

PB14 – Integrating the gender dimension into research content for research funding organisations: How to consolidate?

March 2017

For those countries identified as having no measures whilst funders provide frequent support for the inclusion of the gender dimension at a rate below the EU average.¹

This policy brief provides evidence-based, concrete recommendations for national level policy makers and research funders on how to integrate the gender dimension into research content. It does not cover the topic of gender balance in evaluation panels – which is covered in policy briefs 17-20.

Why is this important?

Integrating the gender dimension into the research process and content means applying sex and gender analysis methods when formulating research questions, deciding on the methodology, anticipating impacts, and disseminating results.² These actions ensure improved quality of research and its outcomes.³ For example in the field of health, both men and women need to be included in clinical trials in the right proportions to avoid worse adverse effects of drugs for women (or men). Integrating sex and gender analysis into the research process improves the benefits of research for women and men and prevents the waste of economic resources. It also helps to ensure that research reflects the needs of a diverse population thereby increasing societal relevance of science knowledge and its acceptance.⁴ It may also contribute to opening up more market opportunities by diversifying the experiences and expertise in the innovation process.⁵

The European Commission's major research funding programme Horizon 2020 (2014 -2020) prioritises the integration of gender/sex analysis in research and innovation (R&I) content as one of its main objectives to improve greater gender equality in science.⁶ Member states have been invited to create a legal and policy environment and provide incentives to strengthen the gender dimension in research programmes.⁷ Various national initiatives have been already undertaken to encourage greater sensitivity and the integration of sex and gender analysis in science knowledge and practice. These include developing and providing support for:

- policies and strategies promoting the integration and analysis of sex/gender as research variables and determinant of outcomes
- research funding programmes aimed at advancing cross-cutting impact of sex/gender aware and responsive research
- guidelines and training materials for researchers and research managers

- guidelines/ training for assessment and evaluation of gender as component of excellence and impact in research proposals and projects
- recommendations and/ or models for university STEM curricular development and researcher training in relevant fields.⁸

Funding agencies play a pivotal role as they prioritise certain research areas to fund and promote.⁹

What is the extent of the problem?

This policy brief addresses specifically those countries with no national measures supporting the inclusion of the gender dimension in research content/ programmes. At the same time the share of funders that frequently support the inclusion of the gender dimension in research content in research agendas is lower than the EU average. In concrete terms this “How to Consolidate” - brief targets specifically: Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Finland.¹⁰

According to the ERA survey 2014 results, funders in only a few countries support the inclusion of the gender dimension in research content/ programmes.¹¹ For this group of countries - that have been identified by the European Commission as having frequent support below EU average¹² and no identifiable measures- it ranges from the Czech Republic where 88% of the research performing organisations (RFOs) provide no support for the inclusion of the gender dimension in research content in research agendas to Finland where 9% of research funding organisations provide no support to the inclusion of the gender dimension in research content by funders.

What are the options?

There are various ways that national level policy makers and research funders can promote the integration of the gender dimension into research. These can be legislative, ‘soft measures’ or strategies and policies to encourage and promote the integration of the gender dimension. Funding agencies can:

- create research funding programmes aimed at integrating sex/gender analysis in research
- consult and include gender experts when designing research funding programmes
- encourage applicants to consider whether the gender dimension is relevant to the proposed research project and specify how this will be taken into account
- include the gender dimension as an evaluation criterion in project assessment¹³
- develop guidelines and training on the gender dimension for applicants and proposal reviewers¹⁴

An example of an action for encouraging the integration of the sex / gender dimension into research is the 'Roadmap for science, Science Vision 2025' which was published in 2014 in the Netherlands. It included the promotion of a specific alliance for gender and health in order to integrate the gender dimension into research content. This was foreseen as a prelude to a national programme on gender and health.¹⁵ Similarly, in 2013, the NSF used the occasion of the Gender Summit – North America to produce a roadmap for action for North America: Diversity Fuelling Excellence in Research and Innovation, that targets a variety of stakeholders in science endeavours.¹⁶

