impact, and to collect innovative ideas about a gender-friendly work organisation.*

Box 6. Example speaking notes for addressing social partners (e.g. unions)

Improving working conditions through tackling gender inequality.

- *Gender equality is not only about complying with legal requirements or individual cases. It also sheds light on working conditions all along the career path. Recruitment, appraisal, lifelong learning, evaluation and career management tools can all be considered from a gendered perspective and/or have (negative) gender impacts. Challenging gender bias can help us to challenge other biases about personal circumstances and to unravel intersecting inequalities.*
- *Gender equality matters for all categories of staff, reaching beyond traditional divisions between permanent and non-permanent staff, academics and non-academics, etc. It is an objective that can create engagement, but also resistance, which is better overcome when social partners are engaged. A gender equality unit can often be perceived as external to social dialogue, but actually it can be an ally. As we are designing a GEP, we would like you to be a part of the process, and share your knowledge about working conditions and work relationships with all engaged stakeholders.*

Enhancing social dialogue by achieving gender equality. *It depends on the context, but dialogue with trade unions and other staff representatives can be quite formal. Be it framed by the law and/or by a collective agreement, it does not always provide a space for assessing the status of gender equality or to be innovative. As we are launching what is meant to be a modernisation of our processes and ways of doing things with regard to gender equality, let's use this opportunity as a tool for modernising our social dialogue and making it more inclusive. In addition, gender bias or prejudices rely on deeply entrenched stereotypes. This requires new ways of sharing ideas and communicating with each other. Co-creation and experience-based or participatory techniques can help us to highlight problems and reach a consensus about solutions.*

Box 7. Example speaking notes for addressing staff

Tailored GEP. *We are currently in the process of developing our GEP and its main goals and fields of action. We envisage a GEP that benefits the entire organisation and reflects the different situations in the institutes and departments. Therefore, we would like to include you in our discussions and are very interested in your perspective and input. Come to our meeting next week and make sure your concerns and issues are on the table.*

Improving working conditions by tackling gender inequality. *Gender equality is not only about complying with legal requirements or individual cases. It also sheds light on working conditions all along the career path. Recruitment, appraisal, lifelong learning, evaluation and career management tools can all be considered from a gendered perspective and/or have (negative) gender impacts. Challenging gender bias can help us to challenge other biases about personal circumstances and to unravel intersecting inequalities.*

Students

Higher education institutions have a major responsibility in instructing their students at all levels (from bachelor to PhD level). First, students can be integrated as beneficiaries of gender equality work, which includes raising their awareness regarding gender-relevant issues in all disciplines and subject areas, not just gender-based violence and sexual harassment, and career progression for students interested in following the academic career path. In addition,

students need to be encouraged and taught to integrate and apply a gender perspective in and to their research, as they may become teachers or researchers themselves. Raising students' awareness of and sensitivity about gender equality contributes to changing attitudes, behaviours and culture at their higher education institution and in other spheres of their lives. They might also have gender biases and/or be a source of resistance, which needs to be taken into account and specifically addressed, if necessary. Second, some students or a group of students can also be drivers in the change process. Their perspectives and involvement can be informal, but can also be formally considered in the GEP, and their responsibilities can be strengthened by involving them as stakeholders in the GEP development and implementation process (e.g. student representatives or student mentors for future or first-year students).

The role of students in a GEP is to:

- actively participate in the initiatives organised within the framework of the GEP as beneficiaries (e.g. training on unconscious gender bias and activities on gender-based violence, including sexual harassment);

- integrate the sex/gender dimension into research (e.g. master's degree and PhD theses);

- provide their perspectives in a participatory GEP development and implementation process;

- take on responsibilities with regard to gender equality work (e.g. student representatives as members of committees and student mentors for future or first-year students).

Box 8. Example speaking notes for addressing students

Tailored GEP. *We are currently in the process of developing our GEP and its main goals and fields of action. We envisage a GEP that benefits the entire organisation and reflects the different situations in the institutes and departments. Therefore, we would like to include you in our discussions and are very interested in your perspective and input. Come to our meeting next week and make sure your concerns and issues are on the table.*

Study conditions. *As a university, we strive for a study environment in which everyone has equal opportunities. We want to ensure that students on our campus do not have negative experiences because of their gender and receive an education that takes into account different life realities. Therefore, we would like to include students in the development and implementation of our GEP. We would appreciate your attendance at our meeting next month to discuss possible ways for students to get involved.*

1.3.2. External stakeholders

Even though a GEP focuses on one organisation, the stakeholder group may not be limited to the boundaries of your organisation. Depending on the organisation, the group of external stakeholders can be quite broad and can include the following: audit organisations (e.g. the HR strategy for researchers in the EU or Stifterverband in Germany); gender experts, consultants or advisory boards; gender research project partners; individual personal contacts in the academic community; non-governmental organisations (e.g. on violence against women); and (inter)national networks (e.g. university or funding body networks). Depending on the national context, political stakeholders, such as ombudspersons or ministries, can also be valuable stakeholders.

External contacts and networks for exchange

Learning from and being inspired by others can be highly valuable for the development and implementation of a GEP, although you should not forget that everything has to be adapted to your own context. Exchange can happen between individuals (e.g. with a gender equality officer of another organisation) or in a group setting, such as (gender equality) networks, for example communities of practice. Exchanges with external stakeholders and networks can also represent an opportunity to spread ideas, insights and information on gender equality more broadly to increase the impact on the academic and/or political system.

The role of external stakeholders and networks in a GEP is to:

- provide mutual support and inspiration and exchange knowledge, expertise and experiences;

- provide an outsider's perspective;

- develop joint initiatives (e.g. national events and policy lobbying) that have a significant impact (on the academic system).

Box 9. Example speaking notes for addressing external contacts and networks for exchange

Exchange and learning potential. *We are currently developing our first GEP. I heard you are in the same situation at the moment. Would you be open to an exchange? I think we could learn from each other's experiences and maybe brainstorm on current issues.*

Synergies. *We have adopted our first GEP and would like to organise a panel discussion on gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, in academia. What do you think about joining forces and organising an event for both of our universities? Or maybe a national event?*

1.3.3. Funding bodies' stakeholders

While there are some overlaps between the stakeholders of funding bodies and the stakeholders of universities or other research organisations (i.e. senior management, middle management, HR departments and non-academic staff) and therefore some of the above-mentioned example speaking notes apply, there are aspects of the set-up of funding bodies that are different. For example, while the main source of data (i.e. on staff) at a university or other research institution is the HR department, in funding bodies it is the unit holding all data on the funding process (i.e. on applicants and reviewers), such as the R & I analysis department. This also means that these departments, as well as the reviewers, applicants and their research institutions, are of great importance as external stakeholders. For more information on how to integrate gender equality in your funding body, see the GEAR step-by-step guide for funding bodies and the GEAR action toolbox section on gender-sensitive funding procedures.

Box 10. Example speaking notes for addressing stakeholders involved in the funding process

Unconscious bias. *Even though we, as an organisation, are already committed to the gender equality cause, it is still threatened by our own assumptions about what women and men are like. If an applicant speaks very loudly and sells their research very convincingly, you might say 'HE is confident', while if it is a woman applicant you might ask 'why is SHE so loud?' We should tackle this issue immediately and organise unconscious bias training for our reviewers.*

Responsibility of funders. *As research funding bodies, we (partly) shape researchers' careers by distributing public money. Therefore, eligibility and assessment criteria need to be designed in a fair and inclusive manner, avoiding any discrimination based on sex/gender, age, discipline, ethnic background or working time. A person who has cared for two children for 7 years following a PhD will not be able to publish as many papers as a person without any care obligations. Many other funding bodies – such as the EU, the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) in Germany and Science Foundation Ireland – are taking up this mission of shaping research in a more inclusive way. How about we have a meeting next month to discuss the areas in which our funding programmes already consider this and to identify and discuss where we can become even more inclusive?*

For additional resources on the characteristics of effective GEPs, see the GEAR tool.

2. Why

Why is gender equality important for R & I? Why do I need to develop and implement a GEP in my organisation?

This chapter sets out the **reasons for promoting gender equality and its potential benefits**, and provides the corresponding relevant sections in the GEAR tool. In this chapter, you'll find answers to the following questions.

- Section 2.1: what is the Horizon Europe **GEP eligibility criterion**?

- Section 2.2: how does the European Commission **promote gender equality** in R & I?

- Section 2.3: why do we need **structural change** to promote gender equality in R & I?

- Section 2.4: what are the **benefits** of engaging in gender equality work?

For a brief overview, watch the informative video produced by the EU-funded project GENDERACTION on why we need gender equality actions.

For more information on the legal and policy framework of your country on gender equality in R & I, see the relevant country information in the 'where' section of the GEAR tool.

2.1. Horizon Europe gender equality plan eligibility criterion

With the launch of Horizon Europe – the key funding programme for R & I – in 2021, a new eligibility criterion was introduced to strengthen gender equality as a cross-cutting priority: organisations applying for Horizon Europe funds are required to have a GEP in place. For the calls with submission deadlines in 2022 and beyond, the GEP eligibility criterion will apply to all parts of Horizon Europe.

The following categories of legal entities established in EU Member States or associated countries need to comply with this criterion:

- **public bodies**, such as **research funding bodies**, national ministries and other public authorities, including public for-profit organisations;

- **higher education institutions**, both public and private;

- **research organisations**, both public and private.

According to the Horizon Europe work programme (European Commission, 2021c), a GEP should meet the following requirements:

- four **mandatory process-related requirements** at the minimum:

  1. **public document** – a GEP is a formal document published on your organisation's website, signed by the top management and actively communicated within your organisation;

  2. **dedicated resources** – a GEP must include a commitment to provide sufficient resources and expertise in gender equality for implementation;

  3. **data collection and monitoring** – a GEP should be informed by collecting and analysing sex-disaggregated data on personnel (and students, for the relevant organisations), and organisations should report progress annually based on specific indicators;

  4. **training** – a GEP must include awareness-raising and training activities on gender equality for the whole organisation and training on unconscious gender biases for staff and decision-makers;

- five **recommended content-related requirements**:

  1. **work–life balance and organisational culture**;

  2. gender balance in **leadership and decision-making**;

  3. gender equality in **recruitment and career progression**;

  4. integration of the **gender dimension** into research and teaching content;

  5. measures against **gender-based violence**, including sexual harassment.

See the GEAR action toolbox for more details on the content-related requirements and, for more details on the eligibility criterion, see the frequently asked questions on GEPs in Horizon Europe and the guidance on GEPs.

In addition to the Horizon Europe eligibility criterion, which establishes the basic requirements for a GEP to set an effective and sustainable change process in motion, there are several other relevant features of a GEP that you should know about before you start developing and implementing your GEP.

Holistic and engages the whole organisation

A GEP needs to **engage the whole organisation** to trigger structural and cultural change effectively. This means that you should actively engage a broad set of organisational stakeholders (see the GEAR section 'Which stakeholders to involve and how'), ideally in the status quo assessment and planning phases of a GEP. In addition, it is also important that you try to link the GEP to other important strategic ventures of your organisation (e.g. internationalisation strategies, research excellence strategies, and open-access and open data strategies), as this allows the effective integration of gender equality into discussions and change processes and engages stakeholders.

Tailored to your organisation

A GEP that aims to trigger structural and cultural change within your organisation is an intervention in **a complex system**. Although there are similarities between organisations in terms of R & I, the following will vary between organisations: the specific status quo of gender equality, the experiences of gender equality work and/or organisational change processes in general, and the legal, policy and sociocultural contexts. Therefore, your GEP can be inspired by and built on the experiences of other similar organisations, but it **needs to be tailored to your organisation**.

Developed and implemented through participatory efforts

Stakeholder engagement is a prerequisite for a successful and effective GEP, but beyond that a GEP should be developed and implemented through participatory strategies and efforts. This means that GEP objectives should not be established by a small group within the organisation (e.g. the top management or a gender equality group); instead, it is advisable to develop a GEP through co-creation and co-design efforts, as this will increase the legitimacy of the GEP and the support of the GEP by different staff categories and, consequently, will ensure effective and sustainable GEP implementation. Please be aware that participatory efforts and stakeholder engagement should continue throughout all steps of a GEP.

Grounded in a change model

Ideally, a GEP should be anchored in a **change model or a theory of change** that links the issues identified and causes of gender inequalities in your organisation to specific activities, targets and desired outcomes – that is, a logic intervention model showing how structural and cultural change can be achieved through a GEP in your organisation. Make sure that your GEP uses different levers to initiate and sustain the change process – a GEP focused narrowly on a single issue is very likely to have only limited effects. Consult step 3 (see Chapter 3) on how to design an effective and sustainable GEP if you

are a research organisation, university or public body, or if you are a research funding organisation (RFO). Find out more about logic models for driving change in the toolbox produced by the EU-funded project Evaluation Framework for Promoting Gender Equality in Research and Innovation (EFFORTI).

An intersectional approach

Through the 2020–2025 EU gender equality strategy, the Commission will enhance gender mainstreaming by systematically including a gender perspective in all stages of policy design in all EU policy areas, both internal and external. The strategy will be implemented using **intersectionality** ([2]) – the combination of gender with other personal characteristics or identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination – as a **cross-cutting principle** ([3]).

Addressing other inequalities that intersect with gender may provide efficient leverage for change and can also inspire comprehensive measures and strategies. However, it should be considered that this requires more analytical resources and data, and a broader range of expertise, than tackling gender separately from other inequality issues.

Promotes sustainability

Sustainable change towards better gender equality, diversity and inclusion is the result of a successfully implemented GEP. Therefore, sustainability needs to be considered throughout GEP development and implementation. This is an ongoing, continuous activity and effort, but it is not necessarily separate from the other GEP implementation activities. Instead, promoting sustainability should be an integral part of your day-to-day activities, and a lot of the ad-

vice and suggestions compiled in the GEAR tool will enhance the sustainability of your GEP: engaging stakeholders and securing leadership commitment, selecting a mix of specific measures aimed at cultural and structural change at different levels of your organisation, and monitoring and evaluation activities. All of these activities will contribute to your work having a sustainable impact on your organisation. Sustainability is therefore more than just the sum of all of the parts or activities of your GEP. Read more on sustainability in step 6 of the step-by-step guide (Chapter 3) and in the GEAR section 'Resistance and common challenges'.

Considers the impact of COVID-19 on the gender equality plan

As has been widely reported, the **COVID-19 pandemic** has had a significant impact on the working conditions and productivity of researchers and on gender inequalities in R & I, as well as in society at large. Therefore, consider whether your GEP provides an opportunity to review the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality in your organisation, to anticipate and prevent the effects of COVID-19 on gender equality, or to take measures to mitigate the challenges and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality are included in the GEAR action toolbox. In addition, you can also use the discussions about gender equality, working conditions and the new ways of working that have emerged as a result of the societal and economic impact of COVID-19 as a lever for change. Although COVID-19 is causing societal and economic stress and crises, it is also an opportunity for promoting organisational change to adapt to new circumstances and to advance working conditions and working cultures.

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[2] Intersectionality is defined in the EIGE glossary and thesaurus as an 'analytical tool for studying, understanding and responding to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics/identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination' (https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1263).

[3] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – A Union of Equality: Gender equality strategy 2020-2025, COM(2020) 152 final, p.2.

