

# Gender equality plan – how to do it?

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# INTRODUCTION

The European Commission's commitment to promoting gender equality in research and innovation is an important part of the broader Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 announced in March of 2020. One of the objectives of this strategy is to strengthen the European Research Area (ERA) to ensure equal opportunities in a working environment where all, regardless of gender, can develop their talents, and to better integrate the gender dimension across scientific projects in order to improve the quality of research as well as its relevance to a society based on knowledge, technology, and innovation.

In line with the above, the legal basis of Horizon Europe (HE) - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) support the Commission's work on gender equality in research and innovation by setting **gender equality as a cross-cutting priority**, which is confirmed by several regulations. According to Article 7(6) of the EU Parliament and Council Regulation of 28 April 2021, the HE Programme “shall ensure the effective promotion of equal opportunities for all and the implementation of gender mainstreaming, including the integration of the gender dimension in R&I content. It shall aim to address the causes of gender imbalance. Particular attention shall be paid to ensuring, to the extent possible, gender balance in evaluation panels and in other relevant advisory bodies such as boards and expert groups.” Clause 53 of the same regulation states that activity in place under Horizon Europe programme “should aim to eliminate gender bias and inequalities, enhancing work-life balance and promoting equality between women and men in R&I, including the principle of equal pay without discrimination based on sex (...).” Similar provisions can also be found in the HE Specific Programme.

Considering the current legal provisions, three main changes have been introduced by Horizon Europe with an ultimate goal of increasing gender equality among male and female researchers:

1. A Gender Equality Plan (GEP) becomes an eligibility criterion for all public authorities, higher education institutions, and research organisations wishing to participate in Horizon Europe;
2. Integration of the gender dimension into research content and innovation is an implicit requirement assessed against the excellence criterion, unless explicitly stated otherwise in the topic description;
3. Gender balance within research teams will be the determining criterion for grant applications with an equal number of ranking points.

The subject of this paper is the first area of focus, namely, the Gender Equality Plans and their development, implementation, and oversight, which are currently a challenge for many public research institutions in Europe. According to the European Commission, a Gender Equality Plan is a document describing a set of actions aimed at: 1) conducting an assessment/analysis of existing practices and procedures to identify gender biases; 2) identifying and implementing innovative strategies to correct any

bias; 3) setting targets and monitoring progress towards the promotion of gender equality through predetermined indicators.

In the context of developing a plan in line with the specifications laid out by Horizon Europe, it is worth bearing that firstly, as already mentioned, **implementation of the plan will be mandatory for all public authorities, i.e. ministries, municipalities, research funding organisations, public profit-making organisations (e.g. certain museums), as well as higher education institutions (universities) and research organisations (research institutes, including the Polish Academy of Sciences and its institutes).** Thus, private profit-oriented organisations such as small- and medium-sized enterprises, as well as nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) are not obliged to implement the GEP. Also, it should be noted that this requirement only applies to organisations based in EU Member States and associated countries (other countries are exempt).

Secondly, having a Gender Equality Plan will be an eligibility criterion for all **Horizon Europe competitions with calls for proposals closing in 2022 or later.** An organisation may not have a GEP at the application stage but must have one in place at the time a grant agreement is signed. This means that at the application stage a statement from the organisation that a Gender Equality Plan will be in place at the latest when the grant agreement is signed will be required. This statement will take the form of a dedicated questionnaire addressing the four mandatory requirements of the GEP, as well as the five topic areas identified on page 7 of this paper. The questionnaire should be completed, in principle, only once for the duration of the Framework Programme by an authorised person (legal representative of the institution - LEAR), unless the status of the legal entity changes. During the course of Horizon Europe programme, the European Commission announces that it will carry out follow-up audits in order to determine whether the GEP criteria are met by the organisation. If the beneficiary does not fulfil the criteria, a standard termination procedure will be implemented, whereby in situations where the beneficiary plays a key role in the grant agreement, termination for the beneficiary may result in termination of the entire project.

Thirdly, as detailed in the general annexes of Horizon Europe 2021-2022 Work Programme, in order to meet the eligibility criterion, the **Gender Equality Plan must contain 4 mandatory elements;** it must be a public document, it must designate specific, dedicated resources to the cause, it must provide for data collection and monitoring, and it must include the organisation of training and capacity building for organisations. **All four requirements are discussed in detail in the following section, though it should be noted at the outset that the elements identified by the EC are closely interrelated and their scopes often overlap, so it is recommended to examine them altogether.**

# FOUR MANDATORY ELEMENTS OF GENDER EQUALITY PLANS

## First: public document

The Gender Equality Plan should be an official, publicly available document, which in practice means that it must be adopted by the authorities of the organisation, published on the institution's website, and disseminated to its female and male employees. Importantly, pursuant to the requirements of the European Commission, the plan does not have to be in English.



