

Gender Equality in Academia and Research

Portugal

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN RESEARCH

Legal framework

Despite the existence of general legal provisions promoting equal treatment and equal opportunities for women and men which apply to universities and research institutions, until October 2015, Portugal has not put in place any legislation fostering gender equality in public research.

Policy framework

In 2008, the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG) signed a protocol with the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) for financing research projects that deepen scientific knowledge on multidisciplinary areas about Gender Social Relations. This protocol is still being enforced. The budget to be made available is defined in a public competition announcement on an annual basis.

The [4th Plan for Equality, Gender, Citizenship and Non-discrimination](#) (2011-2013) defined 'Research and Knowledge Society' as one of its strategic areas and included the following measures: strengthen the role of the Integrated System of Information and Knowledge (SIIC) on data collection and monitoring critical policy areas (measure 45); ensure the continuation of a protocol signed between the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality and the Foundation for Science and Technology to finance research projects that deepen scientific knowledge on Gender Social Relations (measure 46); and monitor the number of researchers broken down by sex and scientific areas (measure 47).

The current national plan for equality ([5th National Plan for Gender Equality, Citizenship and Non-](#)

[discrimination](#)), covering the period between 2014 and 2017, established “Education, Science and Culture” as a subarea of its second strategic area (i.e. Promoting Equality between Women and Men in Public Policies). The measures from the previous plan were discontinued and a new one was included: Introduce a Gender Studies category into the funding programme of the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT), in order to support research in Portugal (measure 19).

Between 2007 and 2013, the National Strategic Reference Framework (QREN) was the structural funds framework programme that was institutionalised in Portugal to regulate the application of EU’s economic and social cohesion policies (QREN – National Strategic Reference Framework). The operational structuring of QREN was systematised through three Thematic Operational Programmes and five Regional Operational Programmes for continental Portugal and for the two Autonomous Regions (i.e. Madeira and Azores). One of the three thematic operational programmes was the Human Potential Thematic Operational Programme (POPH) that was structured around 10 priority axles, of which one tackled [Gender Equality \(Axle 7\)](#). Axle 7 was composed of seven intervention typologies, of which one focussed on funding Plans for Equality (intervention typology 7.2). Although this typology was not specifically targeted at funding universities and research institutions, three universities were selected to receive financial support to set up gender equality plans.

Other stimulatory initiatives

The L’Oréal Portugal – Medals of Honour for Women in Science was launched in 2004 in Portugal. It consists of a partnership between UNESCO’s National Commission and the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) and aims at recognising and supporting female early-stage scientists to pursue their research projects in the areas of health and environment. Since its creation and until October 2015, 37 female scientists have received such a medal.

Key actors

The Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG) was responsible for following up the implementation of the equality plans funded under the intervention typology 7.2 mentioned above. Considering their managerial role in POPH’s Gender Equality axle, CIG cannot provide technical support to organisations that receive funded as it would be considered unethical. On the other hand, CIG has established cooperation protocols with the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) and with other universities in order to integrate gender equality in research (content).

The Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) is the national funding agency that supports science, technology and innovation, in all scientific domains, under responsibility of the Ministry for Education and Science. Besides the cooperation protocol mentioned above, FCT has recently recognised ‘Gender Studies’ as an eligible category to receive research funding.

The Ministry of Education has been/is involved in the implementation of measures of the national plans for Equality, Gender, Citizenship and Non-discrimination, specifically those related to education and research.

INITIATIVES FOR GENDER EQUALITY BY RESEARCH PERFORMING ORGANISATIONS

Between 2010 and 2015, three universities have set up gender equality plans: University of Beira Interior (UBI, Covilhã), University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro (Vila Real) and Higher Education School for Education of the Polytechnic Institute of Porto (ESE-IPP, Porto). These universities were funded by QREN-POPH to set up gender equality plans.

In general terms, all three gender equality plans have followed a four-step approach characterised by (1) an initial assessment leading to the (2) development and (3) implementation of the plans, which foresaw (4) monitoring and evaluation. The process is described in more detail below. All universities undertook an initial assessment which aimed at understanding the gender equality state-of-play of their institutions. The assessments followed distinct approaches, including quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The gender equality plan was then developed based on this assessment.

The prominent categories of measures considered in the three gender equality plans were the creation a structure to support the gender equality work in the universities, awareness-raising initiatives, the promotion of the use of gender-neutral and inclusive language and non-sexist images, and assessments of current organisational practices. On the other hand, the types of measures that were less common across all three plans were those focussing on supporting career progression of women, and promoting a gender balanced representation in leadership and decision-making positions.

Despite all three universities set up a gender equality plan, only UBI ensured its implementation and subsequent evaluation (through additional funding). However, many challenges were faced in the process, including the misconception that gender equality is a non-issue and, consequently, irrelevant, as well as resistances from teaching and non-teaching staff.

Considering the lack of policies and laws promoting gender equality in research, as well as the feeble or non-implementation of the few existing GEPs in Portuguese universities, tools/instruments, approaches and initiatives to progress gender equality in research are very limited.

The Gulbenkian Institute of Science is participating as associated partner of an EU-funded structural change project: LIBRA (Unifying innovative efforts of European research centres to achieve gender equality in academia). The project was initiated in October 2015. Therefore, no

actions have been undertaken so far.

RELEVANT EXAMPLES OF PRACTICES

Monitoring progress towards gender equality

University of Beira Interior (UBI) was the first university in Portugal to set up a gender equality plan. The pioneer work of UBI in this field is well-known in the country. A thorough initial assessment (2010-2011) of the gender equality state-of-play of the university preceded the development of the gender equality plan. UBI's plan established as a measure the elaboration of sex-disaggregated statistics about teaching and non-teaching staff, and students. Since 2012, Gender Equality Reports have been prepared on an annual basis to monitor the progress towards gender equality in the university. These reports are publicly accessible and build on the initial assessment carried out early in the process of setting up UBI's gender equality plan. The analysis provided in the reports considers the gender balance in terms of disciplines taught and on decision-making and leadership positions, the gender pay gap, the use of measures to reconcile professional and personal life (like flexible working hours), a gender analysis of the utilisation of leaves, and information about the number of students disaggregated by sex and faculty.