European Commission

Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans

Research and Innovation

Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans (GEPs)

European Commission
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EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans (GEPs)

Directorate-General for Research and Innovation

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Directorate-General for Research and Innovation
People Directorate – Gender Sector

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This Guidance supports organisations to meet the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) eligibility criterion of Horizon Europe. Certain categories of legal entities applying to Horizon Europe must have a GEP or equivalent strategy in place to be eligible for funding. The Guidance builds on existing materials and resources that support gender equality in research and innovation (R&I), in particular the Gender Equality in Academia and Research (GEAR) tool, co-developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the European Commission's Directorate General for Research and Innovation, that includes further advice, case studies and resources for developing a GEP.

This Guidance:

a. Presents the components of the eligibility criterion as set by the European Commission and detailed in the Horizon Europe technical and administrative documents;

b. Explains what these requirements mean in practice when developing and implementing a GEP or reviewing the equivalence of existing plans or policies;

c. Provides examples to illustrate the steps taken by other organisations and identifies guidance or resources that are already available.

1 Who should use this guidance?

The GEP concerns individual organisations applying to any part of Horizon Europe if they belong to the following categories of legal entities established in EU Member States or Associated countries:

- Public bodies, such as research funding bodies, national ministries or other public authorities, including public-for-profit organisations;
- Higher education establishments, public and private;
- Research organisations, public and private.

The Guidance is intended for the above entities. However, organisations that are not currently required to satisfy the GEP eligibility criterion, such as private-for-profit entities, non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, and all organisations from non-associated third countries may also wish to consult this guidance as part of their own efforts to develop a GEP.

Within these organisations, the guidance is primarily aimed at managers and supporting teams that are responsible for developing a GEP, and staff reviewing the organisation's legal entity validation process (the Legal Entity Appointed Representative), including ensuring that the organisation meets the eligibility criterion prior to Grant Agreement signature. Users may include:

a. The member(s) of the senior management team with responsibility for developing a GEP;
b. The manager or unit responsible for developing a GEP, such as a planning directorate, human resources (HR) department, equalities unit, or strategic projects office;
c. The office responsible for ensuring compliance with external funding requirements;
d. A dedicated committee, gathering representatives from different staff categories, and including students where relevant.

A **FAQ** on the GEP eligibility criterion is available

on the Funding & Tenders Portal, as well as through the Commission's Gender Equality in Research and Innovation policy page.

Questions relating to the GEP eligibility criterion can also be sent to:

RTD-HORIZON-EU-GENDER-EQUALITY-PLAN@ec.europa.eu

2 Executive Summary

Gender equality is a fundamental value of the European Union. Gender equality benefits research and innovation (R&I) by improving the quality and relevance of R&I, attracting and retaining more talent, and ensuring that everyone can maximise their potential. There has been demonstrable progress towards gender equality in the European Research Area (ERA), but data shows there is still significant work to be done. Gender equality goals can only be achieved through a structural approach to change across the whole European R&I system, entailing the joint commitment of R&I organisations, their funders and national authorities, and the European Commission.

The introduction of the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) eligibility criterion aims to support these efforts, reflecting the Horizon Europe legal basis which strengthens gender equality as a cross-cutting priority[1]. Individual organisations applying to any part of Horizon Europe, and belonging to the following categories of legal entities established in EU Member States or Associated countries, are all required to have a GEP as of calls for proposals with deadlines in 2022 onwards:

- Public bodies, such as research funding bodies, national ministries or other public authorities, including public-for-profit organisations;
- Higher education establishments, public and private;
- Research organisations, public and private.

This Guidance is designed to support these organisations in meeting the GEP eligibility criterion.

A GEP is a set of commitments and actions that aim to promote gender equality in an organisation through institutional and cultural change. When developing a GEP there are some essential elements – 'building blocks' – which must be included.

To comply with the Horizon Europe GEP eligibility criterion, a GEP must meet **four mandatory process-related requirements**:

1. **Public document**: The GEP must be a formal document published on the institution's website, signed by the top management and actively communicated within the institution. It should demonstrate a commitment to gender equality, set clear goals and detailed actions and measures to achieve them.
2. **Dedicated resources**: a GEP must have dedicated resources and expertise in gender equality to implement the plan. Organisations should consider what type and volume of resources are required to support an ongoing process of sustainable organisational change.
3. **Data collection and monitoring**: organisations must collect sex/ gender disaggregated data on personnel (and students, for the establishments concerned) with annual reporting based on indicators. Organisations should consider how to select the most relevant indicators, how to collect and analyse the data, including resources to do so, and should ensure that data is published and monitored on an

[1] REGULATION (EU) 2021/695 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013 and COUNCIL DECISION (EU) 2021/764 of 10 May 2021establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, and repealing Decision 2013/743/EU

annual basis. This data should inform the GEP's objectives and targets, indicators, and ongoing evaluation of progress

4. **Training**: The GEP must also include awareness-raising and training actions on gender equality. These activities should engage the whole organisation and be an evidence-based, ongoing and long-term process. Activities should cover unconscious gender biases training aimed at staff and decision-makers and can also include communication activities and gender equality training that focuses on specific topics or addresses specific groups.

In addition to these four mandatory requirements, there are also **five recommended content-related (thematic) areas** that organisations may wish to consider in their GEP:

1. **Work-life balance and organisational culture**: GEPs aim to promote gender equality through the sustainable transformation of organisational culture. Organisations should implement necessary policies to ensure an open and inclusive working environment, the visibility of women in the organisation and externally, and that the contribution of women is properly valued. Inclusive work-life balance policies and practices can also be considered in a GEP, including parental leave policies, flexible working time arrangements and support for caring responsibilities.
2. **Gender balance in leadership and decision-making**: Increasing the number and share of women in leadership and decision-making positions touches upon all aspects in the GEP. Measures to ensure that women can take on and stay in leadership positions can include providing decision-makers with targeted gender training, adapting processes for selection and appointment of staff on committees, ensuring gender balance through gender quotas, and making committee membership more transparent.
3. **Gender equality in recruitment and career progression**: Critically reviewing selection procedures and remedying any biases can ensure that women and men get equal chances to develop and advance their careers. Establishing recruitment codes of conduct, involving gender equality officers in recruitment and promotion committees, proactively identifying women in underrepresented fields and considering organisation-wide workload planning models can be important measures to consider in a GEP.
4. **Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content**: The GEP should consider how sex and gender analysis will be included in the research or educational outputs of an organisation. It can set out the organisation's commitment to incorporating sex and gender in its research priorities, the processes for ensuring that the gender dimension is considered in research and teaching, and the support and capacity provided for researchers to develop methodologies that incorporate sex and gender analysis. Research funding and research performing organisations both have a role to play in ensuring this.
5. **Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment:** Organisations establishing a GEP should consider taking steps to ensure they have clear institutional policies on sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence. Policies should establish and codify the expected behaviour of employees, outline how members of the organisation can report instances of gender-based violence and how any such instances will be investigated and sanctions applied. They should also consider how information and support is provided to victims or witnesses and how the whole organisation can be mobilised to establish a culture of zero tolerance toward sexual harassment and violence.

An effective GEP should be founded on a model of change that identifies the problems it seeks to address, their causes and desired outcomes, including targets, it should detail the set of activities that are required to achieve the aims, and indicators to monitor progress. A GEP should engage the whole organisation, from senior leaders to staff, students (in the case of a teaching organisation) and stakeholders, and it should form ongoing process that encourages self-reflection and review of processes and practices.

All organisations applying for Horizon Europe funding must submit a self-declaration at the proposal stage, through a specific questionnaire confirming they have a GEP in place. This declaration will later be included in the entity validation process. If the four mandatory requirements are met through another strategic document, such as an inclusion or diversity strategy, it will be considered as a GEP equivalent.

3 What are Gender Equality Plans and why are they important?

3.1 Gender equality in European R&I

Gender equality is a fundamental value of the European Union and is one of the UN's sustainable development goals (SDGs). Gender equality in research and learning ensures that R&I systems support democratic and equal societies. Furthermore, a positive correlation between the innovation capacity of a country and the gender equality index in that country has also been observed[2]. Whilst the reasons for this correlation may be multifactorial, gender equality benefits research and innovation in several ways. Gender Equality:

- Helps to improve the quality and impact of research and innovation by helping to ensure it is reflective of and relevant to the whole of society;
- Creates better working environments that enable good quality research and learning and help maximise the potential and talents of all staff and students;
- Helps to attracts and retain talent by ensuring that all staff can be confident that their abilities will be valued and recognised fairly and appropriately.

Whilst there has been progress toward gender equality in R&I in Europe through a range of EU, national and institutional policies and measures, there is still much work to be done. The She Figures 2021 publication shows limited progress compared to the situation presented in She Figures 2018. Both reports highlight the persistence of significant gender inequality across Europe in a range of key areas. For example:

- 32.8% of researchers were women in 2018;
- Women made up 26.2% of grade A (full professorship or equivalent) academic positions in 2018;
- The proportion of women heads of institutions in higher education was 23.6% in 2019;
- Women made up 31.1% of the members of scientific boards in 2019;
- Between 2015 and 2019, only 1.8 % of all publications addressed a sex or gender dimension of a topic;
- There were twice as many men than women among authors of scientific publications between 2013 and 2017;
- Between 2013 and 2017 only 20% of international patent applications included a woman and 47% of inventors' teams were all men.

Progress on gender equality to date has been dependent on a structural approach to change across the whole R&I system[3]. Further gender equality goals can only be achieved through clear and concerted action by R&I organisations, national ministries and funders, and in collaboration with the European Commission. The introduction of the Horizon Europe GEP eligibility criterion, supported by this guidance, aims to support these efforts.

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[2] See November 2018 report by the ERAC Standing Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation on the implementation of Council Conclusions of 1 December 2015 on Advancing Gender Equality in the European Research Area

[3] See for example Analytical Review: Structural Change for Gender Equality in Research and Innovation, Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland (2021) and Report by the ERAC SWG on Gender in Research and Innovation on Gender Equality Plans as a catalyst for change (1 June 2021)

3.2 The Gender Equality Plan (GEP) eligibility criterion

The introduction of the GEP eligibility criterion derives from the legal basis for Horizon Europe which establishes gender equality as a cross-cutting priority[4]. The approach is linked to the European Commission's European Strategy for Gender Equality 2020-2025 which announced the ambition for a GEP requirement for participating organisations. The Council of the European Union in its conclusions on the New European Research Area (ERA) in December 2020 also called on the Commission and Member States to adopt a renewed focus on gender equality and mainstreaming, including through GEPs and the integration of the gender dimension into R&I.

