



Gender Mainstreaming

Gender Equality Action Plans: Method and tool brief

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European Institute for Gender Equality

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1. What are gender equality action plans?

Gender equality action plans are **gender mainstreaming tools that outline the specific actions an institution will take to advance gender equality in their organisation** ⁽¹⁾.

Institutions are not gender-neutral entities, as gender inequalities may be perpetuated through policies, activities and organisational culture ⁽²⁾. Gender equality action plans enable institutions to address the identified inequalities within their organisations by integrating a gender perspective into their internal activities and external outputs.

Gender equality action plans:

- outline the **gender equality goals** the institution aims to achieve and the specific **actions** to carry out to achieve each goal;
- present the **timeframe** and (human and financial) **resources** for implementation;
- describe procedures for **monitoring** and **evaluating** progress.

Gender equality action plans can include actions to address gender inequalities that are:

- **observable and measurable** (e.g. the gender pay gap and the under-representation of women in leadership roles);
- **subtle and embedded within the culture of an institution** (e.g. gender stereotypes and

biases that shape expectations in the workplace, such as perceiving men as not taking parental leave or women as being less interested in leadership roles).

- **intersecting**, recognising that gender interacts with characteristics such as age, socio-economic situation, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, rural or urban location, etc.

More on gender and intersecting inequalities

The interactions of sex and gender with other characteristics create unique forms of discrimination and exclusion, exposing specific groups of women and men to a higher risk of disadvantages ⁽³⁾ (e.g. the largest gender pay gaps are observed among the highly educated, those aged 50–64 and those in couples with children) ⁽⁴⁾. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the overall unemployment rate for young women and men has increased, with those with a migrant background being particularly adversely affected) ⁽⁵⁾. Systematic action is required to transform these inequalities and foster a safe and inclusive working environment that can support women and men in all their diversity ⁽⁶⁾ to perform high-quality work that reaches their full potential.

⁽¹⁾ This brief uses the term 'gender equality action plans' to refer to plans focused on gender-responsive internal transformation of the institution. Across the EU, various terms are used, such as gender equality plans, gender action plans and gender mainstreaming plans.

⁽²⁾ EIGE, 2016a.

⁽³⁾ EIGE, 2022a.

⁽⁴⁾ EIGE, 2023.

⁽⁵⁾ EIGE, 2022f.

⁽⁶⁾ For more on the definition of the phrase 'women and men in all their diversity', see p. 7 in EIGE 2020 source.

1.1. Why are gender equality action plans important?

Gender equality action plans are important because they help institutions to achieve the following goals.



Deliver gender-responsive transformation across the institution

As tools for gender mainstreaming, gender equality action plans provide a framework for systematic reforms led by senior leadership and delivered across the institution by engaging all staff in developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating actions for gender equality. These plans typically explain the rationale for the action, including the need for change, the way this action should occur and the benefits it is expected to bring.



Create a system of accountability

Gender equality action plans hold management responsible for their gender equality commitments by establishing measurable gender equality targets with corresponding timeframes, specifying members of the organisation that are responsible for carrying out the specific actions in the plan and developing frameworks for monitoring and evaluation. Gender equality action plans also help to keep track of the progress achieved over time and to continuously introduce new measures that address gender inequalities embedded in the institution.



Demonstrate continuous commitment to gender equality

Priorities within institutions can change in response to internal and external factors (e.g. staff expertise, budgetary considerations, regulatory requirements, stakeholder expectations). When significant changes occur, especially in times of crisis (e.g. the COVID-19 pandemic), gender inequalities may no longer be considered an immediate concern. By adopting gender equality action plans, institutions can ensure high-level long-term commitment to implementing gender-responsive institutional reforms, even when new or significant issues emerge on their agenda.

1.2. The purpose of gender equality action plans

The purpose of gender equality action plans is to facilitate gender-responsive institutional transformation, defined as a 'process that aims to integrate gender equality into the regular rules, procedures and practices of an institution' (7).

Gender equality action plans tackle inequalities identified in three main dimensions for gender mainstreaming in institutions: (1) **structural di-**

mension, which focuses on integrating a gender perspective in policies and procedures; (2) **personnel dimension**, which focuses on improving gender equality competencies and gender balanced representation; and (3) **output dimension**, which aims to contribute to positive external change towards gender equality, through the institution's results, services and products (8).



For step-by-step guidance on integrating a gender perspective in institutions, see EIGE's [Institutional Transformation toolkit](#).

