

Gender Equality in Academia and Research

Work-life balance and organisational culture

[Main Section](#) [Videos & Webinars](#) [Tools & Resources](#)

A key component of the transformation of an organisation's culture for advancing gender equality is work–life balance. Work–life balance is relevant for all members of staff and involves ensuring that **everybody is properly supported** to advance their career alongside personal responsibilities that they may hold outside the workplace, including caring responsibilities.

It is important to highlight that **the whole institution benefits** from a more open and respectful organisational culture, and that it is not 'a women's issue'. Improving organisational cultures also contributes to becoming an attractive employer, and therefore to attracting and retaining the best talent. See below for tips on what to consider when implementing measures and to view examples from other organisations.

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

Measures in relation to organisational culture will generally include measures to ensure that all staff feel valued and welcome at work. **Work–life balance policies and measures** that can be reviewed and addressed in a gender equality plan (GEP) include the following:

parental leave policies, including ensuring that fixed-term contracts can be extended or grant agreements / fellowships may be extended, as well as active promotion of paternity leave;

flexible working time arrangements, including how departmental processes, procedures and practices impact on staff with caring responsibilities or part-time workers, as well as remote working;

support for caring responsibilities, including childcare and care for other dependants (e.g. people with disabilities, elderly relatives), which may also be extended to support students who become parents during their studies, for instance;

workload management, including how different tasks are allocated and distributed, such

as teaching and administrative versus research workloads in universities;
reintegration of staff after career breaks, including active mentoring and support;
advice and support on work–life balance.

In order to promote an **inclusive organisational culture**, consider the following policies or measures.

policies relating to harassment and dignity at work that set out expectations for the behaviour of staff and managers (see also the [toolbox section on sexual harassment](#));
policies supporting the active use and encouragement of inclusive language around the organisation in relation to gender equality, but also other forms of identity and diversity (guidelines on gender-sensitive communication can be provided for this purpose);
informal aspects of organisational culture, including whether social practices are welcoming and inclusive for all staff.

Examples of relevant documents and guidelines are provided in **the tab ‘Tools and resources’**.

Get some tips on what to consider when implementing measures

First, it is highly relevant to consider the **context and size of your organisation**. Larger organisations, such as universities, may need to consider that working cultures are not homogeneous across departments or research teams. Therefore, different approaches to foster inclusive working cultures might be needed at departmental levels or in research teams. Research funding bodies may also wish to consider the culture and inclusivity of decision-making bodies and committees that involve external experts. In addition, if research funding bodies directly fund positions at universities or other research organisations, they have further leverage for encouraging these organisations to establish working practices that encourage a healthy work–life balance and transparent career management practices. Furthermore, organisations such as research-performing organisations and public bodies may also want to consider issues such as visibility of women in activities, for instance, in expert panels and public outreach.

However, in order to implement effective measures, you may also want to consider the following.

Changing the organisational culture **does not happen through single interventions**. Systematic efforts will be required until the desired change in values has been internalised by all involved in the organisation.

The pursuit of a career in research and innovation (R & I) is still often associated with full dedication to science and a culture of working long hours. As long as women continue to carry the bulk of caring responsibilities, the **double workload for women** renders it difficult to balance their professional and private lives.

In order to promote a respectful, open and welcoming organisational culture, it is important to be sensitive to a **variety of gender identities and discrimination factors**: women and men should not be considered as homogeneous groups.

In order to get more detailed information and guidance on how to promote work–life balance and a good organisational culture, check out the resources provided in the **tab ‘Tools and resources’**.

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):

dependent care leave policy, Cyprus Institute of Neurology and Genetics, Cyprus,
establishing the Association ‘ZA-Pravo LGBTIQ+’, Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb, Croatia,

exemption from teaching service after parental leave, Instituto Superior Técnico, Portugal,

introduction of family-friendly measures, University of Debrecen, Hungary,

long-term development goal ‘Gender equality and rights of women and girls’, Riga Technical University, Latvia,

mini-grants for academic teachers, ‘Ensuring equal opportunities for women and men researchers who combine work and childcare during the COVID-19 pandemic’,

Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland,

parenthood measure, National Centre for Scientific Research, France,


university kindergarten and children’s camps, Politecnico di Milano, Italy,

updated regulations on remote work and care leave (up to 3 days without approval),

National Institute of Chemistry, Slovenia.

You can find further inspirational examples in the following sources.

the European Institute for Gender Equality (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](#).