

Gender Equality in Academia and Research

EU objectives for gender equality in research

Three objectives underpin the European Commission's strategy on gender equality in research and innovation policy:

- ***Fostering equality in scientific careers;***
- ***Ensuring gender balance in decision-making processes and bodies;***
- ***Integrating the gender dimension in research and innovation content***, i.e. taking into account the biological characteristics and the social features of women and men.

As laid out in the [European Commission's Communication for a Reinforced European Research Area \(2012\)](#), the EU Member States are encouraged to:

- Create a legal and policy environment and provide incentives to:
 - remove legal and other barriers to the recruitment, retention and career progression of female researchers while fully complying with EU law on gender equality ([Directive 2006/54/EC](#))
 - address gender imbalances in decision making processes
 - strengthen the gender dimension in research programmes
- Engage in partnerships with funding agencies, research organisations and universities to foster cultural and institutional change on gender – charters, performance agreements, and awards.
- Ensure that at least 40% of the underrepresented sex participate in committees involved in recruitment/career progression and in establishing and evaluating research programmes.

The [Council Conclusions on Advancing gender equality in the European Research Area](#) (adopted in 2015) reiterate the need to foster sustainable cultural and institutional change in the ERA national action plans or strategies at the level of Member States and research institutions.

The Council also invites **EU Member States** and **research funding organisations** to provide incentives to encourage **higher education institutions and research organisations** to revise or develop gender mainstreaming strategies and/or gender equality plans and to mobilise adequate resources.

The Council calls in particular for:

- Guiding targets in decision-making bodies, such as leading scientific and administrative boards, recruitment and promotion committees and evaluation panels, to achieve gender balance in leadership and decision-making positions;
- Guiding targets for a more even gender balance of full professors in higher education institutions;
- Monitoring, with appropriate indicators, the implementation of gender policies, and actions at institutional, national and EU level;
- Gender awareness-raising and capacity-building tools in order to achieve institutional change;
- Flexible and family-friendly working conditions and arrangements for both women and men;
- The review of the assessment of researchers' performance, to eliminate gender bias.

Institutional change in Research Performing Organisations (RPOs), higher education institutions and Research Funding Organisations (RFOs)

Institutional change is a strategy aiming at removing the obstacles to gender equality that are inherent to the research system itself and at adapting the practices of institutions. Within an institutional change approach, the focus is on the organisation.

In the European Research Area, RPOs, higher education institutions and RFOs are invited to implement institutional change relating to human resources management, funding, decision-making and research programmes and funding schemes. The main aims of institutional change are to enhance women's representation and retention at all levels of their scientific careers and to promote the integration of the gender dimension in research and innovation content, also through research funding activities.

'Institutional change' was originally known as 'structural change'. While the concept of structural change can still be found in several documents and publications, it has been replaced and referred to as 'institutional change' in the ERA Communication and in the EU Council Conclusions. For the purpose of this tool, the two concepts are used in an interchangeable manner.