(7) EIGE, 2016a.

(8) For further information on the structural, personnel and output model for institutional transformation, see EIGE 2016a source.

1.2.1. Gender mainstreaming in the structural dimension

Gender equality action plans can include measures to develop or amend policies which shape an institution's working processes. By outlining measures **to mainstream a gender perspective into the management and procedures of an institution**, gender equality action plans can reform the institution's visible and invisible objectives, rules and procedures ⁽⁹⁾.

To facilitate gender mainstreaming in the structural dimension, gender equality action plans can:

- include **gender equality objectives and monitoring frameworks** that hold management and staff responsible for achieving gender equality as a common goal within an institution;
- guarantee that **human and financial resources for gender equality are available** and that gender equality is considered in the institution's budget planning;
- acknowledge **gender and intersecting inequalities** and integrate a gender and intersectional perspective into all internal policies as a cross-cutting principle.

Box 1. The United Nations' System-wide Action Plan on gender equality and women's empowerment (measures relating to the structural dimension)

The **United Nations' System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on gender equality and women's empowerment** ⁽¹⁰⁾ is a system-wide accountability framework to help the UN measure, monitor and drive progress towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. The plan was developed in line with and in response to the UN System-wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women ⁽¹¹⁾. The plan applies to all agencies, departments and offices of the UN system. The plan lists performance indicators which measure progress made to strengthen accountability to facilitate gender mainstreaming; enhance results-based management for gender equality; establish oversight through monitoring evaluation and reporting; allocate sufficient human and financial resources; strengthen staff capacity in gender mainstreaming; and ensure coherence at the global, regional, and national levels ⁽¹²⁾.

1.2.2. Gender mainstreaming in the personnel dimension

Gender equality action plans can include measures to **strengthen gender equality competencies** of leadership and staff and to ensure that **women and men are equally represented** across the institution.

To facilitate gender mainstreaming in the personnel dimension, gender equality action plans can:

- ensure that **human resources (HR) development includes a gender equality component**, through mandatory training and by developing opportunities for staff to become more familiar with gender equality concepts and enable them to integrate gender equality considerations into their work;
- achieve **gender balanced composition at all levels of the organisation** and particularly in leadership and decision-making positions;

⁽⁹⁾ EIGE, 2016a.

⁽¹⁰⁾ UN Women, n.d.

⁽¹¹⁾ United Nations, 2006.

⁽¹²⁾ See footnote 10.

- **foster a working environment that promotes gender equality** by ensuring the staff's well-being and safety from gender-based violence, along with taking action

to consider and accommodate the diverse needs of staff groups composed of women and men in all their diversity.

Box 2. Romania - Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development, and Innovation Funding's Gender Equality Plan (measures relating to the personnel dimension)

The **Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding** is one of the first **Romanian** public institutions to develop a Gender Equality Plan ⁽¹³⁾. The plan includes measures to integrate a gender perspective into all areas of the organisation by training the HR department and responsible staff to comply with gender-sensitive recruitment protocols; training department managers to support employees returning from parental leave; training all employees on sexual harassment; and developing gender-sensitive communications. The plan also includes measures to conduct training sessions on gender equality for evaluators of projects financed by the agency.

1.2.3. Gender mainstreaming in the output dimension

In the output dimension, gender equality action plans can include measures to ensure that the institution's **working results, outputs, services and products** include a gender perspective and **contribute to gender equality**.

To facilitate gender mainstreaming in the output dimension, gender equality action plans can:

- ensure that **gender equality objectives and**

indicators are established in the institution's working results;

- require the use of **gender mainstreaming methods and tools** (e.g. gender analysis or gender impact assessments) in the working processes of the institution;
- **showcase the efforts of the institution to improve gender equality** in their internal and external activities, including in the development and delivery of gender-sensitive products and services.

Box 3. Denmark - Danish Committee for Health Education's Gender Action Plan (measures relating to the output dimension)

The **Danish Committee for Health Education** is a multi-agency non-governmental organisation that supports the development and dissemination of resources for preventing diseases. Its **Gender Action Plan** presents a vision of becoming a 'gender-responsive, transformative and diverse organisation' with a series of goals and objectives to achieve it ⁽¹⁴⁾. One of the plan's objectives aims to increase the visibility of and accountability for the outcomes of gender-responsive projects, as part of the specific goal to 'mainstream gender in its projects, research, and activities so that it contributes to a transformation in gender relations and to the improvement of women's status' ⁽¹⁵⁾.