2.2. European Union objectives for gender equality in research and innovation

Gender equality is a core value of the EU. In 2019, the EU's Gender Equality Index (EIGE, 2021) score was 67 points out of 100 (EIGE, 2020). This clearly shows that gender equality has still not been achieved and that considerable efforts are necessary to make progress towards full gender equality. In the field of R & I, there are persistent gender inequalities, ranging from low numbers of women students in specific disciplines and scientific fields to an under-representation of women in top academic positions or on committees and boards of R & I organisations and of women researchers in companies or start-ups related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) (European Commission, 2021a). Moreover, sex and gender analysis is not mainstreamed into R & I activities, resulting in the generation of knowledge that neglects the relevance of the sex/gender dimension and that has to be considered as gender-blind or gender-biased. However, the European Commission deems gender equality an important lever for increasing fairness in society, boosting the innovation performance of organisations and triggering economic growth. Although some progress has been achieved in gender equality in R & I over the last few years, *She Figures 2021* (European Commission, 2021a) reported that there are still considerable gender gaps in R & I. The European Commission has a long-standing commitment to promoting gender equality in R & I, which goes back to the adoption of the Lisbon strategy in 2000 and the sixth framework programme for R & I that formally integrated gender mainstreaming.

See the video of Mariya Gabriel, European Commissioner, on International Women's Day 2021. The video provides an institutional message containing the information explained at the beginning of this section.

Since 2012, the European Commission's strategy on gender equality in R & I in the ERA framework (European Commission, 2020a) has been underpinned by three objectives:

1. **fostering gender equality in scientific careers**;

2. **ensuring gender balance in decision-making processes and bodies**;

3. **integrating the gender dimension into R & I content**, that is taking the biological characteristics and the social features of women and men into account.

The new framework for the ERA ([4]) reaffirms these objectives and will foster diversity and gender equality in R & I through inclusive GEPs in coordination with the Member States and stakeholders. It aims to promote a gender-inclusive research culture by enacting sustainable change in R & I organisations and removing barriers to women's career advancement. The following effects are expected from the implementation of the new ERA framework:

• increased success and innovation performance of organisations thanks to greater diversity;

• greater understanding of sex and gender specificities;

• improved work–life balance, equal access to opportunities and increased well-being.

In addition, the Council conclusions on the new ERA (Council of the European Union, 2020) reiterate that gender equality is paramount for Europe to be able to tap into the full potential of its R & I system. The focus of gender equality and mainstreaming needs to be boosted through the implementation of GEPs and the integration of the gender dimension into R & I content. The Council also invites the Member States and research funding bodies to ensure that the allocation of research funding is not affected by gender bias.

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[4] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions – A new ERA for Research and Innovation, COM(2020) 628 final (https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0628).

In the **2022–2024 ERA policy agenda** (European Commission, 2021d), the European Commission emphasises the need to address gender-based violence in academic settings and to open up gender equality policies to inclusiveness, intersections with other diversity categories, and potential grounds for discrimination, such as ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation. It endorses the priority areas for gender equality established by the **Ljubljana declaration** (Council of the European Union, 2021):

• ensure fair, open, inclusive and gender-equal career paths in research and consider intersectional perspectives on gender inequalities;

• facilitate mutual learning opportunities through robust form-follows-function governance;

• address and counteract gender-based violence;

• employ existing and newly developed tools, such as GEPs, to facilitate systemic institutional change and remove institutional barriers;

• support active monitoring and evaluation to ensure continuous improvement;

• leverage synergies to enhance gender equality achievements within the ERA, but also within complementary fields, such as the European higher education area, cohesion policy funds and innovation ecosystems, and in international cooperation;

• underpin the above priorities and activities and fully acknowledge gender mainstreaming as a horizontal principle.

In line with these policy priorities, gender equality is also a main cornerstone and cross-cutting principle of Horizon Europe – the EU framework programme for R & I funding – and is considered at three levels:

1. GEPs for public bodies, research organisations and higher education establishments as an eligibility criterion to get access to Horizon Europe funding;

2. integration of the gender dimension into R & I content as a requirement by default;

3. increasing gender balance, with a target of 50 % women throughout the Horizon Europe programme.

2.3. Why change must be structural

2.3.1. What is the issue?

As *She Figures 2021* (European Commission, 2021a) shows, R & I is highly segregated by gender and marked by considerable gender gaps.

Women and men tend to concentrate in certain scientific fields (horizontal segregation). For example, while women are more likely to be found in fields such as social sciences and humanities, men are more inclined to study, teach and/or research topics related to engineering or technology. In addition, top positions are more frequently occupied by men (vertical segregation), and evidence shows that resources distributed through research funding are not equally accessible to researchers of all genders. Watch the video on gender gaps in science produced by the EU-funded project ACT.

In addition, the significant sex/gender dimension often seems to be disregarded in the approach to and content and analysis of research and teaching. The result is that the viewpoints, experiences and needs of half the population risk being overlooked or dismissed. This also applies to other intersecting inequalities or discriminations, which in turn leads to innovations, products, services and policies that are less than optimal because they are targeted at and serve only a certain proportion of society. To better address these issues, recent research funding programmes, such as Horizon Europe, are starting to demand the integration into research proposals of a sex/gender/intersectional analysis as a criterion for research quality.

2.3.2. What needs to be done?

Gender inequalities are deeply ingrained not only in formal organisational policies, processes and procedures, but also in informal practices, values and habits of organisations and their members. The strategic goal of introducing a GEP is to integrate gender equality into the regular rules, procedures and practices of a research organisation. Successful implementation of a GEP will lead to the transformation of an institution, thus also affecting the organisational culture. It will become part of ongoing procedures and will have an impact on the entire organisational system and culture. A GEP is therefore a strategy whose ultimate aim is to become dispensable and become part of the regular rules that gender-equal research organisations follow.

To achieve this, a successful GEP needs to work at different levels to be effective and transformational: it needs to address the whole organisation and the organisational structures, procedures and culture that (re)produce gender and other intersectional inequalities. It is crucial to identify and act upon the different mechanisms that need to be changed through comprehensive and holistic approaches. Such institutional change brings benefits to the organisation as a whole and to society at large.

For more insights, read the European Commission's report on structural change in research institutions (European Commission, 2011).

Let's take a **closer look at some of the issues that are at stake**, and which of them tend to (re)produce inequalities.

Masculine image of research and innovation

From an early age, we learn to associate science with men. Stereotypically, a 'scientist' has the face of a man, with the exception of fields with a higher proportion of women; in those fields, the stereotypes about scientists are more congruent with those about women. Even in countries where women represent ap-

proximately half of the nation's science majors and employed researchers, men still tend to be more associated with science than women. Because women also often hold the stereotypes about the masculine image of science, this can lead to a perceived 'lack of fit' among women, who then choose to work in a field already populated by a lot of women, to leave the R & I field or to not enter it at all, even though they are appropriately educated and trained. This contributes to the abovementioned horizontal and vertical segregation and a lack of role models in specific disciplines and research fields and positions.

Unconscious or implicit gender bias

Prejudiced measures or thoughts based on the gender-based perception that women are not equal to men in rights and dignity are called gender bias. Unconscious or implicit gender bias is critical and problematic when it is at play in the assessment and evaluation of people (e.g. for election to posts or fellowships or for the granting of awards) because it **impedes an objective and fair judgement**. It is one of the main causes of gender inequalities in R & I. Furthermore, men often benefit from positive bias, as they are presumed to have higher levels of competence and performance than their women colleagues, especially in disciplines traditionally dominated by men.

Although R & I is perceived as a field based on meritocratic principles, research on implicit bias shows that this is not entirely true, as selection and promotion processes are influenced by gender bias and other forms of bias. In addition, **implicit bias also affects research funding bodies and their decision-making processes**, as these processes are often characterised by the same conditions that allow bias to manifest: time pressure, ambiguous assessment criteria and the evaluation of people instead of proposals and ideas. However, not all discrimination and disadvantages result from unconscious bias, as there is evidence that open discrimination and bias are still present and relevant.

Take a test to learn more about your own unconscious bias! This test helps to reveal our unconscious biases and how they drive our daily decisions or how we assess and treat others. The results will help you to take specific actions to behave differently in professional and personal settings and when interacting with others.

Workplace culture and climate that are not gender-neutral (chilly climate)

The workplace climate affects productivity, job satisfaction and intentions to leave or stay at an organisation. Although progress towards an equal representation of women and men in R & I is visible, R & I remains a field that is largely dominated by men, and is characterised by a masculinised workplace culture and climate in which women do not feel accepted or that they belong, and may even feel isolated if they are exposed to harassment, microaggressions, ignorant and dismissive behaviour, bullying or incivility. Gender-based violence and sexual harassment are prevalent and largely under-reported in higher education institutions and research organisations. When such behaviour is not recognised as a serious problem, it has a significant impact on individuals' lives and well-being, and influences their decision to leave the field of R & I. See the results of the EU-funded project UniSAFE for more details and empirical evidence on the prevalence of gender-based violence and sexual harassment in R & I in Europe.

Furthermore, the culture of R & I is often perceived as competitive, output-focused and even toxic by women and also by other groups (⁵). Other important aspects of workplace culture and climate are the inequitable distribution of tasks and support, with women often being made responsible for administrative or teaching activities (academic housework), which keeps them from research work and leads to them receiving less (informal) support for career progression. These everyday experiences of unfair

and offensive treatment are described by the term 'chilly climate'.

However, workplace climate and culture are not necessarily uniform throughout an organisation and can vary between different departments, institutes or research groups. Leadership has a large impact on workplace culture and climate and can shape the tone of communication and behaviour and change the distribution of tasks, support and resources.

Watch the ACT video on academic culture for more information.

Work–life conflict and career inflexibility

Career progression and success in R & I are based on a model that assumes that researchers and employees working in this field do not have any other responsibilities, commitments or interests besides their work, that is, no household duties, care responsibilities or other social commitments or interests. These ideal workers – mostly men – are not distracted, are available for work most of the time and can work long hours. Academic careers are still based on this model, even though more and more women are entering the profession and then leaving because their lives and careers do not match these requirements.

The careers of women are more often characterised by career breaks, reduced working time and reduced productivity in terms of research papers. Women and people with non-traditional career patterns often progress more slowly in their careers and leave R & I organisations at higher rates than men. The image of R & I as bearing high costs in the form of significant work–life conflicts may stop people from entering the R & I field and lead them to seek other opportunities to develop their talents and pursue their careers. This is why the research sector ultimately loses qualified personnel.

(⁵) A toxic workplace culture is characterised by hostility, gossip, mistrust, power struggles, poor communication, negativity and selfishness (Fahie, 2019; Sull et al., 2022).

Gender-blind and gender-biased research and training

Much research is still gender-blind or gender-biased, and research organisations and higher education institutions do not take the sex/gender dimension as a cross-cutting issue into account in the training of future generations of researchers and professionals. Therefore, much scientific knowledge and innovation have not been produced using a sex-/gender-sensitive or intersectional approach or methodology. This negatively affects the quality of research results and technologies based on such results. This happens, for instance, when research results are extrapolated to the population as a whole, without due consideration of the sample composition. For example, in medical research, often only male animals are used in preclinical research on new drugs (see the case study entitled 'Prescription drugs: Analysing sex and gender' of the Gendered Innovations project). However, there are also examples and good practices from other disciplines or fields of technology (e.g. artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics, urban planning, transport technologies and agricultural technologies) that show why considering a sex/gender analysis in R & I processes is important and leads to more valid results. See the Gendered Innovations reports (European Commission, 2013, 2020b) for more detailed information.

Sex and gender are fundamental determinants of the organisation of life and society. Therefore, recognising and taking these differences into account is paramount in scientific knowledge creation and should be reflected in research funding programmes, R & I content, and outreach and dissemination activities. Recently, journals have adopted the sex and gender equity in research guidelines (Heidari et al., 2016), which aim to guide authors on how to convey sex and gender information in the reporting of study design, data analyses, results and the interpretation of findings. Furthermore, in Horizon Europe, the integration of a sex/gender analysis is a cross-cutting issue and a component of the excellence criteria for all proposals in all calls. For more information, see the section on the sex/gender dimension in research and teaching

in the GEAR action toolbox and watch the ACT video on sex and gender analysis.

COVID-19

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender equality in R & I is being discussed among different members and stakeholders of the R & I community. At the time of updating the GEAR tool (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic was far from over and it seemed too early to fully assess the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality in R & I in Europe. However, there are several issues related to COVID-19 that should be observed closely, as they have the potential to widen the gender gap in R & I in the future:

- there is evidence that women have taken up the majority of additional family care and education responsibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic and related lockdown measures, resulting in less time for carrying out research, writing publications and writing research proposals;

- there is evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a deprioritisation of gender equality objectives and work due to time constraints and being overloaded with other activities;

- there is evidence that there has been an unequal division between women and men of the responsibility for, and work in, moving the delivery of teaching and support for students online, contributing to less time for research.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic may be different for staff of different seniority levels and contract types, and hence for genders that are over- or under-represented at particular seniority levels and in particular contract types.

- Attention needs to be paid to the new modes of working and collaborating through online tools that have developed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, to see if they reproduce already existing gender inequalities or even produce new inequalities in R & I organisations. There is evidence that women are

interrupted even more by colleagues in online conversations than in face-to-face situations.

- Research on COVID-19 and its impact on public health, society and the economy should integrate a sex, gender and intersectional analysis to collect evidence for developing gender-sensitive policy responses.

2.4 Rationale for gender equality change in research and higher education institutions

Setting up and implementing a GEP requires strong arguments about the benefits of working towards gender equality in R & I. These supporting arguments differ in nature and extent depending on the situation. They can be combined in different ways to build the case for gender equality within your organisation, and to reach different categories of stakeholders.

The European Commission expects the following benefits for the ERA through its commitment to promoting gender equality in R & I:

- increased success and innovation performance of organisations thanks to greater diversity;

- greater understanding of sex and gender specificities;

- improved work–life balance, equal access to opportunities and increased well-being.

In the following subsections, you will learn about these and other **positive impacts of gender equality for R & I**. In itself, quoting these broad areas of impact can help you to build the case for setting up a GEP for your organisation. The scope of the arguments to be used should be adapted to the culture of your organisation. In particular, you should be cautious about the uptake and acceptance of performance-related arguments. While it is widely accepted that measuring performance matters in R & I, this framing is not accepted to the same extent in every context.

Consider broadening and strengthening your arguments for promoting gender equality by using arguments related to diversity and intersectionality. This will enable you to show that all employees, students and applicants will benefit from better (gender) equality.

As stated in UN sustainable development goal 5, 'gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world'. In this sense, the **main types of benefits** of gender equality in R & I are set out below.

2.4.1. Fairness

Gender equality and equal treatment is about fairness in organisations and in society at large. Everyone needs to have the same opportunities to participate and contribute meaningfully to R & I, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, social background, age, etc. Committing to fairness and equality, and introducing organisational changes to meet these commitments, is a value in its own right. Increasing the fairness of organisational processes and practices contributes to more transparency and legitimacy of decision-making and organisational procedures. Therefore, increasing fairness and transparency in R & I can bring additional benefits to individuals and organisations.

2.4.2. Attracting and retaining talent

Research activities are highly intensive in terms of human capital. Training qualified and creative researchers and innovators is costly, and bringing them up to their full potential takes time. Moreover, research organisations are involved in intense competition for talent. This also requires retaining research staff over time and giving them the opportunity to achieve their personal and professional objectives and potential.

It has been shown that women are abandoning their scientific careers in much greater numbers than men. Described as the 'leaky pipeline' of women in science, this phenomenon has a considerable impact: a loss of knowledge, an organ-

isational cost, and a reduced and limited perspective in scientific research. It also feeds a vicious circle: as women leave research in greater numbers, research becomes less attractive to women. Implementing GEPs to promote structural and cultural change in your organisation can contribute to attracting and retaining talented women – or rather diverse talent – in your organisation.

