

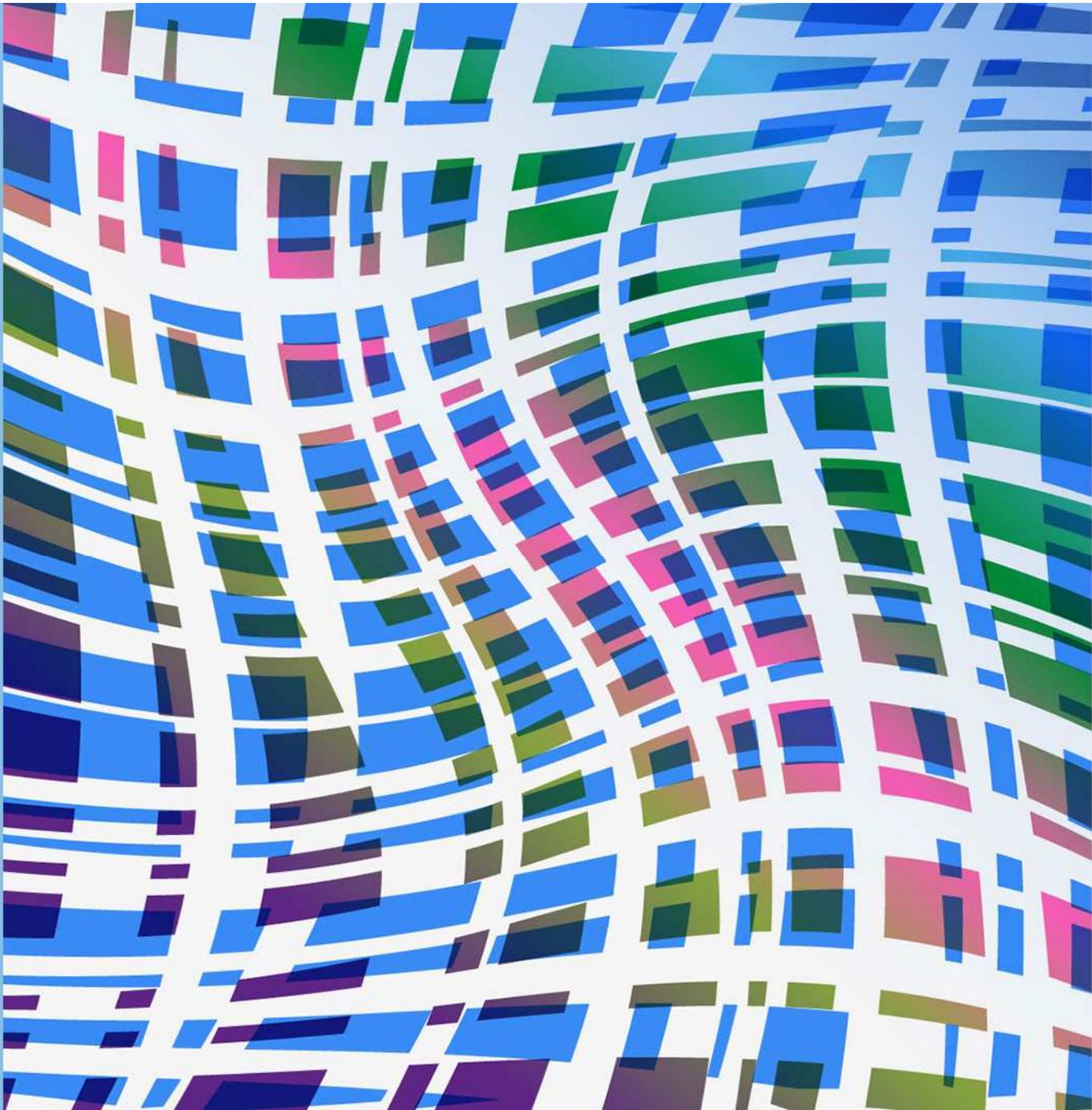
Research Synthesis 5

# **Policy Setting and Implementation**

Authors

Rachel Palmén, Anke Lipinsky and Laura Getz in collaboration  
with the GenPORT Consortium

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## Description of the Problem

In 2012, the ERA Communication "A Reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth" established gender equality as one of five priorities for achieving the objective of a common research area in Europe. The ERA (European Research Area) Communication states that gender equality and gender mainstreaming in research are needed "to end the waste of talent which we cannot afford and to diversify views and approaches in research and foster excellence" (EC, 2012b:4).

It invites Member States to create a favourable legal and policy environment, and provide incentives to:

- dismantle barriers including legal barriers to the recruitment, retention and career progression of female researchers whilst ensuring compliance with EU law on gender equality;
- tackle gender imbalances in decision making processes;
- bolster the gender dimension in research programmes (EC, 2012b:12).

