

## **GENDERACTION position paper on gender for the Implementation Strategy of Horizon Europe**

The present GENDERACTION position paper on gender for the Implementation Strategy of Horizon Europe is aimed at highlighting gender provisions to be considered in the EC *Orientations towards the Implementation Strategy of the research and innovation framework programme Horizon Europe web open consultation* and in the related *online public consultation for Horizon Europe Co-design – Implementation*, which will close on 4 October 2019. Some of the following comments have already been put forward in the *GENDERACTION policy briefs on Horizon Europe*.

Our vision of the future European Research and Innovation (R&I) is a gender inclusive system able to address the needs and concerns of both women and men and to provide innovative solutions that ensure dignity, sustainability and security for citizens of all genders in the EU and beyond. A sustainable transition to a green planet and a digital world cannot be achieved if women's interests and needs are neglected or remain invisible. To boost the excellent R&I that Europe needs for ensuring the prosperity of the planet and improving people's quality of life, Horizon Europe must guarantee that the gender dimension is adequately integrated into the content of all the stages of the performing and funding cycles for R&I actions (including missions and partnerships), and therefore into all the phases of the implementation strategy.

In contrast to this, however, the EC "Orientations" document towards the Implementation Strategy of Horizon Europe hardly mentions gender at all. It appears only briefly in the sections on "Model Grant Agreement" and "Reporting and data". Following the main sections of this Horizon Europe co-design survey and its orientations document, as well as prior input on gender issues from the Interim Evaluation of Gender Equality as a crosscutting issue in Horizon 2020 and from the Helsinki Group Position Paper on H2020 interim evaluation and preparation of FP9, GENDERACTION recommendations for the Implementation Strategy of Horizon Europe are as follows:

### **1. Work Programme design**

The design of a Work Programme at the level of an implementation strategy does not have to detail concrete call topics but it must define how to translate the gender priority as a cross-cutting factor into calls and topics to ensure it is properly integrated. The integration of the gender dimension in R&I content is a crucial element of research excellence and impact, and without it, R&I will bring partial and often wrong solutions and answers. The gender dimension is always applicable when projects deal with human beings either as direct participants or as indirect end-users. Consequently, as a rule of thumb, there is no excellent R&I without considering the gender dimension in its content. However, the interim evaluation of gender in H2020 concluded that the integration of the gender dimension in research content had been poor. It also pointed out that the wording of topics was often vague, without explicitly mentioning gender, and applicants often confused the gender dimension in R&I content with gender balance in R&I teams.

#### Recommendations set 1:

- To ensure that gender-biased projects are not funded, all topics should be, by default, considered as gender relevant. Work programmes should include a clear indication of the relevance of the gender dimension for the call topic and how to interpret it for the three award criteria (“excellence”, “impact” and “quality and efficiency of the implementation”), with examples of concrete gender-related issues to consider (or appropriate reasons for the exceptional cases when the gender dimension is not relevant).
- Consequently, the calls, as a rule of thumb, must explicitly require appropriate integration of the gender dimension across the R&I cycle described in the project proposal, as well as gender expertise in the consortia (e.g., skilled partners or planned gender training) or an appropriate explanation in the event applicants do not consider gender relevant for the specific proposal.
- Gender awareness raising and capacity building on gender in R&I content for specific fields needs to be ensured for key actors of the Work Programme design process by means of mandatory training on the gender dimension in R&I content for Programme officers, Call coordinators, Mission Boards, EIC Advisory Board, NCPs, topic writers and coordinators of the Advisory Groups. Additionally, supporting materials (including check-lists) on gender in R&I content specifically tailored for these target groups should be disseminated, also to members of the programme committees and applicants.
- Lastly, the participation of gender experts and gender equality stakeholders must be ensured in the design of work programmes for a proper integration of gender.