2.4.3. Creating a better work environment

Promoting gender equality in your organisation can contribute to a more engaging and inclusive work and study environment, in which people feel safe, valued and comfortable. This will increase the well-being, work satisfaction, sense of belonging and motivation of staff members in your organisation, regardless of their gender. Your organisation will also benefit from these individual gains in terms of innovation performance, effectiveness (see Section 2.4.4) and talent retention.

2.4.4. Effectiveness and efficiency of research

Building gender-diverse teams helps to secure a broader set of viewpoints, which can enhance creativity and innovation – and thus also the quality of research. In addition, teams with balanced numbers of women and men tend to perform better and to exhibit superior dynamics and productivity, which is expressed in higher numbers of publications and citations and in broader dissemination to public audiences. Ensuring diversity in work teams (in terms of gender, race, nationality, age, etc.) needs a clear commitment to promoting gender equality with an intersectional focus; this will create an inclusive organisation that, in turn, will improve the organisation's reputation and will contribute to the organisation retaining and attracting (new) talent (see Section 2.4.2).

2.4.5. Excellence and research quality

Bringing a gender dimension into R & I content improves the overall quality of research design,

hypotheses, protocols and outputs in a large variety of fields. It makes it possible to address gender bias and to build more evidence-based and robust research, and also contributes to pluri-disciplinarity. As R & I is increasingly framed as working for/with society (thereby creating social impact and benefits) and as contributing to solving the main societal challenges of our time, reflecting the diversity of final users, their needs and boundary conditions from the early research stages has become a must. Gender blindness (understood as the lack of consideration for gender-related aspects) often comes with neglecting other relevant social or experiential parameters. Challenging this blindness, by contrast, creates awareness of a broader set of variables than sex and/or gender. The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly shown how the integration of sex/gender analysis into research not only increases the quality or excellence of research, but also provides better data and evidence for developing targeted solutions for public health, social welfare or economic policies (for more information, see the COVID-19 case study in the second Gendered Innovations report (European Commission, 2020b) and on the Gendered Innovations website). Integrating sex/gender analysis into R & I thus improves its quality and also its relevance.

2.4.6. Economic benefits

There are different kinds of economic benefits. First, research is intensive not only in terms of human capital, but also in terms of funding. Universities and R & I organisations are engaged in fierce competition to access public funding. Increasingly, this competition is organised and framed by funding agencies bound to the objectives of the ERA. Along with other priorities, principles of responsible R & I apply to the selection of successful applications. Within this framework, gender equality is increasingly referred to as a criterion for accessing public funding. This is clearly the case under the EU work programmes of Horizon Europe. Therefore, addressing gender equality in research, and also adopting a gender lens in research content and outputs, can improve the competitiveness of universities and R & I organisations.

Second, an increasing proportion of research is directly interested in producing added value in terms of products, services and policy delivery. Gender equality also contributes to increased economic benefits, not only at macro level – indicated by growth in gross domestic product (EIGE, 2017) – but also at organisational or company level. The presence of women board members is a reliable predictor of the value of a firm, independent of the type of industry, firm size, etc. Companies with gender-balanced management teams also report more returns on sales, more invested capital and better financial results overall. The reasons for these effects are manifold, but organisations with better gender equality and diversity are also able to engage new target audiences, beneficiaries or users/customers for their products and services, as they reflect the diversity in these groups better. Promoting gender equality in innovation teams and teams of inventors contributes to more equal benefits from their innovations/inventions. Gender-diverse teams are perceived to have better problem-solving skills and increased creativity and are able to take a broader set of needs, expectations and usages into account in their R & I processes. Therefore, they are able to develop more valid research outputs and better innovations that meet the needs of heterogeneous user groups.

2.4.7. Leverage for organisational change

Pursuing gender equality requires involving all staff categories (including management, research and non-research staff, and students) in a joint effort to produce change. Collaboration between all of these categories is an overarching goal that provides an opportunity to enhance the sense of community and ownership.

Changes made to achieve gender equality also bring benefits in terms of transparency and accountability, decision-making, career management and research evaluation procedures. Research evaluation procedures are often affected by different sorts of biases and unwritten rules, which consideration of gender equality helps to challenge.

Gender equality can also trigger broader cultural changes that contribute to a more flexible, creative, inclusive and sustainable work environment. This can support other strategic change processes aiming to enhance the competitive edge and national or international profile of your organisation. Linking gender equality work to these strategic objectives and processes of your organisation is an important factor in the success of your change process.

2.4.8. Compliance with domestic and European Union regulations

All research organisations, universities and funding bodies are bound to respect certain legal obligations related to equal treatment and gender equality. Therefore, even though legal and policy frameworks vary between countries, breaching existing regulations can result in fines, legal prosecutions and liability, damaged reputation, a loss of attractiveness and/or internal conflicts.

Complying with the rules requires resources and know-how, which are often more easily secured if implementing a gender mainstreaming strategy (e.g. through sex-disaggregated data production or monitoring instruments). Investing in gender equality helps organisations to comply with legal provisions more comprehensively and proactively.

In recent years, funding bodies have also introduced compliance with specific gender equality standards as an eligibility criterion. For instance, the German research foundation DFG introduced research-oriented standards on gender equality, applicants to programmes of Science Foundation Ireland and other Irish research funding bodies need to have an Athena Scientific Women's Academic Network gender equality accreditation, and the European Commission established a GEP eligibility criterion for Horizon Europe.

Find more information about EU labour law on the European Commission's website, and see the legal and policy frameworks promoting gender equality in R & I in the 27 EU Member States.

Want to know more?

The EIGE *Opinion paper on the positive impact of gender mainstreaming in research and higher education institutions* lays out how the effectiveness of gender equality work can be optimised and what benefits can be expected for the organisation.

For a brief overview, watch the informative video produced by the EU-funded project GENDERACTION on why we need gender equality actions.

Listen to the message from Mariya Gabriel, European Commissioner, on International Women's Day on why gender equality in R & I is important and how the EU aims to foster gender equality in Horizon Europe.

2.4.9. Benefits of gender equality and diversity in research and innovation

The Norwegian Committee for Gender Balance and Diversity in Research provides six key reasons why gender equality is beneficial for research organisations, while the League of European Research Universities (LERU, 2019) has described how universities can become inclusive research environments and the benefits that they may be able to reap from this change effort.

A general overview of benefits has been provided by Bührer et al. (2020), who summarised the multifaceted benefits of gender equality in R & I, and GENDERACTION (2020) have set out why promoting gender equality is also good for innovation performance. In addition, Powell (2018) explains why diversity and a culture of respect matter in R & I.

The European Commission (2011) has described the main arguments for structural change and solutions for how to achieve this, while the global partnership McKinsey & Company (Hunt et al., 2018) has set out the business case for inclusion and diversity.

Finally, Pollitzer and Schraudner (2015) explored how innovation systems can benefit from gender-sensitive approaches to knowledge production.

2.4.10. Effectiveness and efficiency of research

An article by Bührer and Frietsch (2020) shows (based on the German programme for women professors and the Pact for Research and Innovation signed in Germany) how investments in gender equality initiatives not only lead to increases in the number of women researchers, but also change publication patterns. In addition, Koning et al. (2021) show that, if R & I teams become more diverse, R & I results become more inclusive.

Similarly, Nielsen et al. (2017) provide empirical evidence that links the gender of authors to the integration of sex/gender analysis in research papers. They conclude that there is a robust positive correlation between women's authorship and the likelihood of a study including a gender and sex analysis. Campbell et al. (2013) have also shown that publications of gender-diverse authorship teams achieve more citations than publications that have authorship teams composed of only one gender.

Furthermore, Cheruvelil et al. (2014) set out important considerations for creating and maintaining high-performing collaborative research teams, emphasising the importance of diversity.

Finally, Smith-Doerr et al. (2017) summarised the evidence, arguments and strategies on how diversity matters in science and engineering teams.

3. How: Step-by-step guide

This GEAR step-by-step guide is for all those seeking to implement measures in support of gender equality in RPOs, universities or other public bodies, and for research funding bodies ([6]).

Box 11. Different needs of different users

Using the results of the online survey and three co-creation workshops conducted by EIGE for the users of the GEAR toolkit, the content and structure of the GEAR tool were assessed, and differing needs emerged among users. In general, the different framework conditions of RFOs and RPOs have to be considered; for instance, while the gender equality measures of RPOs focus on the promotion of gender equality among research staff, those of RFOs focus mainly on the promotion of gender equality in the allocation of funding (an external dimension). The number of dimensions of gender equality considered differs enormously between RPOs and RFOs, and this required the creation of two separate pathways of the toolkit. Another aspect in which different needs need to be met is sustainability: the survey and workshop participants agreed that sustainability will become increasingly important as more and more institutions rely on RFOs, which general have sustainability requirements for funds to be granted. Therefore, the toolkit needs to meet the different needs of newcomers and advanced users in terms of their progress towards sustainability, an aspect that was also taken into account in the GEAR toolkit.

In the online version of the toolkit, two different paths can therefore be followed: one step-by-step guide for research organisations, universities and public bodies and one step-by-step guide for RFOs. In this publication, these two different paths are briefly presented.

If you are new to the topic, we recommend going through the steps one after the other. If you already have experience with implementing a GEP, you can jump right to the step you are interested in for additional information and resources.

The process of developing and implementing a GEP can be broken down **into six different steps**, each requiring specific types of activities and interventions.

- **Step 1: getting started.** In this step, you will need to familiarise yourself with the GEP concept and how it fits with the specific context of your organisation. You also need to iden-

tify and approach potential allies and supporters of a GEP in your organisation.

- **Step 2: analysing and assessing the status quo in your organisation.** In this step, sex-disaggregated data are collected and organisational procedures, processes and practices are critically reviewed to detect any gender inequalities and their causes.

- **Step 3: setting up a GEP.** In this step, you will need to identify objectives, set your targets and determine measures to remedy the problems identified, allocate resources and responsibilities, and agree on timelines.

([6]) This publication summarises the main results set out on the updated GEAR tool website, which provides a greater level of detail than this guide, along with further information and resources (good practice examples, webinars and videos) targeted at the different needs of RPOs and RFOs. An extensive amount of the content, which was acquired during the research, is available on the GEAR tool website. All users are therefore invited to visit the website to access and use all of the resources provided.

- **Step 4: implementing a GEP.** In this step, you will implement the planned activities and undertake outreach efforts to gradually expand the network of stakeholders supporting the GEP implementation.

- **Step 5: monitoring progress and evaluating a GEP.** Through monitoring and evaluation activities, you will assess the implementation process and the progress achieved against the aims and objectives identified in your GEP. Findings from the monitoring and evaluation exercise(s) allow you to adjust and improve your interventions.

- **Step 6: what comes after a GEP?** Based on the results of steps 4 and 5, you need to develop a new GEP that builds on your experiences, the knowledge you have gained and your achievements and that also ensures the sustainability of the efforts begun in previous GEP implementation rounds.

Box 12. Introducing gender in the work of research funding bodies

The following questions target research funding bodies that want to develop a GEP in order to increase gender fairness in research funding and to comply with the GEP eligibility criterion of Horizon Europe.

- Why is gender relevant for research funding bodies?
- What can be done to promote gender equality? In what areas can you become active within your organisation to promote gender equality? How should you address researchers and other external stakeholders, such as applicants, reviewers and panel/board members?

In answering these questions below, the aim is to provide a practical guide for research funding bodies that want to implement a GEP and to improve their evaluation and grant allocation processes.

Why is gender relevant?

When allocating grants, research funding bodies enable and foster researchers' careers by distributing public funds. This money needs to be allocated in a fair and inclusive manner, avoiding any discrimination based on sex/gender, age, discipline or ethnic background.

With regard to equal chances, the success rates of women and men applicants are usually discussed. At European level, according to *She Figures 2021* (European Commission, 2021a, p. 257), the funding success rate for women is still 3.9 percentage points lower than that for men. Lower success rates for women mean lower chances of conducting their own research, developing their own independent research programme, publishing a research paper or patent, and applying for further funding or leading positions in the science system. Research funding bodies have a shaping role when it comes to setting the research agenda in terms of pushing new research topics or addressing societal challenges. When asking researchers to systematically analyse data by sex and other social categories or to apply an interdisciplinary research approach when including the sex/gender dimension in research content, research funding bodies can establish new quality standards to foster research excellence.

Recently, the discussion has been extended to the wider R & I ecosystem and the phase prior to applying for funding. Research funding bodies are invited to provide incentives to research organisations, including universities, for addressing gender equality in a systematic manner, including the integration of the sex/gender dimension into research content and teaching (see the Commission's gender equality strategy) and encouraging more women to apply. In

this way, research funding bodies can also inspire other research organisations to improve their policies on gender equality and inclusion. This is even more relevant in the light of the considerable difference between the proportion of women applicants and the proportion of women in the pool of potential applicants. In addition, research funding bodies would be well advised to address potential women applicants and research organisations more actively to increase the pool of women applicants. Research organisations in particular have a gatekeeper function through sponsoring, selecting and supporting (potential) applicants.

Research funding thus enables careers and determines who carries out what kind of research. Who gets funded depends on merit and excellence, which are often perceived as neutral concepts measured by metrics and indicators, such as publications, citations or impact points. Research has revealed various bias factors, however. In addition, unconscious bias in the assessment of projects and applicants has been discussed intensively in recent years, focusing on who assesses applications (how panels/boards are composed), what is assessed (which criteria are identified), how assessments are carried out (how the peer-review process is organised and how criteria are applied) and how final funding decisions are taken.

What can be done?

Many research funding bodies have already actively addressed potential bias factors and implemented policies and measures to mitigate gender bias and improve the impact of their funding schemes on gender equality. They can become active in this work at two levels.

First, funding bodies have the potential to exert leverage on their beneficiaries and stakeholders, for example by setting assessment criteria or by monitoring funded projects. If you want an overview of potential measures, have a look at Section 3.1.4 or consult the 'Getting started' section of the GEAR tool. Gender may play a role at each level of such a funding cycle.

Second, to be able to deal with gender issues, research funding bodies need to become active at an internal level. Gender capacity-building activities are required to enable staff members to specify gender equality measures for applicants or reviewers, or to address stakeholders in a gender-sensitive manner. It is also important to set gender-specific targets and raise awareness, as well as to act as an authentic role model.

More information on specific internal measures for research funding bodies, such as allocating a funding budget, training staff and building capacities, and on the relevance of gender equality with regard to external stakeholders (applicants, reviewers and panel/board members) can be found on the GEAR tool web page.

EIGE's step-by-step guide concerns the systematic implementation of gender activities: it describes the **entire GEP process**, from planning to the final evaluation, specifically for RPOs and RFOs. This guide thus attempts to support both newcomers and advanced users in the systematic implementation of gender activities, as required by the eligibility criterion of Horizon Europe.

In step 1, you will find information on how to prepare for a GEP. Undertaking an assessment of the status quo as a starting point for planning measures in your organisation is described in step 2. In step 3, you will learn what needs to be taken into account when you set up a GEP, while, in step 4, the relevant factors for implementing your GEP are highlighted. In step 5, you will become familiar with indicators that can

be used to set up the monitoring process. Finally, step 6 illustrates what comes after the completion of your GEP.

3.1. Step 1: Getting started

As a first step, you need to understand the context of your own organisation, starting by considering your type of organisation: it makes a difference whether you are trying to implement gender equality in a university, in a public or private research organisation, or in a research funding body.

3.1.1. Understand the context

The consideration of different contextual factors will support you in determining which objectives and measures can or should be implemented, which arguments for promoting gender equality might be relevant, and where you might find support for your activities within your organisation, but also in the regional or national context.