⁽¹³⁾ Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development, and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI), 2021. For more examples relating to gender equality in academia and research, see <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gear/action-toolbox>.

⁽¹⁴⁾ The Danish Committee for Health Education, n. d.

⁽¹⁵⁾ See footnote 14.

1.3. The legal and policy framework for establishing gender equality action plans

At the national level, some EU Member States require public and/or private institutions to develop gender equality action plans in national law. Several examples are shown below.

- In **Germany**, the federal administration, federal enterprises and federal courts are required to develop equality plans ⁽¹⁶⁾.
- In **Spain**, the central government and its subordinate bodies ⁽¹⁷⁾, including all public administrations ⁽¹⁸⁾, private companies with over 250 employees and, more recently, small and medium-sized businesses with 50 or more employees, should establish and implement gender equality action plans ⁽¹⁹⁾.
- In **Austria**, all public institutions are required to establish long-term (for a period of 6 years) women's empowerment/advancement plans ⁽²⁰⁾.
- In **Portugal**, the largest listed companies and state-owned companies are required to establish gender equality plans on an annual basis and publish them on their websites ⁽²¹⁾.

- In **Finland**, employers with over 30 staff must establish equality plans at least every 2 years ⁽²²⁾.
- In **Sweden**, employers that hire more than 25 employees are required to establish gender equality plans every 3 years ⁽²³⁾.

At the **EU level**, the Horizon Europe 2021–2027 framework programme requires higher education institutions, research organisations and public bodies to develop gender equality action plans to be eligible for participation and funding ⁽²⁴⁾.



For tailored guidance on the steps to develop a gender equality action plan for research organisations, universities and public bodies, see EIGE's [Gender Equality in Academia and Research \(GEAR\)](#) tool.

1.4. Enabling factors for gender equality action plans

In addition to having a comprehensive legal and policy framework as an important factor for establishing gender equality action plans, various other internal and external factors contribute to a culture of support and accountability for the development, adoption, monitoring and evaluation of gender equality action plans, which can be essential for their success.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Federal Act on Gender Equality of 24 April 2015, Federal Law Gazette I, pp. 642–643. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/101573/122451/F-237725072/englisch_bgleig.pdf.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Government of Spain, Organic Law 3/2007 of 22 March. Available at: https://www.mites.gob.es/ficheros/ministerio/igualdad/LEY_ORGANICA_3_2007.pdf.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Government of Spain, Royal Legislative Decree 5/2015 of 30 October. Available at: <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2015-11719>.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Government of Spain, Royal Decree-Law 6/2019 of 1 March. Available at: <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2019-3244>.

⁽²⁰⁾ Government of Austria, 2012, Federal law on equal treatment in the area of the federal government (Federal Equal Treatment Act – B GIBG), Section 11a, (1). Available at: https://www.genderportal.eu/sites/default/files/resource_pool/aut42823.pdf.

⁽²¹⁾ Portugal Assembly of the Republic, 2017, Law No 62/2017 of 1 August. Available at: <https://diariodarepublica.pt/dr/detalhe/lei/62-2017-107791612>.

⁽²²⁾ Government of Finland, 2014, Act (1329/2014) amending the Act on equality between men and women (609/1986). Available at: https://natlex.ilo.org/dyn/natlex2/r/natlex/fe/details?p3_isn=101107&cs=1qIAB4WnERwRlqo_sWYcMWASxNkmVbuj28KrnQJwEOyctnhLr4nckOlixiehKZ5Cag8LC7mJckfZSMxVpEzLBMQ.

⁽²³⁾ Swedish Code of Statutes, Discrimination Act, SFS 2008:567. Available at: https://adsdatabase.ohchr.org/IssueLibrary/SWEDEN_Swedish%20Discrimination%20Act.pdf.

⁽²⁴⁾ European Commission, 2021a.

1.4.1. Ensure the support of senior leadership

Senior leadership must be willing to develop and implement a gender equality action plan in their organisation ⁽²⁵⁾. Before launching the plan, senior leadership should formally approve the plan and communicate its actions to the members of their organisation. Endorsement of the plan by leadership symbolises the endorse-

ment of the wider institution. This sets a precedent that the plan is important and should be treated as such by leaders and members of the institution at all levels.



See EIGE's [GEAR](#) tool to learn more about the importance of the support of senior leadership for the implementation of gender equality plans in research organisations and research funding bodies.

