Gender Equality in Academia and Research

Step 3: Setting up a Gender Equality Plan

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After carrying out an assessment of the gender equality status quo (see step 2) in your organisation, you can start setting up a gender equality plan (GEP). The findings of the initial analysis allow you to identify the areas of intervention to be addressed in your GEP. Keep in mind that your GEP needs to fulfil the **Horizon Europe eligibility criterion**, and therefore should address these specific areas of intervention. Find more information here.

At this stage, it is crucial to actively involve people in senior management and leadership positions in deciding on the areas of intervention to be addressed and the measures to be identified in your GEP. Their involvement will ensure a smoother and more effective implementation of the proposed measures. Consider also including the members of the team that carried out the initial assessment (see step 2) in the development of the GEP.

However, not all relevant areas of intervention can be tackled at the same time, and some may be more pressing than others. Set the **priorities for your organisation** considering the initial assessment of step 2, the available resources and, of course, the Horizon Europe eligibility criterion.

When developing the GEP, keep in mind that it needs to be **holistic and integrated**. This means that the identified areas of intervention are interdependent. Consider also the five levels (structure, personnel, power, culture and context) that you should involve in the development of your GEP, as outlined in section 2.1 'What is a gender equality plan'. The GEP will address issues that are relevant to the whole community and organisational system. There are several basic elements to be taken into account when setting up the GEP:

objectives

measures

indicators

targets

timeline

responsibilities

During the development process, consider how to connect the GEP to other important strategy documents and processes of your organisation to foster the sustainable institutionalisation of gender equality. Below we explain how these elements are taken into consideration in the process of setting up a GEP.

Promote broad participation when designing the gender equality plan

You can organise joint or separate dynamic workshops with those in senior management and leadership posts, human resources and communication staff, teaching and/or research staff, and students, among others. You can use participatory methods for involving these stakeholders, as suggested by the ACT co-creation toolkit ⬀, the 'Gender equality actions in research institutions to transform gender roles' (GEARING ROLES ⬀) project and the 'Supporting the promotion of equality in research and academia' (SUPERA ⬀) project (you can find more resources about participatory methods in the 'Tools and resources' tab of 'Which stakeholders to involve and how').

A participatory approach will help you to establish meaningful objectives and measures for the people involved, while respecting the organisational culture. This will boost participants' willingness to implement the measures set out in the GEP. Moreover, it will help you to understand the meaning of gender equality for these groups.

Be aware that some formulations may cause discomfort. For instance, 'attracting more women researchers' for a certain discipline may be identified as a priority. However, this formulation can instigate resistance. The text of a measure can, in many cases, be adapted in order to address the organisation's priorities while considering certain susceptibilities. For example, using the expression 'attracting talent' may be more widely accepted by the organisation's community. Be aware that the meaning of gender equality needs to be constantly framed strategically throughout the implementation of the plan to create consent and support.

Think about different levels of stakeholder involvement: you could consider a step-by-step approach to participation, as already implemented in some GEP projects. Get inspiration from CALIPER's *Internal Engagement and Change Management Strategy Guideline* ⧉. In addition to a core team, you might set up a gender equality board or a hub as support structure and also use gender laboratories ⧉ as time-limited, thematic and solution-oriented participation structures.

Establish specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-related objectives, targets and measures

The objectives, targets and measures of your GEP are more likely to be successfully achieved and implemented if they are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-related (**SMART**).

> **Specific.** The objectives and measures should answer the following basic questions: what, why, how, who, when and where.
>
> **Measurable.** Establish quantitative and qualitative indicators and respective targets to be able to check the achievement of objectives (for specific information on indicators, see steps 2 ⧉ and 5 ⧉).
>
> **Attainable.** Make sure the objectives and measures are not out of reach and that they can actually be achieved (even if requiring more effort).
>
> **Realistic.** Ensure that the objectives and measures are relevant to the organisation and that they are feasible within a certain time frame and within the available resources.
>
> **Time-related.** Indicate when the objectives and measures can be achieved.

Remember that the *Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans* ⧉ defines a GEP as 'a set of commitments and actions that aim to promote gender equality in an organisation through institutional and cultural change'. When defining the targets and measures of your GEP, consider the recommended content-related (thematic) GEP building blocks:

> work−life balance and organisational culture;
> gender balance in leadership and decision-making;
> gender equality in recruitment and career progression;
> integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content;
> measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment.

Find inspiration on how to establish SMART objectives under the **tab 'Tools and resources'**. Note that there is more information on how to identify useful indicators in step 5 on **monitoring and evaluation**.

Identify a logic model

Embedding your GEP in a logic model can help you to plan objectives, interventions, desired outcomes and resources in more detail. It allows you to better understand how your different strategies and interventions will work towards the same goals, interact and reinforce each other. Based on the logic model you can also plan your monitoring and evaluation activities (see step 5). The 'Evaluation framework for promoting gender equality in research and innovation' (EFFORTI) toolbox ⬈ allows you to plan your GEP or interventions in the framework of a logic model with the 'programme theory generator'.

Achieving structural and cultural change requires selecting interventions that foster change at different levels of your organisation, such as structural, personnel, power-related and cultural levels. Therefore, your GEP should make use of multiple strategies and interventions to put a change process into motion. These different strategies and interventions should be coordinated and reinforce each other so that, for instance, changes at the structural level are supported by activities at the cultural level.