In addition, for research funding bodies, relevant contextual factors can include the national research intensity (OECD, 2021), the relevance of competitive funding in the national innovation system and/or national research policy goals. Additional indicators, such as the scope of funding activities (national/regional, applied/basic, etc.), could also be of relevance (see Section 3.1.2).

Another important factor is the legal and regulatory framework (at EU level and national and regional policies) within which the institution operates.

3.1.2. Find support

Having an understanding of the context and dynamics of your organisation allows you to decide where best to find support both within and outside your organisation. Finding support and building alliances will be relevant throughout the entire process.

3.1.3. Understand the gender mainstreaming cycle

Before moving on to the next step in the process, it is very helpful to gain a general understanding and overview of how a change process that follows the logic of the gender mainstreaming cycle works. It includes the following four phases:

1. define – analyse and assess the state of play in the institution in order to identify the needs to be addressed by the GEP;

2. plan – set out how you will set up the GEP;

3. act – implement the GEP;

4. check – monitor progress and evaluate the GEP.

3.1.4. Understand gender in the funding cycle

Before moving on to the next step in the process, it is very helpful to gain a general understanding and overview of how the process of implementing measures for gender equality in research funding works. The funding cycle provides an overview of potential measures in the various steps of implementing a specific programme or grant. You can find more information on gender-sensitive research funding procedures through the GEAR tool. The GEAR tool also provides more detailed descriptions of and resources for step 1 for RFOs and for RPOs.

3.2. Step 2: Analysing and assessing the status quo in your organisation

The best starting point for developing an effective set of measures is to have a thorough understanding of how your organisation is currently doing regarding the status quo of gender equality. After assessing the status quo of your organisation, you will have an overview of its strengths and weaknesses concerning gender equality. Based on these results, you will be

able to develop clear objectives and a set of targeted measures for your GEP (step 3).

The comprehensiveness of this initial analysis will depend on the resources available. Make sure to assess the human and financial resources that you have access to in order to undertake this task. This section outlines the main aspects that you need to consider in order to analyse and assess the gender equality status quo in your organisation.

3.2.1. Decide who will carry out the analysis

When deciding who should be involved in performing the analysis, consider the following.

- If the structure of your organisation includes a **person or body responsible for supporting gender equality** (e.g. a gender equality office/unit), this person or body could take on the task of performing the initial assessment regarding gender equality in your organisation. Do not forget to involve gender experts working in your organisation.

- If such a person or body does not exist, or if they/it cannot take on this task, consider **putting together a small team** to undertake this baseline assessment. The team can be composed of teaching and/or research staff and members of the HR department.

In any case, having an **explicit mandate from top management** to undertake a baseline assessment is essential for dedicating time, opening doors and obtaining cooperation.

3.2.2. Review relevant legislation and policies in your country

It is useful to be familiar with the general EU and national legislation and policies regarding gender equality and non-discrimination, as well as those that are specific to the field of R & I. This will allow you to focus your status quo assessment on the relevant legal and policy requirements. It will also back up your rationale to support your measures.

3.2.3. Identify existing measures of promoting gender equality

To start assessing the status quo at your organisation, take a look at existing gender equality measures within your organisation.

3.2.4. Decide on the indicators that you want to focus on

As you may have already guessed, data broken down by sex are needed to detect any gender differences. Analysing such data will provide crucial information for identifying the most pressing areas that require intervention.

Box 13. Key indicators for R & I organisations

Analysing sex-disaggregated data will provide crucial information for identifying the most pressing areas that require intervention. For example, if your analysis reveals that the gender balance is particularly distorted in certain disciplines, efforts may be directed to these areas.

The **key indicators** you should consider are as follows:

- staff numbers by gender at all levels, by disciplines, by function (including administrative/support staff) and by contractual relation to the organisation;
- average number of years needed for women and for men to make career advancements (per grade);
- wage gaps by gender and job;

- numbers of women and men in academic and administrative decision-making positions (e.g. boards, committees and juries);
- numbers of women and men candidates applying for distinct job positions;
- numbers of women and men having left the organisation in the preceding years, specifying the number of years spent in the organisation;
- number of staff by gender applying for / taking parental leave, including how long they took as leave and how many returned after taking the leave;
- numbers of absence days taken by women and by men, differentiated by absence motive (sick leave, care leave, etc.);
- numbers of training hours and/or credits attended/received by women and by men;
- numbers of women and men students at all levels and for all disciplines, and academic and employment outcomes;
- proportions of women and men among employed researchers;
- proportions of women and men among applicants for research positions and among people recruited, including by scientific field, academic position and contract status;
- proportions of women and men on recruitment or promotion boards, serving as heads of recruitment or promotion boards, and in decision-making bodies, including by scientific field.

Of course, this list is not exhaustive and you may want to consider additional quantitative or qualitative indicators based on your individual situation. You may, for instance, want to collect data and carry out an analysis that integrates **other dimensions** besides sex, such as age, race and ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and religion. It is important to understand the intersections between sex/gender and other dimensions, as multiple discrimination can occur and needs to be tackled. However, be mindful of data protection issues when the number of staff with particular intersectionalities is very small, leading to data linking and disclosure issues.

3.2.5. Collect sex-disaggregated data about staff and students

As a first step, check **which data are available** from the HR department or another entity within your organisation. However, most likely, you will need to collect additional data yourself. Furthermore, as you will need to collect these data annually as part of your GEP monitoring process, you should try to **standardise your process** from the beginning. Remember that implementing gender equality is a circular process.

3.2.6. Analyse the data collected

Once you have collected all of the relevant data, start by producing **descriptive statistics** (absolute and relative frequencies, etc.) and take a look at the results. At the end, you need to assess the implication of these data for your plan to implement gender equality measures.

The GEAR tool provides more detailed descriptions of and resources for step 2 for RFOs and for RPOs.

3.3. Step 3: Setting up a gender equality plan

The findings of the initial analysis allow you to identify the areas of intervention to be addressed in your GEP. However, not all relevant areas of intervention can be tackled at the same time, and some may be more pressing than others. Set the **priorities for your organisation** considering the initial assessment of step 2, the available resources and, of course, the Horizon Europe eligibility criterion.

When developing the GEP, keep in mind that it needs to be **holistic and integrated**. This means that the areas of intervention identified must be interdependent. There are several basic elements to be taken into account when setting up the GEP:

• objectives

• measures

• indicators

• targets

• timeline

• responsibilities.

During the development process, consider how to connect the GEP to other important strategy documents and processes of your organisation to foster the sustainable institutionalisation of gender equality. In this section, we explain how these elements are taken into consideration in the process of setting up a GEP.

3.3.1. Promote broad participation when designing the gender equality plan

A participatory approach will help you to establish meaningful objectives and measures for the people involved, while respecting the organisational culture. This will boost participants' willingness to implement the measures set out in the GEP. Moreover, it will help you to understand the meaning of gender equality for these groups. You can use participatory methods for involving these stakeholders, as suggested by the ACT co-creation toolkit (Thomson and Rabsch, n.d.), the Gender Equality Actions in Research Institutions to Transform Gender Roles (GEARING ROLES) project and the Supporting the Promotion of Equality in Research and Academia (SUPERA) project.

3.3.2. Establish specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-related objectives, targets and measures

The objectives, targets and measures of your GEP are more likely to be successfully achieved and implemented if they are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time related (**SMART**). When defining the targets and measures of your GEP, consider the recommended content-related (thematic) GEP building blocks:

• work–life balance and organisational culture;

• gender balance in leadership and decision-making;

• gender equality in recruitment and career progression;

• integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content;

• measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment.

3.3.3. Identify a logic model

Embedding your GEP in a logic model can help you to plan objectives, interventions, desired outcomes and resources in more detail. It allows you to better understand how your different strategies and interventions will work towards the same goals, interact and reinforce each other. The EFFORTI toolbox allows you to plan your GEP or interventions in the framework of a logic model with the 'programme theory generator'.

3.3.4. Get inspired by other organisations

There is no need to reinvent the wheel: there are numerous sound and successful examples of measures implemented by other organisations.

However, a complete replication of such measures can be ineffective in your organisation. It is important to assess the context in which these were carried out. Make sure to adapt the measures by considering the specificities of your own context (see step 1) and your own status quo assessment (see step 2).

3.3.5. Identify and use resources and anchor points for gender equality

Identify existing resources that can serve the measures you are setting up. Sometimes, small changes in existing procedures or services will help to attain the objectives set out without additional costs or much effort. Building on existing resources also has the advantage of promoting the institutionalisation of gender-sensitive and/or gender-specific procedures or activities. Overall, however, the implementation of the GEP will not work without additional resources. Start defining and negotiating these resources during the GEP development phase.

3.3.6. Establish the time frame of the gender equality plan and a timeline for its implementation

The overall duration of the GEP needs to be established (e.g. 4 years). Consider that a short time span means frequent negotiations for the next GEP, perhaps using up a lot of resources. A longer time span, on the other hand, may not allow flexible responses to current needs. It may also be strategically wise to coordinate the time frame of the GEP with that of the organisation's strategy development.

3.3.7. Agree on clear staff responsibilities for each measure

An agreement needs to be made on the team that will be involved in the implementation of the GEP. You need to identify those bodies and functions in your organisation that need to be assigned overarching responsibilities for the GEP in order to achieve greater sustainability and accountability. After having decided on the staff members who will collaborate in this assignment and who will have the decision-making powers necessary for implementation, clear responsibilities need to be established. The GEP should clearly indicate who is responsible for what and when.

3.3.8. Build alliances and expand your network

Engaging stakeholders is indispensable during the set-up phase. The GEP needs to be understood as something more than a piece of paper. Invest time in explaining the benefits of gender equality in research organisations. Adapt your language to the audience you are addressing. Involve external organisations, stakeholders and experts in order to build supportive alliances and increase the visibility of the plan within and outside the institution so that the engagement of leaders is enhanced.

3.3.9. Start thinking about sustainability

The changes to be implemented are expected to have a long-term impact. To ensure the **sustainability** of gender equality measures, it is important to embed practices in the normal routines and procedures of your organisation and to anchor them structurally. In addition, creating links with other strategic planning processes and/or embedding the GEP mandate in other, broader, strategic documents will contribute to sustainability.

The GEAR tool provides more detailed descriptions of and resources for step 3 for RFOs and for RPOs.

3.4. Step 4: Implementing a gender equality plan

Having set up the GEP (see step 3), you are ready to start implementing it. Organise regu-

lar meetings with the team that is going to be involved in the implementation of the GEP that you identified in step 3. These meetings are important not only to design and plan activities in a participatory way, but also to discuss the progress, main achievements and aspects that can be improved. This will allow you to identify possible problems and to act proactively on them.

You may consider organising an initial training session for the team responsible for implementing the GEP, and for other target audiences directly involved (e.g. managers and HR staff). Continuous awareness-raising and capacity-building efforts will maximise your chances for success and institutionalisation.

In the course of implementing your plan, be aware that structural change towards gender equality is not only about implementing the GEP you have developed. It is also about looking for windows of opportunity for change (e.g. renegotiating or drafting a statutory document, strategic plan, etc.) and transforming existing processes, schemes and bodies, as much as it is about institutionalising GEP measures. You might encounter resistance on your way; if so, consult the SUPERA publication entitled *Resistances to Structural Change in Gender Equality* (Ferguson and Mergaert, 2022).

3.4.1. Involve relevant and interested stakeholders

Plan meetings with the GEP support structures you established in step 3 (e.g. the gender equality board, hub or gender laboratories) to involve top management and leadership, HR staff, or other co-workers you consider relevant but who are not part of the implementation team. Continue engaging stakeholders on an ongoing basis. You could also form a network or community of practice within your organisation to bring all people active and interested in gender equality work together to deepen knowledge,

exchange experiences and expertise in gender equality, and support each other in the activities.

3.4.2. Give visibility to the gender equality plan

Inform the whole organisation about the existence of the GEP. Use different channels to communicate about the plan, its main areas of intervention and its time frame. Make the GEP available and easily accessible to the whole community on the organisation's website. It can also be useful to organise a public session to present the GEP to the organisation's community.

Report on the progress towards gender equality in your organisation on a regular basis (in accordance with the monitoring process established in the GEP). Consider involving the communications department of your organisation in this task – this department can have an important role in gender equality structural change.

3.4.3. Be aware that adaptations to the gender equality plan may be needed

The GEP is not static or immutable. Several circumstances may require modifications, such as changes in the structure of the organisation (e.g. due to the appointment of new senior managers) or the introduction of new legislation or policies that apply to research organisations. In addition, the priorities of the organisation may change during the GEP's time frame. Follow such events closely and discuss with your team whether and how the GEP can be adapted.

The GEAR tool provides more detailed descriptions of and resources for step 4 for RFOs and for RPOs.

3.5. Step 5: Monitoring progress and evaluating a gender equality plan

Monitoring and evaluation are important parts of the change process. As you know by now, a GEP will typically address several issues at once, leading to a complex set of measures. Nonetheless, effective monitoring and evaluation instruments are often lacking, which undermines the transformative potential of the measures planned. If objectives are not monitored based on relevant progress, success or outreach indicators, it is difficult to assess whether the organisation is actually being transformed. Having an appropriate monitoring and evaluation plan in place, however, can **support the effective implementation of measures**, ensure accountability and enhance your knowledge and understanding of ongoing changes. This way, you also know whether your GEP needs to be adjusted.

Ideally, in step 2, you considered which areas you wanted to focus on when analysing and assessing the status quo in your organisation. In step 3, you then set out SMART targets and measures addressing these areas. In order to develop a monitoring and evaluation strategy, use the **status quo assessment as a starting point**. The results of this assessment will establish the **baseline**, which will allow you to monitor and evaluate your progress.

3.5.1. Understand the basics of monitoring and evaluation

In order to develop an effective **monitoring and evaluation strategy**, you need to differentiate between monitoring targets and evaluation targets. To understand the difference, consider the following **definitions**, used by the gender equality monitoring tool (Wroblewski and Eckste, 2018, pp. 3–8) of the EU project Taking a Reflexive Approach to Gender Equality for Institutional Transformation (TARGET).

The gender equality monitoring tool defines **monitoring** as a continuous process, in which data are systematically collected in order to

provide management and key stakeholders with regular updates on the progress and achievement of objectives and the use of allocated funds.

Evaluation, on the other hand, relates to a systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, programme or policy based on the monitoring data, which highlights the lessons learnt, which can be used for the planning of future measures.

3.5.2. Create a monitoring and evaluation strategy

When coming up with a strategy, use the logic model you identified in step 3 (embedded in a theory of change): the impact pathway of the measures implemented will help you to identify what you want to monitor and evaluate. Consider the following steps in order to come up with a **monitoring strategy**:

- identify concrete output indicators;

- select appropriate data collection instruments;

- come up with a time frame;

- plan regular monitoring sessions.

As for creating your **evaluation strategy**, the general process will be similar, but some things need to be considered in more depth:

- think about the context;

- identify additional impact indicators;

- use additional (qualitative) data collection instruments;

- take your monitoring results into account.

3.5.3. Identify quantitative indicators

Based on the targets set out in your GEP, specific indicators need to be developed to establish

a baseline and monitor progress. Such indicators help to build accountability for the success or failure of the measures implemented. The EFFORTI toolbox can support you in identifying quantitative (and qualitative) indicators to measure the output, outcome and impact of your measures.

You may also want to consider **breaking down the data even more** and looking into additional dimensions besides gender: a focus on intersectionality can include looking at individual or group features, such as a migrant or minority background, disabilities, socioeconomic status or risk of poverty, and sexual orientation.