Box 4. Slovakia – Ministry of Health's Gender Equality Plan (endorsed by senior leadership)

In **Slovakia**, the **Ministry of Health's Gender Equality Plan (2022–2025)** outlines a set of actions that have been endorsed by the ministry's executive management on behalf of the Minister of Health ⁽²⁶⁾. The plan aims to improve working conditions, raise awareness of gender equality, prevent harassment and discrimination and address employment and personnel issues (including salaries). The introduction of the plan describes the endorsement from senior leaders and managers across the ministry. Likewise, leaders within departments, including heads of department, are responsible for several actions in the plan. By demonstrating the support and involvement of senior leadership in delivering the plan, the institution can encourage members across the organisation to engage in implementing its actions.

1.4.2. Allocate human and financial resources

Gender equality action plans require dedicated support and resources to be implemented sustainably and effectively. Institutions may face challenges in undertaking actions when the plan has been insufficiently funded or resourced (in terms of personnel and time committed to implementation). This may restrict the delivery or scope of important actions.

Institutions may rely on in-house gender equality expertise or hire external gender equality ex-

perts for developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating a gender equality action plan. Based on this assessment, institutions should either revise the plan to improve the feasibility of its actions or reflect on how additional resources can be gathered to carry out its measures.



See EIGE's brief on [gender budgeting](#) and EIGE's [Gender Budgeting](#) step-by-step toolkit to learn more about how to integrate gender considerations into all levels of the budgetary process and re-organise revenues and expenditures to promote gender equality ⁽²⁷⁾.

⁽²⁵⁾ Government of Victoria – Australia, 2022.

⁽²⁶⁾ Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic, 2022.

⁽²⁷⁾ See footnote 26.

Box 5. Italy – Municipality of Padua’s Gender Equality Plan (allocating appropriate resources)

In **Italy**, the **Municipality of Padua’s Gender Equality Plan** describes a set of targeted actions to deliver its strategy for gender equality ⁽²⁸⁾. In order to ensure that capacity is available to implement its actions, the plan describes the actors responsible for leading the delivery of actions, such as human resources staff and general managers across the organisation. Likewise, the plan provides a box for each action to note any additional funding where it is required. This is to ensure that resources are provided to enable the actions to be implemented successfully.

1.4.3. Raise awareness and build gender equality competencies

Gender equality competence is crucial for developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating a gender equality action plan. Institutions may rely on raising awareness and gender equality training to equip leadership and staff with the necessary knowledge and skills that can lead to changes in attitude and behaviours and contribute to the effective implementation of a gender equality action plan tailored to the context and needs of the institution. Gender equality competence development should be understood

as an ongoing and long-term process that requires time, commitment and human and financial resources to ensure that it is provided on an ongoing basis ⁽²⁹⁾.



For step-by-step guidance on designing and delivering effective gender equality in your institution, see EIGE’s [Gender Equality Training](#) toolkit.

For an overview of the type of awareness raising efforts your institution can undertake, see EIGE’s brief on [gender awareness raising](#).

Box 6. Finland – Linköping University’s Action Plan for Equal Opportunities and Gender Equality (gender equality training for decision-makers)

In **Finland**, the **Action Plan for Equal Opportunities and Gender Equality** (2023) of **Linköping University** foresees the collaboration between Linköping University’s centre of pedagogic excellence and equal opportunities lecturers to review existing courses and develop new courses or elements relating to gender equality in internal training sessions and develop complementary training initiatives, primarily for teachers. The plan includes a needs assessment for skills development for different groups and functions responsible for equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming work (e.g. academic appointment boards, education managers, training managers and HR partners).

⁽²⁸⁾ Municipality of Padua, 2022.

⁽²⁹⁾ EIGE, 2016b.

1.4.4. Ensure the continuous involvement of all relevant staff and other members of the organisation

A well-equipped and well-positioned supporting structure to facilitate the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of gender equality action plans is crucial for ensuring sustainability of gender equality efforts ⁽³⁰⁾. The supporting structures can take some leadership in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of gender equality action plans. However, the successful implementation of the plan would require both support from senior leadership and involvement of all relevant staff and other members of the organisation.

Gender equality action plans should not be perceived as an initiative for specific people or bodies within the institution. Engaging and consulting with staff can build support for the plan across the institution and strengthen the sense of ownership of the plan. It is also important for

raising awareness of gender equality amongst those who may not have previously participated in such activities and for ensuring that they understand their role in implementing the gender equality action plan. Involving all relevant actors can also prevent and address institutional resistance, which is part of any change process and can manifest itself passively (i.e. when staff slow down the change process), actively (i.e. when staff outwardly ridicule or boycott the process) or in a hidden manner (i.e. when members show openness to the plan but do not act accordingly) ⁽³¹⁾.