Box 1 below sets out the key requirements for GEPs under the Horizon Europe eligibility criterion, as laid out in the General Annexes to the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022. The criterion includes **four mandatory process-related requirements** and **five recommended content-related (thematic) areas**.

Box 1: Gender equality plans and gender mainstreaming: Horizon Europe Eligibility Criterion

To be eligible, legal entities from Member States and Associated Countries that are public bodies, research organisations or higher education establishments (including private research organisations and higher education establishments) must have a gender equality plan, covering the following minimum process-related requirements:

- **publication**: a formal document published on the institution's website and signed by the top management;
- **dedicated resources**: commitment of resources and expertise in gender equality to implement the plan;
- **data collection and monitoring**: sex and/or gender disaggregated data on personnel (and students, for the establishments concerned) and annual reporting based on indicators;
- **training**: awareness-raising/training on gender equality and unconscious gender biases for staff and decision-makers.

Content-wise, it is recommended that the gender equality plan addresses the following areas, using concrete measures and targets:

- **work-life balance and organisational culture**;
- gender balance in **leadership and decision-making**;
- gender equality in **recruitment and career progression**;
- integration of the **gender dimension** into research and teaching content;
- measures against **gender-based violence**, including sexual harassment.

[4] REGULATION (EU) 2021/695 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013 and COUNCIL DECISION (EU) 2021/764 of 10 May 2021establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, and repealing Decision 2013/743/EU

A self-declaration will be requested at proposal stage. It will take the form of an online questionnaire listing the four mandatory process-related GEP requirements (building blocks) as well as the five recommended thematic areas. The questionnaire should be completed by the legal entity's authorised representative (LEAR), only once, in principle, for the duration of the Framework Programme, unless the status of the legal entity changes. Legal entities are not asked to submit/upload their GEP, only to fill in the questionnaire. If all the above-mentioned mandatory requirements are met through another strategic document, such as a development plan or an inclusion or diversity strategy, it can be considered as equivalent to a GEP. This eligibility criterion does not apply to other categories of legal entities, such as private for-profit organisations, including SMEs, non-governmental or civil society organisations.

A transition/grace period will be implemented before full enforcement of this eligibility criterion for calls with deadlines in 2022. Beneficiaries must also take all measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women in implementing the action and, where applicable, in line with their gender equality plan. They must aim to achieve, to the extent possible, a gender balance at all levels of personnel assigned to the action, including at supervisory and managerial level[5].

Source: Horizon Europe - Work Programme 2021-2022 General Annexes Part 13 -, p.13

This FAQ provides additional key information on the implementation of this eligibility criterion in Horizon Europe. In particular, legal entities concerned by this requirement must keep in mind the following:

- If an entity declares they do not have a GEP at proposal submission stage, there is currently a tolerance extending until the Grant Agreement preparation stage.
- If a consortium partner in a selected proposal still does not comply with the GEP eligibility criterion requirements at Grant Agreement preparation stage, they cannot participate in that Horizon Europe project.
- The European Commission will carry out random compliance checks during the course of Horizon Europe. In the case where non-compliance with the 4 mandatory process-related requirements is found, standard procedures for non-compliance of beneficiaries with Horizon Europe eligibility criteria will then be implemented. In this case, the participation of that beneficiary will be terminated following the standard termination procedures.
- The GEP can be written in the national language(s) used in the organisation.

[5] Horizon Europe General Model Grant Agreement, (HE MGA — Multi & Mono) Version 1.0 01 June 2021

3.3 Developing a GEP: mandatory and recommended building blocks

A GEP is a **set of commitments and actions that aim to promote gender equality in an organisation through a process of structural change** (see Error! Reference source not found.). GEPs aim to promote gender equality through the sustainable transformation of organisational processes, cultures and structures that produce and sustain gender imbalances and inequalities. GEPs should address not only an organisation's visible structure and practices (such as policies and procedures), but also consider how to evolve espoused values (what people say they believe) and underlying assumptions (unconscious beliefs, thoughts, and feelings), including in the production of knowledge and its applications.

When developing a GEP there are some essential elements – or "building blocks" - which must be included. As outlined in **Box 1** above, there are two sets of such building blocks:

A. **Mandatory process-based** elements: these represent standard minimum components of action plans to promote gender equality. Guidance on the process-related building blocks can be found in **section 4**.

B. **Recommended content-related** elements: these are key gender equality issues that a GEP for R&I organisations should seek to address. Guidance on the content-related building blocks can be found in **section 5.**

The building blocks of the Horizon Europe GEP eligibility criterion have been developed with the inputs of a wide array of national and institutional stakeholders and gender equality experts and build on the results of different EU-funded projects and initiatives. They are the results of a shared consensus on the key minimum components needed for achieving sustainable organisational change. The building blocks provide a framework for understanding gender inequality in R&I, setting aims and objectives, and taking effective action to achieve them. An inclusive GEP may also consider how gender inequality interacts with other forms of discrimination based on, for example, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or social origin, and the policies and practices an organisation has in place to address them.

3.4 Developing a GEP: steps

An effective GEP should support **an ongoing process for improving gender equality** to the benefit of the entire organisation. A GEP should encourage self-reflection by staff and leadership and an ongoing review of processes and practices. To develop a GEP, organisations typically go through a standard planning process. For example, the GEAR tool sets out four principal steps in the lifecycle of a GEP.

Typical steps in the lifecycle of a GEP include:

- **An audit phase**. Elements of this phase should include the collection of sex-disaggregated and/or gender-disaggregated data and a review of practices to identify gender inequalities and their causes. The audit stage should also include review of relevant national and regional laws, regulations, or funding requirements.
- **A planning phase**: During this phase, an organisation will set the objectives and targets for the GEP alongside a roadmap of actions and measures. This phase also includes allocating resources and responsibilities for the delivery of the GEP and agreeing timelines for implementation.

- **An implementation phase**, in which the roadmap of activities is implemented, including, for example, setting up working groups to develop and implement new policies and procedures. This phase should include awareness raising and training efforts to achieve buy-in and build capacity and support for the GEP across the organisation, as well as give visibility internally and externally to the GEP.
- **A monitoring and evaluation phase**, in which the delivery of the plan and progress against its aims and objectives are regularly assessed. Ongoing review of findings and progress will also provide space for learning and feedback to enable adjustments and improvements to interventions.

Figure 1: A typical GEP cycle

3.5 Developing a GEP: engaging the organisation

An effective GEP is a strategic document that **engages the whole of the organisation**. GEPs require the support and official commitment of senior leaders but work best when developed with the active engagement of the whole organisation, including staff, students, and stakeholders – and involving both women and men, as well as non-binary people. There are opportunities to engage the whole organisation throughout the development of a GEP, in initial audits or reviews of the problem, establishing aims and objectives, reviewing and establishing new ways of working and communicating the plan more generally. Relevant functions or roles to involve from across the organisation may include:

- The senior management and leadership team;
- Governing bodies;
- Administrative services, including Human Resources (HR) and legal departments;
- Academic departments, schools, research centres, or scientific directorates and research policy departments;
- Research evaluation committees;
- Gender scholars and experts on gender equality in research organisations;
- Research managers;
- Facilities managers;

- Staff and academics, including unions or representative bodies;
- Students and student unions (or other representative bodies).

3.6 Developing a GEP tailored to your organisation

An effective GEP is one that is relevant to the needs and aims of the organisation. All organisations are different and a GEP should be created specifically for an organisation's mission, history, and context. A GEP should also be developed with reference to the national laws and regulations that apply to the organisation, where they are relevant to the issue of gender equality.

The mandatory building blocks of the GEP eligibility criterion relate to processes that apply to all organisations covered by the criterion. When developing a GEP, organisations should consider how these mandatory steps can be embedded into the organisation, accounting for features such as:

- **Organisational structure:** for example, to establish the most appropriate arrangements for senior support and leadership, engaging with external stakeholders and delegation to departments or directorates;
- **Size:** for example, to determine the appropriate approach to resourcing a GEP, including ensuring there is sufficient internal or external expertise and capacity, as well as establishing proportionate and effective approaches to the collection and monitoring of data;
- **Existing activity:** for example, developing training and development initiatives that achieve the right breadth and depth of engagement across the organisation, and building on existing gender knowledge and expertise, policy and initiatives that may already be underway.

The recommended content areas represent common issues that affect gender equality across all R&I organisations. For example, issues relating to work-life balance, recruitment and career progression, gender equality in decision-making processes and prevention of harassment are common to organisations across the R&I field, as well as other sectors. At the same time, gender equality in research careers is a topic that is specific to both research performing organisations (RPOs) and research funding organisations (RFOs) as well as to public bodies such as ministries in charge of higher education and R&I, and linked to professional development and policy frameworks for researchers that have been adopted in many Member States and at the EU level, such as the European Charter and Code for Researchers and the more recent Council Conclusions of 28 May 2021 on 'Deepening the European Research Area: Providing researchers with attractive and sustainable careers and working conditions and making brain circulation a reality'.

The mission or remit of different organisations will also guide the approach to the recommended content areas. An effective GEP should consider gender equality both in terms of an organisation's internal processes and outcomes as well as the impact of its broader research or academic outputs.

For example:

- **Higher education organisations** will need to consider the whole community of staff and students alongside internal quality assurance and management arrangements for teaching and research;

- **Research funding organisations** will need to examine their application evaluation procedures and consider the organisation's broader programming and decision-making processes in terms of the outcomes and impact of funding decisions and associated policy frameworks that impact on gender equality in R&I;

- **Public bodies** such as ministries, will have a leading role in creating the national policy and/or legal frameworks and support needed for an effective implementation of GEPs, in particular regarding the coordinated annual collection of sex and/or gender disaggregated data on staff and students in higher education and research organisations.

Box 2: Developing a GEP

In addition to the **GEAR tool** there are a range of resources and reports that can help to guide the development of GEPs in R&I organisations. Among these:

The **European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE)** has also developed several additional tools which can help to support institutional change and gender mainstreaming, including a guide to institutional transformation.

The **GENERA project**, supported by Horizon 2020, created a Roadmap for the implementation of customized Gender Equality Plans.

The **European University Association (EUA)** has published reports on Diversity, equity and inclusion in European Higher Education Institutions as part of the INVITED project, and Strategies and approaches used by universities to promote diversity, equity and Inclusion, which includes examples from across Europe.

