

PB15 – Integrating the gender dimension into research content for research funding organisations: How to lead?

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For those countries identified as having 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 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 better response to sex and gender analysis gender issues 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 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 is lower than the EU average.¹⁰ In concrete terms this “How to Lead” - brief targets specifically: Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Austria, Spain and Sweden.¹¹

According to the ERA survey 2014 results, funders in only a few countries have recognised the need to include the gender dimension in research content/ programmes as a criterion of excellence.¹²

Within this group of countries in Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden the majority of the RFOs surveyed provide no support for the inclusion of the gender dimension in research content. In Germany and Austria on the other hand, the majority of research funders provide occasional support. 40% of research funders in Austria and 25% in Germany provide frequent support to the inclusion of the gender dimension in research contents in research agendas 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

The Irish Research Council requires all applicants to demonstrate that they have

given full consideration to whether there is a potential sex and/or gender dimension in their proposed research. It has also hosted workshops where gender experts facilitated sessions to enable researchers to identify whether a sex/ gender dimension is relevant and if so how to integrate it into the research design, implementation, evaluation and dissemination.¹⁵

The Austrian Science Fund (FWF) has integrated gender in research content into grant applications and has also developed guidelines for applicants for specific research programmes.¹⁶ It includes mandatory gender-related analysis in the FWF's flagship Special Research Programmes (SFBs) and Doctoral Programmes (DKs).¹⁷ They have also developed a 'How to make research gender sensitive' and a 'Checklist for Gender in Research' available for applicants.

Recommendations

- Include the sex/gender dimension in research curricular/ content as a criterion for funding in the performance agreements with RPOs and RFOs or when public administrations provide research funding allocated on a competitive basis.¹⁸
- 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
- Integrate into the proposal template an obligatory 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 sex/gender dimension of applications.
- Integrate the inclusion of the sex/gender dimension into their monitoring and evaluation systems in order to be able to successfully demonstrate the impact of this approach.

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 1).

[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] 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).
- [11] European Commission, (2015a). ERA Facts and Figures 2014, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p33.
- [12] Ibid.
- [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://www.research.ie/sites/default/files/irish_research_council_gender_action_plan_2013_2020_0.pdf
- [16] European Commission, (2014a). Gender Equality Policies in Public Research, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p36
- [17] Please See: <https://www.fwf.ac.at/en/about-the-fwf/gender-issues/fix-the-knowledge/fix-the-knowledge-detail/>
- [18] European Commission, (2013b). Recommendations on the Implementation of the ERA Communication: Report of the Expert Group 2013, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, p40.
- [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>