

PB24 – Building gender competence and knowledge for institutional transformation

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This policy brief provides evidence-based, concrete recommendations for national level policy makers and institutional science leaders on how to build gender competence and knowledge in research performing organisations (RPOs) and research funding organisations (RFOs) in order to achieve institutional transformation.

Why is this important?

Institutional transformation as a long-term strategic process requires specific competences. Research managers tend not to have gender equality expertise and may lack sufficient knowledge about gender equality issues. The EC report on structural change highlights that, despite the considerable knowledge available on gender one of the main problems as to the lack of progress made in gender equality in research is because a great deal of universities and research institutions “lack the capacity and experience to analyse and transform the rich and often complex knowledge into specific gender management applicable to their structures and procedures”.¹

Gender training for managers and staff is essential to build institutional capacity to put mainstreaming strategies into practice. Gender knowledge is required in order to understand what and why something should be done as well as to detect and deal with subtle forms of resistance. Gender equality training encompasses: knowledge transfer, competence and capacity building, challenging attitudes and behaviours that obstruct the application of knowledge and competences as well as review of organisational policies and practices for bias and inequity.² Insufficient gender knowledge and skills has been identified as one of the main obstacles for implementing gender mainstreaming in the EU.³

What is the extent of the problem?

Traditional management practices in science have been identified as negatively impacting on career opportunities -disproportionately affecting women. Standard practices in selection, recruitment and promotion processes and procedures, and in the assessment of excellence- tend to advantage some whilst disadvantage others.⁴ These practices are often subject to unconscious bias in decision-making which has been identified as one of the major contributing factors to enduring inequality in the workplace and need to be corrected if the EUs’ talent pool in science is to be effectively utilised.

What are the options?

In Spain, the Equality Law requires Public Research Institutions to include courses on gender and equality in their training programmes for staff. The Law of Science, Technology and Innovation specifies that these programmes include a topic “gender and science”. These programmes are not specifically targeted at management but cover all staff.⁵

In Austria, the Department for Gender Equality Policies and Legal Matters at the Division for Women and Gender Equality created an inter-Ministerial working group to provide support for the implementation of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in all Federal Ministries – at all political levels. It has been recognised that the systematic provision of training and the collection of gender specific data – is a crucial component of the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming.⁶

In Switzerland, the Swiss National Centre for Competence in Research organised an international workshop (Switzerland and the U.S.) for equal opportunity specialists, ‘Gender Awareness in Academia from Principles to Practice’. It was a training the trainers session to exchange ideas, good practices, and teaching materials to multiply the resources available in the Swiss context in order to provide expertise for the future.⁷

In Ireland, Trinity College provided training for the executive officer group in order to embed gender equity into the governance of institutions which included unconscious bias training. Briefing sessions were held with the executive officer group which included the provost, vice provost, faculty deans and dean of researcher, treasurer, bursars and college secretary.⁸

In the UK, Kings College London, is offering a programme of workshops for all staff to raise awareness of unconscious bias and its impacts and to provide colleagues with the practical tools to reduce these. To limit the impact of unconscious bias on key decisions, the university has made attendance at unconscious bias training during the 2015/16 academic session, mandatory for all academics (Senior Lecturer and above) and all Professional Services Staff (Grade 7 and above).⁹

In the UK all key RCUK bodies/ panels agreed to implement unconscious bias training¹⁰

Recommendations

National level policy makers:

- Develop legislation that includes courses on gender and equality in training programmes for staff including top and middle management.
- Embed the development of gender competence (i.e. training) in national strategies for gender equality¹¹ and science strategies.
- Allocate sufficient human and financial resources for initial training and follow up activities.¹²
- Put in place accountability mechanisms to guarantee application of new knowledge in practice.¹³ For example bodies could be identified to monitor how gender issues are integrated into the full policy cycle (planning, implementing and review).

Institutional Science Leaders:

- Include the development of gender competence (i.e. training) in organisational plans/ strategies for gender equality.¹⁴
- Allocate sufficient human and financial resources for initial training and follow up activities¹⁵
- Make gender and (implicit) bias training mandatory for all academics, professional service staff, management and decision-making posts – including new employees.
- Require gender competence as a selection criterion –by default in all job adverts, selection procedures for management, decision-making roles and other personnel decisions.¹⁶

Funders:

- Provide training for reviewers and evaluators so that they can identify and reduce bias.¹⁷
- Require that all funded projects demonstrate proven gender competence in the project team and how this will be developed throughout the research. Research funding organisations will need to build gender competence in their own organisation – but also realign the peer review process – or develop an alternative to this approach.¹⁸

Further Reading

European Institute for Gender Equality (2013). Preliminary Results of EIGE's in-Depth Study on Gender Training in the EU, Investing in Gender Competence. Available at: <http://bit.ly/29ubkOL>

INTEGER: Requirements checklist for gender equality training. Available at: <http://bit.ly/29ubaXD>

- [1] 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 19.
- [2] INTEGER: Requirements checklist for gender equality training. Available at: http://www.integer-tools-for-action.eu/sites/www.integer-tools-for-action.eu/files/file_fields/2015/07/01/requirementschecklistforgenderequalitytrainingquality_0.pdf
- [3] European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), (2013). Preliminary Results of EIGE's In-Depth Study on Gender Training in the EU, Investing in Gender Competence.
- [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, p20.
- [5] Gender-Net, (2015b). Analysis Report: National plans and initiatives promoting gender equality and structural change, p 27.
- [6] European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), (2013). Preliminary Results of EIGE's In-Depth Study on Gender Training in the EU, Investing in Gender Competence, p3.
- [7] https://www.unige.ch/rectorat/egalite/files/9114/0353/2763/Flyer_GA_Nov13.pdf
- [8] Gender-Net, (2015c). Analysis Report: Plans and initiatives in selected research institutions aiming to stimulate gender equality and enact structural change, p27.
- [9] <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/aboutkings/governance/diversity/bias.aspx>
- [10] http://gender-summit.com/images/GS7_Speakers/GS7_ppts/GS7Eu_Hunter_FINAL.pdf
- [11] European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), (2013). Preliminary Results of EIGE's In-Depth Study on Gender Training in the EU, Investing in Gender Competence, p2.
- [12] Ibid.
- [13] Ibid.
- [14] Ibid.
- [15] Ibid.
- [16] Wroblewski, A., Buchinger, B., & Schaffer, N. (2014). Cultural Change Towards a Gender- Neutral Landscape in Science, Academia and Research in 2025, IHS, Vienna.
- [17] Ensuring Inclusive Excellence through Merit or/ Peer Review, 2013- cited in Gender Summit North America (2013) Diversity Fueling Excellence in Research and Innovation Conference Report, p29.
- [18] Wroblewski, A., Buchinger, B., & Schaffer, N. (2014). Cultural Change Towards a Gender- Nuetral Landscape in Science, Academia and Research in 2025, IHS, Vienna,, p26.