However, if the four mandatory requirements are reflected in other official documents such as a development plan, integration or diversity strategy, or through provisions contained in several separate official documents, they can be considered equivalent to a Gender Equality Plan. However, in the latter case, the EC recommends collecting this dispersed information in a dedicated summary available on the organisation's website. In addition, an HRS4R certificate "HR Excellence in Research" or another certificate at the national/regional level related to gender equality can be considered an equivalent to the Gender Equality Plan, as long as it meets the four above-mentioned basic requirements.

## Examples of Gender Equality Plans - POLAND

- The Gender Equality Plan for the University of Warsaw and the 2020-2023 Equality Activities Plan. Warsaw 2020 (available [in Polish](#) and [in English](#))
- Gender Equality Plan Draft for the Krakow University of Technology for 2021-2024 (available [in Polish](#))

As far as the content of the plan itself is concerned, it should demonstrate the institution's commitment to gender equality, and set forth specific objectives and detailed actions and measures to achieve them. Based on the examples elaborated so far, it can be noted that this kind of document usually includes:

1. Diagnosis, i.e. the main research findings and conclusions based on analysis of the current situation of gender equality in a given unit, such as investigating and describing the current gender distribution in the scientific workforce;

2. Clearly formulated objectives which aim to, for example, support the development of women's scientific careers, increase gender balance in expert teams and management positions, facilitate the combination of work and family life;
3. Specific actions and indicators closely linked to the objectives;

Objective	Action	Indicator
<b>Raising awareness of the importance of equality issues and strengthening positive attitudes towards diversity</b>	Introduction of anti-discrimination training for management staff of organisational units and for representatives of student councils	Train at least x (number or percentage) of female and male employees in 2023
<b>Supporting the development of women's scientific careers</b>	Networking groups for female PhD students	Organisation of x (number or percentage) networking group meetings annually
	Gathering information on good practices and their dissemination	Periodic publication of information on the institution's website or in an internal newsletter
<b>Increasing the balanced gender representation in expert teams and management</b>	Formulating and implementing guidelines on the percentage representation of women and men on expert panels and committees	Achieving a level of at least 45% female employees by 2024
	Formulation and implementation of guidelines for appointing both women and men as chairs of decision-making bodies	Achieving a level of a minimum of 35% positions held by women by 2024
<b>Facilitating the work and family life balance</b>	Development of infrastructure to support care functions, including plan to create a nursery and a preschool	Increasing the number of children of staff, doctoral students, and others utilizing care institutions at the unit
	Diagnosing the needs of those returning to work in research and teaching after parental leave in terms of university support	Conducting consultations and survey, publishing results by 2023 for next Gender Equality Plan

4. Identifying the units/departments responsible for implementing and overseeing related actions;
5. Timetable for implementation of the actions;

## 6. Identification of target audience for given actions.

Furthermore, the European Commission has defined five key areas for achieving gender equality in research and innovation which should be covered by the Gender Equality Plan:

1. Work/family life balance and organisational culture of the institution;
2. Gender balance in management and decision-making bodies;
3. Gender equality in recruitment and career development;
4. Integrating gender into research and teaching content;
5. Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment.

### Examples of Gender Equality Plans - EUROPE

- The University of Bologna, Gender Equality Plan 2017-2020 (available in [English](#))
- The Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine at the Helmholtz Association (MDC), The Gender Equality Plan 2014-2020 (available in [English](#))
- The Dresden University of Technology, Gender Equality Concept 2018 (available in [English](#))
- The University of Rijeka, Gender Equality Plan 2021-2025 (available in [English](#))
- The Plovdiv University, Gender Equality Plan 2021-2024 (available in [English](#))
- The Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Plan of Action on Equality 2019-2021 (available in [English](#))

A helpful feature for organisations in terms of the preparation, implementation, and oversight of a Gender Equality Plan is the GEAR Tool (The Gender Equality in Academia and Research Tool), developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality. It is a guide providing universities and research organisations with practical advice and tools at all stages of institutional change, from developing a gender equality plan to evaluating its actual impact. Among other things, it provides guidance on the obstacles and challenges together with suggestions on how to overcome them; a list of basic requirements and success factors for its implementation; specific examples of actions to be designed and implemented within the framework of a Gender Equality Plan; key resources supporting the process of structural change; arguments for promoting gender equality, and basic information on EU and national policies which support gender equality in research.

The GEAR Tool guide is addressed to all employees working in research and higher education institutions. This includes academic and teaching staff, administrative and support personnel, and middle and top management. The tool is not addressing students directly, but does refer to some aspects of their function within the organisation.

It is worth mentioning that due to the requirements related to Horizon Europe, the GEAR Tool guide is currently under revision.

