

Gender Equality in Academia and Research

Greece

COUNTRY: Greece

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN RESEARCH

Legal framework

Law 2839/2000 requires one-third gender representation in all decision-making public body committees, including those of universities and research institutions. More specifically, one-third representation of the minority sex is needed for all decision-making public body committees, provided that potential members have the same level of qualifications.

Law 3549/2007, on reform of the institutional framework of the structure and functioning of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Greece, sets out contributing to gender equality as one of the main missions of the country's HEIs.

Law 3653/2008, on institutional framework of gender and technology, requires the establishment of gender-balanced procedures and decision-making processes in the research sector. This is particularly relevant in recruitment and selection of personnel in national bodies and research and technology committees, provided candidates have the same qualification levels.

Article 25 of Law 4386/2016 provides that numbers of candidates for the National Committee of Research and Innovation, the Sectoral Research Councils, the Regional Councils of Research and Innovation, and the Scientific Committees of Research Institutes will be determined on the basis of scientific excellence. At least one-third representation of the minority sex will be guaranteed, provided that candidates have the same qualification levels.

Article 17 of Law 4604/2019, on promoting substantive equality between the sexes and combating gender-based violence, encourages universities and research centres to integrate gender in their teaching and research activities. For private and commercial companies, including those in the research sector, Article 21 of the Law provides the creation of a Gender Equality Badge (GEB) to reward initiatives promoting equal opportunities and the adoption of Gender Equality Plans (GEPs). The GEB has yet to be implemented.

Article 33 of Law 4589/2019 provides the establishment of Gender Equality Committees (GECs) at all Greek universities. The GECs act as consultative bodies to the university senate, schools and departments. They are composed of unpaid members who participate voluntarily in different activities, including the development of Gender Equality Action Plans (GAPs). The GAPs aim to: promote gender equality and combat sexism; enhance awareness and training on gender and gender equality in research communities; promote gender studies and research at Greek universities and research institutions; mediate cases of gender-based violence, discrimination and harassment; and support victims who report gender discrimination and gender-based violation. Most Greek universities and some research centres have established GECs, taking up an active role in 2021 in initiatives against gender-based violence, discrimination and harassment in research institutions.

Policy framework

In November 2014, the General Secretariat of Gender Equality (GSGE) published a guide on non-sexist language in administrative documents. The guide applies to all public institutions, including public universities and research centres. It describes the widespread usage of sexist language in public sector institutional documents in detail and prescribes measures to prevent sexism in administrative language. For example, it points to the use of the masculine form in public job advertisements, which makes women candidates invisible and discourages women from making their voices heard.

The General Secretariat for Research and Technology (GSRT) implemented “Diversity, Inequalities and Social Inclusion”. The programme was funded by the European Economic Area (EEA) Financial Mechanism 2009-2014. Its objective was to enhance research-based knowledge development in Greece, addressing gender mainstreaming and the promotion of researchers’ work-life balance. The programme was fully aligned with national and European research and development (R&D) priorities.

The GSRT set gender equality as one of the main priorities in the National Strategy for Research 2015-2020 (Priority 4). This was in accordance with Horizon 2020 and signalled an important departure from previous roadmaps. The roadmap stressed the need to challenge gender inequalities in research teams, as well as gender hierarchies in research institutions. It also highlighted the potential benefits to the Greek research sector of more women researchers and gender-focused research. It was directly influenced by the documents on gender equality in research and innovation in the European Research Area (ERA) and reflected the development of gender priorities in EU funding mechanisms. The relevant measures on gender equality in research and innovation in the National Strategy included:

- Incorporating gender mainstreaming in the national institutional framework for the Greek research and innovation system for the first time;
- Specifying a minimum representation (one-third) of each gender in advisory bodies, provided that the candidates are appropriately qualified;
- Increasing women's participation at national level, mainly within the scope of research and innovation (R&I) actions of the smart specialisation strategy (RIS3);
- Promoting immediate funding by the State Scholarships Foundation of a programme to incorporate the gender dimension in all fields of doctoral research (at least two doctorates);
- Encouraging public research bodies to draw up action plans to promote gender equality and to incorporate relevant provisions in their internal regulations and/or strategic plans;
- Promoting wide dissemination of the rules governing Horizon 2020 and the Gendered Innovations Approach, particularly in research organisations active in science, in order to raise awareness of gender issues;
- Encouraging universities to promote teaching and research of these issues, with the introduction of relevant doctoral programmes;
- Supporting research on gender issues by prioritising it as a research area in respect of funding and incentives (e.g. funding auxiliary research staff);
- Promoting a study on the gender of reviewers (percentage) in all programmes of MERRA/GSRT 2007-2014, with continuous monitoring throughout 2014-2020.