The **League of European Research Universities (LERU)** has published in 2019 a position paper examining systemic, whole university, approaches to equality, diversity and inclusion, including gender equality.

CESAER, the European association of science and technology universities has also recently hosted a forum on developing and implementing GEPs.

In 2017, **Science Europe** had also produced a Practical Guide to Improving Gender Equality in Research Organisations for RFOs and national RPOs.

3.7 Equivalence

GEPs or equivalent documents should set out **targets and actions that address gender equality**. The eligibility criterion allows for organisations to meet the mandatory and recommended elements through **equivalent plan(s).** Many research organisations already have GEPs or similar initiatives in place. For example, an increasing number of national ministries and funders already require RPOs to have GEPs[6] whilst there are a range of certification and award schemes (CAS) in use across the R&I sector that address gender equality (see **Box 3** for further details on CAS).

[6] Report by the ERAC SWG on Gender in Research and Innovation on Gender Equality Plans as a catalyst for change (1 June 2021)

It is the responsibility of applicant organisations to assure themselves that equivalent plans and policies address the mandatory elements of the Horizon Europe eligibility criterion as a minimum. For example, organisations that have received the European Commission's HRS4R 'HR Excellence in Research Award', or a national/regional-level certification related to gender equality, must make sure that their related action plan fulfils the four process-related mandatory requirements. Organisations may wish to consider an internal review to ensure that existing plans meet the eligibility criterion for Horizon Europe. A light touch assurance process may include the following steps:

a. **Conducting an internal review** of existing plans or actions to ensure that the mandatory GEP requirements, and recommended areas, are being addressed;

b. **Addressing any gaps** that may be identified in existing plans and policies when reviewed against the eligibility criterion and the recommendations set out in this guidance;

c. **Publishing a short statement**, endorsed by the Head of Institution, identifying the institutional plans and activities that meet the mandatory requirements and which form the GEP for the purposes of eligibility for Horizon Europe.

Where organisations believe that they already meet the criterion through existing plans or policies, they may confirm this on their application and grant agreement.

Box 3: Awards and certification systems for gender equality

There are a wide range of certification or awards schemes (CAS) on gender equality and diversity in Europe, many of which are focused on or include higher education institutions. Furthermore, several Member States and associated countries also have requirements relating to such CAS for R&I organisations.

The CASPER project, supported by Horizon 2020, has mapped a wide range of CAS in use in R&I, including schemes that are open to all organisations and schemes that are specifically focused on R&I. Examples of CAS used in R&I organisations identified by CASPER include:

- Athena SWAN (IE, UK)
- Distinctivo "Igualdad en la Empresa" (ES)
- Equality Mark (MT)
- GEMA Certifikat (SI)
- HR Excellence in Research (HRS4R) Label (EC)
- Label Diversité / Label Égalité Professionnelle (FR)
- Prémio 'Igualdade é Qualidade' (PT)
- Project Juno (IE, UK)
- Talent to the Top (Talent naar de Top) (NL)
- TOTAL E-Quality Award (DE)

Preliminary assessment by CASPER shows that many CAS address elements of the Horizon Europe GEP eligibility criterion, such as sex-disaggregated data collection and training, and cover such issues as recruitment, anti-harassment, and work-life balance policies.

However, most CAS do not align completely with the requirements and scope of the Horizon Europe eligibility criterion, such as the allocation of resources. Furthermore, non-R&I schemes are unlikely to address specific R&I issues such as the integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content.

The CASPER project has also found that CAS tend to use self-assessment of gender equality as a first step in the application process whilst encouraging internal change by evaluating progress over time and against different levels of practice[7]. Evidence and action plans developed in support of a CAS process may indeed provide a useful reference point for internal assurance of eligibility against the Horizon Europe GEP criterion.

3.8 Impact of COVID-19 on gender equality in R&I

A GEP should be relevant to an organisation's context, including the evolving impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on practices and operations. Initial feedback (see Error! Reference source not found.**4**) suggests that the disruption to personal lives, education, working conditions and the economy stemming from the pandemic has had implications for gender equality and the implementation of GEPs in higher education and research. Issues that have been noted include:

- A de-prioritisation of gender equality objectives and actions during disruption to education and research activities;
- An unequal burden of additional family caring and education responsibilities falling on women that in turn has undermined their own work, including research and publication;
- An unequal burden of responsibility falling on women to move delivery of teaching and pastoral support online;
- New ways of working, including online management and collaboration, that require alertness to evolving patterns of inclusion and exclusion;
- Differential impacts on staff of different seniority and contract types with potential consequences for women who are overrepresented in more precarious roles;
- The need to ensure that the gender dimension is integrated in COVID-19 research in the context of a fast paced, evolving, and high impact research environment[8].

Considering these challenges, R&I organisations, including RFOs, RPOs and public bodies, may wish to consider undertaking a review of the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality as part of the development or review of their GEP. A review may include a survey of the organisation as well as participatory workshops to understand these challenges in more depth. A review should aim to understand the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality in the organisation and identify what steps or measures may be required to mitigate these impacts, in line with the goals of the GEP, including:

- Engaging with staff and students to understand the impact of COVID-19 on working practices and outcomes, including through a survey or audit;
- Identifying where disruption and changes in working practices present a risk to the aims and objectives of the GEP;
- Maintaining and enhancing the visibility and prioritisation of the GEP, including at senior levels and in organisational planning, and awareness of the impact on gender equality;

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[7] CASPER project, Deliverable D3.3-State of the Art Analysis: mapping the awarding certification landscape in Higher Education and Research (June 2020)

[8] See for example Brady, E., Nielsen, M.W., Andersen, J.P. et al. Lack of consideration of sex and gender in COVID-19 clinical studies. *Nature* Communications 12, 4015 (2021). https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-021-24265-8 and the European Commission's Gendered Innovations case study on The impact of sex and gender in the COVID-19 pandemic (2020).

- Enhanced monitoring of key objectives, such as in research funding decisions to maintain or improve gender balance of principal investigators and distribution of project tasks;
- Reviewing relevant policies to ensure that risks are appropriately mitigated, and additional support is provided where necessary, including:
  - Work-life balance policies to address the impact and needs associated with home working and care responsibilities for staff and students;
  - Workload arrangements to ensure that the burden of new working practices is distributed fairly and does not exacerbate existing gender inequalities;
  - Management and supervision arrangement to ensure that appropriate support for new patterns of working is in place and ensuring inclusive practices;
  - Evaluation arrangements for career progression to ensure unequal burdens and impacts are accounted for;
  - Additional support for specific groups, such as early career researchers or those on temporary contracts, who may be particularly affected.
  - Sexual harassment policies to ensure that they address risks associated with increased use of online tools for collaboration and teaching.
- Enhancing arrangements within funding and approval processes of both RFOs and RPOs to ensure that sex and gender analysis is fully incorporated into research design on COVID-19.
- Considering whether additional sections of the GEP are necessary to address the specific issues associated with COVID-19 and to ensure plans are in place for future risks.

Box 4: COVID-19 and GEPs

The **SUPERA project**, in particular, found that the working and personal lives of women academics and researchers had been disproportionately negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The project presented a series of recommendations for RFOs and RPOs to address the challenges.

The **GenderSMART project** ran a survey on 'Gender-SMART at the time of Coronavirus' examining the impact of the pandemic on the income of permanent and non-permanent researchers, the need for child/family care support, and the impact on work arrangements and work activities. Part 1 was released in May 2020 and Part II was released in June 2020.

Project ACT has also hosted sessions as part of its FORGEN community of practice of RFOs on the integration of the gender dimension in R&I content relating to COVID-19.

Other resources include an examination of the impact of COVID-19 on implementing a GEP in RPOs and RFOs by the **SPEAR project**, as well as a position paper on the current COVID-19 outbreak and gendered impacts on researchers and teachers developed by the ERAC Standing Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation (SWG GRI).

The **Global Research Council**'s Gender Working Group has also compiled a list of gender equality, diversity and inclusion related measures taken by GRC participating national funding organisations to address COVID-19 effects on researchers.

- Additional references can also be found on this Commission Coronavirus R&I webpage on gender equality.

4 Detailed guidance on the mandatory process-related GEP building blocks

4.1 Publication and official endorsement of the GEP

The Horizon Europe eligibility criterion requires that the GEP be a formal document published on the institution's website and signed by the top management. As part of this requirement, GEPs should:

a. **Be published on the organisation's public website*:*** Publication of the GEP on an organisation's website publicly signals its commitment to gender equality and enables proper accountability against the plan's aims and objectives by the organisation's staff, partners, stakeholders and the wider community. The GEP can be published in the organisation's working language(s), using clear, unambiguous and accessible language. The GEP should clearly state:
   - The organisation's commitment to gender equality;
   - The objectives and desired outcomes of the GEP;
   - Relevant baseline data and targets;
   - Details of the actions that are or will be taken by the organisation, including the allocation of dedicated resources.

   While the GEP may be published alongside or within wider action plans for broader inclusion and diversity, in order to meet the Horizon Europe eligibility criterion, it is essential that the GEP includes specific commitments, goals, actions and resources dedicated to improving gender equality within the organisation and its activities.

   The core information and commitments outlined in the published GEP should be compliant with the general data protection regulation (GDPR) and may be complemented with more detailed information (e.g. gender equality audit/diagnosis) or internal plans and budgets to support day-to-day implementation of specific aspects of the GEP. These supplementary operational documents can be published in the public domain but can also be internal documents. They should always, however, be available within the organisation for validation by senior management and review by relevant staff or other stakeholders (e.g. a governing body).

b. **Be signed by the senior leadership**: The GEP should be a strategic document that is owned by the senior leadership of the organisation. It should be signed by the executive head of the organisation with a clearly nominated lead on the top management team to take the plan forward. The senior leadership of the organisation has full responsibility for the implementation of the commitments set out in the GEP. It will be accountable for the success of the GEP within the organisation and with its key stakeholders, such as the governing body, funding bodies, trade unions and student associations.

c. **Be actively communicated within the institution**: As well as publishing the GEP in the public domain, it should also be actively disseminated and communicated across the organisation to signal the leadership's support for the plan. It should be clear that delivering the commitments and actions set out in the GEP is the responsibility of every staff member within the organisation, at all levels, and that they will be held accountable for implementation of the GEP within their domains. The expectations and resources allocated to the implementation of the plan should be clearly set out, as should the review processes for ensuring that gender equality

becomes a priority focus. It is very important to consider key messages that need to be communicated and how these should be tailored to different target groups.

d. **Be accompanied by regular progress reports***:* After the publication of the GEP on the organisation's public website, the organisation should also publish regular progress reports (see also section 0 on data collection and monitoring). Regular reports allow ongoing organisational review of the impact of the plan as well as keeping the wider community informed and engaged in the organisation's progress towards gender equality. Progress reports may usefully include qualitative information alongside quantitative data, such as updates on human resource data disaggregated by sex, or monitoring data to keep track of the implementation of key actions. Effective monitoring of the GEP will depend on developing relevant quantitative and qualitative indicators for each measure/ action included in the GEP.

