

PB7 - Implementing gender equality plans in research performing organisations: How to lead?

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For those countries identified as having no measures but above EU average levels of implementation.¹

This policy brief provides evidence-based, concrete recommendations for national level policy makers on how to encourage the development and implementation of effective gender equality plans in research performing organisations (RPOs)².

Why is this important?

Gender equality and gender mainstreaming is a key priority in the European Research Area.³ The European Commission's approach has shifted from providing direct support to women to a focus on institutional transformation. Despite various policy interventions – targeting female scientists – the proportions of women in science have not sufficiently increased.

Research evidence shows that for real change towards gender equality to occur the focus must be placed on transforming institutional structures, practices and cultures towards more gender awareness, equal treatment and gender balance. This includes the appreciation of gender-sensitive career structures and the concept of lifelong learning beyond a traditional academic career model of uninterrupted employment and continuous career advancement. Sources of implicit gender bias need to be tackled (e.g. in recruitment and promotion of researchers) and need to be accompanied with efforts to integrate the gender dimension into science knowledge and practice as well as into curricular and research content.

Gender equality plans (GEPs) are the main tool promoted by the Commission to effect systematic institutional change through targeting human resource development strategies, institutional governance, research funding allocation, institutional leadership and decision-making and research programmes.

What is the extent of the problem?

This policy brief addresses specifically those countries that have no national measures (i.e. supporting provisions) for gender equality in public research.⁴ In addition more than 64% (EU average)⁵ of their research performing organisations self-report implementing a gender equality plan. In concrete terms, this “How to Lead”- brief targets specifically Malta.⁶

Gender equality plans are one of the most effective and common tools to effect

change at the institutional level. There is however a wide variety in their uptake, and how the plans are legislated and regulated by different Member States.

The ERA facts and figures 2014 identifies that only one country's share of RPOs that have adopted GEPs is above the EU average (Malta) – despite not having any measures or strategies in place.⁷

What are the options?

Member States are encouraged to foster partnerships with research performing and funding organisations to push for lasting institutional action on gender equality. Member states can play a key role in the push for institutional change in RPOs and RFOs in a variety of different ways – by fostering a favourable legal and political context for institutional change (through enacting legal provisions and developing policies or strategies) or by providing incentives for its' uptake.⁸

Research performing organisations are asked to develop and implement Gender Equality Plans containing specific actions and targets for institutional change to improve: leadership and governance; data collection, analysis and reporting; recruitment practices; career progression; work environment; salary structures; awareness of gender equality issues among staff and students; compliance with regulations, legislation and guidelines. Examples of actions include:

- carrying out audits of procedures and practices – to detect gender bias,
- implementing strategies to combat bias and
- setting targets and monitoring progress with indicators.⁹

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”.¹⁰

Some countries have legislation that requires universities and research institutions develop Gender Equality Plans – this is the case in Spain, Norway, Germany and France.¹¹ In other countries- gender equality plans are not mandatory but other ways are used to incentivise their take up through guidelines, charters/ codes, awards.¹²

In Norway the Ministry of Education and Research requires RPOs to have gender action plans¹³ -as a prerequisite for funding.¹⁴ Annually RPOs report the current gender equality picture and planned and implemented measures to the Ministry. Gender equality work carried out by the institution forms an integral part of budgetary discussions with the Ministry.¹⁵

In Germany the Federal Ministry for research and education has developed the Programme for Female Professors (2008-2017) targeting universities. Universities can apply for funding for a maximum of three professorial chairs –

the institution must ensure the recruitment of a female professor. This must be accompanied by demonstration of institutional –wide gender equality measures i.e. by submitting a Gender Equality Plan - for which additional funding is available.¹⁶