In 2013, the United States Office on Research of Women's Health (ORWH) (which oversaw the National Institutes of Health (NIH)-wide research agenda related to sex and gender) launched a funding programme to provide supplements to existing grants to add subjects, tissues or cells of the opposite sex – used in the original grant or to add more subjects to a sample that included both sexes. The ORWH co-funds the specialized centres of research on Sex Differences Programme – which promotes interdisciplinary research on sex and gender differences in health research. It also provides training in considering sex and gender in experimental research design and analysis.¹⁷ In 2014 the US NIH required that female and male cells are used in pre-clinical studies and in 2015 it released guidelines on including the sex and gender dimension in research content.¹⁸

Recommendations

- Maximise their own role as research funders in raising the quality of research by creating effective incentives for researchers to integrate the gender dimension into research content.¹⁹
- Integrate into the proposal template a section where applicants are asked to describe, when relevant 'how sex and gender analysis is taken into account in the projects' content'.
- Make a greater effort to promote and disseminate research that has successfully integrated the gender dimension.²⁰
- Develop and provide guidelines and/ or training materials/ workshops to assist applicants to competently integrate sex and/ or gender analysis into research designs.
- Develop and provide guidelines and/ or training materials/ workshops to assist proposal reviewers/ evaluators to competently assess the gender dimension of applications.

Further Reading

Further, in-depth reading concerning the integration of the gender dimension into research content for research performing organisations is available through the following three publications: the Gender-Net *Compendium of national initiatives on the integration of the gender dimensions in research contents*²¹, the report by the League of European Research Universities (LERU) *Gendered Research and Innovation: Integrating Sex and Gender Analysis into the Research Process* (see footnote 9) and the *Gendered Innovations* project (see footnote 16).

[The GenPORT Gender Dimension in Research Content – Research Funding Organisations \(RFOs\) Online Discussion](#)

- [1] Please see 'Gender and Science Policy Briefs: From "Where to start" to "How to innovate": An Introduction', for a description of the methodology used. Available at:
http://www.genderportal.eu/sites/default/files/resource_pool/pb_introduction_.pdf
- [2] Schiebinger, L., Klinge, I., Sánchez de Madariaga, I., Paik, H. Y., Schraudner, M., and Stefanick, M. (Eds.) (2011-2015). Gendered Innovations in Science, Health & Medicine, Engineering and Environment. Available at:
<http://ec.europa.eu/research/gendered-innovations/>.
- [3] European Commission, (2015a). ERA Facts and Figures 2014, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p34.
- [4] European Commission, (2012b). Structural change in research institutions: Enhancing excellence, gender equality and efficiency in research and innovation, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p.13.
- [5] For an overview of gendered innovations please see <http://genderedinnovations.stanford.edu/what-is-gendered-innovations.html>
- [6] European Commission, (2014d). Guidance on Gender Equality in Horizon 2020, V1, February 2014.
- [7] European Commission, (2012a). A Reinforced European Research Area: Partnership for Excellence and Growth, COM (2012) 392, p12.
- [8] These categories are taken from the classification of national initiatives on the integration of the gender dimension in research contents developed by the Gender-Net Project.
- [9] League of European Research Universities, (LERU), (2015). Gendered Research and Innovation: Integrating Sex and Gender Analysis into the Research Process, p16.
- [10] European Commission, (2015a). ERA Facts and Figures 2014, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p33.
- [11] Ibid.
- [12] It should be noted that these figures concern RPOs which answered the ERA survey in 2014, which employ 515 000 researchers (around 20% of total EU researchers).
- [13] European Commission, (2013b). Recommendations on the Implementation of the ERA Communication: Report of the Expert Group 2013, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union.
- [14] These categories are taken from the classification of national initiatives on the integration of the gender dimension in research contents developed by the Gender-Net Project.
- [15] Gender-Net, (2015a). Compendium of national initiatives on the integration of the gender dimension in research contents, p108.
- [16] See <https://www.nsf.gov/od/oia/activities/gendersummit/GS3-Roadmap-july30-2014.pdf>
- [17] Clayton, J. & Collins, F. (2014). NIH to balance sex in cell and animal studies, Nature, Vol. 509, p283.
- [18] Please See: <http://genderedinnovations.stanford.edu/policy/timeline.html>
- [19] Ibid.
- [20] Ibid.
- [21] Gender-Net, (2015a). Compendium of national initiatives on the integration of the gender dimension in research contents. Available at: <http://bit.ly/29yqOTY>