3.5.4. Identify qualitative indicators

Qualitative indicators are especially relevant for determining whether your desired outcomes were reached. However, qualitative indicators can also provide additional information on your progress and help you understand the dynamics of change (or lack thereof). Qualitative indicators have a huge **learning potential**. They support self-reflection and may provide useful indications for continuous enhancement of the measures implemented. They may also provide evidence that change happens and that gender equality and awareness are not out of sight.

Box 14. Examples of qualitative indicators

- **Mainstreaming of gender knowledge.** This can be measured, for instance, by the relevance given to knowledge creation on gender equality within the organisation, the institutionalisation of gender equality (in the form of dedicated programmes or departments) and the dissemination of gender equality knowledge across disciplines.
- **Awareness among different categories of staff and external stakeholders (reviewers, board/panel members and applicants).** This can be measured by the attention given to gender equality by different categories of stakeholders through communication initiatives, codes of conduct and activities centred on gender-related aspects.
- **The uptake of gender equality objectives set out in your GEP.** This can be monitored by observing the participation in and acceptance of your implemented measures and the (human and financial) resources allocated to support these measures.
- **The actual transformation towards greater gender sensitivity.** This should focus on the effects on both formal and informal practices of the measures implemented. It may, for instance, be shown by increased attention being given to women's ideas and perspectives in decision-making mechanisms that are dominated by men. Consider different levels of hierarchy.
- **The diffusion of a gender equality culture.** This can be measured in terms of changing working conditions, but also verbal and non-verbal interactions and decision mechanisms (e.g. seating arrangements in panels). It could be reflected in changes regarding the management of work–life balance, the awareness of sexual harassment and other aspects of gender-based violence, non-sexist communication, etc.

3.5.5. Implement your strategy and communicate the results

Once you have collected and analysed the data, you will be able to see if there have been any (significant) changes since your initial status quo assessment (baseline). You should also assess whether the monitoring and evaluation targets have been met. Discuss the results with your team and draw conclusions on **what they mean for your GEP**. During your monitoring, you might want to check whether you need to adjust some of your targets or the way that measures are implemented. During the final evaluation, you need to ask yourself what you can learn for the next GEP cycle. Finally, you need to **communicate your results**.

When communicating the impact of your measures, know that there may be other positive side effects (or added value) of your implemented measures: the entire process may lead to a strengthened sense of community; more transparent recruitment, appraisal and evaluation procedures; stronger pluri-disciplinarity in research; and improved working conditions in general. All of this may be uncovered by your monitoring and evaluation process. In particular, your final evaluation will demonstrate the positive dynamics brought about by gender mainstreaming strategies and their inherent opportunities. Making these positive side effects visible can help strengthen your position and build the foundation for the next GEP cycle.

The GEAR tool provides more detailed descriptions of and resources for step 5 for RFOs and for RPOs.

3.6. Step 6: What comes after a gender equality plan?

A GEP will be concluded at some point. However, this is not the end of promoting gender equality in your organisation. It is important to understand that a GEP is also a quality assurance model in the organisational change process. This further development of the organisation in the direction of gender equality is never finished.

Based on the findings of the evaluation of the GEP, it is possible to draw conclusions regarding the progress made towards achieving gender equality in your organisation. During the development and implementation of the GEP, the path should already have been set for sustainable anchoring of gender equality work in your organisation. It is likely that the sustainability of some measures and procedures will already have been ensured, while others may still require further action.

Be aware that structural and cultural change is a long-term process that requires continuous and repetitive efforts and measures to avoid a return to former practices and behaviours. Some measures and activities will need to be

implemented throughout several GEP cycles – of course you should consider improving these measures based on your monitoring and evaluation results.

In addition, the final evaluation may have identified new areas that require attention. Moreover, it may be necessary to respond to changes that have come about since the last GEP cycle outside (at political level) and within your organisation. There may be other important issues on the agenda that can stimulate or hinder gender equality work. This is the point at which you should decide how to continue the efforts undertaken so far and what a new GEP should address.

You might also want to think about new topics in which to integrate gender equality in your organisation, and strategies to do so. At this point, we want to give you information about two strategies that have been implemented (so far mainly by organisations that have been working in the field of gender equality for a fairly long period of time): gender budgeting (Section 3.6.1) and intersectionality (Section 3.6.2).

3.6.1. Gender budgeting

Why think about gender in a budgeting process? A budget is not a neutral instrument; instead, it reflects the existing distribution of power in society between women and men. In the past, budget cycles and procedures were designed mainly by men, when women did not have access to public institutions, education systems or research organisations. Therefore, budgets are an expression of the male scale of values, principles, issues and priorities.

Gender budgeting is about identifying ways to redistribute resources to make management and financial decisions gender responsive, ensuring equal opportunities for all members of the organisation, regardless of their gender. According to the EIGE gender budgeting toolkit (EIGE, 2020), gender budgeting involves conducting a gender-based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process, and restructuring

revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality. In short, gender budgeting is a strategy and a process with the long-term aim of achieving gender equality goals.

For more insights, see the methodology report compiled by the EU-funded project Leading Towards Sustainable Gender Equality Plans in Research Performing Organisations (LeTSGEPs) in 2021.

3.6.2. Intersectionality

GEPs also include a wider perspective, related not only to sex or gender but also to other characteristics. For instance, it is important that objectives include further disaggregation within the broad categories of women and men, considering additional sociodemographic attributes such as age, socioeconomic background, poverty, race, ethnicity, location (rural/urban), disability, sexual orientation (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and others) and religion. Moreover, all thematic priorities should, ideally, consider an approach that pays attention to intersectionality (i.e. the intersectional characteristics of individuals, and how these interact or intersect to influence gender inequalities). If GEPs are to address this, they need an intersectional approach.

EIGE defines intersectionality as an 'analytical tool for studying, understanding and responding to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics/identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination'. Intersectional analysis thus aims to show the diversity of identities and the different types of discrimination that occur as a result of the intersection of gender and other social characteristics.

Of the most recent EU-funded structural change projects, some have addressed intersectionality (e.g. Redesigning Equality and Scientific Excellence Together (RESET), Gender Equality in STEM Research (CALIPER) and Communities for Sciences (C4S)). Experiences from these projects and evidence of effective intersectional approaches can be used for your own work.

The GEAR tool provides more detailed descriptions of and resources for step 6 for RFOs and for RPOs.

4. Gender Equality in Academia and Research action toolbox

When working towards institutional change in research organisations and higher education organisations, different areas and themes can be addressed in the GEP through specific initiatives. Depending on the needs of the organisation, it makes sense to focus on a **combination of areas**. The structure and content of the GEAR action toolbox are strongly oriented towards the five areas recommended by Horizon Europe, and descriptions strongly build on the *Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans* (European Commission, 2021e).

The **five recommended areas** are the following:

1. work–life balance and organisational culture;

2. gender balance in leadership and decision-making;

3. gender equality in recruitment and career progression;

4. integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content;

5. measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment.

In addition, the action toolbox provides information and organisational practices on the following topics, which are also relevant for, or even required by, Horizon Europe:

- measures mitigating the effect of COVID-19;

- data collection and monitoring (including evaluation);

- training and awareness raising;

- GEP development and implementation;

- gender-sensitive research funding procedures.

Note that the thematic areas addressed in the action toolbox are not mutually exclusive; rather, **they overlap**. For example, training can focus on how the gender dimension can be addressed in scientific research or in teaching.

4.1. Work–life balance and organisational culture

A key component of the transformation of an organisation's culture for advancing gender equality is work–life balance. Work–life balance is relevant for all members of staff and involves ensuring that **everybody is properly supported** to advance their career alongside personal responsibilities that they may hold outside the workplace, including caring responsibilities. Actions in relation to organisational culture will generally include measures to ensure that all staff members feel valued and welcome at work.

It is important to highlight that the **whole institution benefits** from a more open and respectful organisational culture, and that it is not 'a women's issue'. Improving organisational cultures also contributes to becoming an attractive employer, and therefore to attracting and retaining the best talent.

4.1.1. Measures for addressing the issue in your gender equality plan

Work–life balance policies and measures that can be reviewed and addressed in a GEP include:

- **parental leave policies**, for example ensuring that fixed-term contracts or grant agreements / fellowships can be extended, as well as the active promotion of paternity leave;

- **flexible working time arrangements**, including how processes and practices have an impact on staff with caring responsibilities or part-time workers, as well as on remote working;

- **support for caring responsibilities**, including childcare and care for other dependants (e.g. people with disabilities or elderly relatives);

- **workload management**, including how different tasks are allocated and distributed, such as teaching and administrative tasks, and how these are balanced with research workloads in universities;

- **reintegration of staff after career breaks**, including active mentoring and support;

- **advice and support on work–life balance**.

In order to promote an **inclusive organisational culture**, consider the following policies or measures:

- **policies relating to harassment and dignity at work** that set out expectations for the behaviour of staff and managers (see also the GEAR action toolbox section on sexual harassment);

- **policies supporting the active use and encouragement of inclusive language** around the organisation in relation to gender, but also in relation to other forms of identity and diversity;

- **informal aspects** of organisational culture, including whether social practices are welcoming and inclusive for all staff.

You can find practical examples in the online version of the GEAR action toolbox.

4.2. Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

Efforts to promote gender balance in leadership and decision-making have been undertaken in numerous countries. However, despite the policies and actions taken, data show that women remain under-represented in academic and administrative leadership and decision-making positions in universities and research institutions across Europe.

4.2.1. Measures for addressing the issue in your gender equality plan

The EU project Female Empowerment in Science and Technology Academia (FESTA) identified specific policies and practices that can be considered to improve organisational processes, procedures and culture (FESTA, 2015), so that more women can take on and stay in leadership and decision-making positions:

- **examining and adapting processes and procedures** for the selection and appointment of staff on committees and other bodies;

- **making committee membership more transparent** – evidence shows that women are more likely to succeed in recruitment and promotion when there is clarity about what is required, when information about the opportunities is freely available, and when the criteria used in decision-making are clear and unequivocal;

- **ensuring that leadership and decision-making roles are properly recognised** in evaluations of work, including in relation to the generation of research funding and outputs;

- **providing support to women employees** to achieve leadership and decision-making goals – this can be done through leadership programmes for women or through gender-balanced development programmes, leadership mentoring programmes and peer networking opportunities;

- **providing all decision-makers and leaders with gender equality training**, particularly committee members and chairs – this can be

crucial for mitigating (unconscious) selection biases, but can also contribute to awareness raising and better understanding of the gender dynamics at play in interactions during meetings;

- **ensuring gender balance through introducing gender quotas** – EIGE defines gender quotas as a 'positive measurement instrument … that establishes a defined proportion (percentage) or number of places to be filled by, or allocated to, women and/or men, generally under certain rules or criteria'.

You can find practical examples in the online version of the GEAR action toolbox.

4.3. Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

Various studies have shown the existence (and persistence) of implicit gender bias in the evaluation of research and performance (ERAC, 2018). Measures are needed to avoid and undo the systematic and structural discrimination against women along their career paths in research. **Critically reviewing existing selection processes and procedures at all stages and remedying any biases** are important steps for ensuring gender equality in academic and research careers. Furthermore, public bodies and research funding bodies also need to consider how their policies and funding programmes can promote gender equality in research careers (see the GEAR action toolbox section on gender-sensitive research funding procedures for more information).

4.3.1. Measures for addressing the issue in your gender equality plan

A GEP may include a review of procedures and the implementation of respective measures in the following areas:

- **recruitment and promotion**

  - establishing **codes of conduct** for recruitment and promotion – this can increase transparency and help avoid unconscious biases, with the European Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers being a well-established example;

  - involving **gender equality expertise** in recruitment and promotion committees;

  - providing **unconscious bias training** for recruiters, reviewing the **language used** in advertisements and **being aware of language biases** in recommendation letters (see the GEAR action toolbox section on training and raising awareness);

  - **preferring open and publicly advertised** recruitment procedures over closed procedures;

  - increasing the number of potential women candidates by **broadening the disciplinary range of recruitment in fields where women are under-represented**;

  - **proactively identifying women in under-represented fields**, including active scouting of women through, for example, field-specific internet sites;

  - using **standardised curricula vitae (CVs)** and undertaking **blind CV assessments**;

  - **increasing accountability** by requiring departments and committees to justify recruitment and promotion shortlists that do not include women;

  - agreeing on a **re-advertising** policy if there are no women in the applicant pool;

- **evaluation and appraisal criteria**

  - accounting for the time frame of the achievements;

  - **accounting for career breaks** when assessing research output;

- assessing research **quality rather than quantity**, not relying on journal-based metrics;

- assessing **soft skills** as well as research outcomes;

- if defining criteria in a new, unbiased way is not possible, considering whether biased criteria can be given a smaller weight;

- ensuring that administrative responsibilities, student supervision and marking workloads are **transparent and valued** alongside research outputs;

- considering **organisation-wide workload planning models** to promote transparency and fairness, by enabling an equitable and transparent spread of workload among academic staff that is consistent between departments.

You can find practical examples in the online version of the GEAR action toolbox.

4.4. Integration of the sex/gender dimension into research and teaching content

The inclusion of the sex/gender dimension means that differences, whether biological or social, are taken into account in research and teaching. Our knowledge is the basis on which future generations will build their societies. It is therefore crucial that the **knowledge** that is **created through research** and **transferred through education** is free of gender bias.

Looking at potential sex and/or gender differences and at issues related to gender equality generates added value in terms of research excellence, rigour, reproducibility and creativity; brings an in-depth understanding of all people's needs, behaviours and attitudes; and enhances the societal relevance of R & I. Integrating the gender dimension into educational activities, including teaching curricula and public engagement, is also essential for the proper

training of the next generations of researchers and innovators.

4.4.1. Measures for addressing the issue in your gender equality plan

The GEP should consider how the gender dimension will be incorporated into the content of research or educational activities and into the outputs of the organisation. The GEP can:

- set out the **organisation's commitment** to incorporating gender equality in its R & I priorities;

- **establish processes** for ensuring that sex and gender analysis is considered in the design and outputs of research and teaching;

- set out the provision of **support and capacity for researchers** to develop methodologies that incorporate the sex/gender dimension;

- set out the provision of **support and capacity for teachers** to develop curricula that incorporate the sex/gender dimension.

R & I organisations that distribute funding might consider the following questions in their GEP.

- Do funding programmes encourage or require prospective applicants to consider the sex/gender dimension in their work?

- Are there specific calls or opportunities that are designed to stimulate research on the gender dimension across different disciplines?

- Do funding decisions have processes for identifying or flagging areas in which sex and/or gender analysis should be considered? In addition, do funding decisions include mechanisms for evaluating how research projects account for the sex/gender dimension as part of evaluation criteria for research excellence and impact?

- Is sufficient expertise incorporated into decision-making processes, including peer-review processes and panels, to assess the sex/gender dimension of project applications?

You can find practical examples in the online version of the GEAR action toolbox.

4.5. Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

The field of R & I is not immune to sexual and gender-based violence, but this issue tends to be underestimated in research organisations and research funding bodies. All organisations are subject to relevant national or regional laws and regulations, and numerous organisations are likely to have existing employment policies that cover dignity and harassment at work. Organisations may find it sufficient to address gender-based violence under existing policies and procedures. Increasingly, however, institutions consider it necessary to set up dedicated structures and/or to issue specific procedures and instruments. In any case, the institution must make clear that it does not tolerate abuse.

A GEP can also consider how the whole organisation can be mobilised to **establish a culture of zero tolerance** towards sexual harassment and gender-based violence. This includes communication activities that identify the problem, but also measures to ensure that all members of the organisation are empowered to change attitudes, intervene when necessary and create an inclusive and safe culture for the whole organisation.