Recommendations

- Analyse contextual conditions and possible constraints in individual organisations prior to planning of gender equality plans.¹⁷
- Set up an easily accessible information infrastructure for reference to a common framework for gender equality plans and expert knowledge. This may include online services, institutions, or organisations specifically established to assist RPOs in setting up gender equality measures.¹⁸
- Enact legislative provisions for GEPs in RPOs to provide a real stimulus for their uptake. This could occur within a broader legislative framework for gender mainstreaming.
- Provide financial incentives for developing, implementing and monitoring GEPs. This could be carried out by linking gender equality performance or in this case the existence of a GEP to eligibility for funding criteria.
- Provide support and collaborate with research performing organisations in the development of gender equality plans and the integration of actions into university structures, processes and procedures for long-lasting change.
- Adopt regular assessment and monitoring mechanisms in order to efficiently implement cultural and institutional change.
- Develop indicators for the institutional level in order to measure progress and facilitate a comparative analysis- with other institutions nationally. This however should be aligned to developments at the EU level in order to facilitate a comparative analysis of Member States regarding institutional change.¹⁹ Any kind of policy monitor developed should also be aligned to existing statistics on and indicators for gender balance.²⁰
- Allocate resources for capacity building activities and training to take place within RPOs and for national level decision-makers in R&I to ensure the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming.²¹
- Facilitate the knowledge sharing of institutional change experiences between institutions.

Further Reading

Further, in-depth reading concerning the implementation of gender equality plans in research performing organisations is available through the European Commission's report on *Gender Equality Policies in Public Research* (see footnote 8) and two publications by the Gender-NET project: *Analysis Report: National Plans and Initiatives Promoting Gender Equality and Structural Change*²² and *Analysis Report: Plans and initiatives in selected research institutions aiming to stimulate gender equality and enact structural change*²³.

[The GenPORT Implementation of Gender Equality Plans 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] According to the ERA, a research performing organisation (RPO) encompasses any organisation conducting public research – specifically research with a 'public mission' (DG Research and Innovation, 2013).
- [3] European Commission, (2012a). A Reinforced European Research Area: Partnership for Excellence and Growth, COM (2012) 392.
- [4] No supporting provisions for gender equality in public research as defined and reported in the ERA Facts and Figures 2014 report.
- [5] 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).
- [6] European Commission, (2015a). ERA Facts and Figures 2014, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, pp29 & 84.
- [7] Data from the ERA survey results see: European Commission, (2015a). ERA Facts and Figures 2014, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p84.
- [8] European Commission, (2014a). Gender Equality Policies in Public Research, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p12.
- [9] European Commission, (2012a). A Reinforced European Research Area: Partnership for Excellence and Growth, COM (2012) 392, p13.
- [10] European Commission, (2014c). European Research Area, Progress Report 2014, COM (2014)575, p6.
- [11] Gender-Net, (2015b). Analysis Report: National plans and initiatives promoting gender equality and structural change, p17.
- [12] These are used in Belgium, Croatia, Germany, Estonia, Romania, UK, Switzerland and Turkey, European Commission, (2014a). Gender Equality Policies in Public Research, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union.
- [13] In order to fulfil the requirements of the Norwegian Gender Equality Act.
- [14] European Commission, (2013b). Recommendations on the Implementation of the ERA Communication: Report of the Expert Group 2013, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p42.
- [15] Gender-Net, (2015b). Analysis Report: National plans and initiatives promoting gender equality and structural change, p18.
- [16] European Commission, (2014a). Gender Equality Policies in Public Research, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p20.
- [17] Lipinsky, A. & Schäfer, M. (2015). INTEGER Guidelines for the Self-Assessment of Transformational Gender Action Plans set up in Higher Education and Research Institutions. Available at: http://www.integer-tools-for-action.eu/sites/www.integer-tools-for-action.eu/files/file_fields/2015/07/06/integerself-assessmentguidelines.pdf
- [18] GenPORT Project E-Discussion. (2016). The Implementation of Gender Equality Plans. Available at: <http://www.genderportal.eu/group/e-discussion-implementation-gender-equality-plans>
- [19] European Commission, (2013b). Recommendations on the Implementation of the ERA Communication: Report of the Expert Group 2013, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p43.
- [20] Gender-Net, (2015b). Analysis Report: National plans and initiatives promoting gender equality and structural change, p59.
- [21] European Commission, (2013b). Recommendations on the Implementation of the ERA Communication: Report of the Expert Group 2013, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p48.
- [22] Gender-Net, (2015b). Analysis Report: National plans and initiatives promoting gender equality and structural change. Available at: <http://bit.ly/29xvpDr>
- [23] Gender-Net, (2015c). Analysis Report: Plans and initiatives in selected research institutions aiming to stimulate gender equality and enact structural change. Available at: <http://bit.ly/29scElf>