## Second: dedicated resources



The preparation, implementation, and oversight of the Gender Equality Plan undoubtedly requires specific human resources and adequate time. In view of the above, it seems necessary to create a special position within the organisation, such as an Equality Officer, or a unit such as a team, department, or office dedicated to gender equality which will be fully responsible for monitoring the issue of equal treatment, not only regarding gender, but also across other minority groups (such as persons with disabilities). Their basic tasks should include, among others, collecting information on good equality practices and disseminating these practices, providing information on equality courses and trainings, acting as a contact point for discrimination issues, and developing and implementing a gender equality monitoring system. It is worth adding that information on the appointment of such a person or team, together with a brief description of tasks and contact details, should be provided on the institution's website.

### Examples of gender equality positions/teams - POLAND

- [Chief Equality Officer](#) at the University of Warsaw.  
Equality Officers have also been appointed within various faculties of the University of Warsaw.  
More information can be found [here](#)
- [Department for Security and Equal Treatment](#) at the Jagiellonian University
- [The Rector's Proxy for Equal Treatment](#) at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań
- [Ombudsman for equal treatment and anti-discrimination](#) at the University of Wrocław
- [Office of the Equal Treatment and Anti-Mobbing Ombudsman](#) at the University of Gdańsk

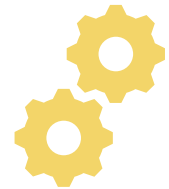
An alternative solution which can be implemented by an organisation, particularly smaller institutions, is to allocate a certain part of the full-time equivalent of selected academic, managerial, or administrative staff to handle tasks related to gender equality activities within the organisation. In this case, it must be indicated how much of the employee's time is allocated to such tasks, and it must be specified in the employee's job description.

## Examples of gender equality positions/teams - EUROPE

- [Equal Opportunity Officer](#), the Helmholtz Research Centre, Centre for Environmental Research
- [Gender Equality Officers](#), the Max Planck Institute for Solar System Research
- [Gender Equality Team](#), the University of Southern Denmark
- [Equal Opportunities Officer for Women](#), the University of Applied Science, Berlin
- [Equal Opportunities Officer](#), the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies, Potsdam

### Third: data collection and monitoring

Another key element of the Gender Equality Plan is data collection and monitoring. The European Commission expects organisations to develop their plans based on current data on the situation of women and men employed by the institution. Secondly, once plans are developed, the EC requires ongoing monitoring of those areas of gender equality where remedial action has been declared.



**The analysis undertaken at the first stage is not only an essential part of the plan, but above all the best starting point for creating a Gender Equality Plan that meets the specific needs of the organisation.** A thorough understanding of how an organisation manages to promote equality by collecting current statistics on the gender of its staff and a detailed diagnosis of the differences between the situation of women and men enables it to develop, and therefore take appropriate actions to ensure equal opportunities and conditions of employment.

It should be emphasised that the comprehensiveness of the analysis of the level/degree of equality in each institution depends on the available resources of the organisation, both human and financial, that can be allocated to this task. Hence, it seems necessary to identify internal resources and also to consider possible external resources (opportunities to obtain external funding for research, involvement in current projects, etc.).



## Examples of reports - POLAND

- Report "Women in Science - managing diversity and gender equality as a part of the social responsibility of the University of Gdansk" 2020 (available [here](#))
- Report "Women at Technology Universities" 2021 (available [here](#))
- Report "Women in Polish Political Science. From diagnosis to cooperation" 2018 (available [here](#))
- "A poor chance for promotion? Report from the study on the presence of women at art universities in Poland" 2015 (available [here](#))

It should be added that the examples of reports indicated in this part of the study, which are rather cross-sectional reports, can inspire analysis, however data collection and monitoring within a given institution can be carried out on a much smaller scale and adapted to the needs proportional to the size of the organisation. In other words, the type and range of information collected during the diagnosis can vary. In addition to basic socio-demographic variables such as marital status, age, gender, religious beliefs, and income, the most common are:

- questions on working conditions; position in the organisation, field of study, net salary, bonuses, types of contracts, access to career, progress and obstacles, development training, responsibilities related to caring for family members, position responsibilities, working and pay conditions and satisfaction levels, support for pregnant women, work-family balance, holiday support, and workload;
- questions on organisational culture; representation of men and women, gender equality, differences in roles, promotions, personal treatment, perception of the working environment and atmosphere, recruitment factors, promotion factors, perception of gender and social roles, team atmosphere;
- questions on stereotypes and prejudices; unconscious biases, manifestations of sexism, bias in recruitment and/or leadership;
- questions about interpersonal behaviour and experiences; microaggressions, harassment, bullying, organisational culture in the workplace.