4.5.1. Measures for addressing the issue in your gender equality plan

Through a GEP, organisations can **examine the prevalence** of sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence and implement organisational policies and measures against sexual harassment, such as the following:

- a **code of conduct** clarifies whether relationships are (or are not) considered harassment, but it should also ensure that potential victims or witnesses of harassment are not deterred from reporting incidents;

- a **reporting** policy should outline how all members of the organisation can report incidents of sexual harassment, including when they are the victim of harassment or witness harassment – this includes clear, visible and robust reporting channels;

- an **investigation** policy sets out visible and easy-to-understand information for all staff and students about the investigatory and decision-making process, including associated time frames;

- **victim support** measures can be implemented to provide counselling and information to victims or witnesses about their options following a report, including pastoral support and psychosocial counselling / psychotherapeutic care;

- **disciplinary measures for and prosecution** of perpetrators can be implemented at organisational level and may also cover guidance and support for reporting to the police and for legal proceedings against suspected perpetrators or harassers, including court cases;

- **educational programmes** about sexual and gender-based harassment may prove useful in preventing its occurrence.

You can find practical examples in the online version of the GEAR action toolbox.

4.6. Measures mitigating the effect of COVID-19

Most human organisations, research organisations and research funding bodies have been severely affected by the health, economic and policy impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and are constantly adapting to the current situation. Initial feedback shows that the disruption to

personal lives, education, working conditions and the economy stemming from the pandemic has had implications for gender equality and the implementation of GEPs.

4.6.1. Measures for addressing the issue in your gender equality plan

In order to account for the changing context, organisations should consider undertaking a **review of the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality** as part of the development or review of their GEP. A review may include a **survey of the organisation** and **participatory workshops** to understand these challenges in more depth. A review should aim to understand the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality in the organisation and to identify what steps or measures may be required to mitigate this impact, in line with the goals of the GEP, including:

- engaging with staff and students to understand the impact of COVID-19 on working practices and outcomes;

- identifying the areas in which disruption and changes in working practices present a risk to the aims and objectives of the GEP;

- maintaining and enhancing the visibility and prioritisation of the GEP, including at senior levels and in organisational planning, and improving awareness of the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality;

- enhancing the monitoring of key objectives, such as in research funding decisions to maintain or improve the gender balance of principal investigators and in the distribution of project tasks;

- reviewing relevant policies to ensure that risks are appropriately mitigated and that additional support is provided where necessary;

- enhancing arrangements within the funding and approval processes of both research

funding bodies and research organisations to ensure that sex and gender analysis is fully incorporated into the design of research on COVID-19;

- considering whether additional sections should be added to the GEP to address the specific issues associated with COVID-19 and to ensure that plans are in place for future risks.

You can find practical examples in the online version of the GEAR action toolbox.

4.7. Data collection and monitoring

GEPs or any other gender equality ad hoc initiatives need to be grounded in evidence. Before you can plan any measures, you need to know **how your organisation is doing regarding gender equality** and which areas you need to focus on. This initial assessment of the status quo of gender equality in an organisation usually includes a statistical analysis of sex-disaggregated data, additional interviews or focus groups (qualitative methods) to gain a better understanding, a documentary analysis of national legal and policy documents, and a review of your organisation's strategic and operational documents.

Based on your status quo assessment, you will establish SMART objectives, targets and measures for your GEP (see step 3 of the step-by-step guide). However, the data collection does not end here: to be **eligible for Horizon Europe**, it is mandatory that **organisations collect and publish disaggregated data on the sex and/ or gender of personnel** (and students, where relevant) and carry out annual reporting based on indicators. Therefore, a regular monitoring plan and a final evaluation of your GEP are required. The latter will help you to learn relevant lessons for future measures.

You can find practical examples in the online version of the GEAR action toolbox.

4.8. Training and awareness raising

In order to initiate a structural change process towards better gender equality in an organisation, raising awareness of gender inequality and knowledge about gender issues in management, but also within the workforce, is of central importance (see success factors). Awareness-raising efforts aim to generate and stimulate sensitivity to issues related to gender (in)equality, while (gender) capacity building aims to strengthen people's knowledge and skills to engage with gender equality issues. In practice, these two types of activities often overlap, as learning starts with awareness, but is a continuous process.

To highlight the importance of gender knowledge and gender awareness, the Horizon Europe eligibility criterion requires that a **GEP includes awareness-raising and training measures on gender equality and unconscious gender biases** for staff and decision-makers. All staff, leaders and decision-makers have a role to play in identifying practices, cultures and unconscious gender biases that disadvantage women, and in implementing more inclusive approaches.

4.8.1. Measures for addressing the issue in your gender equality plan

To raise awareness of and provide training in gender issues, GEPs may consider, without being limited to, the following types of activities:

- **training on unconscious bias** may be offered in the context of the development of the GEP itself, but it is also important for it to **be incorporated into broader organisational training activities** on an ongoing basis;

- **communication and engagement activities** might include participatory workshops with staff, as well as talks delivered by gender equality experts and leading women scientists, scholars and academic leaders;

- **informing the organisation of the existence of the GEP** and its main aims, areas of intervention and time frame raises awareness of gender equality issues;

- **ongoing communication** is crucial to provide visibility to the GEP and keep staff informed of and involved in its implementation;

- training for researchers and academics on **how to include the sex/gender dimension in research design and teaching curricula** raises awareness of gender-reflexive excellence in research;

- **other gender equality training** activities that focus on specific topics or address specific target groups can also be considered.

You can find practical examples in the online version of the GEAR action toolbox.

4.9. Gender equality plan development and implementation

A GEP needs to be structurally anchored and supported in your organisation at different levels, for example through a unit, office, core team or department that is mandated to foster the implementation of structural changes towards equality (see also success factors). On a broader level, support structures such as gender equality boards, hubs or gender laboratories are also necessary to support the structural change process, as experiences from projects such as SUPERA and CALIPER show.

A gender equality function or core team provides a focal point and source of expertise for the development and implementation of a GEP. When a dedicated function is not appropriate, for example in small organisations, organisations should still consider how the implementation of a GEP will be organised and should ensure that there is a clear focal point with expertise to coordinate and drive the work.

Such a structure may already exist in your organisation. If not, its creation can be one of the

measures of your GEP. In the meantime, a task force or working group of research and/or administrative staff can be set up to deal with the development of the first GEP.

An effective GEP is a strategic document that engages the whole of the organisation. GEPs require the support and official commitment of senior leaders, but work best when developed with the active engagement of the entire organisation. To structurally embed gender equality within the organisation, it is necessary that the widest possible circle of stakeholders is receptive to this change. In order to make gender equality work effective, it is paramount to engage with these stakeholders, vertically as well as horizontally. You can engage the whole organisation throughout the development of a GEP.

You can find practical examples in the online version of the GEAR action toolbox.

4.10. Gender-sensitive funding procedures

GEPs of research funding bodies should, on the one hand, address internal stakeholders and processes, similar to RPOs (internal career development, internal decision-making and leadership, and internal sexual harassment policies). On the other hand, external stakeholders and the whole funding cycle need to be addressed from a gender perspective. Allocating research grants needs to be done in a gender-sensitive and inclusive manner (read more in the section 'Gender budgeting' in step 6). Research funding bodies should implement a comprehensive gender strategy covering internal and external processes.

Research funding bodies can become active in all steps in which (potential) applicants are addressed, reviewers and panel members are approached and guided, and applications are discussed, assessed and funded or rejected. Gender activities start when a programme or grant is designed, and all data should be analysed to determine if a redesign of the grant programme is necessary after a call is finished.

4.10.1 Gendering the funding cycle

In this subsection, activities promoting gender equality are discussed in the context of a typical funding programme/grant. Following a cyclical model, gender may be relevant in the various steps of this funding cycle (Figure 1), for example when funding programmes are designed, when panel members are selected or when criteria are specified. The following describes the different steps of the funding cycle and how gender equality needs to be taken into account in these steps.

Figure 1. Funding cycle with gender relevance

More detailed information on the following different steps of the funding cycle and how gender equality needs to be taken into account in these steps can be found in the online version of the GEAR action toolbox.

- **Initiation phase.**

  - *Planning and status quo.* At this stage, funding bodies should be aware that, by defining programme targets and specifying funding conditions (eligibility and assessment criteria, assessment procedure, etc.), they have an impact on individual researchers' careers and on processes within research organisations, including universities. Moreover, these bodies should

collect statistical information on an annual basis (or on the previous call). The main areas to collect data on are the proportions of women and men among applicants and grantees and the proportions of women and men on evaluation panels and among evaluators (by discipline, if relevant). As the **integration of the sex/gender dimension into R & I** has become a funding principle in Horizon Europe, this should be requested in all funding programmes. Accordingly, specific data on the proportions of funded and rejected applications integrating gender are needed (see also step 2 of the step-by-step guide for research funding bodies).

▪ *Launch of the call and composition of panels/boards.* Here, gender-sensitive language and images are required. An explicit statement on the commitment of the research funding body to promoting gender equality might encourage more women to apply. Gender-proofing of call texts and the images contained therein can have an impact on the number of women who feel encouraged to apply.

● **Application.** A higher proportion of women in research teams can be achieved by asking all call applicants to indicate whether and how a sex/gender analysis is integrated into their research proposal (from the beginning) or explain why gender is not relevant to the proposed research. The benefits are twofold: on the one hand, these questions should attract more women to become members of research teams and, on the other hand, high-quality research outcomes can be expected, as the research questions are more tailored to different subgroups. Research funding bodies could offer awareness-raising activities and training for applicants to enable them to detect the gender relevance of their research and to conduct a sex/gender analysis. The integration of the sex/gender dimension into research content is a strategy to enhance research excellence and to increase the gender knowledge of researchers. Support structures provided by research organi-

sations play an increasing role in the application process. The small proportion of women applicants can also be attributed to self-selection: studies show that women tend to apply only when they assume that they have a good chance of succeeding (Ranga et al., 2012). The possibility of making care obligations in applications visible and of compensating for care are crucial elements of the eligibility check. Funding bodies can provide various forms of compensation (Rabsch, 2020), such as extending the period for applying (see European Research Council, 2021), providing compensation for a care person or introducing a supplemental discretionary allowance to enable funded research teams to recruit a replacement for a team member going on maternity or adoptive leave. Be aware that reviewers need to know how to evaluate research performance in cases of non-linear career paths.

● **Assessment.**

▪ *Criteria.* The eligibility criteria need to be gender-sensitive, for example by taking into account that researchers have a slower career progression when they need to dedicate time for caring or take sabbaticals. To increase the gender awareness of the research community, your funding body should provide costs for capacity building, such as for gender training, gender coaching or mentoring. Assessment criteria can, in themselves, be a potential factor for gender bias. Measuring the quality of researchers or their research on the basis of bibliometric, journal-based indicators has been heavily criticised from a gender perspective: women who have less time to publish, who have smaller networks and are therefore less likely to get invited to join collaborations or publications, or who are less cited are very likely to also have lower overall research performance. To counteract bias here, some funding bodies have limited the number of publications that can be listed in the application.

- *Process*. In panel meetings, you should have a clear list of criteria to be discussed and make sure that the same criteria are applied to each applicant. This should be communicated explicitly in briefing meetings for reviewers and panel/board members. The panel chair plays an important role in guaranteeing that everyone plays by the same rules, and this also applies to gender equality. Here, the panel chair might encourage all members to reflect on gender and the proportion of women applicants in all steps of the assessment process. To improve the assessment process, it is recommended that there be constant gender equality observers, who are either external gender experts or specifically trained internal staff. They can evaluate and report on whether and how gender bias is manifested in the discussion of proposals.

- **Decision-making.** The phase of final decision-making covers different steps to find a final solution, such as internal triage / shortlisting, panel/interview assessment or re-ranking. Here, it makes a difference whether the final decision is taken by the panel or by a management body, such as a scientific board. Some research bodies apply a gender quota for women to be funded (e.g. at least 40 % or a proportion of women grantees equal to the proportion of women applicants). Again, it is important to provide gender awareness-raising activities for members of management and decision-making bodies.

- **Monitoring.** Setting up a clear monitoring strategy and analysing all collected call data enables a research funding body to be informed about the progress on gender equality at programme or grant level. By applying indicators, such as the number of participants in training programmes or the budget spent on specific measures, whether gender objectives are met or adaptations need to

be implemented can be checked on a short-term basis. It also helps to maintain the accountability of the stakeholders involved. Furthermore, the GEP criterion of the European Commission requires research funding bodies to present data annually. As intersectionality is of increasing relevance, research funding bodies are encouraged to extend their monitoring system in this direction.

- **Evaluation.** Checking the gender distribution in each step of the evaluation process based on clearly identified indicators might help in gaining detailed insights and in identifying the areas in which interventions are needed. Evaluation should also cover qualitative aspects, such as a check for biased language used in panel discussions or evaluation reports, as well as in the call text or guidelines for reviewers / panel members. In that regard, a language scan, applying linguistic software, could be useful. All relevant data and knowledge gained should be reported to national authorities and the public in order to guarantee accountability, but also to provide the funding body – and other stakeholders – with insights for the design of future programmes/grants. More information on evaluation can be found in step 5 of the step-by-step guide for research funding bodies. Monitoring and evaluation deliver crucial information on gender-sensitive funding outcomes and processes ahead of the funding decision. Funding bodies need to take time to reflect on the knowledge gained and how to integrate this knowledge within the next funding cycle. By aiming to improve each step from a gender and intersectional perspective, the design of a funding programme/grant can be adjusted, grant allocation can be optimised and gender equality in research funding can be constantly enhanced.

You can find more practical examples in the online version of the GEAR action toolbox.

5. Where: Legislative and policy backgrounds

National contexts are important framework conditions for developing and implementing GEPs. Strong legal and policy frameworks can support or even require the establishment of a GEP and can predefine which objectives and measures should be implemented. Please be aware that national requirements might be different from those of Horizon Europe. Furthermore, other policies and initiatives to promote gender equality in the field of R & I might be helpful when starting a GEP. The country-specific information on legislative and policy backgrounds and other support measures to promote gender equality in research will help you to identify relevant framework conditions for your GEP implementation processes. The country profiles provide information on:

- **legal framework**, namely the laws and regulations governing the promotion of gender equality in R & I;

- **policy framework**, namely the specific activities of national authorities to promote gender equality in R & I, such as the establishment of an advisory group, the commission of studies on gender equality in R & I, the provision of support mechanisms for research organisations to implement GEPs, capacity-building activities, awareness-raising activities and awards for organisations or researchers;

- **other stimulatory initiatives** introduced by companies and non-governmental bodies to promote gender equality in R & I;

- **key actors**, detailing public actors who are responsible for advancing the gender equality agenda in R & I and are able to steer legal and policy developments on gender equality in R & I;

- **initiatives for gender equality** by RPOs, describing how many RPOs (including higher education institutions) have implemented a GEP, how well these plans have been developed and the most common measures included in these plans;

- **relevant examples of practice**, describing promising practices as regards measures to promote gender equality, the development and implementation of GEPs, and gender-sensitive responses in the COVID-19 period.

6. Success factors for gender equality plan development and implementation

A number of elements can be highlighted as supporting gender equality work in research organisations and research funding bodies, that is, success factors for effective and sustainable change. When these success factors are present in an organisation, the efforts towards gender equality are more likely to succeed.

6.1. Promoting gender equality plan support and collaboration within and outside the organisation

Almost every organisational endeavour is more likely to succeed if it is a collective effort. In this regard, the following success factors can be considered as relevant for gender equality work.

