

Gender Equality in Academia and Research

Step 4: Implementing a Gender Equality Plan

Main section Videos and webinars Tools and resources

Ready, steady, go!

Having set up the gender equality plan (GEP) (see [step 3](#)), you are ready to start its implementation. Gather the team that is going to be involved in the implementation of the GEP and form a task force to put in motion the measures of the GEP according to the established timeline.

Organise regular meetings with the team responsible for the implementation of the GEP. These meetings are important to design and plan activities in a participatory way, but also to discuss the progress, main achievements, and aspects that can be improved or need to be adjusted. This will allow for identifying possible problems and acting proactively upon them.

You may consider organising an initial training session for the team responsible for implementing the GEP, and for audiences directly involved, either within your research funding body (e.g. programme managers, scientific officers, human resources staff) or external stakeholders (reviewers, panel/board members, applicants, etc.). Continuous awareness-raising and capacity-building efforts will maximise your chances for success and institutionalisation. As highlighted in the recommendations of the 'Gender equality network in the European research area' ([GENERA project](#) [↗](#)), the implementation team should be skilled in driving organisational change, dealing with resistance and building support networks, and should have gender knowledge regarding research careers, decision-making and integrating gender into research content. Furthermore, it is helpful to build up or use existing knowledge about self-assessment, monitoring, and data gathering and analysis, and about the specifics and functioning of one's own institution.

If the team is lacking specific skills, consider who from outside your research funding body might provide [expertise](#) or which member might be trained. Moreover, during the implementation of the GEP, you can provide personalised coaching, organise additional awareness-raising sessions, run campaigns on selected topics or plan workshops to build specific competences. It is also helpful to involve people in the wider GEP group (gender equality committee, strategic department) who can provide skills or knowledge that are not directly available to the core team.

In the course of implementing your plan, be aware that structural change towards gender equality is about looking for windows of opportunities for change (such as national gender targets from a national authority, or 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 the way; if so, consult the toolkit from the 'Supporting the promotion of equality in research and academia' (SUPERA) project, [Resistances to Structural Change in Gender Equality](#).

Involve relevant and interested stakeholders

Plan meetings with top management and leadership, programme management and human resources staff or other co-workers you consider relevant, but who are not part of the core implementation team. This will help to create ownership of the GEP, motivate the staff involved, strengthen the potential of the GEP and maximise the impact of the GEP's measures.

Continue engaging internal and external stakeholders on an ongoing basis. Explain the [benefits of gender equality in research organisations](#) in general and according to the progress you have already made within the GEP. Always frame the provided information and incentives strategically according to the profile you are addressing. Do not forget to keep in touch with stakeholders you engaged in a previous phase. This will also provide you with insights about the measures implemented or on how to improve the measures to be carried out. You might also form a network within your organisation to bring all people active and interested in gender equality work together. If you are also thinking of forming a network with other organisations active in fostering gender equality, you can find more information on the 'Systemic action for gender equality' (SAGE) [website](#) about how to do that.

Keep in mind that, while the start can be slow, the scope and range of activities may gradually be extended over time. At the same time, the circle of allies and engaged stakeholders may also grow.

Give visibility to the gender equality plan

Inform the whole organisation about the existence and implementation progress of the GEP. Use different channels to communicate about the plan, its main areas of intervention and its time frame. Make the GEP available on the organisation's website, mainly to inform the community, but also to fulfil the **Horizon Europe eligibility criterion**. It can also be useful to organise a public session to present the GEP to the organisation's community and, in particular, to external stakeholders, such as the scientific board, reviewers, panel/board members and applicants.

The participation of senior management and those in leadership posts in this initial presentation can support the implementation of the measures set out in your GEP.

Communication measures are crucial to giving constant visibility to the GEP and include:

- developing key messages tailored to different target groups (internal versus external stakeholders);

- advertising activities in advance using appropriate channels in order to ensure good participation rates;

- prompting the whole community to take action by suggesting how others can contribute;

- promoting external events (e.g. conferences) or interesting information from beyond the organisation about integrating gender equality in funding organisations.

Report about the progress towards gender equality in your organisation on a regular basis (according to the monitoring moments established in the GEP). The monitoring exercises will provide insightful information about the progress achieved by the organisation. Share key messages about these findings with various target groups and provide online access to the full reporting publications and/or data (see [step 5](#) for details on monitoring and evaluation).

Consider involving the communications department of your organisation in this task (if any exists). It can actually have an important role in gender equality structural change. It can do the following.

Ensure the use of gender-neutral and inclusive language in internal and external communications (call text).

Ensure the use of inclusive, non-stereotypical and non-sexist images in internal and external communications. The use of inclusive images enables you to show the diversity of your organisation.

Mobilise the available communication channels to promote the measures undertaken within the GEP.

Communicate about the progress of the organisation towards gender equality on a regular basis: small changes and steps are relevant and should be highlighted.

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 also change during the GEP's time frame. Follow such events closely and discuss with your team whether and how the GEP can be adapted. In addition, advanced gender awareness (of the people responsible) may bring new insights that result in adjustments.

Despite the efforts undertaken to develop a robust plan, other pressing issues may arise in the organisation during its implementation. Try to understand the reasons why certain measures are not being (successfully) implemented and make adjustments if needed. Keep up to date with innovative measures that were used in other organisations. Be prepared to face **challenges or resistance** when implementing certain measures and act on them.

Do not forget to follow up on the implementation of the measures of the GEP. There may be important lessons to be learnt from the regular monitoring exercises (see **step 5**). Listen to the feedback of those organising or participating in particular activities (e.g. through exit questionnaires). This will give pertinent hints on how to improve operational and/or content-related issues of the GEP.

In order to view **videos and webinars** or further **tools and resources** on the topics discussed in step 4, switch between the respective tabs. Otherwise, click below to continue to the next step and learn about monitoring and evaluating your GEP.

As the implementation of a GEP for funding bodies is rather new, we refer to the experiences of other research organisations.