## 2. Submission and Evaluation

Some areas for improvement of the current submission and evaluation process in Horizon 2020 to better integrate the gender dimension have been identified, especially regarding the gender expertise of evaluators and moderators as well as the need to require explicit considerations on the gender dimension in the Evaluation Summary Reports (ESRs). Specifically, the interim evaluation of gender in H2020 found *quite a high degree of inconsistency at the time of evaluating the gender dimension in the ESRs* and concluded that *it should not be assumed that having more women in panels or expert groups will lead to a more equal and fair selection and/or more gender-sensitive science*, therefore suggesting gender expertise as a criterion for group or panel composition. The report also highlighted as a main shortcoming that *too few projects really implement a thorough gender and sex analysis, truly developing a gender perspective in research content and project design*. And, in fact, according to *She Figures 2018* data, the percentage of EU-28 publications 2013-2017 with a gender dimension in the research content is below 2%, with a too slow increase of 0.05% per year.

**Recommendations set 2:**

- Proposals on topics that concern humans or have impact on humans should be required to include a specific deliverable in which the consortium will describe how the gender dimension has been integrated into the funded project across all its stages (including missions and partnerships) and what are the main results and outcomes from a gender perspective.
- The evaluation forms and ESRs need to include specific sections for the evaluation of Gender-Responsible R&I issues in the three award criteria for R&I proposals that concern humans or have impact on humans, so that the appropriate integration of sex/gender analysis can be considered a key factor for the *excellence* and *impact* criteria, while the consortium gender expertise can be taken into account for the *quality and efficiency of the implementation* criterion. Moreover, by default, those proposals that do not integrate sex/gender analysis in a gender relevant call topic should fail to receive the threshold point awards in the *excellence* criterion.
- These gender provisions need to be clearly integrated in the evaluation guidelines and briefings, as well as in the self-evaluation forms and grants manual for applicants. Moderators, rapporteurs and panel chairs in the evaluation process must be held accountable for providing appropriate briefing on the gender dimension in R&I content.
- To ensure gender expertise in the evaluation process, a mandatory training on gender in R&I content should be required for key actors of the evaluation process: external experts (including those in Phases 1 and 2), moderators and panel reviewers of gender relevant call topics, and at least one gender expert should be included in these panels.

Additionally, the interim evaluation of gender in H2020 estimated that only 25% of funded projects were headed by women. The interim evaluation of H2020 did not provide a monitoring indicator on how often the gender balance in the consortium was applied as a ranking factor for *ex-aequo* proposals but as it was not among the first ranking factors to be applied, and therefore low impact is expected.

**Recommendations set 3:**

- Gender training, briefing and information materials on how to combat implicit gender bias in the assessment of applicants' merits should be required for key actors in the evaluation processes. Gender balance should be ensured in the composition of the evaluation groups and panels.
- The rules for dealing with *ex-aequo* proposals need to go beyond the gender balance in the consortium to develop more disruptive gender ranking factors, such as gender balance of WP leaders in the project proposal or the proportion

of partner institutions that have ongoing gender equality plans (or the proportion of those which have obtained a gender equality accreditation award). Moreover, in the innovation sector where women are severely under-represented, a ranking factor for women project coordinators could be considered, too. These need to be among the first gender ranking factors to be applied.

- In the proposals submitted for funding, partner institutions should be required to guarantee equal pay, as well as clear guidelines and structures in place to address sexual and gender harassments and other forms Gender Based Violence (GBV). Without these requirements, institutions should not be able to apply for funding.

### 3. Model Grant Agreement (MGA)

According to the EC “Orientations” document, the MGA for Horizon Europe *will cater for the programme specific needs/objectives* which include **gender**, among others, in continuity with H2020. GENDERACTION emphasises that improved provisions for gender obligations and incentives need to be clearly specified for the beneficiary institutions as well as for project officers and reviewers.