Equally research organisations are invited to implement institutional change specifically focusing on human resources management, funding, decision-making and research programmes by carrying out Gender Equality Plans which should aim to:

- carry out impact assessments / audits of procedures and practices to identify gender bias;
- implement innovative strategies to tackle bias;
- establish targets and monitor progress via indicators (EC, 2012b:13).

Member States are seen as key partners in the effective implementation of institutional change by creating a conducive legal and political environment, and by providing incentives for change. They are therefore invited to engage in partnerships with funding agencies, research organisations and universities to foster cultural and institutional change.

Most features and issues addressed in national policy making environments with regard to gender and science are not based on legal provisions – they result from

long-term or medium-term strategic orientations and “policy instruments falling in the realm of ‘soft law’ restricted to recommendations, resolutions, action programmes and road maps” (EC, 2012a:24).

Strategies in specific policy fields can be assigned to three main types of instruments based on characteristics of steering, policies and strategies (Bothfeld & Rouault 2015):

- Hierarchical steering: based on direct objectives forced by regulation and impacts directly on foreseen change (e.g. quota);
- Procedural steering: based on indirect objectives, incentives, cooperation or regulation and has an indirect-structural impact (e.g. gender equality plans, equality officers);
- Evaluative steering: based on indirect objectives, self-commitment, addresses elaborate problems and defines strategy to address them, and has a latent impact through cultural change and learning (e.g. monitoring and reporting duty, audits).

National policies in the field of gender and science often pursue mixed approaches and vary between hierarchical steering, procedural steering and, in fewer countries, evaluative steering.

This research synthesis will look at the key steering strategies used by Member States for institutional change and those in place in three main areas: recruitment, promotion and re-entry; the gender dimension in research content; and gender balance in decision-making. It will attempt to identify the types of steering mechanisms used in each of these areas and the presence of these policies throughout different Member States. This synthesis is mainly based on systematic research carried out in this field: the European Commission’s 2014 report “Gender Equality Policies in Public Research” – based on a survey among members of the Helsinki Group on Gender in Research and Innovation, 2013’ (EC, 2014); the ERA Facts and Figures (2014) Report (EC, 2015), and the GenPORT Policy Environment Report (Lipinsky et al., 2015).

## Recent and New Insights from Research

### Institutional Change

The push for institutional change has been driven through a combination of legislation and “soft” measures in Member States, principally through two main procedural steering mechanisms: Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) and gender equality officers.

Gender equality plans are mandatory by law in universities in Austria, Spain and Norway. Whilst in Denmark, Sweden, Iceland and Finland the law requires that all workplaces over a certain size develop gender action plans (cf. Bergman/ Rustad, 2013:25 cited in EC, 2014:19). Of course there is great variation between institutions’ GEPs in terms of the extent of these plans and degree of implementation (ibid). According to the results of the ERA survey 2014, 64% of respondent research performing organisations (RPOs) implement a gender equality plan – there is however great variation between countries (EC, 2015:29).

The legal institutionalisation of gender equality officers is not widespread. Only four countries have binding provisions on the implementation of gender equality officers (Germany, Austria, and Iceland) or gender units (Spain) (Lipinsky et al, 2015).

Member States can play a key role in the push for institutional change in RPOs and research funding organisations (RFOs) in a variety of different ways- by fostering a favourable legal and political context for institutional change (through legal provisions, policies or strategies) or by incentivising its uptake (EC, 2014:12). This proves to be an effective approach as the ERA Progress Report 2014 highlights the “significant correlations between measures taken at RPO level including GEPs and the existence of national laws, strategies and/ or incentives to foster institutional change” (EC, 2014b:6).

One effective approach to steering institutional change has been carried out through measures linking gender equality performance in RPOs to research funding (EC, 2014a):

- Performance agreements with the government, as in Austria, Luxembourg and Finland; in Denmark some universities have also included gender equality in their development contracts with the Ministry;
- Assessment of gender equality concepts and grading of institutions, as in Germany by the German Research Foundation;
- Linking funding of biomedical research to structural change performance in the United Kingdom by using the Athena Swan charter;
- Relevant measures also in associated countries – i.e. the establishment of the Committee for Gender Balance in Research and the Creation of the Gender Equality Award by the research council in Norway (EC, 2014a:18).

The Norwegian and Irish Research Councils provide good examples of taking a holistic approach to evaluation. The former includes recruiting female scientists to research teams, gender balance of principal investigators and gender in research content – it has also developed a monitoring system for those relevant projects (EC, 2014a:36). The Irish Research Council has produced a gender strategy and action plan, 2013-2020, which covers Supporting Gender Equality in Researcher Careers, Integrations of Sex/ Gender Analysis of Research Content, and Internal Gender Proofing.