6.1.1. Awareness and capacity development

Implementing a GEP, in any type of organisation, needs awareness, knowledge and expertise, not only at the time of designing and planning measures, but also when implementing and monitoring the measures. Staff members can support transformational change by gaining knowledge of gendered processes and practices. Staff can also increase their understanding of gender equality aspects and the need for (certain) action, and reduce resistance to the active promotion of gender equality and structural, as well as cultural, change in an organisation. Awareness-raising and capacity-building activities, which transfer and enhance knowledge among a great number of stakeholders (including senior/middle management) through multiple lines of communication (e.g. specific events, training and social media), should therefore be pursued. In order to transfer knowledge about policies sustainably, it is helpful to create educational programmes for

new department chairs and senior management, in which they can learn about the rationales of all crucial gender equality policies and practices, and discuss how to tackle potential difficulties in implementing them. For more support, the communications / public relations department and/or gender researchers throughout the organisation can be involved. However, awareness raising and capacity development should be accompanied by structures, policies and practices in order to lead to real change.

6.1.2. Senior management support

Explicit, clearly communicated and reiterated support and backing from the top of the organisation over time provides legitimacy to gender equality work. This legitimacy in turn offers the opportunity to sustainably integrate changes into internal procedures and systems, that is, it is often easiest for gender equality practitioners to establish structures, adopt strategies and implement activities, as they are the ones taking the decisions for the organisation. It also significantly reduces the chances of gender equality initiatives being rejected. When top management explicitly supports gender equality, it signals the importance of this issue to the organisation and makes it easier to mobilise all components, levels, communities, and human and financial resources within the organisation. Support from the top can also reduce the fear of individuals that their scientific reputation may be harmed by engaging with gender equality work, and can increase individuals' motivation and engagement. The 'top' refers to the central governing bodies and people in decision-making positions, such as (vice-)rectors, (vice-)chancellors, deans, presidents, executive boards, (boards of) directors and chief officers. Regarding legitimacy, it can also prove helpful to gain the support of people with 'informal power' (e.g. prestigious researchers).

6.1.3. Stakeholder involvement in planning and further cooperation for implementing the gender equality plan

Stakeholder participation in planning and implementation is key, as it creates a feeling of ownership. Collaborative planning processes lead to measures that are likely to have a greater impact. Bringing together different stakeholders (including senior and middle management) who have different expertise and types of knowledge about the (formal and informal) functioning of the organisation is productive. It helps in building more targeted policies, anticipating potential resistance and creating greater acceptance and support. A mixed team (in terms of positions within the organisation, genders, seniority and disciplinary backgrounds) can provide more diverse ideas and can also more easily initiate strategies for gender equality that permeate the whole organisation. A positive change in organisational and personal attitudes and a greater understanding of gender equality is achieved through work at senior management level and in other areas of the organisation (i.e. by academics, administrative staff, HR and students). Addressing all genders and awakening interest in gender issues among all of those different groups creates collective responsibility. A collaborative process provides time for dialogue and for clarifying objectives and responsibilities, thus generating synergies and increased legitimacy and ownership of the implementation of proposed measures. Therefore, integrating participatory methods and processes (e.g. co-creation/co-design) can be helpful. It can also prove fruitful to delegate some activities to other stakeholders, for example letting the faculties or departments come up with their own GEPs (activities) that fit their specific contexts. During the GEP development process and afterwards, strategic communication and dissemination (e.g. presentations, seminars and newsletters) are crucial to ensure that stakeholders are provided with the necessary information. This information and documentation should include the rationale and process of the development of the GEP, a comprehensive explanation of the goals, the considerations that went into adopting it and a precise description of how the GEP will be administered and monitored. It is important to find a clear, comprehensible design and language, which also reflects/includes arguments important to various stakeholders. This information should be disseminated regularly and quite frequently.

For the implementation of the GEP, cooperation among stakeholders is paramount if sustainable changes in all components of the organisation are to be achieved. Building alliances with key stakeholders is not sufficient. Broader networks between the organisation's units, spanning different organisational and/or disciplinary subcultures, are also necessary. The cooperation should connect the central level of the organisation with the local level (e.g. departments and faculties), for example by establishing central and local gender equality committees/representatives or networks of focal actors. A clear distribution of tasks and responsibilities among stakeholders based on their individual areas of expertise and competence must be ensured. For instance, the activities that fall within the remit of the central or local level should be clearly established. You should also provide educational and practical support, so that all stakeholders in the organisation can benefit from useful alliances. The more widespread that the stakeholder support is, the more resilient the change efforts will be. The cooperation should allow flexibility so that points of compromise can be found, but at the same time should follow the fundamental goals and objectives of the GEP. The organisation should also make sure that the stakeholders' efforts regarding gender equality, for example their work in a gender equality network, are rewarded and recognised within the organisation and do not take the form of unpaid, additional labour (which takes away time from research-related activities). Rewarding and recognising gender equality activities can be formalised, for example in time allocation models (40 % teaching, 40 % research and 20 % work) or by awarding additional points in performance evaluations for promotions.

For more information on which stakeholders to involve and to find resources for participatory methods and techniques, see the section on stakeholders and step 4 of the step-by-step

guide on implementing a GEP for research organisations, universities and public bodies and for RFOs.

6.1.4. External networks to enable exchange on gender equality

While every GEP is unique, there is still a lot of potential in learning from others. Therefore, involvement in international, national or subnational networks (e.g. communities of practice) with other organisations can help your organisation to acquire knowledge, exchange experiences, give and receive feedback, and gain inspiration. It can also be motivating to hear perspectives from other organisations and to feel solidarity with other gender equality practitioners. For some, participating in structural change projects within the frameworks of the seventh framework programme and Horizon 2020 fulfilled this purpose.

For more information on the role that networks can play for stakeholders, see the GEAR section on stakeholders.

6.2. Establishing effective gender equality structures and embedding the gender equality plan into these or other existing structures

In order to ensure sustainability, structures are key. In this regard, the following success factors can be considered as relevant for gender equality work.

6.2.1. A well-equipped and well-positioned gender equality body

Such a central structure coordinates and monitors the gender equality efforts undertaken. It provides gender equality work with staff, knowledge and expertise. Ideally, and depending on the size of the organisation, it consists not of one person only, but of quali-

fied and motivated team members supporting each other and sharing responsibilities and the workload. Its clear, permanent mandate and responsibilities, designated budget and position in the governance of the organisation, as well as the existence of clear responsibility structures, are all important factors for ensuring sustainability. The gender equality body has to be located at the appropriate level to effectively support the implementation of gender equality work. Being in proximity to decision-making and having the capacity to inform HR and scientific management foster effective implementation. Knowledge (of, among other things, sex-disaggregated data) and expertise are essential for the ability of these bodies to act. It is also important that gender equality bodies exert some leadership on gender mainstreaming implementation, with the support of executive bodies. If the implementing responsibilities are shared among other stakeholders (e.g. faculties, departments or the HR department), it is crucial to provide the necessary financial resources at this level as well. The resources of the structural change / Horizon 2020 projects proved helpful in establishing such permanent gender equality bodies in numerous universities.

6.2.2. Embedding gender equality in existing structures and management procedures

Anchoring gender equality provisions in existing structures and practices ensures institutionalisation and strengthens the sustainability of planned measures. For instance, measures targeting recruitment and appraisal should be incorporated in broader recruitment and career management procedures. Similarly, gender training initiatives are more likely to be institutionalised if incorporated in broader training or lifelong learning schemes. Monitoring instruments, in the form of quantitative and qualitative indicators or regular surveys, gain relevance and sustainability when incorporated into routine management procedures. Aligning the GEP objectives with the overall strategic goals (e.g. university/company strategy) can create synergies and legitimacy. Explaining how gen-

der equality contributes to achieving the overall strategic goals of the organisation (e.g. attracting talented personnel) can also facilitate working with stakeholders and shows that you are all in the same boat and working in the same direction. If structures and procedures aimed at gender equality are already in place, further efforts should build on these and proceed from there.

6.2.3. Legislation and policies

If it includes initiatives on gender equality, equal opportunities, anti-discrimination and/or diversity, the national or subnational framework can be a driver for organisational gender equality work and can serve as a basis for argumentation, legitimacy and resources (e.g. training or guidelines from ministries). The same holds true for frameworks at international level (e.g. European legislation and the Horizon Europe eligibility criterion). In addition, the policy frameworks of other countries can be drivers in the sense that they are a source of inspiration and offer material for arguments for stakeholders. However, organisational gender equality work does not necessarily have to mirror the approach presented in legislation and policies; it can go beyond that.

To read more about the national frameworks on gender equality in R & I in the EU-27 and the corresponding framework at European level, consult the GEAR country reports and/or EU-specific information in Chapter 5.

6.3. Following an evidence-based approach to gender equality work

Evidence from your own organisation can guide you on where to start and how to shape the future direction of your organisation. Regular dissemination of data and of information on the impact of activities can also help to retain stakeholders' attention and engagement. In this regard, the following success factors can be considered as relevant for gender equality work.

6.3.1. Availability of sex-disaggregated data

Sex- and/or gender-disaggregated data and, as far as possible, other data (e.g. on intersecting inequality dimensions, such as age or ethnicity) relevant to documenting the status of gender (in)equality within the organisation are indispensable for designing effective strategies. The availability (i.e. existence and accessibility) of such quantitative and qualitative data is a precondition for the impact of measures and initiatives. Indeed, ensuring that proposed measures are evidence based not only allows the appropriate distribution of resources and tackling of problems, but also ensures that achievements can be monitored. Having organisation-specific data can also help to raise awareness, increase understanding and overcome resistance. If there are no data or you want to look into what the data mean, the launch of in-depth auditing processes, in the form of surveys, focus groups or pilot interviews, is a way of identifying organisation-specific issues, thus providing a starting point and base for further work. The data on the status quo of gender equality in the organisation should be made available to staff to keep them informed. For more information, see step 2 of the step-by-step guide on analysing and assessing the status quo in your organisation for research organisations, universities and public bodies and for RFOs.

6.3.2. Monitoring instruments

Creating implementation follow-up mechanisms is paramount. The monitoring system can involve all implementing units (e.g. faculties, departments, the gender equality body and senior management) and units that are responsible for the data collection in the organisation (e.g. the HR department, the research and development department and the grants office). These follow-up mechanisms can take the form of regular monitoring meetings with the implementing units and the gender equality body / senior management, regular surveys, or data collection and indicators that are fully integrated into governance and management monitoring systems. Follow-up indicators

increase the validity and sustainability of gender mainstreaming strategies and should be tailored to the GEP's objectives and activities. For example, quantitative indicators can be used to monitor goals regarding recruitment and upwards mobility, and work environments can be monitored by means of a survey. These methods provide key instruments for the overall assessment of gender equality work. Available data can promote the implementation of gender equality policies and strengthen the engagement of different stakeholders interested in being part of the progress. Increased accountability via the monitoring cycles can serve as a driver of positive change. When assessing impact, you should also keep in mind that data should be fine-grained enough to detect change and that impact is assessed not for the average employee, but for a diverse group of employees. Both the qualitative and the quantitative indicators have to be SMART.

6.3.3. Evaluation

Mid- or long-term evaluation of GEPs is not possible when monitoring mechanisms are absent or insufficient. This is detrimental to the effectiveness of future strategies, because evaluations allow you to draw upon lessons learnt from previous initiatives. Evaluations also provide visibility and measurability of actual progress, which cannot always be formally attributed to the implementation of specific measures. If there are no monitoring and evaluation processes implemented, this undermines the capacity of the practitioners to assess their achievements and communicate them. Evaluations, like monitoring, are especially important because the two overarching objectives – the adaptation of institutions to improve equality and the integration of a gender perspective in research content – require time for them to be achieved. Evaluation can also be performed by external experts. For more information, see step 5 of the step-by-step guide on monitoring progress and evaluating a GEP for research organisations, universities and public bodies and for RFOs.

6.4. Finding the balance between clear and fixed goals and objectives, and their flexible and creative implementation

Gender equality work and plans are a complex undertaking, so navigating the process can be challenging. In this regard, the following success factors can be considered as relevant to gender equality work.

6.4.1. Clear and tailored goals and objectives

First, gender equality needs to be framed as a meaningful issue, relevant to the whole community of the organisation. In addition, it has to be backed by explaining the nature and purpose of a GEP and what it entails. For a GEP to be effective and to gain legitimacy, the objectives should reflect the situation in the organisation. GEPs should also take into account the context and situation of the different units (e.g. faculties and departments) and the framework conditions (e.g. the budget, available expertise and experiences). Authenticity and context sensitivity are key when developing the objectives (i.e. each GEP is unique) and, while you can draw inspiration from others, keep in mind that what works well and is realistic for others might not work for you and your context, and vice versa. In order to assess what is relevant in the local context and to tailor the strategy and language used to the organisation, stakeholder engagement and participatory approaches are recommended. Being practical and concrete in formulating objectives and setting targets can effectively support the ownership of the strategy by the whole organisation.

Objectives should be not only long term, but also short and medium term in order to better account for failures, successes and challenges. GEP planning should thus be driven by clear objectives and targets, set out for each planned measure and/or intervention area, along with clearly ascribed responsibilities with regard

to their attainment. In this way, the GEP – as a strategic document – sets easily understandable quality standards for all measures taken based on the strategy, and provides a systematically structured and visionary path that does not need to be repeatedly negotiated with stakeholders. While the GEP is a strategic document, more concrete and operational plans can be taken up in (annual) action plans, which can also be developed at local level (e.g. in faculties, institutes and departments). When developing objectives, it can be helpful to use a framework, such as a logic model, to support the process.

For more information on objectives and goals and how to establish them (e.g. using a logic model), see step 3 of the step-by-step guide on setting up a GEP for research organisations, universities and public bodies and for RFOs.

6.4.2. Flexibility, creativity and resilience

While clear targets and objectives indicate the orientation of the measures, there is also a need to adopt a flexible approach as regards how to reach these goals. You have to find a balance between the activities planned and the actual design of the implementation, which means that the plan may require adjustments and the implementation may therefore differ from the planned version. A key to success in this area is the ability to adapt and reinterpret the GEP (or the action plan(s) based on the GEP) in cooperation with the stakeholders, based on the results of monitoring and current organisational needs. Get creative when choosing your activities: not all problems can be solved by one single measure – diversification is key. Be in it for the long term and do not get discouraged easily: setbacks are an integral part of the process and, if you learn from them, they may even help to push your organisation forward. Find your own pace that fits your organisation and context: do not go too fast, but do not go too slow, and look for a broad support base while focusing on progression. Have a look at who or what level of the institution has the power and willingness to make a change, and start with that person or level, then take advantage of opportunities to work at other levels or with other people. Resilience leads to changes in the attitudes of the members of the organisation and to sustainable structural change. Measures such as training are more effective if they are designed for the long term and are carried out repeatedly. The repetition of training ensures that gender equality cannot be neglected or ignored by senior management and staff members, and sustains the commitment of the organisation in the long term.

7. Resistance, common challenges and how to overcome them

Challenges in the set-up, roll-out, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation of a GEP are manifold and frequent. Some challenges are related to a lack of success factors, others are associated with pervasive forms of resistance, and there are various institutional and/or administrative barriers that need to be tackled in a range of ways. It is important to state that work on gender equality does not usually happen rapidly and may appear to be slow, with concrete results and achievements not being fully realised for a number of years. In this chapter, various challenges in relation to gender equality work and GEPs are highlighted. Suggestions on how to overcome these challenges are also provided.