#### Recommendations set 4:

- Improved provisions for gender equality in the working conditions at beneficiary institutions should be made, including those to improve work-life balance and to guarantee gender equal pay as well as those to prevent and properly address any form of gender discrimination and gender-based violence (GBV). But beyond requiring some minimum gender standards like these in the working conditions of the beneficiary institutions and research teams, additional funding for supporting the implementation of Gender Equality Plans and the development of professional gender equality structures in beneficiary institutions, as well as gender expert advice, mentoring activities from a gender perspective and family support services needs to be considered as an incentive.
- Particularly, the present concept of family in the H2020 MGA should be extended beyond those linked to the researcher by marriage or equivalent status relationship and dependent children actually being maintained by the researcher, to also include dependent elderly parents. Family allowance costs are considered in MSCA and should be extended to other types of grants.
- MSCA grants are supposed to cover all the costs for the recruitment of researchers, including the contribution to the social security made by the hiring institution. Nevertheless, this only applies when the researcher is actually working. If he or she is on a leave, the social security would pay her/him the salary, but the hiring institution still needs pay its contribution to social security.

If a leave is longer than 1 month, the action (MSCA) must be suspended, and this contribution is not covered by MSCA but by the hiring institution.

Maternity leave is most likely to be the most common example of a long leave (more than a month) during MSCA, so institutions, in order to avoid those “extra costs” during maternity leave tend to prefer hiring men than women.

During FP7 there was additional funding and the institution that incurred this extra cost could afterwards ask the European Commission for reimbursement, but this changed with H2020. Therefore, it is recommended that Horizon Europe should find a way to reimburse these extra costs to the beneficiary institutions so that this negative gender impact can be avoided.

- Additional funding should be provided to beneficiary institutions in case of family/parental leave, to be able to recruit a cover post or to extend the research period, in collaborative projects. Care facilities and politics of time in beneficiary institutions and grant activities need to be incentivised and supported (at least, additional funding to provide caring costs linked to project mobility, including those for attending project meetings and relevant conferences). Other improved work-life balance measures could be applied to Horizon Europe grants in consultation with other gender stakeholders.
- Moreover, Article 33 “Gender Equality” of the H2020 MGA needs to be improved not only to refer to the promotion of “effective gender equality” (which is a more inclusive wording) instead of “equal opportunities between women and men”, but also to go beyond the aim of “gender balance at all levels of personnel” and its related measures to promote gender equality in the recruitment, promotion and working conditions, to also include the aim of an appropriate integration of the gender dimension into the R&I content, with clear descriptions of the related measures that can be taken by the beneficiary institutions to achieve this. All projects must provide information on the actions taken and results concerning gender balance (including decision-making positions) and equal working conditions (equal pay *inter alia*) in their research teams, as well as the integration of the gender dimension into R&I content, all of this at grant agreement, reviewing and reporting stages. The description of work in the Annex to the MGA should by default require that a clear explanation be included on how the gender dimension is integrated into the content of all the work packages. In areas using the portfolio approach during grant preparation, successful applicants might have to adapt the project content to ensure consistency in the integration of gender issues. Any of the measures described in Chapter 6 of the H2020 Annotated MGA can be applied in case of beneficiaries’ non-compliance.
- These gender provisions need to be integrated in review and reporting templates, as well as in specific guidelines for project officers and reviewers, with special focus on how to appropriately implement the integration of the gender dimension into R&I content. Mandatory gender training must be required too for project officers and reviewers, who must be held accountable for providing appropriate briefing on gender equality concerning both the

management of the project human resources and the integration of the gender dimension into the R&I project content. Gender capacity building measures for beneficiaries, especially those on gender in research content need to go beyond eligible costs, to become clearly encouraged and incentivised by means of additional funding and acknowledgment in the reviewing and reporting stages.

#### 4. Dissemination and Exploitation (D&E)

The EC “Orientations” document points out the concern that *D&E activities at project level are less successful comparing to other goals of the projects, and do not yet get the necessary attention by the beneficiaries*. GENDERACTION concern on this issue highlights the need to ensure gender equality and the integration of the gender dimension in the content of the D&E activities in funded projects. This will also help to maximize the impact and exploit the full potential of R&I outcomes for sustainable policymaking.