Box 5: Examples of publishing and endorsing GEPs

The University of Warsaw (Poland): The University has created a public webpage on their Gender Equality Plan, presenting key goals and institutional commitments for equality, as well as the full description of their GEP in English, also linking it to the HR Excellence in Research logo recognition that the organisation received from the European Commission in 2016.

The University of Deusto (Spain): The institution's public website also has a page dedicated to the University's commitments, goals and actions to promote gender equality. It includes the gender equality audits carried out in 2014 and 2020, the current gender equality plan (2020-2022) – available in Spanish, Basque and English – and its predecessor (2017-2018), as well as other relevant documents such as the University's Guidelines for Non-Sexist Language. The gender equality plan was developed by a university wide working group and was approved by the university's governing body. This initiative was undertaken as part of the Horizon 2020 funded GEARING ROLES project.

The Estonian Research Council (Estonia): The funding organisation's Gender Equality Plan 2020-2027 has been approved by its management and is displayed on its public website. Review of the plan is expected at least once a year. Through the plan the Estonian Research Council underlines its aims to pay more attention to the aspects of gender in all its activities, and thus contribute to promoting gender equality in the Estonian research landscape. The Council is also a partner in project GEARING ROLES.

Trinity College Dublin (TCD) (Ireland): The Provost & President of Trinity College Dublin takes an active role in the promotion and advancement of equality, diversity and inclusion. TCD's institutional applications to the Athena SWAN programme are supported by the Provost & President, who drafts a personal letter of endorsement to open the application. The Board of the University, chaired by the Provost & President, reviews Annual Equality Monitoring Reports which present a wide range of data on all the diversity grounds covered in Irish equality law, and which are then made publicly available. TCD has an Equality Policy setting out the University's commitment to non-discrimination for staff, students and visitors (last revised in 2016), as well as a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (first published in 2017) which contains concrete actions to implement the College's goals for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion as set out in TCD's Strategic Plan 2014-2019. More information on the practice is available here. This work was initiated as part of the FP7 funded INTEGER project and further developed through Horizon 2020 funded SAGE project.

The French Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MESRI) (France): The national action plan for professional equality between women and men 2021-2023, adopted jointly by the MESRI and the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports, is publicly available on their website.

4.2 Dedicated resources

The **Horizon Europe criterion requires that the GEP has dedicated resources** and expertise in gender equality to implement the plan. When developing or reviewing their GEP, organisations should consider what type and volume of resources are required to support an ongoing process of sustainable organisational change to promote gender equality. Resources will be needed for developing and leading the plan as well as to support specific measures, such as work-life balance and parental leave (see section 5.1) or for staff training and development (see section 4.4).

The volume and structure of dedicated resources for the development and implementation of the GEP should be appropriate to the size and needs of the organisation and its GEP. Resources will be needed throughout the whole GEP cycle, including audit, planning, implementation, monitoring and review.

Dedicated resources for a GEP may include:

a. **A dedicated gender equality function**: Where appropriate, establishing a gender equality function or structure or team can provide a focal point and source of expertise for the development and implementation of a GEP. Any gender equality function should be appropriate to the organisation's needs. Where a dedicated function is not appropriate, for example in smaller organisations, organisations should still consider how the implementation of a GEP will be taken forward, including the necessary staff and financial resources, and ensuring that there is a clear focal point with expertise to lead and drive the work.

   Experience has shown that a gender equality function works best if it is structured as a team, rather than just one person working alone. A dedicated gender equality function benefits from incorporating expertise in gender equality and change management and being organised so that it can work with the whole organisation. For example, a gender equality function would benefit from being led by a member of the senior executive team and being part of an office or function with responsibility for strategic projects or organisational change, such as a strategic planning directorate or executive leadership office. Where a dedicated gender equality function is set up and can lead on the GEP, it will still be important to emphasise that promoting gender equality is the responsibility of every staff member.

Box 6: Setting up a gender equality function

The **GEAR tool** provides advice on setting up a gender equality function .

A gender equality structure can:

- set up, implement, monitor and evaluate the GEP;
- provide practical support and tools to the actors involved in the GEP implementation;
- cooperate with and engage stakeholders at all levels in order to ensure the implementation of the GEP's measures;
- raise awareness about the benefits of gender equality in research organisations;
- assess the progress towards gender equality in the organisation.

These structures are more effective when:

- they are composed of more than (the equivalent of) one person working full-time and whose mandate is solely dedicated to promoting gender equality;
- they do not work in isolation and are well-networked;
- they are publicly supported by top-level executives (e.g. university rector or dean, director general of a research organisation, Minister in charge of higher education and/or research).

b. **Wider staff time***:* A GEP should engage the whole organisation throughout its development and implementation. A gender equality function may draw on staff from different parts of the organisation to support the delivery of the plan. Furthermore, a GEP may earmark staff time to develop and implement the GEP. Personnel from across the organisation may be engaged in various steps, from reviewing existing data and practices, to identifying areas for attention and establishing the GEP's objectives. Staff time may be required for specific aspects of the GEP, such as data analysis for annual reports and evaluation. Furthermore, staff may be needed to participate in working groups to review specific issues, for example organisational culture, and to develop new policies and or practices with the input of different parts of the organisation. As much as possible such working groups and implementing teams should be gender balanced.

c. **Gender budgeting**: Gender budgeting is a management strategy aiming to integrate a gender perspective into the financial processes and procedures of institutions, including R&I organisations. It is an instrument for advancing gender equality that can create new approaches to policy and decision-making related to raising and allocating resources and identifying gender inequalities in resourcing and workload. Gender budgeting goes beyond addressing the gender gap in distributions of earnings and other remunerations among staff. Gender budgeting acknowledges that financial decisions and procedures, including research funding allocation, are political processes that produce gendered outcomes and inequalities. Gender budgeting is therefore an integral part of good governance strategy.

Box 7: Examples of dedicated gender equality resources

The University of Southern Denmark (SDU) (Denmark): SDU created A Gender Equality Committee and Gender Equality Team (GET) to ensure that SDU is a diverse employer with an innovative and creative research environment and an inclusive working environment. The GET is established by SDU's Executive Board, and organisational responsibility for the project is delegated to a member of SDU's Executive Board. The chair of SDU's central Gender Equality Committee, which is comprised of representatives of all the university's faculties and its central administration, acts as a steering committee for the GET. The GET is part of the HR Development Unit and works in close cooperation with the various faculties, bodies and units, including the central and the local gender equality boards. SDU is a partner in the Horizon 2020 funded SPEAR project.

The Open University of Catalunya (UOC) (Spain): An Equality Unit was created in 2008 to develop gender equality policies for the university. The Equality Unit is a body which reports to UOC's Office of the Vice President for Globalization and Cooperation. The Equality Unit's core function is to ensure compliance with current legislation for effective equality between women and men and raise awareness within the UOC community of the importance of including a gender perspective in

all regular activities, and it has overseen the construction of UOC's current 2020-2025 GEP.

Jagiellonian University (Poland): Since the beginning of 2020, Jagiellonian University established a new department of Safety, Security and Equal Treatment, which, among other responsibilities related to physical and psychological wellbeing of the university's community, is also responsible for ensuring gender equality. The department works across the university to identify gender inequality, raise awareness, and provide advice and guidance on discrimination and gender-based violence. The department is working on the preparation of the Equity Policy and Anti-discrimination Procedure and associated actions to ensure gender equality and safety across the university. The work is being developed as part of the Horizon 2020 funded project MINDtheGEPs.

The Özyeğin University (Turkey): created a Gender Equality Unit that is directly linked to the Rector's Office. The main aim was to endow the GE Unit with the administrative capacity needed to deliver a GEP. Implementation of the GEP has been achieved through sustained communication and discussion with the relevant university bodies such as the Rectorate and the National Higher Education Council Coordination Unit. Understanding the administrative structure and internal regulations of the institution played a vital role in conceiving and writing the directive of the GE Unit. This work was undertaken as part of the PLOTINA project, supported by Horizon 2020.

The German Research Foundation (DFG) (Germany): The DFG Head Office has a unit dedicated to Equal Opportunities, Research Integrity and Cross-Programme Development, which promotes gender equality through a variety of actions.

The Academy of Finland (AKA) (Finland): AKA has appointed an Equality and Non-Discrimination Working Group gathering representatives of both employer and personnel to support and monitor the implementation of AKA's Equality and Non-Discrimination Plan 2019-2021, which addresses gender equality and non-discrimination both within the organisation and in AKA's funding programmes. Sufficient time and other resources are made available to ensure the working group can fulfil its role.

The National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) (France): Since 2001, CNRS has had a strategic unit attached to the Presidency, the Mission for the Role of Women at CNRS, dedicated to the promotion of gender equality across the organisation and beyond.

Most **ministries** also have departments or units in charge of promoting gender equality, such as the Women and Science Unit in the Spanish Ministry of Research and Innovation (Spain), or the Department of Human Resources strategies, Parity and Fight against Discriminations in the French Ministry for Higher Education, Research and Innovation (France).

The University of Iceland (Iceland) developed a toolkit for gender budgeting through the GARCIA project supported by FP7, and further developed this activity through the GenBUDGET community of practice created through the Horizon 2020 funded ACT project, putting the emphasis on the gendered managerial mechanisms through which organisations formulate budgets and allocation of resources.

4.3 Data collection and monitoring

To be eligible for Horizon Europe, it is mandatory that **organisations collect and publish disaggregated data on the sex and/or gender of personnel** (and students, where relevant) and carry out annual reporting based on indicators. The collection of such disaggregated data is a common practice for R&I organisations. A survey of 159 Higher Education organisations from 36 European systems conducted by the European Universities Association as part of the INVITED project showed that 83% of organisations collected data on the gender of their staff and 57% had targets relating to the number, share or percentage of staff by gender.

