

Gender Equality in Academia and Research

Who is involved in a Gender Equality Plan

As a principle, all stakeholders of a research organisation or higher education institution are mobilised for developing and implementing a Gender Equality Plan. Their involvement, which can be direct or more indirect depending on the stakeholder profile, will create a sense of belonging that will help overcoming [obstacles and resistances](#) throughout the process at all levels.

Although the organisational structure of European universities and research institutions differ, various types of actors, listed below are (to be) involved in a Gender Equality Plan. Their responsibilities need to be mutually agreed on and made clear from the very beginning. Their cooperation is crucial for the successful development and implementation of a Gender Equality Plan.

Structure to support gender equality work

First of all, a Gender Equality Plan needs to be strongly supported by a dedicated [structure](#). Structures to support gender equality work are dedicated organisational arrangements which are mandated to support structural change towards gender equality through their work. Such structure may already exist in the research organisation or higher education institution. Examples include: gender equality offices/units, ombud services, or gender equality networks. They are best placed to initiate, ensure the implementation and monitor the Gender Equality Plan. In case your organisation does not have such structure, its creation can be one of the measures of your Plan.

These structures are more effective when:

- They are composed of more than (the equivalent of) one person working full-time and whose mandate is solely dedicated to promoting gender equality.
- They do not work in isolation and are well-networked.

- They are publicly supported by top level executives (e.g. a university Rector or Dean, or a Director of a research centre).

What is the role of a structure to support gender equality work in a Gender Equality Plan?

- Set up, implement, monitor and evaluate the Gender Equality Plan.
- Provide practical support and tools to the actors involved in the implementation of the Gender Equality Plan.
- Cooperate with and [engage stakeholders](#) at all levels in order to ensure the implementation of the measures of the Gender Equality Plan.
- Raise awareness about the [benefits of gender equality](#) in research organisations.
- Assess the progress towards gender equality in the organisation.

Senior management and leadership posts

These are the actors responsible for governing the organisation. Whereas in higher education institutions they can be a Rector or a Chancellor, in research organisations they can be a Chair of the Board or a Director. They have the power to make decisions and are, therefore, very important allies when setting up and implementing a Gender Equality Plan.

What is the role of senior management and leadership posts in a Gender Equality Plan?

- Publicly support the principle of gender equality in/for the organisation.
- Publicly endorse the Gender Equality Plan and the structure responsible for its implementation. See for example the [video about the HeForShe campaign event held at SciencePo \(Paris\)](#), with interventions by the Director and the Provost of SciencePo, explicitly supporting gender equality.
- Make available sufficient financial and human resources to implement the Gender Equality Plan.
- 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 progress towards gender equality.

Managers

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These actors are in charge of the day-to-day management of the organisations departments. In the context of research organisations, these actors include faculty deans, heads of departments or directors of services. They may have a closer relationship with teaching and/or research staff, as well as with students (depending on the organisation).

What is the role of managers in a Gender Equality Plan?

- Publicly support the Gender Equality Plan.
- Ensure the practical implementation of the measures, procedures and activities required by senior managers and listed in the Gender Equality Plan.
- Promote [incentives](#) to ensure the integration of a gender dimension in research and teaching.
- Instruct the relevant units to provide information and data to monitor the implementation of the Gender Equality Plan and progress towards gender equality.

Research and/or Teaching staff

Staff with research and/or teaching responsibilities can have a ground-breaking role in changing the way disciplines are taught and the way research is done. Integrating a gender dimension in research and innovation content and in teaching opens new horizons and creates new knowledge. Considering a gender dimension in research can have a positive and powerful impact on society and on improving people's lives.

What is the role of research and/or teaching staff in a Gender Equality Plan?

- Integrate a [gender dimension in research](#) and teaching. Have a look at the section on [‘integrating gender in research and education content’](#).
- Actively participate in the initiatives organised within the framework of the Gender Equality Plan.
- Instigate change through debating the status quo of the organisation and proposing measures to promote structural change.
- Organise activities that focus on integrating a gender dimension in research and innovation content and/or that contribute to promote structural change to progress gender equality in the organisation. For example, the University of Santiago de Compostela created an [award](#) to recognise and make visible existing research projects and teaching practices that stand out for integrating a gender dimension.

The department responsible for managing the human resources of the organisation is key to promote structural 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 an equal career progression and a balanced reconciliation of work and family life.

What is the role of human resources staff in a Gender Equality Plan?

- Collect and report about sex-disaggregated data about the organisation's staff on a systematic basis.
- 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, working and caring duties.
- Review and/or set in place an anti-harassment policy and complaints procedure.

Students

Higher education institutions have a major responsibility in instructing their students. This includes raising their awareness regarding gender-relevant issues in all disciplines and subject areas. In addition, they also need to be encouraged and taught to integrate and apply a gender perspective to their research. Students may become teachers or researchers themselves. Raising students' awareness and sensitivity about gender equality contributes to changing attitudes and behaviours in other spheres of their lives.

What is the role of students in a Gender Equality Plan?

- Actively participate in the initiatives organised within the framework of the Gender Equality Plan.
- Integrate the [gender dimension in research](#).
- Learn to [identify gender biases](#).