See EIGE's [gender stakeholder consultation](#) brief to learn more about how gender stakeholder consultation works and why it is important.

To learn more about dealing with resistance at the individual, organisational and discourse levels, see EIGE's [Institutional Transformation](#) toolkit.

Box 7. Portugal – Shared Services of the Ministry of Health's Plan for Equality Between Women and Men (allocating clear responsibilities)

In **Portugal**, the **Shared Services of the Ministry of Health's Plan for Equality Between Women and Men** (2023) describes staff at all levels of the organisation who are involved in delivering the plan ⁽³²⁾. The actions and their responsibilities were developed following an internal audit of gender issues within the organisation and supported by staff feedback, following previous iterations of the plan. The plan lists the department or individual that is responsible for leading the implementation of each action against its strategic objective. By allocating the responsibility to implement actions to specific groups, the institution can provide accountability for ensuring the plan is delivered effectively.

⁽³⁰⁾ EIGE, 2022b.

⁽³¹⁾ EIGE, 2016c.

⁽³²⁾ Shared Service of the Ministry of Health (SPMS) Portugal, 2023.

2. How do gender equality action plans work?

Figure 1. Steps to establish a gender equality action plan



2.1. Step 1 – Conduct a gender equality assessment

To determine the best course of action to advance gender equality, institutions must first take actions to establish the status quo. This is essential for the development of a plan, because it allows institutions to collect data on visible and tacit forms of gender inequalities within the institution, and consult with staff to understand their perceptions on gender equality within the institution.

Staff or external experts appointed to develop the plan must be able to identify the key gender equality issues that exist in their organisation and that relate to the organisation’s mandate and outputs, along with any previous actions which have been taken to address them. This is necessary to ensure that the actions that will be presented in the plan are targeted to the needs of the institution and can be realistically achieved.



Use EIGE's [gender audit](#) brief to understand how your organisation fosters gender equality internally and through its external outputs. You may

also benefit from EIGE's [gender analysis](#) brief, which provides framework examples of different gender analysis frameworks.

Checklist for Step 1 (Conduct a gender equality assessment)

Identify the main gender and intersecting inequalities that exist in the organisation in **different areas**, such as: recruitment and career progression; work-life balance and organisational culture; leadership and decision making; and gender-based violence and sexual harassment.

Decide which **methods** to use to collect sex-disaggregated data on the state of gender equality within the organisation (i.e. a staff survey, a review of HR data and statistics, interviews with leaders in the organisation).

Collect data **disaggregated by sex and by other variables** (such as age, socio-economic situation, disability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, rural or urban location) whenever possible.

Select the people/groups responsible for conducting the gender equality assessment and decide if the assessment will be conducted **internally** (e.g. by internal HR and gender equality staff of the institution) and/or **externally** (by hired experts or stakeholders).

Ensure that the analysis includes a **gender and intersectional perspective** (i.e. considering how gender interacts with age, dis/ability, country of birth, family type, race, migration background, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc.).

Identify opportunities for the institution to improve gender equality (e.g. by collecting recommendations from staff that participate in consultation activities).

2.2. Step 2 – Develop and adopt the gender equality action plan

After establishing the status quo through data collection and analysis, the organisation can develop and adopt a viable gender equality action plan responding to its institutional needs. This means that plans should be data-driven and should tackle issues identified during the gender equality assessment (conducted in [Step 1 – Conduct a gender equality assessment](#)).

Measures adopted in gender equality action plans can vary widely, depending on the type

of institution considered, the mandate and strategic objectives of an institution and the gender equality issues that have been identified (see [Examples of measures in gender equality action plans](#) for inspiration on the types of measures that can be included).



Use EIGE's [gender statistics and indicators](#) brief and [gender monitoring](#) brief to learn more about how to build a set of indicators for gender-responsive monitoring.

See EIGE's [Gender Statistics Database](#), a one-stop source for all gender statistics at the Member State and EU levels.

Checklist for Step 2 (Develop and adopt the plan)

Become familiar with the **main gender and intersecting inequalities and challenges** identified during the gender equality assessment (conducted in the previous step).

Propose **measures** to address the identified gender and intersecting inequalities.

