

PB13 - Integrating the gender dimension into research content for research funding organisations: Where to start?

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For those countries identified as having no implementation.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 in addition to the objective 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 to, 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, standards, and training materials for researchers and research managers

- guidelines and 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 The Global Research Council – which brings together the heads of science and engineering funding agencies from nearly 50 countries from around the world has also recognised the benefits of integrating the gender dimension and recommended that their members promote it as part of a *Statement of Principles and Actions Promoting the Equality and Status of Women in Research* developed at their fifth annual meeting in May 2016 in New Delhi.

What is the extent of the problem?

According to the ERA survey 2014 research funders in only a few countries support the inclusion of the gender dimension in research content when planning research programmes.¹⁰

This policy brief addresses specifically those countries that have been identified by the European Commission as having no relevant implementation strategies.¹¹ In concrete terms, this “Where to Start” brief targets specifically: Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, France, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, and the UK.¹²

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

In Italy, in 2013 a parliamentary bill was introduced to implement gender medicine nationally.¹⁵ This bill paved the way for the Ministry of Health to annually finance key projects on gender medicine as well as introduce tax incentives to encourage and advance scientific, medical and pharmaceutical research into gender medicine.¹⁶

In the US, the National Institute of Health has recently published an analysis of public comments on the consideration of sex as a biological variable in biomedical research.¹⁷ The public's overall endorsement of pursuing this line of work combined with an analysis of comments gave the NIH a greater mandate to: raise awareness about the inclusion of the gender dimension in research design and analysis, provide training and resources in this field, consider changes to both application and review processes, provide guidance to researchers and the broader scientific community about NIH's expectations for applicants.¹⁸

Recommendations

- Maximise their own role as research funders in raising the quality of research by creating effective incentives for researchers to integrate the sex/gender dimension into research content.¹⁹
- Ensure that call texts are vetted by gender experts in order to guarantee that the gender dimension is properly integrated.
- 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 sex/gender dimension.²⁰
- Develop and provide guidelines and/ or training materials/ workshops to assist applicants to competently integrate the sex/ gender dimension 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 and research impact.

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 2).

[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] Ibid.
- [11] This classification of EU Member States is according to the support to the inclusion of the gender dimension in research programmes and frequent support provided by funders. Unlike in the other policy areas - we have included the group of countries identified as having 'no implementation'. This indicates that greater attention is much needed in this policy area.
- [12] European Commission, (2015a). ERA Facts and Figures 2014, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p33.
- [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] Please See: <http://genderedinnovations.stanford.edu/policy/timeline.html>
- [16] Please See: <http://genderedinnovations.stanford.edu/policy/ItalianNationalGenderMedicineBill2013.pdf>
- [17] Please See: <http://orwh.od.nih.gov/about/director/pdf/RFIFinalReport20150520.pdf>
- [18] Ibid.
- [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>