

Gender Equality in Academia and Research

Step 1: Getting started

Main Section Videos & Webinars Tools & Resources

At this point, you have realised that promoting gender equality in your organisation is crucial to promote better working conditions and to perform research that is more responsive to societal needs. Now ... how to get the process started?

As a first step, you need to understand the context of your own organisation (see below for more details), starting with the type of organisation: it makes a difference whether you are trying to implement gender equality in a university, in a public or private research organisation or in a research funding body. As promoting gender equality in a research funding organisation follows a different logic from promoting gender equality in research-performing organisations, we have prepared a separate **step-by-step guide for research funding organisations** that you can find [here](#).

Understand the context

In order to contextualise your institution, start by considering the following key contextual factors provided by [Austin and Laursen \(2015\)](#), and learn from their research on organisational change, which received [ADVANCE Institutional Transformation awards](#)  from the (US) National Science Foundation. The consideration of these different contextual factors will support you in your decisions on which objectives and measures can or should be implemented; which arguments for promoting gender equality might be relevant; and where you might find support for your activities within your organisation, but also in the regional or national context.

Location. Consider the country/region, but also whether it is an urban or rural environment.

History. Consider your institution's history, as it may affect what 'faculty and administrators think is important and what they perceive to be possible'.

Economics. Consider the economic situation and its potential effects on the gender

equality policies you want to implement (e.g. is it a good or bad time for recruiting?).

Leadership. As with the history, the leadership's goals and priorities are crucial to understanding what is possible within your organisation. A change in leadership can pose challenges, but can also open up new opportunities.

Structure and governance. Consider whether the structure is rather centralised or decentralised and whether there is a strong or rather flat hierarchy. This will be very relevant when you are trying to find support (see below).

Policies. Consider any policies that may already be in place to support gender equality in your organisation (e.g. policies in support of work–life balance).

Organisational culture. Consider the culture within your organisation, as it may be important to assess which measures you can probably implement and where you might encounter resistance.

Size. Consider the size of your organisation and/or department and how this may affect your intended measures (e.g. are there enough senior researchers to act as mentors?).

Another important factor is the legal and regulatory framework (EU level, national and regional policies) that the institution operates in. For more information on the relevant legal and policy frameworks, see the '[Where](#)' [↗](#) chapter in the gender equality in academia and research (GEAR) tool and the chapters focusing on [Horizon Europe](#) and on [EU objectives for gender equality in research and innovation](#). For **additional resources** on how to consider the context of your organisation, see **tab 3** of this step.

Find support

Having an understanding about the context and dynamics of your organisation allows you to decide where best to go in order to find support both within and outside your organisation. Finding support and building alliances will be relevant throughout the entire process. Note that, in order to convince others, it is very important that you invest time in explaining the reasons for and benefits of implementing gender equality in your organisation. If you have not done so already, browse through the information and arguments in the '[Why](#)' chapter of this tool before reaching out to key people within your organisation.

Within the organisation, consider the following for finding support.

Map actors who have expertise in gender equality. In order to do so, consider your colleagues' research focus or previous gender equality work. Besides providing relevant gender-related input, they may act as advocates to put measures in motion and help

identify other actors.

Identify (potential) allies. Consider the top and middle management levels, human resources staff, co-workers and so on. Try to spot all those interested in promoting gender equality and a more balanced and inclusive working environment and start to involve them in your change efforts. Allies will help you get things done and promote the future gender equality plan (GEP).

Outside your organisation, look at the following possibilities.

Find funding opportunities. There are different funding schemes supporting the set-up and implementation of GEPs or other gender equality measures. At EU level, the European Commission is funding institutional change projects through [Horizon Europe](#) [↗](#). At national or regional level, there may also exist similar initiatives that provide financial means to promote organisational change. At institutional level, there may already be measures in place to fund conferences that promote a gender-balanced composition of speaking panels or to finance research that integrates a sex/gender dimension, etc.

Set up alliances. Look up regional and national networks or bodies that focus on gender equality in research and innovation. You can also check the '[Join](#)' section of this tool and learn about ways to connect with others and share experiences.

Understand the gender mainstreaming cycle

Before moving on to the next step in the process, it is very helpful to get a general understanding and overview of how a change process that follows the logic of the gender mainstreaming cycle works. While this step-by-step guide provides a stepwise process for you to follow, it can be useful to understand the process in a circular way, as demonstrated by the figure below. It shows the [gender mainstreaming cycle](#) of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and includes the following four phases:

define – how to analyse and assess the state of play in the institution;

plan – how to set up a GEP;

act – how to implement a GEP;

check – how to monitor progress and evaluate a GEP.

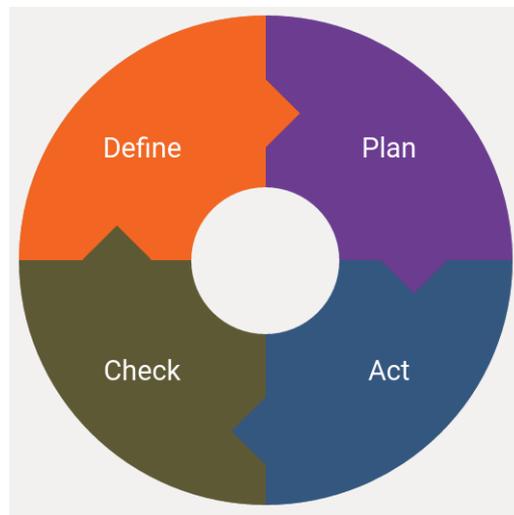


Figure 2 – Gender mainstreaming cycle.

Source EIGE, [Gender Mainstreaming Cycle](https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming-cycle) | European Institute for Gender Equality (europa.eu)

These phases are in line with the set-up of this step-by-step guide, with steps 1 and 2 corresponding to the define phase. For more information on gender mainstreaming and the gender mainstreaming cycle, see [the EIGE website](https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming-cycle) [↗](#).

In order to view **videos and webinars** or further **tools and resources** on the topics discussed in step 1, switch between the respective tabs. Otherwise, click below to continue to the next step and learn **how to analyse and assess the gender equality state of play in your institution**.