ROADMAP TO GENDER EQUALITY PLANS in research and higher education institutions

a short guide

According to the European Commission Communication on 'A Reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth' (COM(2012) 392 final),

A Gender Equality Plan is defined as a set of actions aiming at:

- **conducting impact assessment / audits of procedures and practices to identify gender bias.**
- **implementing innovative strategies to correct any bias.**
- **setting targets and monitoring progress via indicators.**

A Gender Equality Plan is more than a commitment to gender equality. It includes an analysis and bases its actions upon the findings of an assessment of gender (in)equality and gender bias within an organisation. Similarly, a Gender Equality Plan does not only consist of a series of objectives and targets, but also comprises of a set of practical measures, whose implementation should be monitored and evaluated. This set of actions, which can have different targets and degrees of complexity, is meant to address the contextual features of the organisations and to articulate a strategic view aimed at achieving gender equality.

This short guide presents the six main steps to develop a Gender Equality Plan:

1.

Step 1: Getting started!

Are you ready for setting up a Gender Equality Plan in your organisation?

- **Remember that context matters:** rather than simply copying successful actions or approaches that others did, ask which actions would work best in your own institution, considering its objectives and relevant regional/national contexts.
- **Find support:** involve gender experts, potential allies at different levels within and outside the institution, and investigate possible funding opportunities for the gender equality work that needs to be undertaken.

2.

Step 2: Analysing and assessing the state-of-play in the institution

The assessment of the state-of-play of the institution will provide insight on which measures need to be implemented. The comprehensiveness of this initial analysis will depend on the available resources. A standard approach would include:

- **Analysing sex-disaggregated data about staff and students.** Data broken down by sex is needed to detect any gender differences and to identify the most pressing areas requiring intervention. The first step is to check which data are readily available. If data do not yet exist in your organisation, efforts to collect such data need to be made. The second step is to carry out a gender analysis based on the collected data.
- **Identifying the existing measures promoting gender equality.** The implementation and results of existing measures (such as those to promote women's careers, to raise awareness about gender equality, or to enhance work-life balance) need to be critically assessed, together with those involved, seeking how their effectiveness can be enhanced.
- **Reviewing relevant legislation and policies in your country.** This allows for understanding where the organisation stands, the identification of any possible breaches and for providing the rationale to support gender equality actions. This knowledge can also support some of the measures within the Gender Equality Plan.

3. Step 3: Setting up a Gender Equality Plan

The findings of the initial analysis allow identifying the areas of intervention to be addressed in a Gender Equality Plan. Not all areas can however be tackled at the same time, and some may be more pressing than others. The priorities set out for an organisation will depend on the available resources.

A Gender Equality Plan needs to be holistic and integrated. This means that the identified areas of intervention are interdependent. The Gender Equality Plan needs to address a variety of issues relevant for the whole community and organisational system. The basic actions to be taken into consideration in the process of setting up a Gender Equality Plan include:

- **Get inspiration** from measures implemented by other organisations, but make sure to adapt these measures considering the specificities of your own context.
- **Define SMART objectives and measures** for your Gender Equality Plan (i.e. Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-related).
- **Define the timeframe** of the Gender Equality Plan, **as well as a realistic timeline for its implementation.** Do not forget to establish specific monitoring periods to report on the progress achieved.
- **Promote the participation of actors of all levels** when defining measures and actions of the Gender Equality Plan. A participatory approach will help define meaningful measures to the actors involved and will enhance their willingness to implement the measures in the Gender Equality Plan.
- **Identify and utilise existing resources** when planning the measures. Building on existing resources has the advantage of promoting the institutionalisation of gender-sensitive and/or gender-specific procedures or activities.
- **Agree on clear staff responsibilities for each measure.** The Gender Equality Plan should clearly indicate 'who is responsible for what and when'.
- **Build alliances.** The measures in a Gender Equality Plan will not deliver or be achieved unless the Plan is supported by stakeholders at all levels. Take time to explain what the Gender Equality Plan implies for all targeted stakeholders. These efforts need to be continued throughout the implementation of the Gender Equality Plan.
- **Think about sustainability.** The resources to promote gender equality through institutional change are not unlimited and neither is the duration of your Gender Equality Plan. To ensure the sustainability of gender equality actions, it is important to embed practices in the normal routines, policies and procedures of the organisation.