Another approach is concerned with providing incentives to RPOs to recruit and promote female academics to middle and mostly senior positions, which include as an eligibility criterion the implementation of a gender equality plan (Programme for Senior Professors in Germany, ASPASIA in the Netherlands, and BALANSE in Norway); in other cases incentives are linked to a benchmark (i.e. Denmark, with the award of additional chairs in certain universities) (EC, 2014a:25).

## **Recruitment, Retention and Career Progression**

Equal opportunities legislation can affect the participation of women in science by preventing and sanctioning discrimination based on sex in recruitment and promotion procedures. Legal conditions can vary according to academic level (from PhD to full professor) for recruitment, employment and promotion processes (EC, 2014a:11). Legislation relating to equal pay and the reduction of the wage gap are also important tools in the push for gender equality in science. Various countries have additionally included equal opportunity issues into the specific legislation that regulates higher education, including the financing of universities (Rees, 2002).

Whilst, in Austria women have to be appointed if they are as equally qualified as their male competitors (Lipinsky et al., 2015:17).

As a result of the shift towards greater institutional autonomy, RPOs are increasingly seeing the benefits of adopting “soft” measures to improve recruitment, promotion, leaves and absences policies – as well as the work climate. In terms of recruitment of female researchers in public research, the Commission identified specific support in the following Member States: AT, BE, DE, DK, EL, ES, HR, NL, SE, UK (EC, 2015:29/30). Regarding the implementation of recruitment and promotion policies for female researchers, an average of 59% of ERA respondent RPOs are implementing recruitment and promotion policies. There is however great variation between countries (EC, 2015).

There are two main strategies to include gender equality in institutional recruitment practices: through gender equality plans or charters and concordats; these define a set of principles that organisations sign up to and comply with (EC, 2014a:35). This type of strategic response takes an evaluative or procedural steering approach and examples of such tools include the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for their Recruitment, UK Concordat to support the Career Development of Researchers, LERU’s commitment to act against gender bias and the Athena Swan charter (EC, 2014a:11). The general aim of these is to make “existing career thresholds and procedures” more transparent and gender aware (ibid). In some countries, the government has set targets for recruitment and promotion. For example, in Germany RPOs are encouraged to implement the cascade model which relates the actual ratio of a career stage to the target ratio for the next career stage (EC, 2014a:26).

As regarding career breaks and re-entry, various actions have been taken by RFOs, for example, research projects can be extended and additional funding can be provided for substitute staff whilst periods of leave can be taken into account in career evaluation (Estonia, Germany, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Malta, Iceland and Switzerland) (EC, 2014a:28). In Poland, the funding agency allows projects to be extended in the case of principal investigators taking parental leave (EC, 2014a:33).

## Decision-Making

In 1999, the European Commission set a 40% target of the under-represented sex in all committees, advisory groups and panels, which was recently reinforced by its commitment in the ERA research and innovation sectors. Targets and quotas are used to counteract gender imbalance in decision-making bodies which in effect is a hierarchical steering mechanism. In some countries, these are backed up by policies which establish clear rules for the composition of selection panels (EC, 2014a:11). In some countries legislation has been developed, for example, the Nordic and some Southern EU member states in particular employ quotas and targets to encourage gender balance more generally in public decision-making bodies and scientific committees (Rees, 2002). This legislation has had a significant effect on the proportion of women in senior university and research institute committees, research councils, selection panels etc (Rees, 2002; Castaño et al., 2010). In 2009 in Austria the quota regulation of 40% of women on university decision-bodies – is beginning to bear fruit: “18 of 22 universities now meet the 40% female quota for the rectorate, and only one lies under the 40% quota for university council. Far more women now also sit on other commissions than was the case four years ago: while in 2010 46% of all appointment boards were made up of at least 40% of women, the same figure applied in 2012 to two-thirds of all appointment boards” (Wroblewski et al, 2015:5).

*“Targets and quotas are used to counteract gender imbalance in decision-making bodies which in effect is a hierarchical steering mechanism”*

## Gender Dimension in Research Content

Gender Dimension in Research Content can refer to (1) Gender Studies/Women's Studies as a distinct discipline, (2) gender research, which is an extensive interdisciplinary research area, both with various forms of institutionalisation (professorships, institutes, centres, networks) across Europe and globally, and (3) the issue of gender perspectives in research more generally, which integrates analysis of sex-gender factors as primary variables in study design. Gender research is conducted in some form in most European countries and Gender

Studies/Women's Studies has been taught in most European countries for decades (e.g. Rees 2002; EC 2008). In Europe integrating the gender dimension into research content has been given an important push with Horizon 2020 – that could “unlock the creative potential of sex and gender analysis in research and innovation” (Pollitzer et al, 2015). There is, however, a real danger that this momentum dries up and gender as an innovation driver is lost as it becomes subsumed under the Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) agenda (ibid).

