

Gender Equality in Academia and Research

What is a Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

In the specific context of research organisations and higher education institutions, the European Commission considers a **Gender Equality Plan** as a set of actions aiming at:

- 1 | Conducting impact assessment / audits of procedures and practices to identify gender bias;
- 2 | Identifying and implementing innovative strategies to correct any bias;
- 3 | Setting targets and monitoring progress via indicators.

Source: [European Commission Communication on 'A Reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth' \(COM\(2012\) 392 final\)](#)

This set of actions, which can have different degrees of complexity, is meant to articulate a strategic view aimed at achieving gender equality. Initiatives such as adhering to a Charter or adopting general gender equality objectives do not constitute per se a gender equality strategy/plan, as these commitments have to materialise into a concrete set of steps and actions to be undertaken.

For the same reason, a broader diversity or anti-discrimination strategy and/or plan addressing gender among other issues, should not automatically equal to having a gender equality plan. Indeed, if such a strategy does not rely upon sufficient data on gender, and only addresses gender through a limited number of measures and indicators, it is unlikely that gender equality will actually be achieved.

The scope of a gender equality plan may strongly vary, depending on the type of organisation, the institutional context in which it is implemented, the disciplines addressed or the type of gender biases and inequalities identified as part of the diagnosis.

The way gender biases and inequalities themselves are being addressed can also vary, along with

the chosen approach and the availability of internal or external gender expertise. Recently, gender bias and inequalities have been increasingly addressed taking into account their intersection with other inequality grounds such as disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or ethnicity.

Addressing other inequalities intersecting with gender may offer efficient leverages for change and can also inspire comprehensive actions and strategies. Yet, it should also be taken into account that it also requires more analytical resources, data and a broader range of expertise than tackling gender separately from other inequality grounds.

A Gender Equality Plan can be broken up in different steps or phases, each requiring specific types of interventions:

- An **analysis** phase, in which sex-disaggregated data is collected; procedures, processes and practices are critically assessed with a view to detect gender inequalities and gender bias;
- A **planning** phase, in which objectives are defined, targets are set, actions and measures to remedy the identified problems are decided, resources and responsibilities are attributed and timelines are agreed upon;
- An **implementation** phase, in which activities are implemented and outreach efforts are undertaken so as to gradually expand the network of stakeholders;
- A **monitoring** phase, in which the process and the progress are regularly followed through and assessed. Findings from the monitoring exercise(s) allow to adjust and to improve interventions, so that their results can be optimised.

In need of inspiration?

Have a look at the following real-life examples of Gender Equality Plans (in English):

- [Autonomous University of Barcelona](#)
- [National University of Ireland Maynooth](#)
- [Stockholm University - Department of Political Science](#)
- [University of Helsinki](#)
- [University of Vigo](#)
- [Uppsala University](#)
- [Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zürich](#)