The data an organisation collects should enable scrutiny of the differences between men and women in different roles, directorates and at different levels of the organisation. The scope of data that is collected should also reflect the mission of the organisation and its activities, whilst also being proportionate to its size.

In most countries and institutions across Europe, "gender statistics" are actually collected according to biological sex at birth, usually in a binary fashion (female, male) and, more rarely, introducing the intersex category. In an increasing number of countries and organisations, however, data is being collected according to gender identity, with usually at least three categories considered: woman, man, and non-binary (or gender-diverse)[9].

The collection and analysis of relevant data can be used for various functions including:

- The establishment of a **baseline situation** in relation to gender equality in the organisation, against which progress can be monitored on a regular (at least annual) basis;
- Carrying out a **gender equality analysis** to identify areas of relative strength and weakness, which will allow better targeting of actions and priorities within the GEP and ensure that it is fully evidence-based;
- **Communicating** to the organisation's staff, students (where relevant), other key stakeholders and the wider public about the organisation's commitment to gender equality and the progress made.

When collecting data for a GEP, organisations may wish to consider the following aspects:

a. **Selecting indicators for data collection***:* It is essential to collect as much relevant data as possible to examine the relative situation of women and men within the organisation and its core activities. The selection of relevant indicators for each organisation will depend on its specific profile, responsibilities, and activities. The GEAR Tool sets out a list of indicators which may be a useful starting point for RPOs and RFOs (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). It is important to note that:

   – The list of indicators is not intended to be exhaustive. Each organisation must reflect on **the most appropriate indicators** for its specific case and amend the list as appropriate;

[9] For more information of sex/gender disaggregated data, please see Annex B, General Methods, "Asking about gender and sex in surveys", p.192-194 of the "Gendered Innovations 2: How inclusive analysis contributes to research and innovation" policy report (European Commission, 2020)

- As well as collecting data disaggregated by only sex and/or gender, organisations should consider **breaking down the data further** to explore differences between women and men based on other individual or group features (where data is available) such as people with a migrant or minority background, people with disabilities, people with low socio-economic status or at risk of poverty, members of the LGBTIQ community[10]. This data will allow exploring the intersectionality of gender with other characteristics and potential grounds for discrimination (also known as 'gender plus') which can highlight specific areas requiring attention;
- Depending on the priority fields identified in the GEP, **specific indicators** may need to be developed to establish a baseline and monitor progress;
- Although most indicators will be quantitative, some can be **qualitative**, for example through climate surveys among staff and/or students to measure experiences and perceptions of gender equality in the organisation. Indicators may also be relative, for example benchmarking against comparable organisations or sectors domestically and across Europe.

Box 8: Data and metrics for a GEP

Relevant data on gender equality for all organisations can include:

- Staff numbers by sex/gender at all levels, by disciplines, function (including administrative / support staff) and by contractual relation to the organisation;
- Average numbers of years needed for women and men to make career advancements (per grade and by discipline);
- Wage gaps by sex/gender and job;
- Numbers of women and men in academic and administrative decision-making positions (e.g. top management team, boards, committees, recruitment and promotion panels);
- Numbers of female and male candidates applying for distinct job positions;
- Numbers of women and men having left the organisation in past years, specifying the numbers of years spent in the organisation;
- Numbers of staff by sex/gender applying for/taking parental leave, for how long and how many returned after taking the leave;
- Number of absence days taken by women and men and according to absence motive;
- Number of training hours/credits attended by women and men;

Specific data on gender equality relevant to RPOs may include:

- Number of female and male students at all levels and for all disciplines, and academic and employment outcomes;
- Share of women and men among employed researchers;
- Share of women and men among applicants to research positions, among

[10] As defined in the European Commission's LGBTIQ equality strategy adopted on 12 November 2020, LGBTIQ refers to: people: who are attracted to others of their own gender (lesbian, gay) or any gender (bisexual); whose gender identity and/or expression does not correspond to the sex they were assigned at birth (trans, non-binary); who are born with sex characteristics that do not fit the typical definition of male or female (intersex); and -whose identity does not fit into a binary classification of sexuality and/or gender (queer).

persons recruited and success rate, including by scientific field, academic position, and contract status;

- Share of women and men in recruitment or promotion boards, heads of recruitment or promotion boards and share of decision-making bodies, including by scientific field.

Specific data on gender equality relevant to RFOs may include:

- Share of women and men among reviewers, heads of panels and on funding decision-making bodies across different disciplines or schemes;
- Share of men and women principal investigators in submitted and selected projects and their respective success rates;
- Share of men and women in the research teams of submitted and selected projects, and the distribution of tasks and roles among each team;
- The average size of grants to research projects conducted by men and women;
- The integration of the gender dimension in research funding schemes;
- The integration of the gender dimension in submitted and funded projects;
- The amounts allocated to research projects primarily devoted to gender aspects.

Source: adapted from Science Europe's Practical Guide to Improving Gender Equality in Research Organisations and the GEAR tool

b. **Collection of the data***:* Once the indicators are defined, the organisation must ensure that appropriate data is collected. Some of the data will be available from existing administrative sources (e.g. human resources), while other data may need to be specifically collected and/or calculated. Where data about potential issues or topics of concern is not held in existing administrative data collections or may be incomplete (e.g. in relation to sexual harassment) the GEP can include an action to collect the relevant data (and monitor it on an ongoing, systematic basis). The team(s) or individual(s) responsible for the collection of data for each indicator should be clearly identified.

c. **Analysis of the data***:* Once gathered, the data should be analysed to establish an understanding of the key differences and gaps between women and men within the organisation and its activities. This analysis will help to guide the key priorities for the GEP and to adjust these priorities as the situation evolves over time. The team(s) or individual(s) responsible for the analysis of collected data should be clearly established; where possible, the team analysing the data should include expertise on gender equality within the organisation.

   Data analysis can also form part of a more comprehensive **Gender Equality Audit** (GEA) which goes further by, for example, examining existing policies on gender equality within the organisation and gathering feedback and inputs from staff or other stakeholders via workshops and focus groups. Guidance on conducting full GEAs in research organisations can be found in various sources, e.g. the Gender Equality Audit and Monitoring (GEAM) tool developed by the ACT project or the tools developed by the TARGET project, also funded under Horizon 2020. While carrying out a full GEA is not obligatory to be eligible for Horizon Europe, it may be a useful exercise to consider to underpin sustainable institutional change.

d. **Publishing the data:** Data gathered on gender equality should be published on the organisation's website, either as a standalone document or webpage, or within the GEP. Relevant data should be included in the GEP to justify the need to act both generally and in relation to specific areas of concern. Once multiannual data is available, it can also be used to show the progress or lack of progress made. Published data should be clear, unambiguous, accessible and up-to-date.

e. **Monitoring the data on an annual basis***:* Organisations must carry out monitoring and reporting of the data collected on an annual basis. The annual reporting should feed into a review of progress against the aims and objectives of the GEP by leadership and its stakeholders. The review should enable the organisation to understand progress, identify where activities are having an impact, and where obstacles persist throughout the life of the GEP.

Box 9: Examples of using data for a GEP

The University of Belgrade (Serbia): The university published its first GEP in 2018 based on a Gender Equality Audit self-assessment conducted as a part of the TARGET project, supported by Horizon 2020. The audit was focused on three main dimensions of gender equality at the University of Belgrade: human resources management, decision making, and curricula and research content. The audit then informed a long-term plan to promoting gender equality at all levels of the organisation. The audit showed that it was necessary to address implicit biases to address under representation of women in leadership positions alongside monitoring system to be able to track data about research careers and progression of men and women.

The University of Padua (Italy): The University of Padua published its first annual Gender Report in 2017 (concerning the year 2016). Since then, it has conducted yearly monitoring of indicators and data in relation to key staffing issues such as gender inequality by role, seniority and pay, and other relevant issues. The reports also look at differences in performance of male and female students, in terms of university careers, employment and earnings after graduation. *Source: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in European Higher Education Institutions*

The National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) (France): Research and higher education institutions in France are required to publish social reports and data and analysis on the comparative situations of women in men. The annual report published by CNRS is one of the most complete and analyses data on staff and gender, including by level and remuneration, and trends over time.

The University of Agder (Norway): Agder's Action Plan for Equal opportunities, inclusion and diversity includes reporting of gender by role and department across the university. This analysis informed clear targets for the university and monitoring of progress against the action plan.

Israeli Ministry of Science and Technology (Israel): In 2018, the ministry initiated a yearly collection of data on the status of women in academia, industry, and education. Data collection on academia was launched in 2018 by the Israeli Council for Higher Education. Data collection on the status of women in industry and education is currently under development. *Source:* ERAC SWG GRI Report on the Implementation of Targets: Follow-Up on the 2018 Guidance Recommendations

GEECCO project: This Horizon 2020 funded project has developed various GEP evaluation and monitoring tools, including an Excel template and a Powerpoint tutorial for sex/gender-disaggregated data monitoring for RPOs. It covers the three core areas: decision-making processes and bodies; recruitment and career development of women researchers and staff; and the gender dimension in research and teaching content.

SAGE project: The consortium of universities involved in the Horizon 2020 funded SAGE project, published guidelines on tools and methods for primary data collection as part of an institutional self-assessment on gender equality within research organisations. The guidelines focus on data collection tools (surveys, interviews and focus groups) and include survey questionnaires for use by academic and research staff.

ACT project: The ACT project, funded by Horizon 2020, developed a Gender Equality Audit and Monitoring (GEAM) tool. This tool includes a core questionnaire for implementing a high-quality gender equality audit/monitoring survey in several languages, as well as an online database of existing monitoring questionnaires, surveys and tools.

4.4 Training

The Horizon Europe eligibility criterion requires that the **GEP includes awareness-raising and training actions on gender equality and unconscious gender biases** for staff and decision-makers. All staff, leaders and decision-makers have a role to play in identifying practices, cultures and unconscious gender biases that cause disadvantage to women and in implementing more inclusive approaches. Awareness-raising and training are tools and strategies to increase people's sensitivity to gender equality whilst also giving them the knowledge and skills to enable them to engage with the goal of gender equality. Awareness-raising and capacity-building training on gender equality can be delivered in different ways and cover a range of topics. Some key principles[11] that should be considered in the GEP when planning and implementing gender equality training include:

- **engaging the whole organisation**, different levels and roles across the organisation such as senior management and leadership, managers, research and/or teaching staff, human resources departments, and students;
- Consideration should be given to ensuring that gender equality training is based on an **evidence-based assessment** of the needs of an organisation;
- Creating **ongoing and long-term process.** One-off sessions are rarely enough on their own to provide participants with the necessary knowledge and tools to mainstream gender.