Integrate a **gender and intersectional perspective** into the outlined measures.

Identify the potential positive/negative **impacts** of each action, both internally (on members of the institution) and externally (on customers, clients, stakeholders, etc.).

Identify the people (women and men in all their diversity) or groups in the organisation that will be **responsible for overseeing** the implementation of the plan (e.g. members of the supporting structures within the institution) and/or **carrying out** each action (e.g. the HR department can be responsible for collecting sex-disaggregated data on the composition of staff).

Allocate the **resources** (human and financial) required to carry out each action.

Take measures to address any **resourcing issues**.

Develop **benchmarks** (describing the organisation's current performance) and **targets** (describing the organisation's desired performance) with specified **timeframes** (realistic timelines for achieving each activity).

Develop **gender indicators** to monitor progress for each measure.

Assess needs for **sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics** to monitor each of the indicators, consider (whenever possible) data broken down by sex and other variables, compile regular monitoring reports and conduct an evaluation of the plan.

Select people or groups **responsible for monitoring** each of the indicators, compiling and disseminating regular monitoring reports and **evaluating** the plan.

Identify how leaders of the organisation can formally **adopt/endorse** the plan and raise **awareness** amongst staff.

2.3. Step 3 – Implement and monitor the measures adopted in the plan

After adopting the gender equality action plan, institutions should execute the actions outlined in the plan. The exact actions that should be taken to implement and monitor the plan should already be decided at this stage (as they were developed under [Step 2 – Develop and adopt the gender equality action plan](#)).

Implementation and monitoring of the plan should occur **simultaneously**. Data collected to monitor the achievement of the plan throughout its lifecycle can be compiled in regular (e.g. annual, biannual) progress reports. Reporting is an integral part of the monitoring process, as it allows for the organisation to take stock of the progress achieved. The findings of the monitoring process may indicate a need for making updates or adjustments to the gender equality action plan to better suit the organisational context and organisational needs.

Checklist for Step 3 (Implement and monitor the plan)

Inform members of the institution (women and men in all their diversity) about the gender equality action plan through different channels (e.g. emails, brochures, posters, intranet sites).

Identify opportunities to **raise awareness** of the plan (e.g. with the support of leaders and gender equality champions who can continuously raise awareness to complement the implementation of the plan).

Carry out the activities included in the plan.

Actively **monitor** each measure adopted in the plan in a gender-responsive manner.

Analyse the results of the monitoring reports to identify whether the institution is **achieving** the plan's gender equality goals.

Check whether the institution is **failing** to meet the plan's gender equality targets.

Assess whether the plan needs to be adjusted in any way to account for any new gender and intersecting challenges or emerging inequalities not previously considered and propose **actions** to address these issues.

Adjust the plan as needed.

2.4. Step 4 – Conduct a gender-responsive evaluation of the plan

Institutions should conduct a gender-responsive evaluation of gender equality action plans during their implementation (e.g. a mid-term evaluation) and/or after they expire (*ex post* evaluation). Mid-term evaluations can help institutions assess whether the targets in their plans need to be adapted, based on new factors or issues not previously

considered. However, institutions may find it more practical to evaluate a plan after the period of implementation. This could be done either internally or with the support of external experts.

In this step, institutions can use the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) standard evaluation criteria assessing the effectiveness, impact, relevance, efficiency, coherence and sustainability of an intervention, as described on the following page ⁽³³⁾.

⁽³³⁾ The OECD Development Assistance Committee's Network on Development Evaluation criteria.

Criterion	Evaluation question
Effectiveness	Did the intervention achieve its objectives?
Impact	What difference did the intervention make?
Relevance	Did the intervention do the right things?
Efficiency	How well were resources used?
Coherence	How well did the intervention fit with the broader gender equality objectives of the organisation?
Sustainability	Will the benefits of the plan last?



Use EIGE's brief on [gender-responsive evaluation](#) to learn more about this gender mainstreaming method

to measure progress towards achieving the goals included in their gender equality action plan.

Checklist for Step 4 (Evaluate the plan)

Ensure **institutional support** and adequate **financial and human resources** for carrying out the gender-responsive evaluation of the plan.

Establish the **evaluation team**, making sure that women and men in all their diversity are part of the team.

Assess the **gender evaluability** of the intervention.

Define gender-sensitive evaluation **objectives, criteria and evaluation questions** and design the **methodological approach and tools**.