There is ongoing consultation on the National Strategy 2021-2027, but no initiatives specifically target gender equality in research and innovation.

Other stimulatory initiatives

No other stimulatory initiatives could be identified during the reporting period.

Key actors

The General Secretariat for Demographics, Family Policy and Gender Equality (GSDFPGE, formerly GSGE) is the governmental authority with competence for designing, implementing and monitoring policies for gender equality, including in research.

The Research Centre for Gender Equality (KETHI) is a legal entity under the private law of the Ministry of the Interior. KETHI's activities focus on conducting research on gender equality issues. They also seek to improve women's status and enable their advancement in all areas of political, economic and social life, within the framework of the policies defined by the GSDFPGE.

The National Documentation Centre (EKT) is the focal point for Horizon 2021-2024 in Greece. It organises activities on gender equality in research and development, including sharing the "She Figures" report in Greek, online seminars, expert meetings and presentations promoting gender equality in science and technology.

The GSRT of the Ministry of Education is responsible for policy direction on research and innovation. It is also charged with the funding and organisation of all Greek public research institutions in a wide range of scientific areas, including gender equality in research, and gendered research and innovations.

The GECs of Greek universities and research centres are key actors and have consultative powers. They are responsible for GEPs, promotion of gender balance, and promotion of innovative gender-focused research and teaching. They also play an active role in the prevention of gender-based violence, harassment and discrimination, and provide support to survivors of gender-based violence at universities and research institutions.

The Laboratory for Gender Research of the National Centre for Social Research conducts research on gender relations and gender policy, including collaborating with all relevant stakeholders.

The Centre for Gender Studies of the Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences is one of the leading institutions in the field. It has implemented several EU and nationally funded projects on gender equality and policy. It promotes gender research in social sciences through projects that explore intersectional aspects of gender relations and use interdisciplinary methodologies.

The Greek Association of University Women (ELEGYP) is a non-profit scientific organisation that aims to improve the status of women in academic institutions and promote their scientific work and social contribution. Its members are women academics from Greek universities. Between 2013 and 2015, ELEGYP implemented an action programme to promote a gender perspective and combat gender discrimination at universities, co-financed by the Ministry of the Interior.

The Research Centre for Gender and Equality Issues (DIOTIMA) is a non-profit organisation that conducts gender-based research and promotes social action, networking and advocacy on feminist issues.

INITIATIVES FOR GENDER EQUALITY BY RESEARCH PERFORMING ORGANISATIONS

Prior to 2019, there were several isolated initiatives to promote gender equality in research and innovation at national universities and research centres. The University of Ioannina was part of a consortium of the EU-funded structural change project, DIVERSITY (2009-2012). The Office for Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens drafted annual reports and undertook gender-based analyses of the gender composition and representation of women and men in the decision-making bodies of the institution. The last report was issued for the academic year 2011/2012. The University of the Aegean established the Committee “AEGEAN 50:50 Balanced Participation in 2014” to promote progress in gender equality and equal opportunities at the university. The Committee was responsible for submitting an integrated institutional GAP to the university’s academic administration in 2016. Similarly, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki created a Committee for Gender Equality in 2015, with the aim of mainstreaming gender equality. These initiatives were short-lived, however, as long-term institutional commitment was lacking.

Following the publication of Law 4589/2019, all universities and research centres have established - or are in the process of establishing – GECs. Those GECs will be tasked with developing comprehensive GEPs to guide research and teaching. A network of GECs has been organised to coordinate common activities across institutions and develop common actions, particularly on gender-based violence. However, GECs are formed on a voluntary basis and GEPs are non-binding and do not influence public funding for research. Most research institutions have been prompted to introduced GEPs by recent eligibility requirements introduced in EU Horizon funding schemes.

As of 2021, most universities and research centres have established GECs, with some going on to develop and approve GEPs. The Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP) approved its GEP and published guidelines on the development of GEPs in the context of the EU-funded project, TARGET. The Athens University of Economics and Business (ASOEE) is participating in “Transparent and Resilient Gender Equality Through Integrated Monitoring Planning and Implementation” (TARGETED-MPI). The project aims to address gender inequality in business and management schools and promote the development, effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation of GEPs. Several other university GECs have also completed their GEPs and are awaiting approval.