To address the awareness-raising and gender training building block, GEPs may consider, without being limited to, the following types of activities:

a. **Unconscious bias training for all staff and leaders**. Unconscious or implicit bias unintentionally influences judgements and opinions about others based on stereotypes and can result in discrimination. The ERAC SWG GRI 2019 report 'Tackling gender bias in research evaluation: Recommendations for action' found that gender bias – which can also be conscious and explicit – is demonstrated by both men and women, and highlighted the following issues:

   a. *Recruitment and career progression:* For example, women and men are often valued differently, with the work of men consistently judged as superior even when there is no difference. Letters of recommendation for women and men may differ, with women often praised for their likeability and social skills, with less focus on research than in letters for men. The use of artificial intelligence for recruitment purposes can also introduce gender biases if not carefully designed and controlled. For more information, see section 5.3.

   b. *Work-life balance*: There is a so-called 'motherhood penalty', where mothers who are researchers are under-valued and seen as less competent and dedicated to their work than fathers. Notions of excellence are gendered, with an emphasis on characteristics such as long hours, availability and mobility without external commitments. Furthermore, gender-blind rules can disadvantage parents, by not taking into account family-related career breaks. For more information see section 5.1.

[11] Key principles as recalled in EIGE's Gender Equality Training toolkit

c. *Leadership and decision making:* Women tend not to be perceived as leaders and are often penalised if they display characteristics often associated with leadership. There are perceived differences in cognitive styles, with male styles being regarded as abstract and visionary, and women as analytical and focused on detail. Impostor syndrome may discourage women from applying in areas typically associated with the over-represented sex. For more information see section 5.3.

Unconscious bias training is important in helping people to examine their own behaviours and views and identify how institutional processes may cause disadvantage to women in areas such as decision making, careers and leadership. Training on unconscious bias may be offered in the context of the development of the GEP itself, but it is also important for it to be **incorporated into broader organisational training activities** on an ongoing basis. Integrating this type of training across the organisation's processes – for example, recruitment and induction processes, or research funding evaluation processes – is key to ensuring that unconscious gender bias does not influence decision-making and selection practices.

b. **Communications and engagement activities with all staff.** Involving all staff in activities that raise awareness of gender equality issues and organisational approaches to address them is key in creating collective engagement with gender equality issues. This might include participatory workshops with staff as well as talks delivered by gender equality experts and leading women scientists, scholars, and academic leaders. Informing the organisation about the existence of the GEP, its main aims, areas of intervention, and timeframe is a first step. Publication of the GEP may be accompanied by **a public session** to present it to staff, with the participation of senior management and leadership that can increase staff commitment. **Ongoing communication** is then crucial to give visibility to the GEP and keep staff informed of and involved in its implementation. Communication actions can include organising internal workshops on specific sections of the GEP, or running campaigns on selected topics, as well as promoting external events (e.g. conferences) or interesting information from beyond the organisation about integrating gender equality in research institutions and universities.

c. Training for researchers and academics on how to include the **gender dimension into research design and teaching curricula** and training for RFOs on incorporating the gender dimension into their funding programmes. For more information see section 5.4.

d. **Other gender equality training** activities that focus on specific topics or address specific target groups can also be considered. This includes face-to-face training events and courses of study; staff and student induction programmes; online modules; guidance materials and compendia of resources; networks for sharing expertise.

Box 10: Examples of gender equality training

The University of Plovdiv (Bulgaria): The University of Plovdiv established Communities of Practice to help develop a sustainable approach to gender equality. This includes building a strong sense of community, solidarity and peer support with others facing similar struggles in the organisation. This approach, developed as part of the Horizon 2020 funded SPEAR project, involved engagement with stakeholders, including senior leadership and other stakeholders across the organisation to understand their concerns and priorities. The project then created a series of ongoing engagement and reflection processes exploring experiences and enhancing competences.

Trinity College Dublin (TCD) (Ireland): TCD initiated a cascade of gender bias training and its dissemination, starting from the university leadership team and cascading down to the heads of departments and faculties. By 2015 all members of all promotion committees were required to attend one of two sessions. TCD also developed on online module on unconscious bias through Horizon 2020 project SAGE.

Another example of unconscious bias online training module is the one developed by the **Canadian funding agencies** for their peer reviewers.

University of Milan (Italy): The University of Milan organised training courses on the effects of gender stereotypes on career paths and research, between 2012 and 2015. This was undertaken in the framework of the FP7 Project STAGES – Structural Transformation to Achieve Gender Equality in Science. The courses addressed the senior management of the entire university (Management Board, Academic Senate, Heads of Department, Heads of Administrative Office) and of selected departments. The courses focused in particular on gender stereotypes in evaluation, career progression and decision-making. Institutional leadership. The University is also introducing students and future students to the range of activities underway at the University to combat all forms of discrimination, including relating to sexual orientation.

The University of Graz (Austria): As part of the internal leadership training programme the gender equality and equal opportunities office of the university organises bias sensitising workshops examining gender and other forms of discrimination in personnel selection procedures and how these biases can undermine the quality of recruitment outcomes. The training takes place over two half-day sessions and is facilitated by internal and external experts as well as gender equality experts. Participants gain knowledge about diversity issues, societal inequalities, and academic evaluation procedures. They also participate in a mock personnel selection procedure, as well as discussions on academic CVs, to initiate reflection on their own selection criteria and biases. *Source: GEAR tool*. Other types of trainings are also delivered through the University's Coordination Centre for Gender Studies and Equal Opportunities.

Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO): NWO piloted training for evaluators to avoid implicit gender biases in the funding decisions. The intervention included bespoke Implicit Association Test[12] based on actual evaluation

[12] For more information on Implicit Association Tests (IAT) see Project Implicit

materials, as well as other activities to increase literacy on gender biases (e.g. on unconscious bias in CV evaluation, in interviews). The e-learning module enabled tracking of participation and the impact on evaluations procedures, including analysing the awarding rates. *(Source: Implicit Gender Biases during Evaluations: How to Raise Awareness and Change Attitudes report from the 2017 European Commission workshop).* NWO has also created two videos for reviewers and committee members about implicit bias, challenging the ideal image of what a good researcher or a good proposal is, and providing concrete suggestions based on scientific research to optimise the evaluation process.

The FP7 funded FESTA project has developed a Gender Sensitive PhD Supervisory Toolkit, aimed at PhD supervisors and students, to help them enhance their supervision methods and relationships by ensuring that they are sensitive to the way gender may affect them, as well as a Handbook on Resistance to Gender Equality in Academia.

The Horizon 2020 project GE Academy has developed a series of webinars on gender equality including an introduction to gender equality plans for universities and other research and innovation organisations examining how to strategically frame gender equality policies & set priorities for change at your university and approaches to creating long lasting commitment for gender equality in research. GE academy also hosts a variety of training sessions and workshops on developing and implementing GEPs. All of these can be found on the GE Academy website.

The **GEAR action toolbox** also has resources on competence building and training, including a database of trainers.

5 Detailed guidance on the recommended content-related (thematic) GEP building blocks

5.1 Work-life balance and organisational culture

A key component of the transformation of an organisation's culture for advancing gender equality is **work-life balance**. Work-life balance is relevant for both women and men and involves ensuring that all staff are properly supported to advance their career alongside personal responsibilities that they may hold outside of the workplace, including caring responsibilities. Work-life balance policies and practices which can be reviewed and addressed in a GEP include:

- **Parental leave policies**, including ensuring fixed term contracts can be extended or grant agreements may be extended;
- **Flexible working time arrangements**, including how departmental processes, procedures and practices impact on staff with caring responsibilities or part-time workers, and remote working;
- **Support for caring responsibilities**, including childcare and care for other dependents (e.g. people with disabilities, elderly relatives);
- **Workload management,** including how different tasks are allocated and distributed, such as teaching and administrative versus research workloads in universities;
- **Reintegration of staff after career breaks**, including active mentoring and support;
- **Advice and support** on work-life balance.

A respectful, open, and welcoming organisational culture is sensitive to a variety of gender identities and does not consider women and men as homogeneous groups. Actions in relation to organisational culture may include measures to ensure that all staff feel valued and welcomed at work. Relevant policies may include policies relating to **harassment and dignity at work** that set out expectations for the behaviour of staff and managers. Other steps may include the active use and encouragement of inclusive language[13] around the organisation in relation to gender but also other forms of identity and diversity. Informal aspects of organisational culture may also be considered, including whether social practices are welcoming and inclusive for all staff.

All organisations should consider the impact of work-life balance and organisational culture on gender equality. Larger organisations, such as universities, may need to consider how working cultures are fostered at **departmental levels or in research teams**. RFOs may also wish to consider the culture and inclusivity of **decision-making bodies and committees** that involve external experts (see section 5.2 for more information). Furthermore, organisations such as RPOs and public bodies may also want to consider issues such as visibility of women in activities such as **expert panels and public outreach**.

[13] See for example, EIGE's Gender-sensitive communication guide and the European Parliament's guide on gender neutral language

Box 11: Examples of measures for work-life balance

The Hanken School of Economics (Finland): Hanken School of Economics automatically extends temporary contracts of teaching and research personnel if they have been absent due to maternity, paternity or parental leave. The policy was included in the Human Resources instructions of the School in 2010, and promoting positive work/life balance is one of the priorities its gender equality and equal treatment plan. The policy was adopted to support long-term research work and ensure that research projects are finalised, as well as to promote the career advancement of women researchers. *Source: GEAR tool*

University of Trento (Italy): The University of Trento was the first Italian university to seek to obtain the Family Audit Certification. The actions implemented to meet the audit requirements included a focus on increasing the flexibility of working time arrangements. An 'hours bank' was introduced for administrative staff which employees could use to leave the workplace in case of emergencies or specific needs. For academic staff, the university implemented an action to promote the consideration of family and personal needs in the organisation of lessons and the scheduling of departmental processes. The action also sought to identify and address any gender asymmetries in terms of teaching, research and organisational workloads. This work was undertaken as part of the FP7 funded GARCIA project.