Assess the extent to which the measures in the plan were **effective, impactful, relevant, efficient, coherent and sustainable**.

Analyse the overall results of the evaluation report to identify the ways in which the institution **achieved** the plan's goals and the ways in which the institution **failed** to meet the plan's targets to advance gender equality.

Identify the main **factors** that enabled or hindered the development, implementation and monitoring of the gender equality action plan.

Identify missed opportunities to **address** any issues in the implementation or monitoring of the gender equality action plan.

Report on and disseminate findings as well as lessons learnt and recommendations.

2.4.1. What should happen after the evaluation of the plan?

After carrying out a gender-responsive evaluation, the institution will have a clear understanding of the progress achieved through the gender equality action plan, along with the remaining gender equality challenges that the organisation should continue to tackle.

To achieve long-term change, institutions should continuously renew their commitment to developing relevant gender equality action plans. This means that after a plan expires, institutions should go back to [Step 1 – Conduct a gender equality assessment](#) and begin developing a subsequent plan that reflects changes to the status quo.

Checklist for follow-up activities

Analyse the **main lessons learnt** from the previous gender equality action plan.

Identify **gender inequalities** that the previous plan did not consider and that should be addressed in the subsequent plan.

Consider **the measures which should remain** and those which should be removed.

Assess the extent to which all relevant personnel and groups in the institution in all their diversity were properly **engaged** in the process of implementing the previous plan, and how to strengthen their engagement.

Explore **how a gender and intersectional perspective** can be better integrated into the subsequent plan.

3. Examples of measures in gender equality action plans

Gender equality action plans can include measures to:



Integrate gender equality in the institution's policies, procedures and organisational culture, by using gender mainstreaming

tools such as sex-disaggregated data and gender indicators, gender budgeting, gender impact assessments, gender equality training and gender-sensitive language as an integral part of the institution's working processes, along with creating the supporting structures required for the implementation and monitoring of the plan.

Box 8. Examples of gender equality action plans promoting the use of gender mainstreaming tools

In **Ireland**, the **Department of Foreign Affairs** adopted its **Gender, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan 2022-2025** ⁽³⁴⁾. Aiming to be recognised as a leader and model for good practice on gender equality across the public services, one of the pillars of the plan focuses on gender equality and includes a target relating to conducting regular reviews of new policies to measure potential impacts from a gender perspective ⁽³⁵⁾.

In **Estonia**, the **Information System Authority**, the public body in charge of coordinating the development and administration of information systems and information security ⁽³⁶⁾, adopted its **Gender Equality Principles and Action Plan 2022-2025**. One of its goals focuses on gender-sensitive communication and includes measures such as using gender-sensitive language, monitoring the representation of women and men in communication materials, including printed materials, photos and websites, and ensuring gender balance in speakers and performers when organising events ⁽³⁷⁾.

In **Spain**, the **National Parliament** adopted its **Gender Equality Plan (2020-2024)** ⁽³⁸⁾ to improve gender equality amongst staff of the parliamentary administration. The plan includes a total of 142 indicators which are split into eight thematic areas. As part of the first thematic area focusing on organisational measures, the parliament created a monitoring committee for the implementation of the gender equality plan. The parliament also established two new departments with competencies in gender equality matters in the general secretariats of both chambers ⁽³⁹⁾.

⁽³⁴⁾ Department of Foreign Affairs, 2022.

⁽³⁵⁾ See footnote 34.

⁽³⁶⁾ Information System Authority (RIA). Available at: <https://www.ria.ee/>.

⁽³⁷⁾ Information System Authority (RIA), *Gender Equality Principles and Action Plan 2022-2025*. Available at: <https://www.ria.ee/ru/media/1196/download>.

⁽³⁸⁾ Spanish National Parliament, 2020.

⁽³⁹⁾ See footnote 38.



Address gender and intersecting inequalities, by including awareness raising for leaders and staff on the importance of adopting a gender equality and intersectional perspective in their work, including how their

own experiences of power or privilege may impact their work and their interactions with co-workers, along with establishing employee networks or groups which aim to advance gender equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Box 9. United Kingdom - University College London's Gender Equality Plan (measures relating to gender and intersecting inequalities)

University College London's Gender Equality Plan addresses structural gender and intersecting inequalities as 'priority actions' within the plan and calls for integrating intersectional gender and race analysis into the university's gender equality work ⁽⁴⁰⁾. The plan includes measures to support women and men from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and improve their career progression and development through sponsorship schemes, along with measures to reduce racial bias in the recruitment of women and men from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.



