

Gender Equality in Academia and Research

European Union objectives for gender equality in research and innovation

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Gender equality is a core value of the EU. In 2019, the EU's [Gender Equality Index](#) score was 67 points out of 100 (European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), 2020). This clearly shows that gender equality has still not been achieved and that considerable efforts are necessary to make progress towards full gender equality. In the field of research and innovation (R & I), there are persistent gender inequalities, ranging from low numbers of women students in specific disciplines and scientific fields to an under-representation of women in top academic positions or on committees and boards of R & I organisations and under-representation of women researchers in companies or start-ups related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) (). Moreover, sex and gender analysis is not mainstreamed into R & I activities, which generate knowledge that neglects the relevance of the sex/gender dimension and that has to be considered as gender-blind or gender-biased. However, the European Commission deems gender equality an important lever to increase fairness in society, to boost the innovation performance of organisations and to trigger economic growth. Although some progress has been achieved in gender equality in R & I over the last few years, [She Figures 2021](#) () reported that there are still considerable gender gaps in R & I. The European Commission has a long-standing commitment to promoting gender equality in R & I, which goes back to the adoption of the Lisbon strategy in 2000 and the sixth framework programme for R & I that formally integrated gender mainstreaming.

[Video of Mariya Gabriel, European Commissioner, on International Women's Day 2021.](#) [↗](#)

Since 2012, the European Commission's strategy on gender equality in R & I in the European research area (ERA) framework has been underpinned by [three objectives](#): [↗](#)

fostering gender equality in scientific careers;

ensuring gender balance in decision-making processes and bodies;

integrating the gender dimension in R & I content, that is, taking the biological characteristics and the social features of women and men into account.

The [new framework for ERA](#) reaffirms these objectives and will foster diversity and gender equality in R & I through [inclusive gender equality plans \(GEPs\)](#) in coordination with the Member States and stakeholders. It aims to promote a gender-inclusive research culture, by enacting sustainable change in R & I organisations and removing barriers to women's career advancement. The following effects are expected from the implementation of the new ERA framework:

- increased success and innovation performance of organisations thanks to greater diversity;
- greater understanding of sex and gender specificities;
- improved work–life balance, equal access to opportunities and increased well-being.

In addition, the [Council conclusions on the new ERA](#) (adopted in 2020) reiterate that gender equality is paramount for Europe to tap the full potential of its R & I system. The focus of gender equality and mainstreaming needs to be boosted through the implementation of GEPs and the integration of the gender dimension into R & I content. The Council also invites the Member States and research funding bodies to ensure that the allocation of research funding is not affected by gender bias.

In the [ERA policy agenda for 2022–2024](#), the European Commission emphasises the need to address gender-based violence in academic settings and to open up gender equality policies to inclusiveness; intersections with other diversity categories; and potential grounds for discrimination, such as ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation. It endorses the priority areas for gender equality established by the [Ljubljana Declaration](#):

- ensure fair, open, inclusive and gender-equal career paths in research and consider intersectional perspectives on gender inequalities;
- facilitate mutual learning opportunities through robust form-follows-function governance;
- address and counteract gender-based violence;
- employ existing and newly developed tools, such as GEPs, to facilitate systemic institutional change and remove institutional barriers;
- support active monitoring and evaluation to ensure continuous improvement;

leverage synergies to enhance gender equality achievements within the ERA, but also within complementary fields, such as the European higher education area, cohesion policy funds and innovation ecosystems, and in international cooperation;
underpin the above priorities and activities and fully acknowledge gender mainstreaming as a horizontal principle.

In line with these policy priorities, gender equality is also a main cornerstone and cross-cutting principle of Horizon Europe – the EU framework programme for R & I funding – and is considered at three levels:

- 1 GEPs for public bodies, research organisations and higher education establishments as an eligibility criterion to get access to [Horizon Europe funding](#),
- 2 integration of the gender dimension into R & I content as a requirement by default,
- 3 increasing gender balance, with a target of 50 % women throughout the Horizon Europe programme.

In order to view **videos and webinars** or further **tools and resources** on the topics in this section, switch between the respective tabs. Otherwise, click below to continue to the next section on **why change towards gender equality needs to be structural**.