4. Step 4: Implementing a Gender Equality Plan

Having set up the Gender Equality Plan, it is time to start implementing it:

- **Put the measures of the Gender Equality Plan in motion** according to the defined timeline.
- **Try to embed and institutionalise as many measures/actions as possible** in order to ensure their sustainability.
- **Organise regular meetings** with the team responsible for the implementation of the Gender Equality Plan. These meetings are not only important to design and plan activities in a participatory way, but also to discuss the progress, main achievements and aspects that can be improved. The regular meetings will also help to identify any possible challenges or problems and act upon them.
- **Plan meetings with senior management and leadership, human resources staff, and/or other co-workers you consider relevant.** This will help create ownership of the Gender Equality Plan, motivate the staff involved, strengthen the potential of the Plan, and maximise the impact of the Plan's actions.
- **Continue engaging stakeholders** on an on-going basis and do not forget to keep in touch with stakeholders you engaged in a previous phase.
- **Give visibility to the Gender Equality Plan.** Inform your institution about the existence of the Gender Equality Plan. Use different channels and routes to communicate the Plan, its main areas of interventions, timeframe and achievements.
- **Be aware that adaptations to the Plan may be needed.** A Gender Equality Plan is not static or immutable. Several circumstances may require modifications or amendments to the Plan. Discuss with the implementation team and with senior management and leadership whether and how the Plan can be adapted.
- **Seek to understand why some measures are not being (fully) implemented** and make adjustments as needed. Keep up-to-date with innovative actions in other institutions.
- **Be prepared to face obstacles or resistances** when implementing some measures and act upon them.

5.

Step 5: Monitoring progress and evaluating a Gender Equality Plan

Monitoring and evaluation instruments support effective actions and accountability. Establish indicators, targets and follow-up instruments, while also allocating resources, to assess actions and to enhance the knowledge about on-going implementation. Gender expertise (possibly external) may need to be considered in monitoring and evaluation processes, potentially along with other expertise on change dynamics or other specific issues tackled by the Gender Equality Plan.

Monitoring is crucial to:

- Enable seeing where and how actions are being implemented.
- Help identify and address potential sources of resistance to change.
- Indicate whether a transformative dynamic exists.

Indicators should be implementation-oriented, and adapted to the purposes of the action. Monitoring does not mean looking only at figures and data; other underlying, qualitative aspects also need to be considered.

Evaluation is key to sustainability and further enhancement because it:

- Provides evidence of actual changes or lack thereof.
- Highlights the positive dynamics and opportunities brought by gender mainstreaming strategies.
- Is an opportunity to enhance the support to gender equality policies.
- Paves the way for future, even more resolute actions, and offers a valuable knowledge for their design.

Transforming complex organisations, challenging processes, routines and power relations among staff takes time. Attention must be paid to short-term and mid-term milestones and potential achievements as well. A thorough, context-sensitive and mixed evaluation approach helps your strategy to make a substantial difference.

Examples of quantitative indicators

Quantitative indicators are relevant whenever they are adapted to the expected results of the planned actions. Quantitative indicators most often include:

- the number of female and male candidates for positions.
- the number of women and men in selection panels (for recruitment and promotion).
- horizontal sex segregation in respective categories of occupation.
- the number of male and female individuals targeted and reached by gender awareness-raising or planned training actions.
- gender ratios in accessing research grants (and other resources, e.g. laboratory spaces or personnel).
- the gender pay gap among different categories of staff, including researchers.

Examples of qualitative indicators

Qualitative indicators can contribute to a better understanding of the process of change. They may bring evidence of change and that gender equality and awareness are gaining ground. Qualitative indicators have also a stronger learning potential. They support self-reflexivity and may provide indications for a continuous enhancement of the implemented actions. The following dimensions can be considered when defining/assessing qualitative indicators:

- The uptake of the gender equality objectives set by the Gender Equality Plan by different categories of stakeholders.
- The actual transformation towards greater gender-sensitivity of both formal and informal practices as an effect of implemented actions, notably in the areas of human resources management, decision-making, evaluation and governance.

6.

Step 6. What comes after the Gender Equality Plan?

A Gender Equality Plan will conclude at some point in time. However, this is not 'the end' towards promoting gender equality. A new cycle should start. It is likely that the sustainability of some measures and procedures is already ensured, whereas others may still require further action, or new areas of attention may have been identified. This is the point where a decision needs to be made on how to continue the efforts undertaken so far and what any new Gender Equality Plan should address.

Want to know more?

Visit GEAR, EIGE's online tool about Gender Equality in Academia and Research:
www.eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/tools-methods/GEAR

EIGE
European Institute for Gender Equality

ABOUT EIGE

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is the EU knowledge centre on gender equality. EIGE supports policy-makers and all relevant institutions in their efforts to make equality between women and men a reality for all Europeans and beyond by providing them with specific expertise and comparable and reliable data on gender equality in Europe. More information: http://www.eige.europe.eu

The information gathered in this roadmap originates from a project focusing on the integration of gender equality into research and higher education institutions developed in cooperation with the European Commission, Directorate-General Research and Innovation. This project ran from July 2015 until October 2016. The legal and policy framework and other stimulatory initiatives promoting gender equality in research were mapped out in the 28 EU Member States. Based on national initiatives and projects funded by the EU Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development, and in consultation with experts and stakeholders, an online tool was developed to assist research and higher education institutions in setting up, implementing, monitoring and evaluating gender equality plans. The most important tips of the step-by-step guide available in the online tool have been summarised in this roadmap.

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