

Gender Equality in Academia and Research

Training: awareness-raising and capacity building

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In order to initiate a structural change process towards better gender equality in an organisation, awareness of gender inequality and knowledge about gender issues in management, but also in the workforce, is of central importance (see [success factors](#)). Awareness-raising efforts aim to generate and stimulate sensitivity to issues related to gender (in)equality, while (gender) capacity building aims to strengthen people's knowledge and skills to engage with gender equality issues. In practice, the two types of efforts often overlap, as learning starts with awareness, but is a continuous process.

To highlight the importance of gender knowledge and gender awareness, the [Horizon Europe eligibility criterion](#) [↗](#) requires that a gender equality plan (**GEP**) **includes awareness-raising and training measures on gender equality and unconscious gender biases** for staff and decision-makers. All staff, leaders and decision-makers have a role to play in identifying practices, cultures and unconscious gender biases that disadvantage women, and in implementing more inclusive approaches. The European Commission funds a centre of excellence for inclusive gender equality in research and innovation (R & I), which will also be responsible for capacity-building activities.

Awareness-raising and capacity-building training on gender equality can be delivered in different ways: campaigns over short introductory sessions for specific target groups, seminars and training, lectures, and dedicated courses or summer schools. If you are looking for trainers to conduct training in your organisation, please consult the trainer database of the [Gender Equality Academy](#) [↗](#). The Gender Equality Academy also provides an overview of all [training](#) [↗](#) sessions conducted during the project, categorised by topics and target groups. In addition to training materials, video recordings are also often made available on YouTube. Moreover, communication and engagement activities involving all staff are important to raise awareness of gender equality issues and organisational approaches to addressing them.

The Horizon Europe eligibility criterion particularly emphasises **unconscious bias training** (see also 'Tools and resources' in [tab 3](#)) as important for helping people to examine their own behaviours and views and to identify how institutional processes may cause disadvantage to women in areas such as decision-making, careers and leadership. Unconscious or implicit bias unintentionally influences judgements and opinions about others based on stereotypes and can result in discrimination. Read more about unconscious bias in the section '[Why change must be structural](#)'.

Consider these measures for addressing the issue in your gender equality plan

To address the awareness-raising and gender training building block, GEPs may consider, without being limited to, the following types of activities.

Training on unconscious bias may be offered in the context of the development of the GEP itself, but it is also important for it to **be incorporated into broader organisational training activities** on an ongoing basis. Integrating this type of training across the organisation's processes (e.g. recruitment and induction processes or research funding evaluation processes) is key to ensuring that unconscious gender bias does not influence decision-making and selection practices.

Communication and engagement activities might include participatory workshops with staff, as well as talks delivered by gender equality experts and leading women scientists, scholars and academic leaders.

Informing the organisation about the existence of the GEP, its main aims, areas of intervention and time frame also raises awareness of gender equality issues. The publication of the GEP may be accompanied by a public session to present it to staff, with the participation of senior management and leadership, which can increase staff commitment.

Ongoing communication is crucial to give visibility to the GEP and keep staff informed of and involved in its implementation. Communication measures can include organising internal workshops on specific sections of the GEP or running campaigns on selected topics, as well as promoting external events (e.g. conferences) or interesting information from beyond the organisation about integrating gender equality into research institutions and universities.

Training for researchers and academics on **how to include the sex/gender dimension in research design and teaching curricula** raises awareness of gender-reflexive excellence in research.

Other gender equality training activities that focus on specific topics or address specific target groups can also be considered. These include face-to-face training

events and courses of study, staff and student induction programmes, online modules, guidance materials and compendia of resources or networks for sharing expertise.

Get some tips on what to consider when implementing measures

[Gender Equality Training – Gender mainstreaming toolkit](#) from the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) provides key principles that should be considered in the GEP when planning and implementing gender equality training.

Engage the whole organisation, including different levels and roles across the organisation, such as senior management and leadership, managers, research and/or teaching staff, human resources departments and students.

Ensure that gender equality training is based on an **evidence-based assessment** of the needs of your organisation.

Create an **ongoing and long-term process**. One-off sessions are rarely enough to provide participants with the necessary knowledge and tools to mainstream gender.

In addition, take the following considerations into account.

Make sure you choose the most effective form of awareness-raising or capacity-building initiative, taking the needs of the target audience(s) into account.

Consider carefully who the target audience is and whether the focus of your efforts is to be on awareness-raising or on capacity building. Tailor your approach accordingly.

Think about the effects that you want to trigger through these awareness-raising and capacity-building efforts. How can these effects be monitored? Try to find indicators and ways to track the impact of the efforts. Evidence of impact will provide you with strong advocacy arguments.

Get inspired by what other organisations have implemented

Here are some **examples of measures** implemented in other organisations (note that they will open in a new window). Some of the examples focus on research funding, but might be also relevant to internal resource allocation in universities and other research organisations:

'Episode VII: Future is female – Discussions with women in science and tech', Business Finland, Finland, Finland,

Equal by 30, VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland, Finland (campaign),

Equality Office, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden,

establishing the Centre for Women's Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social

Sciences, University of Rijeka, Croatia,

introducing gender-sensitive language in legal documents, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia,

Project crocodile, University of New Caledonia, France,

support programme on equal opportunities, Fraunhofer Society, Germany,

National Network of Diversity Officers (LanDO), Leiden University, the Netherlands.

Examples focusing on training

Gender4STEM, Luxembourg Institute of Science and Technology, Luxembourg.

GenderLab, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark.


Examples focusing on awareness-raising during the COVID-19 pandemic


equality, diversity and inclusion at University College Dublin during the COVID-19 pandemic, University College Dublin, Ireland.

ProGender project, Centre for Gender Studies, Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences, Greece.

You can find further inspiring examples in the following sources:

EIGE provides a section on [good practices](#) for various relevant topics;

the EU-funded project 'Promoting gender balance and inclusion in research, innovation and training' (PLOTINA) provides a [library of actions](#) , focusing on issues such as career progression and work–life balance, but also the integration of sex and gender in teaching curricula;

these sustainable measures were already mentioned in the first version of the gender equality in academia and research ([GEAR](#)) [tool and are still in place](#) .

If you want to learn more about how you can adjust these measures for your own purposes and how to implement them through a GEP, read the step-by-step guide for [research organisations, universities and public bodies](#), or the step-by-step guide for [research funding organisations](#).