The main source of data on gender inequality in research institutions is the “She Figures” database published by the European Commission. This data is disseminated by the EKT, whose information and awareness-raising activities have increased the visibility of gender inequality in research and innovation in recent years. Some institutions have conducted more focused research on the issue. In 2015, the Foundation for Research and Development (FORTH) published a study^[1] on gender equality in science and technology research, focusing on the impact of precariousness on the lives of women researchers. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods, the study showed how gender inequality and precariousness are reflected in scientific hierarchies. It also explored how women scientists are impacted by the double burden of professional, personal and family responsibilities. In 2019, ELIAMEP conducted a study on the main causes of Greece’s gender equality gaps in research and higher education. Following this study, based on data from the 2019 She Figures report, it urged the Greek government to mainstream gender equality in further reforms in higher education and research^[2].

There is growing awareness of gender-based violence issues in research and HEIs. In 2018, the Centre for Gender Studies of Panteion University piloted the training programme “USVreact”^[3], which collected data and encouraged the reporting of gender-based violence^[4]. KETHI and DIOTIMA have also conducted extensive research on gender-based violence and promoted capacity-building and networking across research organisations and relevant service providers. Since the emergence of the #metoo movement in Greece at the beginning of 2021, however, the issue has garnered substantial public attention. GECs play an active role in calling attention to gender-based violence at universities and research institutions and have begun processes to create structures to support survivors. Most notably, the University of the Aegean, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, and Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences have raised awareness through press articles and interviews, online conferences and seminars for staff and students. Despite formal complaints of sexual harassment at several universities in the wake of #metoo, very few have managed to establish formal structures for reporting and prosecuting gender-based violence.

Several classes at social science universities cover teaching and training on gender research. In 2015, the Departments of Public Policy, International, European and Regional Studies, Communication, Media and Culture, Sociology and Social Anthropology of Panteion University established an interdepartmental postgraduate (MA) programme “Gender, Society, Policy”. The University of the Aegean also runs a postgraduate MA programme, “Gender, Culture and Society”. In numerous scientific sectors, however, gender teaching and training is still absent from curricula and research agendas.

RELEVANT EXAMPLES OF PRACTICES

The Centre for Gender Studies of Panteion University created “ProGender: A Digital Hub on Gender, the COVID-19 crisis and its Aftermath”. The Hub addresses gender equality during the COVID-19 pandemic in several thematic areas: (1) gender, care and labour; (2) gender-based violence; (3) women and gender in science; (4) gender and communities; and (5) women in governance. The project is based on a series of online and offline activities and deliverables that facilitate exchange of ideas, research findings and perspectives on the gender aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Funded by EEA funds, the project sees the exchange of know-how between Iceland, Norway and Greece. During lockdowns, when Greek universities were closed, it created a hub for academics, students, researchers, activists and policymakers to meet and debate different aspects of gender and the COVID-19 crisis.

The Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (HFRI) is funding a research project, “Affectscapes of Care: Gender-Based Violence and Resilience during the COVID-19 Pandemic”. The project is funded in the framework of the 4th call (“Interventions”) of HFRI Science & Society to address the economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. It will be carried out by the Department of Social Anthropology of Panteion University.

Several initiatives have been organised to promote the activities of GECs across research institutions, including TARGET, implemented by ELIAMEP, and TARGETED-MPI, implemented by the Athens University of Economics and Business.

The Network of GECs of Greek Universities was set up as an informal mechanism to coordinate activities across universities and research centres. It seeks to raise awareness of gender-based violence through training, organisational change and plans to combat such violence at Greek universities.

Footnotes

[1] Kambouri, N., Kiki Papadaki, K. and Hatzopoulos, P., Gender, Research, and Innovation in Greece, Herakleion: Foundation of Research and Development, 2015, <https://issuu.com/genderinscience/docs/>

[2] Anagnostou, D., “Gender equality and the reform of higher education in Greece”, ELIAMEP Policy paper, 2019, <https://www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Policy-Paper-No-30-Ana...>

[3] Centre for Gender Studies, Panteion University, “Assessment of training” USVreact project, 2018, https://usvreact.eu/wp-content/resources/panteion_pte_gr.pdf

[4] Zavos, A., “Sexual Violence in Greek Universities: Politics of Disclosure, Interventions and Institutional change”, in K. Chandrashekar, K Lacroix, and S. Siddiqui, “Sex and Power in the University”, Annual Review of Critical Psychology, Vol. 15, 2018, ISSN: 1746-739X, 200-222