Practice to date shows that data collection on gender equality in organisations takes different forms: from desk research such as review and analysis of existing data, through quantitative research (surveys of female and male staff interested in their opinions on gender equality at the institution, organisational practices promoting gender equality, sexist attitudes and behaviour, etc.) to qualitative research such as individual or group interviews with academic/administrative staff.

### Examples of reports and tools - EUROPE

- [The Annual Report on staff and gender](#), published by CNRS
- [Gender Equality Mapping](#), Gender Equality in Central and Eastern Europe - GEinCEE project
- [Gender Equality Audit and Monitoring \(GEAM\) Tool](#), the ACT project
- [Gender Statistics Database](#), the European Institute for Gender Equality

### Fourth: training and capacity building of organisations



The fourth and final element to be included in the Gender Equality Plan is a series of training, workshops, or equality events to build the capacity of the institutions. Activities under this component can range from developing competencies in combating unconscious gender bias among staff, leaders, and decision-makers, to setting up working groups on specific topics and raising awareness through workshops and communication activities. Thematic training courses are primarily intended to provide knowledge about the principle of gender equality, to sensitise recipients to areas and manifestations of discrimination - including linguistic discrimination, and to provide good practices and examples of effective implementation of the principle of equal opportunities.

### Examples of training - POLAND

- [Equality workshops for academic teachers](#), the University of Warsaw
- [Training on gender equality in management](#), Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin
- [Gender equality aspects in science using the example of the H2020 GEECCO project](#) webinar, Cracow University of Technology
- Ars Docendi course "[Discrimination-free university](#)", the Jagiellonian University
- [Workshops organised by Women in Science at Nencki](#) on biases in recruitment and academic assessment, the Institute of Experimental Biology of the Polish Academy of Sciences

When preparing the thematic scope of training on gender equality, it is worth remembering that the topics should be consistent with the results of the analysis; the training should cover areas that are most problematic from the perspective of the organisation or where inequalities between women and men are most noticeable. In addition, it is important to develop a detailed description of the planned training, including information on which audience they are addressed to, with what regularity they will take place, and how the results of the training will be measured. It is also crucial to create a repository accessible to all

employees, for example on the institution's website, where training materials will be uploaded and/or updated.

### Examples of training - EUROPE

- [LeTSGEPs Training Strategy](#) (Gender Budgeting, Gender Equality Plans), Max Planck Society
- [Gender Sensitive PhD-Supervision Toolkit](#) for PhD supervisors, PhD students, managers, and administrators, FESTA project
- Workshop [Implicit gender biases during evaluations: How to raise awareness and change attitudes?](#), GEECCO project
- Online training [How to communicate “gender” in times of resistance?](#), Gender Equality Academy
- Training Course [Challenging Stereotypes and Identities to Promote Gender Equality](#), North-South Centre of the Council of Europe
- [Trainer database](#), Baltic Gender project

Finally, the European Commission plans a series of training courses on Gender Equality Plans. They are aimed at EU Member States and associated countries with high number of organisations covered by Horizon Europe eligibility criterion which have not yet introduced a GEP. The first of EC training (on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September of 2021) addresses public institutions, research organisations, and higher education institutions of Bulgaria.

## USEFUL LINKS

- [European Commission webpage on gender equality research and innovation](#)
- [How to prepare a Gender Equality Plan for Horizon Europe workshop](#)
- [Information Days of Horizon Europe, Gender Equality session, presentation by Dr Anne Pepin from the European Commission](#)
- [Website of the European Institute for Gender Equality](#)
- [WiSER: Women in Science and European Research website](#)
  
- [GENERA project website](#) (Polish participant: the Jagiellonian University)
- [LIBRA project website](#)
- [PLOTINA project website](#)
- [SAGE project website](#)
- [EQUAL-IST project website](#)
- [Baltic Gender project website](#)
- [TARGET project website](#)
- [GEECCO project website](#) (Polish participant: Cracow University of Technology)
- [CHANGE project website](#)
- [SUPERA project website](#)
- [R-I PEERS project website](#)
- [GENDER SMART project website](#)
- [GEARING-ROLES project website](#)
- [SPEAR project website](#)
- [CALIPER project website](#)
- [EQUAL4EUROPE project website](#)
- [LeTSGEPs project website](#)
- [TARGET-MPI project website](#)
- [RESET project website](#) (Polish participant: University of Łódź)
- [GENDERACTION project website](#) (Polish participant: The National Information Processing Institute - National Research Institute)
- [GENDER EQUALITY ACADEMY project website](#)
- [ACT on Gender project website](#) (Polish participant: the Jagiellonian University)
- [UniSAFE project website](#) (Polish participant: the Jagiellonian University)
- [About ATHENA project](#) (Polish participant: Jan Kochanowski University of Kielce)
- [About MINDtheGEPs project](#) (Polish participants: the University of Gdańsk and the Jagiellonian University)