

## HOW TO SET UP A GENDER & EQUALITY COMMITTEE (GEC)

Despite the journey that society has made in recent years, there are still barriers that hinder the presence of women and equal opportunities in the world of work.

Establishing a gender equality committee is a key way to drive change towards a more diverse and inclusive culture. It demonstrates an organizational commitment to issues of workplace gender equality.

This guide aims to facilitate the creation of a GEC, as a first step to promote equal opportunities within an organization.

Before starting, it is important to find out about the applicable legislation in your country, which has not been taken into consideration in this guide, and which could determine the actions to be taken.

### What comes first, the GEC or the institutional commitment?

In some cases, the creation of a GEC may be ordered by the management of the center, which shows that there is an initial commitment of the management to improve and guarantee equal opportunities in the institution (top-down). In other cases, it will be the people who first self-organize as GEC and then demand the commitment of the management to promote the gender perspective within the organization (bottom-up).

Whatever the order, in order to establish and implement effective actions that contribute to improving equality in an organization and guarantee equal opportunities, it will be necessary to have the commitment of the center's management.

This commitment can manifest itself in various ways:

- Recognizing equality as a basic transversal principle of the organization and including this in the values of the organization.
- Formalizing and collecting the organization's commitment to equality in corporate documents.
- Recognizing the GEC (approving its constitution).
- Disseminating the institutional commitment as well as the constitution of the GEC and its different actions to all staff.
- Giving support to the different activities proposed by the GEC.
- Providing the necessary resources for the development of the Action Plan proposed by the GEC.

### Writing the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Gender Equality Committee (GEC)

It is important to establish the Terms of Reference of the Committee in order to establish clear objectives, roles and responsibilities from the beginning. The terms of reference can help clarify the committee's direction and remit and serve as a reference

for its members. The ToR should cover, as a general rule, the following sections that will be developed below:

- Purpose
- Composition
- Main tasks
- Functioning
- Reporting

It is important that the ToR be approved by the management of the center.

## Purpose

It indicates the main mission of the Committee.

Example: To improve and promote equal opportunities for men and women without directly or indirectly discriminating for reasons of sex/gender or other aspects (nationality, race, religion, etc.), at the (organization name)

## Composition

To form an effective and representative committee, you'll need to consider size, member composition and your chairperson. Being part of the Committee is voluntary, but the organization should look for formulas of recognition for the members.

Size: The size of your committee will depend on the size and nature of your organization and the objectives of the committee. But in any case, it should be a manageable size to efficiently work and make decisions.

Membership: It is important to have a representation of different positions and areas in the institution with the aim of gathering differential needs within the institution and also facilitating the maximum dissemination of the processes and results. Further, membership should be inclusive of men and women, youth, seniors, and marginalized groups and minorities as appropriate.

It is also recommended to have members within the Committee who have a leadership or managerial position, as well as personnel from the HR department and from the scientific management area. Their involvement will ensure a smoother and more effective implementation of the proposed actions and measures.

Chairperson: The person who coordinates the Committee should be trained in gender issues. The functions and time dedication of the chairperson should be clearly described. The coordinator needs to have in-depth knowledge of the organization itself, including its hierarchies, processes and mode of operation and a close relationship with the organizational management.

Renewal: Membership can be monitored annually and reviewed after two/three years, or what is agreed depending on the organization.

## Main tasks

The GEC needs to have clearly defined tasks from the outset. Some of them could be:

- Promoting awareness and provide education on gender equity issues to the (insert name of organization) members.
- Developing the GEP\*.
- Fostering gender balance in decision-making places.
- Ensuring equal opportunities in the recruitment process.
- Incorporating the gender perspective in evaluation processes/internal promotions.
- Guaranteeing the use of non-sexist language in all the written material of the Institute.
- Ensuring the inclusive use of language and images in (name of the organization) communications and the gender balance in (name of the organization) events.
- ....

### **\*GEP- The Gender Equity Plan**

We open a specific section for the GEP, since we consider that it is the main axis and the starting point for proposing improvement actions in the institution.

Through the GEP, a diagnosis of the institution's situation is made, preferably through a survey of all staff, which gives an overview of the current state of affairs. The results will allow us to detect situations of discrimination, real or latent, and to propose and apply positive measures and actions to correct them and achieve equal opportunities between women and men and all staff.

Once developed by the GEC, the GEP must be presented and approved by the Steering Committee of the Institute.

From 2021, the EU requires research centers that want to access Horizon EU funds to have an Equality Plan that contains a series of requirements. We recommend carrying out the Plan following the EU guidelines that you have at your disposal here: [Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans](#).

Remember that it is also important to check if there are any regulations or specific requirements in your country in relation to the Equality Plans, in order to comply with them.

## Functioning

Frequency of meetings: Meetings shall be held a minimum of two (2) times per year or more frequently at the call of the Chair. Meetings may be in person or via teleconference.

**Decisions/Voting:** In case you have to decide, each member of the Gender Equity Committee shall cast one (1) vote. In the event of a tie, the Chair shall cast a second deciding vote.

**Record of decisions:**

- All meetings will have an agenda and produce minutes.
- The minutes shall be taken by the Chair or a member of the Committee that the Chair designates and must be approved at the next Committee meeting.
- Documents shall be kept and be available for the GEC members.

## Reporting

The GEC will report regularly about progress to the head of HR or General Manager (as agreed in the organization) and once a year at least to the Management Committee about overall progress and planned actions.

The progress being made by the GEC will be reported to the Management Committee through the Chair or other designated members. The Gender Equality Committee follow-up should be an annual standing item on the Management Committee agenda.

The work of the GEC and the actions done should be also disseminated for all staff and documents related available for all staff in the Intranet. The GEC should have an area within the Intranet.

It is recommended to create a section on Gender in the institution's public website, to indicate the institution's support and to make the GEP available.

## Resources

If staff members are to take on the tasks of promoting gender equality, it may be necessary for them to receive relevant further training or be temporarily supported by external experts.

**Time resources:** working hours should be determined and planned realistically in accordance with the varied range of tasks - e.g. there should be one person coordinating the GEC. Depending on the size of the center, this can be with full time dedication, or with an explicitly specified percentage of time allocated for supporting the implementation of gender equality promotion.

**Financial resources:** the GEC should have its own budget in order to develop the different actions proposed.

Financial resources may, for example, be used to pay for external consultants, training in gender perspective, workshops, for commissioning the development of gender mainstreaming methods, carrying out surveys, the publication of brochures, etc.

## References

[Institutional transformation. European Institute for Gender Equality](#)  
[El compromiso de la empresa con la igualdad. Ministerio de Sanidad, Servicios Sociales e Igualdad.](#)  
[Gender equality- EU Commission](#)