The Volkswagen Foundation (Germany): the foundation is a private research funding organisation in Germany, which has developed a comprehensive funding support scheme for parents. Although it is directed to parents of either sex, including adopting parents, its approach aims to lower the burden and career cost of parenting for early career female researchers. Funding is available for male or female researchers raising one or more children. Supplementary funds are also focused on initiatives and calls targeted at early career researchers seeking funding for their own positions, in particular postdoctoral positions, and W1 professorships in Germany. *Source: GEAR tool*

Leibniz Institute for Baltic Sea Research Warnemünde (IOW) (Germany): The Leibniz Institute for Baltic Sea Research Warnemünde (IOW) runs a funding scheme called "Come back to research" for 3-6 month grants to support female marine scientists who want to return to science after a family-related break. Former IOW employees, doctoral students supervised by IOW researchers or researchers who would like to establish their position at IOW are eligible to apply. Formally the programme is for women who have had parental leave or responsibilities to care for family members during the last two years, however, applications from male PhD students and Post Docs are also considered if received. This work was developed as part of the Baltic Gender project that was supported by Horizon 2020.

National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) (France): In line with the requirements of the congé pour recherches ou conversions thématiques (research or thematic conversion leave) applicable to all universities in France, CNRS also offers to financially cover six months' relief from teaching duties for academic personnel working in CNRS joint laboratories and returning to work from maternity/paternity/adoption leave. It applies to both women and men, but until now, has mostly benefitted women returning from maternity leave.

5.2 Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

Many Member States and associated countries have developed national legal and policy frameworks, as well as institutional level policies, to advance gender balance in decision-making[14]. However, despite the policies and actions taken, the She Figures reports show that women remain underrepresented in academic and administrative leadership and decision-making positions in universities and research institutions across Europe. For example, according to She Figures 2021, only 26.2% of full professors were women in 2018 in the EU whilst the European Universities Association found in 2019 that only 14% of rectors in 46 countries with EUA members were female.

Improving gender balance in leadership and decision-making is a key objective for GEPs. Aspects a GEP may consider include:

- **How** women are represented in decision-making at the top of the organisation, across academic schools and administrative functions;
- **What** types of barriers exist to ensuring women are represented in decision-making and leadership positions, including structural, institutional and individual barriers;
- **What** targets could be set to promote gender balance in leadership and decision-making roles across the organisation;
- **Which** steps can be taken, and by **whom**, to achieve these targets.

Increasing the number and share of women in leadership and decision-making positions is a process that touches upon all aspects in the GEP, from sex/gender-disaggregated data collection and analysis to identifying issues (section 0) to gender sensitive training (section 4.4) organisational practices and the promotion of work-life balance (section 5.1). **Achieving gender balance in decision-making requires more than just increased representation**. Ensuring that an appropriate number of women are on committees should be accompanied by measures to examine decision-making processes to ensure decisions consider gender issues and women are empowered to take an equal role.

When developing a GEP, organisations should consider the different locations for decision-making and their roles and remit. For example, all organisations covered by the GEP eligibility criterion will have a senior executive team with day-to-day responsibility for decision-making, alongside some form of governing body or comparable arrangement that has oversight of the organisation's main decisions. In addition, organisations may have a variety of other decision-making locations. For example, universities may have a range of committees relating to quality assurance and research approval, including at departmental levels. Similarly, RFOs or public bodies will also have a range of decision-making bodies, for example for funding decisions, or advisory groups that should also be considered.

The FP7 FESTA project identified specific policies and practices that can be considered to improve organisational processes, procedures and culture so that more women can take on and stay in leadership and decision-making positions:

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[14] See the 2020 "Report on the Implementation of Targets: Follow-Up on the 2018 Guidance Recommendations" from the ERAC SWG GRI. The 2018 Guidance had been prepared by the European Commission and then Helsinki Group on Gender in R&I in response to the Council Conclusions of 1 December 2015 on Advancing Gender Equality in the European Research Area,

- **Providing all decision-makers and leaders with gender equality training,** particularly Committee members and Chairs. This can be crucial to help mitigate (unconscious) selection biases, but also in raising awareness and understanding of the gender dynamics at play in interactions during meetings (section 4.4).

- **Examining and adapting processes and procedures** for selection and appointment of staff on committees and other bodies. This can include auditing the work of committees and decision-making bodies to assess the inclusiveness of their practices and outcomes; reviewing the selection processes of committees and decision bodies specifically; making appointments to committees on a fixed term basis to ensure that membership changes regularly.

- **Ensuring gender balance through introducing gender quotas**. EIGE defines gender quotas as a *"positive measurement instrument… that establishes a defined proportion (percentage) or number of places to be filled by, or allocated to, women and/or men, generally under certain rules or criteria".* Voorspoels & Inge in their 2019 paper 'Implementing gender quotas in academia: a practice lens. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion' identified different ways that gender quotas or targets can be implemented, including:

  - **Targeted advertising of calls**: for example, advertising positions actively amongst networks of women or towards potential female candidates for positions can encourage women to come forward as candidates.
  - **Scouting**: for example, actively seeking and identifying women candidates suited to roles in decision-making and leadership positions. This may be done directly, by for example, inviting individual women to become a (candidate) member of a decision-making body; writing to all eligible women staff to encourage them to apply; consulting women scientists associations and professional societies; consulting existing databases of outstanding women academics – such as AcademiaNet – or else asking previous members whether they might nominate a woman to attend in their place. This might also be done indirectly, through faculty directors, deans, department chairs, lab directors, and encouraging colleagues to identify potential female candidates through general work activities and networks.

  While quotas are generally seen as effective in bringing forward an improved gender balance, quotas can evoke significant resistance. It is worth carefully considering the pros and cons of introducing quotas, taking into account cultural specificities. A meaningful participatory approach to developing and implementing GEPs is key for tackling resistance to such measures, including through training, awareness-raising, working groups, consultations and other forms of engagement.

- **Making committee membership more transparent.** Evidence shows that women are more likely to succeed in recruitment and promotion when there is clarity about what is required, when information about the opportunities is freely available and criteria used in decision-making are clear and unequivocal. Ensuring that staff or stakeholders know the membership of key committees, that minutes are published openly on websites, and that vacancies are published with the conditions for applying and the evaluation criteria, can be important in increasing gender balance in decision-making.

- **Providing support to female employees** who are disproportionately burdened to achieve leadership and decision-making goals. This can be done through leadership

programmes for women or through gender-balanced development programmes, to help enhance their leadership competences and explore individual leadership styles; leadership mentoring programmes; and peer networking opportunities.

- **Ensuring that leadership and decision-making roles are properly recognised** in evaluations of work, including in relation to generation of research funding and outputs.

Box 12: Gender balance in decision-making

Ghent University (Belgium): In response to legislation requiring gender balance in university decision-making, in 2014, Ghent University changed its procedures for the election of the members of its Board of Governors. Election procedures request a 40/60 gender-balanced representation of its members and faculties are required to have at least one male and one female candidate for the elections. Where elections do not meet the minimum 40/60 gender balance, the candidate with the least votes from the overrepresented sex (compared to other faculties) is replaced by the faculty's candidate of the other sex with the highest number of votes. This procedure resulted in a gender balance on the Board of Governors for the first time in the university's history. *Source: GEAR tool*

Lund University (Sweden): The AKKA programme at Lund University focuses on developing leadership competences rather than personal characteristics. From 2004 to 2014, five AKKA programmes have been offered to 150 senior scholars. Within the programme, the academic organisation and leadership are subjected to critical scrutiny from a gender perspective. The purpose is to address gender structures and make visible the gendered power structure that generates different possibilities and conditions for women and men. The programme has successfully increased the number of women in leading positions and helped create gender-aware leaders who have served as "change agents", however analysis carried out in 2020, after the discontinuation of the programme in 2014, shows that backsliding occurs if efforts are not sustained. The AKKA programme has however inspired similar programmes in various universities, including the current High Potential University Leaders Identity & Skills Training (H.I.T.) Program - Inclusive Leadership in Academia at the University of Zürich (Switzerland). *Source: 2015 EIGE report on the AKKA Leadership Programme and 2020 presentation in the framework of the ACT project.*

The Higher Education, Research and Science Section of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (Czech Republic): Has introduced a directive on gender balance in advisory boards and evaluation committees. The target of 40% of both sexes will be monitored on an annual basis. *Source: Horizon 2020 project GENDERACTION's 2020* policy brief on Disrupting measures for gender equality in research and innovation.

Portuguese legislation in the public sector (Portugal): The government adopted Act No. 26/2019 of 28 March 2019 to increase the quotas for women in public administration – including higher education institutions (HEIs) – from 33% to 40%, with a minimum proportion of 40% of persons from each sex on lists of candidates to be elected as members of the collegial bodies of the government and among the management of HEIs and respective organic units. *Source: ERAC SWG GRI Report on the Implementation of Targets: Follow-Up on the 2018 Guidance Recommendations*

Estonian Research Council (Estonia): The Council set a strategic priority to strive for gender balance in decision-making positions and on the legislative level for the Evaluation Committee of the Estonian Research Council (RFO), which evaluates applications for research funding. It is recommended on the legislative level that, when possible, gender balance shall be taken into account in forming the committee, with preference being given to candidates of the unrepresented gender in the committee. It is also recommended that researchers of different academic seniority are represented in the committee. *Source: ERAC SWG GRI Report on the Implementation of Targets: Follow-Up on the 2018 Guidance Recommendations*

The Swedish Research Council (Sweden): The Swedish Research Council undertakes regular reviews of decision-making procedures to identify potential gender biases in funding processes and outcomes. This includes a programme of observations of evaluation panels to achieve the Research Council's gender equality objectives. The 2019 review recommended the following actions:

- Make room for reflection by assessment panels on the central concepts of gender equality, objectivity and bias;
- Ensure all panel members are informed about the Swedish Research Council's gender equality goal at an early stage;
- Increase vigilance of gender equality in the assessment through the panel chair and Swedish Research Council personnel;
- Continue to highlight the issue of assessment of competence and merit for researchers and the impact on gender-equal allocation of research grants.

Source: A gender-equal process – a qualitative investigation of the assessment of research grant applications 2019

The Research Council of Norway (RCN) (Norway): RCN's Balanse Programme seeks to promote gender equality and gender balance in Norwegian research, with a particular focus on increasing the proportion of women in senior academic and research management positions, including through the creation of a national learning arena at the programme level targeting leaders in the research sector.

Advance HE (IE, UK): Advance HE runs the Aurora leadership development initiative for women, which has already supported over 8300 women from nearly 200 different institutions across the UK and Ireland. The programme explores four key areas associated with leadership success: Identity, Impact & Voice; Core Leadership; Politics & Influence; and Adaptive Leadership Skills. The programme builds on the role played at institutional level by in-house senior advocates, so-called Aurora champions (women and men), who help identify women participants in their institutions, as well as mentors and role models.

