

Gender Equality in Academia and Research

Latvia

COUNTRY: Latvia

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN RESEARCH

Legal framework

The Law on Scientific Activity has been in force since 2005. The corresponding secondary law stipulates that a person performing scientific activities will be allowed to do so regardless of race, nationality, gender, language, age, political and religious beliefs, social origin, property, family or service status and other circumstances. The Labour Law prohibition of discrimination against a person on the basis of their gender, race and various other circumstances is the only sub-clause regulating gender equality. The scope of the Law on Scientific Activity does not include any additional provisions promoting gender equality. The current law has not been changed or amended since 2005.

Policy framework

In 2018, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia established a “Plan for the promotion of equal rights and opportunities for women and men for 2018-2020”. The Plan targeted the implementation of integrated and effective sectoral policies promoting equal rights and opportunities for women and men in Latvia. It envisaged the promotion of gender equality research by identifying scientific papers on gender equality developed by Latvian university students, and submitting research question lists to general, professional and higher education institutions (HEIs).

The Plan has been renewed for 2021-2023. It now incorporates monitoring of gender equality policies and promotes the identification of scientific papers on gender studies and equality topics developed by Latvian university students. Research results will be summarised for wider distribution to the public. It also intends to assess the impact of gender equality on men.

Other stimulatory initiatives

UNESCO's National Commission, the Latvian Academy of Sciences and L'Oréal Latvia have partnered to support the "Women in Science" scholarship. Launched in 2004, it aims to support women scientists to pursue research in Life and Material Sciences.

Key actors

As there are no laws and policies promoting gender equality in research, no actors actively intervene in this area.

INITIATIVES FOR GENDER EQUALITY BY RESEARCH PERFORMING ORGANISATIONS

In 2017, Riga Technical University (RTU) established a Gender Equality Plan (GEP), which is embedded in the Constitution of the RTU. Given the lack of support from national authorities in the implementation of GEPs, RTU remains the only university in Latvia to monitor gender equality and gender balance. The RTU Constitution stipulates that the university must be tolerant and inclusive. Its GEP includes reducing inequality by ensuring gender balance in the different faculties and research institutes.

RELEVANT EXAMPLES OF PRACTICES

Code of Ethics of the National Botanic Gardens research institute

The National Botanic Gardens research institute developed a Code of Ethics in 2008. Section 4 deals with self-development and mutual relationships, with sub-section 12 stating that "the employer avoids and prevents harassment of another person on the grounds of race, gender/sex [in Latvian, the term *dzimums* is used to refer to both sex and gender], age, national and religious affiliation or other". Section 31 of the Code declares that "at the beginning of their employment, the administration of the National Botanic Gardens familiarises the employee with the Code of Ethics". Section 7, on examination of violations of the Code, describes the procedure for dealing with and resolving violations of norms set by the Code of Ethics. In such cases, an investigation is undertaken by the Ethics Commission, which is composed of a representative from the administration and the union of National Botanic Gardens. Neither the complaining party nor the employee can be on the Ethics Commission, and meetings held by the Ethics Commission must be open. The Code of Ethics does not define any penalties for violation of the Code.

Research Programme for 2015-2020 of the University of Latvia (LU)^[1]

The University of Latvia's Research Programme for 2015-2020 notes that various institutes carry out studies on the philosophy of feminism and gender, and clearly mentions research plans and topics in the research programme. It is the only university in Latvia that advises companies on the definition of the word *dzimums* and other related terms. Established in 1998, the University's Gender Studies Centre is a study and research centre that deals with aspects of women's, men's and gender studies, such as feminist and gender theories, gender and power, religion, culture, history, politics and philosophy.

Riga Stradins University's (RSU) long-term gender equality' goal

RSU has yet to adopt a GEP. However, the "Sustainable Development Goals"^[2] section of its website emphasises "the person" as the RSU's main value. It notes that gender equality is an integral value of the university and one of the basic elements for successful work, stating "gender equality = sustainable development". RSU publishes current information on the topic of gender equality on its website, while its professors and students share their opinions in various conferences and public discussions.

Footnotes

[1] <https://www.lu.lv/en/>

[2] <https://www.rsu.lv/en/sustainable-development-goals>