Get inspired by other organisations

There is no need to reinvent the wheel: there are numerous sound and successful examples of measures implemented by other organisations. However, a complete replication of such measures can be ineffective in your organisation. It is important to assess the context in which these were carried out. Make sure to adapt the measures considering the specificities of your own context (see step 1) and your own status quo assessment (see step 2). Look at the gender equality in academia and research (GEAR) action toolbox to get some inspiration on the areas that can be covered in a GEP, and browse through examples from other organisations.

Identify and use resources and anchor points for gender equality

The financial and human resources available for gender equality work are usually scarce. Working in such conditions can be very challenging. Identify existing resources that can serve the measures you are setting up. Sometimes, small changes in existing procedures or services will help to attain the objectives set out without additional costs or much effort. Building on existing resources also has the advantage of promoting the institutionalisation of gender-sensitive and/or gender-specific procedures or activities.

Some examples are the following.

'On-the-job training' programmes are usually offered by organisations. An initial mandatory gender training could be offered within this programme at the beginning of each (academic) year in order to build capacities of newly appointed staff or to improve the knowledge and/or competences of other staff members.

The drafting of new (or renewing) organisational strategic documents is an excellent opportunity for integrating gender-sensitive or gender-specific measures into those documents.

When planning the conferences to be held by the organisation, make sure to include a provision requiring a balanced representation of women and men in the panels.

Overall, however, the implementation of the GEP will not work without additional resources. Start defining and negotiating these resources during the GEP development phase. Use the Horizon Europe eligibility criterion and any applicable national regulations as arguments. Moreover, consider possible external resources as well (e.g. funding, local partnerships), as suggested in step 1 ('Find support').

Find inspiration on identifying and utilising resources under the **tab 'Tools and resources'**.

Establish the time frame of the gender equality plan and a timeline for its implementation

The overall duration of the GEP needs to be established (e.g. 4 years). Consider that a short time span means frequent negotiations for the next GEP, perhaps using up a lot of resources. A longer time span, on the other hand, may not allow flexible responses to current needs. It may also be strategically wise to coordinate the time frame of the GEP with that of the organisation's strategy development.

Considering the proposed measures and available resources, establish the timeline for executing each of them. When planning the time frame, take into account that not all measures can be implemented at the same time and that some measures are mutually dependent. For example, it is necessary to establish a gender equality officer first, before that officer can set up gender equality monitoring and then submit annual reports.

The 'Promoting gender balance and inclusion in research, innovation and training' (PLOTINA) project provides an Excel document for designing your own GEP, creating annual work plans, following up on implementation and gathering qualitative results for the measures implemented.

Do not forget to establish specific **monitoring periods** for reporting on the progress achieved (see step 5 to learn more). Progress reports should be discussed in decision-making bodies in your organisation and the top management should be held accountable for the results.

Keep in mind that a GEP is not static – it evolves continuously. The organisation, the people and the priorities can change drastically from one moment to the next, so be flexible. The negotiation of the relevance of gender equality in relation to the different measures and stakeholders involved is a constant process.

Agree on clear staff responsibilities for each measure

An agreement needs to be made on the team that will be involved in the implementation of the GEP. You need to identify those bodies and functions in your organisation that need to be assigned overarching responsibilities for the GEP in order to achieve greater sustainability and accountability (e.g. human resources department, top and/or middle management, communications department, financial department). Representatives of these bodies and functions should be involved in the development of the GEP as much as possible to ensure a high level of identification. After having decided on the staff members who will collaborate in this assignment and who will have the decision-making powers necessary for implementation, clear responsibilities need to be established. The GEP should clearly indicate 'who is responsible for what and when'. Here are recommendations on which stakeholders you need to engage in a GEP and what the role of these stakeholders can be.

Build alliances and expand your network

The GEP may include innovative and effective measures, but these will not work if the GEP is not supported by stakeholders at all levels. Engaging stakeholders is indispensable during the set-up phase. The GEP needs to be understood as something more than a piece of paper. Invest time in explaining the benefits of gender equality in research organisations. Adapt your language to the profile you are addressing. Take the time to explain what is in the GEP for targeted stakeholders – top down, bottom up and from the outside. Involve external organisations, stakeholders and experts in order to build supportive alliances and increase the visibility of the plan within and outside the institution so that the engagement of leaders is enhanced. Note that these efforts need to be continued throughout the implementation of the plan (see step 4).

Keep in mind that engaging stakeholders is a continuous activity. It starts with convincing those in senior management and leadership posts to have a GEP for the organisation, but it does not end there. Keep on engaging stakeholders in order to build stronger alliances.

Find inspiration on building alliances under the **tab 'Tools and resources'**.

Start thinking about sustainability

The resources for promoting structural change towards gender equality are not unlimited and neither is the duration of your GEP. The changes to be implemented are expected to have a long-term impact. To ensure the **sustainability** of gender equality measures, it is important to embed practices in the normal routines and procedures of the organisation and to anchor them structurally. This can be done by introducing new functions, such as a gender equality officer, and changing existing routines and procedures in the organisation or structurally complementing them with new ones. In addition, creating links with other strategic planning processes and/or embedding the GEP mandate in other, broader strategic documents will contribute to sustainability.

If you are interested in general **tools and resources** to support you in developing your GEP, click on the tab 'Tools and resources'. In addition, the SPEAR video on step 3 tells you all you need to know about developing a GEP:

SPEAR Gender equality in academia. EIGE's GEAR tool step 3 ⧉

You can find webinars about developing a GEP in the **tab 'Videos and webinars'**. Otherwise, click below to continue to the next step and learn how to **implement your GEP**. You can also go back to the previous step.