The number of Member States that include the gender dimension in research content and programmes is increasing but levels of implementation “remains insufficiently supported” (EC, 2015:28). The Commission identified that provisions for the inclusion of the gender dimension in research contents/ programmes are in place in ten Member States (AT, DE, DK, ES, FR, IE, IT, NL, SE, SK) (EC, 2015:33). Different steering mechanisms can be used to include the gender dimension in research content. For example, hierarchical steering can be used by linking evaluation of the gender dimension to research funding, the gender dimension can also be addressed by gender equality plans (procedural steering) and through monitoring (evaluative steering).

However, the results from the ERA survey 2014 also highlight that in only a few countries research funders support the inclusion of the gender dimension in research contents/ programmes. In only eight countries was the gender dimension frequently integrated into research content according to respondent funders (EC, 2015:33). The gender dimension can be incorporated in various ways – through consideration of gender in content during grant applications (Austrian Research Funding Agencies FFG and FWF) grant evaluations (Research Council of Norway and Irish Research Council), and reporting guidelines (EC, 2014a:36).

In Austria there has also been a push to integrate the gender dimension beyond the university context. Austrian research funders (FWF and FFG) along with the Technology Agency of the City of Vienna (ZIT) have introduced gender criteria into their research grant application process – both in terms of including the gender dimension in content and demonstrating how gender equality is promoted throughout their institution (Wroblewski et al, 2015:4).

## Implications for Policy

A variety of different strategies are being pursued in the field of gender and science in the push for greater gender equality in recruitment and promotion, the inclusion of the gender dimension in research content and integrating women in decision-making processes throughout Europe.

Despite the rich mix of policy strategies that are being developed – the gap between ‘proactive’ and ‘relatively inactive’ countries is widening as regards gender equality policies in research. In 2009 17 member states (BG, CY, CZ, EE, FR, GR, HR, HU, IL, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, PL, PT, SI, SK, TR) were identified as least reactive to gender equality policies – these were defined as “lower innovation” academic systems (EC, 2008:21). In contrast “higher innovation” academic systems were characterised as “global leaders” in terms of gender equality policy implementation (Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden). Another group of countries was seen as ‘proactive’ (Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland and UK) (ibid). Implementing joint efforts to address this growing gap is of key relevance in order to bring about institutional change in the European research area.

*“The gap between ‘proactive’ and ‘relatively inactive’ countries is widening as regards gender equality policies in research”*

This highlights the importance of knowledge transfer among policy makers in this field. There is a wide variety of strategies, initiatives, policy instruments and specific measures that may be applied and put in practice by governments and funding agencies to foster institutional change. These need to be more widely known. Relevant research stakeholders such as LERU and Science Europe have highlighted the need to promote an effective sharing of practice and mutual learning, as well as a realistic assessment of what is effective and works in different national contexts and what is transferrable.

The mere presence of policy strategies and initiatives does not ensure effective implementation. Research from Austria suggests that making some measures more binding and/ or introducing sanctions for non-adherence to equality goals may strengthen implementation (Wroblewski et al, 2015). This highlights that effective

coordination between governments, funding agencies and RPOs is required to foster long-term institutional change in research.

Member States can provide incentives for gender equality in science in various ways – for example, through including gender equality in contracts between RPOs and Ministries and by explicitly including gender equality as one criterion to funding.

The EC commissioned report on structural change highlights that one of the main problems as to “why progress has been so slow for gender equality in research despite all the knowledge available on gender to inform policy and actions, is that many universities and research institutions lack the capacity and experience to analyse and transform the rich and often complex knowledge into specific gender management applicable to their structures and procedures” (EC 2012a:19).

Examples of capacity building on gender and science at the European level include the genSET capacity building workshops and related documents, and genSET recommendations of science leaders. At the national level, a good example of long-term systematic national capacity building is the Norwegian Committee of Gender Balance in Research recently renamed to Committee for Gender Balance and Diversity in Research. Member States can actively encourage gender training for managers and staff. This is regarded as essential to build the capacity to put mainstreaming strategies into practice. Gender knowledge and reflection is required in order to understand what and why something should be done and which skills are necessary in order to put the proposed measures in place. Without this knowledge and these skills, the process will be in danger of coming to a halt.

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**Note:** The present document gives a brief overview of recent research findings regarding *Policy Setting and Implementation*. Further research syntheses on (1) Education and Training, (2) Academic and Science Careers, (3) Institutional Practices and Processes, (4) Gender in Research Content and Knowledge Production, and (6) Historical Perspectives and Future Scenarios are available at [www.genderportal.eu](http://www.genderportal.eu)

An **up to date version** of the bibliography and further relevant resources can be found at the following address:

<http://www.genderportal.eu/tags/research-synthesis-5-agenda-setting-policy-and-implementation>



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