7.1. Resistance

Resistance can take numerous forms and manifestations: it can be explicitly expressed, but it can also be implicitly expressed by an individual's insufficient action, lack of action or lack of engagement in a process or a GEP. Resistance can be personal (e.g. due to individual beliefs and motives) or institutional, with the latter consisting of a systematic, ongoing, sustained pattern of non-engagement with the issue of gender equality and a pronounced lack of support for a GEP. Resistance can take the form of gender-specific resistance, if the reasons are connected to opposing views on gender equality (activities). However, resistance can also be directed at change processes in general or can be related to personal conflicts or fear of more bureaucracy and an increased workload (non-gender-specific resistance). Some forms of measures in GEPs, such as proposed quotas or changing promotion mechanisms, may be particularly prone to triggering resistance.

7.1.1. Overcoming resistance

Overcoming resistance can be challenging. Support needs to be provided to all levels of staff to help them to realise the value of gender equality work, and this may involve training or specific time allocation for work on the GEP. Commitment from the highest levels of management that is unequivocal and publicly visible is required to overcome resistance and to ensure progress in relation to gender equality. Providing transparency regarding the GEP process through clear communication and by involving stakeholders in identifying and naming problems and resistance may also be useful. In this way, solutions can emerge and the ownership of solutions is not held by only one group or person. A lack of knowledge and understanding may also manifest as resistance; in this case, the suggestions contained under the heading 'Lack of awareness or understanding of gender equality (plans)' on the GEAR section on resistance and challenges may be helpful. Some may also fear an increased workload due to gender equality measures, which can be prevented by designing efficient measures, using synergies and making time resources available.

It is advisable to frame the agenda together with one that your colleagues are more familiar with, relating to their own agenda, for example promoting equality in order to promote excellence by not allowing gender, race, ethnic origin, disability or any other irrelevant variable to intervene in appointment and promotion, or embedding it in a policy of a 'positive work environment' from which everyone could benefit. It is also recommended that the terminology is adapted if the term 'gender' provokes too much resistance, for example by focusing on 'equal opportunities'. Examples from other organisations and countries can help to frame the topic in a more positive way. It is also important to

note that some individuals will not be cooperative and supportive under any circumstances; in this case, it may be more productive and efficient to focus on institutional forms of resistance and/or to engage other committed and supportive staff and colleagues, rather than to try to change the minds of these resistant individuals.

7.2. Common challenges

7.2.1. Engagement and mobilisation of stakeholders

Of course, it is easier to develop and implement a GEP if the organisation, and especially senior management, is aware of gender equality issues, recognises the need for a GEP and supports the GEP activities. However, this ideal case does not happen too often. Getting (almost) everyone on board can prove difficult. This section sets out common challenges in this regard.

Lack of (early) stakeholder engagement

The first crucial step in mobilising and engaging stakeholders is to identify who needs to be communicated with and engaged in the development and roll-out stages of a GEP. Factoring in the time for finding and engaging allies is important to avoid challenges at a later stage of implementation of the plan, for example in the form of resistance because stakeholders do not feel ownership. However, communicating and working with a diverse set of stakeholders is a challenge in itself. If you are unsure who to involve and how, have a look at the stakeholders section.

Lack of men involved

Involving various people within the organisation in the process of designing and implementing a GEP is important in order to receive widespread approval for gender equality measures. Some groups are more difficult to involve than others. Men, in particular, are often difficult to

reach and it can be hard to get them to participate in activities. A lot of them seem to think that they are not co-responsible for gender equality and cannot benefit from it. It is thus a common perspective that gender equality activities are a job for women. In order to increase men's participation, they must be made aware of their significance in promoting gender equality. Furthermore, it should be clarified to men that they could also benefit from gender equality measures, such as a diverse working culture or a better work–life balance. Therefore, whether activities can or should be open to all genders should be examined and discussed. If there are already some men who are active in gender equality work or convinced by the agenda, you can rely more on them. It is also recommendable to connect with men who hold positions of power and find common ground between their professional agenda and gender equality work. However, when engaging in a dialogue about privileges, it should be kept in mind that not all men have the same privileges owing to their ethnicities, disciplinary backgrounds, gender expressions, sexual orientations and other intersecting dimensions.

Lack of awareness or understanding of gender equality (plans)

In some organisations, there can be a fundamental lack of understanding regarding the need for and importance of gender equality. Little awareness of the gendered nature of current systems and methods of evaluating R & I has been identified as a challenge. All organisational members and stakeholders do not always agree on the problem of gender inequalities. This can lead to a lack of engagement of and involvement by the key stakeholders, the relevance of the work being minimised and gender equality being considered a 'women's issue'. It can also have the effect that gender equality is seen as not necessary or as contradictory to meritocracy or scientific excellence (see the following subsection). A lack of understanding and awareness can also be a cause of resistance. To counteract this, it is important to reiterate that gender equality is not a minority, marginal issue, but concerns each and every person in

an organisation. Gender equality may also need to be framed as key to developing a successful, open and forward-thinking research and higher education institution that respects and enables everyone working and studying there. Setting up a GEP that is fully and publicly supported by senior managers and leaders will help to give visibility to gender equality. Basic (possibly mandatory) training and/or seminars, in person or online – for all staff in an organisation – on gender equality and meetings with stakeholders may also be required (see examples of training initiatives in the GEAR action toolbox). This is to ensure a collective, shared understanding of the importance of gender equality and related work. Ensuring that time is allocated to this training in staff work schedules gives gender equality prominence within an institution and frames it as an organisational priority. Finally, explaining what a GEP entails (and does not entail) may also be required (possibly with relevant examples shared among staff).

Belief that gender equality work contradicts the value of meritocracy or scientific excellence

Some individuals in organisations may believe that the requirement for a GEP or work on gender equality contradicts the commitment to scientific excellence or promotion on merit. Moreover, some may believe that gender inequalities are partly self-inflicted by women because they are not self-confident enough. This belief appears to have led to an absence of women in various fields and at higher levels of academia or research settings. In fact, a commitment to excellence in research requires a diversity of expertise, experience and staff, as well as the assurance to attract and retain the most talented staff. There are two ways to address this challenge: first, by providing and promoting training (e.g. on unconscious bias) for all staff within an organisation and, second, by referring to international and European research and reports on this topic, which may be useful in order to convince colleagues and stakeholders of the importance of gender equality and GEPs. In the specific case of less intensive research, or 'widening' countries, a case is to be built to

demonstrate that bridging the gender gap and bridging the knowledge and innovation gap correlate. More concretely, expanding the pool of talent, tackling unconscious bias and better addressing gender-relevant aspects through groundbreaking research together contribute to enhancing excellence and can result in a competitive advantage. For more material to support your arguments against this belief, have a look at tabs 2 and 3 of this page, for example the video of the ACT project on meritocracy.

Opinion that gender equality work is not required or denial

In some settings, countries or academic disciplines, the perception prevails that gender equality measures and GEPs are unnecessary. You may also find a 'job done' attitude. This may be attributed to women being well represented in certain disciplines, fields, faculties or sectors, or a historical legacy of gender equality work in an organisation. In a number of cases, other organisational everyday matters seem to be more urgent, and gender equality as part of change processes falls into oblivion. In spite of the best intentions, gender equality measures are unconsciously left out. In addition, some believe that gender equality issues will improve on their own, without the need for special activities or resources, or believe that specific issues are neutral, while they are in fact affected by power relations. In this case, it may be beneficial to conduct a status quo analysis and regular monitoring, for example with a survey, focus groups or an in-depth quantitative analysis of HR data, to be able to pinpoint gender equality issues (see the GEAR action toolbox section on data collection). It is also important to clarify that developing a GEP and work on gender equality need to be continued and maintained, and are not 'one-off' activities. This is to ensure that the gains previously made are sustainable and flexible enough to adapt to changes in an organisation caused both internally and externally. It is also important to emphasise that ongoing work on gender equality benefits all staff, not only women. In order to disseminate those arguments and messages within the organisation, awareness-raising measures (e.g. seminars and

information days) can be helpful. Keep in mind that denial may also be related to resistance.

7.2.2. Organisational resources

Gender equality work needs a strong foundation in organisational resources: on the one hand regarding human and financial resources and, on the other, concerning evidence on gender issues in the organisation, and gender knowledge and expertise.

Lack of gender knowledge and expertise

Some universities and research institutions may not have a history or tradition of teaching or engaging with gender studies or practical gender equality work. This can be challenging for the team/person responsible for the development of the GEP and can make it even more difficult to convince staff and stakeholders of the importance and benefits of gender equality work and GEPs. An initial discussion about valuable knowledge could be a remedy in this case. This challenge may require support from and utilisation of gender equality networks (at national, regional or international level) and the buying in of gender expertise to enhance institutional capacity and knowledge. One challenge in this regard could be that it is not possible to transfer objectives, measures or tasks from other organisations: they can serve as inspiration, but have to be adapted to the specific context of your organisation.

Lack of relevant data

A lack of availability of or access to sex-disaggregated HR data and other forms of data (from focus groups, interviews and surveys) is a challenge, as these figures and insights are required to develop a status quo assessment of the areas in which gender equality work and measures need to be targeted in an organisation. Several case studies have pointed to a lack of information and indicators regarding the intervention, which makes effective monitoring and evaluation difficult. Having the data and statistics col-

lated and prepared is also needed to inform and convince stakeholders and to counter resistance with up-to-date facts and figures. Another challenge regarding data collection can be the time lag between the implementation of gender equality measures and their impact, which can also be a challenge for the monitoring and evaluation of GEPs (e.g. students' education period and the impact of this education on later professional careers). Furthermore, data protection policies and legislation may in some cases (in particular in organisations, faculties or departments with low staff numbers) limit the availability of sex-disaggregated personnel data. Updated HR data collation and management systems may need to be utilised to enable the generation from existing staff records of statistics that are broken down by sex/gender. Time and costs for collecting and analysing data may need to be factored into the GEP. If specific sex-disaggregated data relevant to your status quo assessment are not readily available in your organisation, it is important to include a specific activity in your GEP to produce a methodology and procedure for collecting these data in a standardised form in the future. Storing any resultant data in a way that complies with European and national data protection requirements is also critical. In addition, using a mix of quantitative (e.g. HR data) and qualitative data (e.g. focus groups) is recommended for mapping the most pressing issues, but also to ensure you have information on the reasons behind these issues. In the GEAR tool, you can find more detailed information on data collection and on step 5 on monitoring progress and evaluating a GEP.

Lack of human and financial resources

An absence of dedicated, adequate and sustained resources, both human and financial, for gender equality work and for developing, implementing and monitoring GEPs is a common obstacle. A lack of funding can lead to chronic under-resourcing of the work, which may lead to only 'cost-neutral' measures and policies being taken up. This is despite, in most cases, investment and committed finances being required to accelerate change and to support the initiatives

and measures of the GEP. The staff time required to develop and implement a GEP and the status quo analysis, assessment and drafting of a GEP needs to be acknowledged and resourced. Adding to the workload of already overburdened staff, offloading this task to inexperienced or junior staff, or not financially supporting the measures of the GEP give a strong impression that gender equality is not valued at institutional level. Not funding training on gender or allowing time in staff schedules to attend such training is another form of not resourcing gender equality work. To overcome this obstacle, the value of gender equality work should be clearly outlined, such as increased staff retention, more robust research, more diversity in staff composition and evident senior-level commitment. The resources needed, both human and financial, to develop and maintain a GEP must be clearly articulated, agreed upon and documented in the early stages of plan development. Doing so allows the work involved in a GEP to be fully and accurately accounted for and helps to avoid staff burnout, insufficient key stakeholder engagement due to a lack of results, a lack of progress (both short and long term) and limited goal achievement. It also demonstrates the commitment and support that an organisation has for the GEP and the importance it places on gender equality. A persistent and chronic lack of resources for this work and the GEP may indicate institutional resistance to the issue (see also Section 7.1).

7.2.3. Governance

Gender equality work is highly dependent on having room for manoeuvre, that is, a national and political context and the organisational set-up in terms of governance influence that does not restrict what can be done and how. For example, translating ideas into formal gender equality structures and policies can be difficult if the organisation has limited authority due to the political environment.

Lack of organisational authority of the gender equality body

The staff involved in the development and roll-out of a GEP may not hold the authority or decision-making powers to promote and drive change in the organisation. This can lead to frustration, limited progress and blockages in terms of goal or output achievement of the GEP. This obstacle can generally only be resolved by early involvement, commitment and ongoing support from senior management in an organisation. This support needs to be visible, perceptible and genuine to all those within an organisation and to those who fund the work of the organisation in order to develop a reputation for deeming gender equality work important. Furthermore, subordinating the body responsible for gender equality directly to senior management can be helpful. In addition, identifying who is needed to grant authority, foster progress and authorise decisions, and liaising with them early on in the process of GEP development, are also crucial.

Lack of autonomy of the organisation

In some countries or regions, organisations may have limited autonomy to enable changes related to gender equality. For example, in some countries, ministries have a strong influence on universities or funding bodies. This lack of autonomy may be particularly pronounced in relation to hiring, recruitment, salaries, and promotion procedures and regulations. However, you may want to examine whether the regulation in question applies to all members of the organisation or whether there are groups to which it does not apply (e.g. administrative staff versus academic staff). Organisations have to respect the provisions of the law, but if there is an internal drive and a catalyst for change, more can be achieved. Bottom-up approaches can push for change. You should identify activists in your organisation to brainstorm creative solutions that comply with the law and, at the same time, promote fairer organisational practices (e.g. for recruitment and career progression). These activists can also help to set measures in motion and convince senior management and leadership. Alliances need to be sought and built to

contribute to a better working environment for all genders. It can also be helpful to form and engage in networks (e.g. university networks, funding agency networks and research-performing networks) in order to collectively make a change in the national context or academic system (see the section on stakeholders).

COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 and the responses to it have greatly changed the way we live and work together as a society and, of course, this has also been an overarching challenge for organisational gender equality work. The pandemic and lockdowns have affected R & I in terms of gender (for more information, see the GEAR section on why change must be structural). The effects of the pandemic have often caused delays in gender equality work, as it can be quite challenging to collect data and involve stakeholders when individual workloads increase and while pandemic-related restrictions are in place, for example to collect feedback on a GEP draft. However, it can also be an opportunity to shed light on gendered aspects of academia (e.g. empirical research on care responsibilities and the effects on publication activities), and you can use the results of this kind of research to present a case for your arguments. If you would like to gain inspiration on how to design gender-sensitive responses to COVID-19 for your organisation, consult the GEAR action toolbox.

7.2.4. Sustainability

Sustainability represents another overarching challenge. Gender equality is a long-term process, and the corresponding measures have to be designed in a way to ensure that gender equality activities persist (e.g. also after the completion of a specific project). Progress and success in relation to gender equality and the implementation of a GEP can be vulnerable to changes, as decisions or progress may be reversed or halted as a result of changes. This can be particularly pronounced when key supporters or drivers at senior management level change functions/roles or leave. Budget changes, cutbacks, restructuring and apathy /gender fatigue can also lead to reduced or limited sustainability of a GEP. To overcome this challenge, embedding commitment to both gender equality and the work related to the GEP in multiple organisational structures is key. This means that support, accountability and commitment for the GEP will need to be sought from multiple stakeholders, and not allocated to only a specific school or department. Allocating a specific multiannual budget to gender equality-related work that does not originate from one school or department alone also seems to contribute to sustainability. Furthermore, focusing a GEP on anchoring changes in organisational regulations, statutes and structures and applying an approach that contains a mix of different measures that address gender inequalities at different levels supports sustainable change. Integrating regular monitoring and evaluation structures and/or tools into a GEP may help you to realise when sustainability begins to lag and may indicate what measures are needed prior to crisis points being reached. The sustainability and resilience of any GEP may need to undergo a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis prior to the GEP's adoption and launch. This is to ensure that the GEP is fit to anticipate and overcome challenges in the future.

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