Improve the representation and retention of talented women and men in all their diversity, by critically reviewing hiring and promotion policies and identifying practices which may be discriminatory,

integrating gender-sensitive language into employment documents, establishing a code of conduct for hiring processes and organising gender equality training sessions or training sessions to recognise and tackle unconscious biases for members of selection committees ⁽⁴¹⁾.

Box 10. Hungary - Centre for Budapest Transport's Gender Equality Plan (measures relating to recruitment, selection and career progression)

In Hungary, the **Centre for Budapest Transport's Gender Equality Plan** provides a framework for implementing measures to achieve equality of opportunity and eliminate gender-based discrimination within companies ⁽⁴²⁾. It describes commitments, actions and measures against five pillars, including improving gender balance in the recruitment and selection process. To achieve this, it presents actions to make the recruitment process more objective, such as providing equitable criteria and standards, avoiding gender-discriminatory language and ensuring that internal opportunities for career progression are equally available to all staff.



Promote gender balance in leadership and decision-making, by introducing gender quotas for decision-making bodies and committees, conducting (mandatory) gen-

der equality training sessions for leaders and decision-makers and facilitating mentorship programmes and networking opportunities to help women employees obtain leadership and decision-making positions ⁽⁴³⁾.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ University College London, 2021.

⁽⁴¹⁾ EIGE, 2022c.

⁽⁴²⁾ Centre for Budapest Transport, 2022.

⁽⁴³⁾ European Commission, 2021b.

Box 11. Portugal - University of Aveiro's Gender Equality Plan (measures related to gender-balance in leadership and decision-making)

In Portugal, the **University of Aveiro's Gender Equality Plan (2021-2025)** includes measures to implement gender equality and diversity training sessions to staff in administrative and management positions with a decision-making capacity ⁽⁴⁴⁾. The plan also aims to monitor the gender composition of the university's decision-making bodies. These measures will help to achieve a 40 % gender quota in decision-making, which is legally required for public institutions in Portugal ⁽⁴⁵⁾.



Improve work-life balance, by introducing flexible working arrangements, managing workloads within

teams, raising awareness of existing entitlements to parental and carers' leave and encouraging staff to take parental and carers' leave ⁽⁴⁶⁾.

Box 12. Austria - Women's Advancement Plan for the Parliamentary Directorate (measures related to work-life balance)

In Austria, the **Women's Advancement Plan for the Parliamentary Directorate** presents actions to improve work-life balance and facilitate flexible working arrangements for women and men ⁽⁴⁷⁾. It outlines actions to encourage women and men to re-enter the organisation following a period of parental leave, which include informing parents about the options for flexible working to accommodate childcare responsibilities, procedures to support and enable a gradual return to work and the requirement that supervisors interview employees prior to re-entry and inform the Equal Opportunities Officer.



Address gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, by improving reporting procedures, providing support to victims, establishing sanc-

tioning procedures, raising awareness of gender-based violence and sexual harassment in the workplace and informing staff about existing reporting mechanisms and support structures ⁽⁴⁸⁾.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ University of Aveiro, 2022.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Portugal Assembly of the Republic, 2019, Law No 26/2019 of 28 March on the Balanced representation between men and women with regard to management staff and in Public Administration Bodies. Available at: https://www.dgaep.gov.pt/EN/upload/legislation/Law_26_2019.pdf.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ EIGE, 2022d.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Austrian Federal Chancellery, 2021, *Women's Advancement Plan for the Parliamentary Directorate*. Available at: <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/eli/bgbI/II/2021/168/20210414>.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ EIGE, 2022e.

Box 13. Cyprus – CYENS Centre of Excellence (measures related to gender-based violence including sexual harassment)

In Cyprus, the **Gender Equality Plan (2022-2025)** of the Research and Innovation Centre on Interactive Media, Smart System and Emerging Technologies – **CYENS Centre of Excellence** – includes an objective to promote measures and policies against sexual harassment and gender-based violence ⁽⁴⁹⁾. Measures for implementing this objective include mapping of the existing situation through conducting confidential research and analysis of cases, raising awareness to prevent and address sexual harassment and gender-based violence, disseminating existing codes of conduct, policies, procedures, and materials on the prevention of gender-based violence, providing support to survivors and creating mechanisms to address gender-based violence using a holistic approach ⁽⁵⁰⁾.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ CYENS Centre of Excellence, 2022.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ See footnote 49.

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