##### Recommendations set 5:

- Gender as a cross-cutting issue must be integrated in the Horizon Europe guidance, collection of best practices and further support resources for D&E activities.
- Particularly, project D&E outputs need to ensure gender inclusive language and images, as well as specific attention to women’s and men’s (potential) different characteristics, interests, roles, etc., revealed by the project results and which are or should be taken into account in its applications. Gender stakeholders in the field as well as women from intersectional groups related to the project applications sectors should be considered as participants and targets of the D&E activities.
- Additionally, gender balance must be a requirement for keynote speakers, organizational/scientific committees, etc., in D&E activities; for instance, Horizon Europe must not fund “manels” (that is, only men panels).
- The gender considerations for D&E must be integrated in the project grant agreement, review and reporting stages, where beneficiaries must be accountable for the measures taken and results achieved concerning this goal.
- Specific guidelines on gender in D&E activities need to be developed for both beneficiaries and EC personnel responsible to provide supporting resources for D&E activities and to review them. Training activities on these matters should be mandatory for those EC personnel, and incentivised for beneficiaries by means of additional financial support.

#### 5. Data and Reporting

The interim evaluation of gender in H2020 found *monitoring problems due to poorly measured indicators* and one of its general recommendations was *improving monitoring and data collection*, including *the development of more relevant indicators for monitoring the implementation of gender equality*. The EC “Orientations” document section on data and reporting only refers to gender balance in participation, but not to the integration of gender into R&I content. The Helsinki Group Position paper on H2020 interim evaluation and preparation of FP9 argued that in the next framework programme, *there should be monitoring of all gender-related actions and measures used in the FP* and identified several areas for improvement concerning the monitoring of the framework programme, including inter alia the research workforce by categories of researchers and the integration of sex/gender analysis into R&I content. Concerning the latter, the GENDER-NET Plus ERANET Cofund has recently adopted several monitoring indicators to follow-up the integration of the gender dimension in the content of co-funded projects, such as “*Gender experts in the research team (no./% w/m/other)*”, or “*The project brings out differences/inequalities between women and men in the field (if any and/or shows there are none)*”, inter alia.

#### Recommendations set 6:

- The appropriate integration of sex/gender analysis across the different stages of the R&I project needs to be monitored by default from grant agreement to mid-term/final project reporting, including key performance indicators.
- The [Horizon Dashboard](#) should allow to search for gender-specific projects and for those which have effectively integrated the gender dimension into R&I content. Same for European Innovation Council dashboard.

#### Recommendations set 7:

- A more detailed system to monitor gender balance in the (research) workforce funded by Horizon Europe, disaggregated by each part of the Framework Programme, particularly highlighting:
  - The different categories of researchers (Scientific Coordinators, WP leaders, Researchers, Postdocs and PhDs)
  - Gender balance in research teams (at proposal, grant agreement and reporting stages).
  - Distinction between scientific and administrative coordinators.
- Additionally, a more detailed system to monitor gender balance in Evaluation Panels by field of research:
  - Specific attention to fields where women are severely under-represented (at less than 25%), where a comparison should be provided by field to show both the proportion of women in the EMM

database pool and the proportion of women selected to participate in the evaluation panels.

- Number and proportion of evaluation panels that fulfil the gender balance criterion, disaggregated also by the different parts of the Framework Programme.
- In the proposal, grant agreement and report templates non-binary categories of sex/gender should be considered, such as:
  - Sex at birth: woman, man, intersex
  - Gender: woman, man, gender diverse (or non-binary or other)
- The Horizon Dashboard should allow disaggregating all data by sex/gender of coordinators/leaders/participants where feasible, and include gender indicators on the success rate of applicants by each part of the Framework Programme. Same for European Innovation Council dashboard.
- Additional indicators should be included on the number and proportion of *ex-aequo* proposals that have been prioritised in the evaluation process on the basis of the gender ranking factor/s.

## References

European Commission (2017). *Interim Evaluation: Gender Equality as a crosscutting issue in Horizon 2020.*

Helsinki Group on Gender in Research and Innovation (2017). *Position paper on H2020 interim evaluation and preparation of FP9.*



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