5.3 Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

Women face systemic discrimination and structural barriers along their career path in research and innovation. Recruitment, selection and career progression measures aim to ensure that women and men get equal chances to develop and advance their careers. **Critically reviewing existing selection processes and procedures at all stages and remedying any biases** are important steps for ensuring gender equality in academic and research careers in higher education organisations and other RPOs. Public bodies and RFOs should also consider the quality of their own recruitment and career progression practices whilst also considering how their policies and funding programmes can promote gender equality in research careers. When addressing gender equality in recruitment and career progression, a GEP could explore and outline:

- **What** targets should be set in terms of recruitment of women and progression into senior roles;
- **Which** inclusive and proactive measures can be implemented to achieve these targets.

Gender equality in recruitment and career progression is not an isolated topic and hence should be addressed in GEPs in synergy with other actions. In particular, actions outlined in section 5.2 to ensure gender balance in decision-making, as well as section 5.1 on Work-life balance and organisational culture, are likely to intersect with policy measures on recruitment and career progression. A GEP may include review of the following areas:

a. **Recruitment and promotion**. Potential measures may include:

- Establishing **codes of conduct** for recruitment and promotion. Clearly defined principles can increase transparency and help avoid unconscious biases. The European Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers is a well-established example (see **Box 13** below).
- Involving **gender equality expertise** in recruitment and promotion committees. Gender equality officers and/or gender scholars can report on the equal consideration given to all female and male candidates, including, for example, the type, frequency, and quality of the questions asked of all candidates, or in the case of promotion processes, the remarks made about candidates for career progression, and any gender biases observed.
- Providing **unconscious bias training** for recruiters, reviewing **language used** in adverts and **being aware of language biases** in recommendation letters (see section 4.4 on unconscious bias and training).
- **Preferring open and publicly advertised** recruitment and selection procedures over closed ones.
- Increasing the number of potential women candidates **by broadening the disciplinary range of recruitment in fields where women are under-represented**.
- **Proactively identifying women in underrepresented fields**, including active scouting of women through, e.g., field-specific internet sites.
- Using **standardised CVs** and undertaking **blind assessment of CVs**.
- Ensuring that search and appointment **panels are gender-balanced,** or if not possible, **including a minimum number of women**.

- **Increasing accountability** by requiring departments and committees to justify recruitment and promotion shortlists that do not include women.
- Agreeing on a policy of **re-advertising** if there are no women in the applicant pool.

b. **Evaluation and appraisal criteria** for researchers may also consider:
   - Accounting for the time frame/period for the achievements and the intensity of work carried out.
   - Accounting for career breaks and discount leave periods when assessing research output, also placing a suitable value on non-traditional career paths, e.g. getting particular kinds of training, unusual undergraduate degrees and different job experiences.
   - Assessing research quality rather than quantity, and not relying solely on publication citation index[15].
   - Assessing soft skills as well as research outcomes, such as being a project leader of a research project with a successful conclusion.
   - If defining criteria in a new, unbiased way is not possible, it should be considered whether biased criteria can be given a smaller weight.

c. Ensuring that administrative responsibilities, student supervision and marking workloads are **transparent and valued** alongside research outputs.

d. Considering **organisation-wide workload planning models** to promote transparency and fairness, by enabling an equitable and transparent spread of workload between academic staff that is consistent between departments.

Box 13: Examples of initiatives for gender equality in recruitment and career progression

KU Leuven (Belgium): The launch of the KU Leuven Gender Action Plan 2014-2017 marked the establishment of the gender vanguards, i.e. a full professor who is a member of the assessment committee of the faculty (or group). Gender vanguards are present on each assessment and promotion committee. They:

- Monitor the number of female and male candidates in each recruitment/promotion round
- Guard a gender-sensitive assessment
- Explicitly pay attention to implicit bias and gendered language
- Ensure that feedback is constructive, gender-neutral and unambiguous

To enable the gender vanguards to thoroughly carry out their duty, the Diversity Policy Office organises sessions to boost their knowledge on gender mechanisms in the assessment, and the effect of unconscious bias.

[15] See for example: Sara Reardon, "Fewer citations for female authors of medical research", *Nature* (29 July 2021)

Masaryk University (Czech Republic): The University has included preferential treatment for projects with researchers returning from parental leave. This is aimed at individuals who will have a key role in the project and is implemented as part of an internal competition to fund interdisciplinary projects through the University Grant Agency. *Source: Horizon 2020 project GENDERACTION's 2020 policy brief on Disruptive measures for gender equality in R&I*

Freie Universität Berlin (Germany): The university has a long-standing policy to increase the number of female professors. This includes clear and strict formal rules for the recruitment process. For example, half of the members of search committees, and at least two of them, must be female scholars (one of them a women professor). If there are no female candidates among the shortlisted recruits, the department is obliged to explain why, including information on attempts to obtain applications from female candidates, and to explain whether the gender equality officer had been consulted and how the department plans to increase the number of female scholars in the future. To achieve a higher percentage of female professors, the university is actively counselling the members of search committees and engages in active scouting for female talent. Moreover, gender equality officers are involved throughout the process. As a result, the share of female professors rose from 24% to 32% between 2008 and 2017 and reached 37% by 2019. *Source: EUA report on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in European Higher Education Institutions*

The German Cascade Model and the Women Professors Programme (Germany): German higher education and research institutions have been encouraged to implement the "cascade model" for promotion, in which a quota or target proportion of women is set for each career level that corresponds to the proportion of women at the next lowest qualification level. The DFG Research-Oriented Standards on Gender Equality recommend this approach, and the higher education act of the German Land North Rhine-Westphalia of 2014 made the application of the cascade model mandatory for setting up targets for the recruitment of women professors (Article 1 §37a). The cascade model is also implemented outside of Germany, including in the **Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) (Belgium).** Furthermore, the German_Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) initiated in 2008 the Women Professors Programme, renewed since then, which developed a successful twofold approach: encourage the design and implementation of GEPs in German higher education institutions and increase the number of women professors. If its GEP proposal is positively assessed, the institution can be granted funding for up to three professorships held by women for the course of five years. The impact of the Women Professors Programme has been assessed and analysed repeatedly, including in a recent BMBF report.

Technical University (TU) of Delft (Netherlands): The strategic framework for TU Delft states that diversity is needed for excellence and innovation. As such, one of the five core objectives of the HR strategy of TU Delft is to attract a diverse pool of talent. Specific actions include: the setting-up of the Delft Women in Science (DEWIS) network, participation in the Westerdijk Talent impuls programme to increase the share of female professors in academia, the establishment of the Delft Technology Fellowship to offer high-profile, tenure-track positions to outstanding female academic researchers, and gender awareness training for members of the selection committees for professors. *Source: EUA report on Universities' Strategies and Approaches towards Diversity, Equity and Inclusion*

Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (Spain): a gender coefficient has been included in the evaluation of female candidatures for promotion to full professor category, with their evaluation marked up. *Source: Horizon 2020 project GENDERACTION's 2020 policy brief on Disruptive measures for gender equality in R&I*

Higher Education Authority (Ireland): The Gender Equality Task 2018 to 2020 action plan recommended that higher education institutions ensure that Higher Education Institution workload allocation models are transparent and monitored for gender bias on an annual basis and embedded into performance reviews of managers and supervisors. Since 2016, transparent workload models are in place in all seven Irish universities. Universities are working to ensure that the principles that underpin their models and the way they are implemented are not gender biased. Each university is examining how workload allocation data can be analysed and aggregated to monitor for gender bias.

The 2015 report by the ERA Steering Group on Human Resources and Mobility on **Open, Transparent and Merit-based Recruitment of Researchers (OTM-R)** outlines how open recruitment promotes gender equality. In particular, the OTM-R recommends gender awareness throughout the recruitment process within an institution, including (but not limited to) the gender balance within appointment committees, e.g., not less than one third of one gender in the committee. In addition, the OTM-R recommends that merit should be judged qualitatively as well as quantitatively, focusing on results within a diversified career path, and should consider career breaks and lifelong professional development. The Horizon 2020 GEARING ROLES project has also reviewed the OTM-R and how these recommendations can be put into practice and adapted to further support gender equality, including clear disaggregated data, selection criteria, sensitivity of language, composition and procedures of selection panels and appointments.

The Research Centres of Catalonia (CERCA) (Spain): CERCA has developed a series of videos on gender equality issues in scientific research organisations including a video on recruitment bias in research institutes which mocks a faculty search committee, highlighting key gender-biased behaviours that can occur, as evidenced by scholarship.

The **online webinar from Horizon 2020 project GE Academy** on 'Gender bias in academic recruitment and promotion. Recognizing and overcoming it' is a useful guide to understanding gender bias in academic recruitment and implementing measures to avoid it.

5.4 Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content

The GEP should consider **how the gender dimension will be incorporated in the contents of research or educational activities and outputs of the organisation.** It can set out the organisation's commitment to incorporating gender equality in its research and innovation priorities, the processes for ensuring that sex and gender analysis is considered in the design and outputs of research and teaching, and the support and capacity provided for researchers to develop methodologies that incorporate the gender dimension.

The **integration of the gender dimension addresses the incorporation of sex and/or gender analysis through the entire R&I cycle**. This includes setting of research priorities through defining concepts, formulating research questions, developing methodologies, gathering and analysing sex/gender disaggregated data, evaluating and reporting results and transferring them to markets into products and innovations. The integration of the gender dimension is relevant in many R&I fields. Looking at potential sex and/or gender differences and at gender equality related issues brings added value in terms of research excellence, rigor, reproducibility and creativity, brings in-depth understanding of all people's needs, behaviours and attitudes, and enhances the societal relevance of research and innovation. Integrating the gender dimension into educational activities, including teaching curricula as well as public engagement, is also crucial for the proper training of the next generations of researchers and innovators.

Research funding organisations (RFOs) play an important role in shaping the research activities and outputs of research performing organisations, including by designing programmes that support excellent research with wider impacts. In this context, RFOs are key in ensuring that the gender dimension is properly integrated into the contents of the research and innovation projects that they support. The European Commission, further strengthening the measures introduced in Horizon 2020, and building on the recommendations of its Expert Group presented in the Gendered Innovations 2 report, has set the integration of the gender dimension into funded R&I content as a requirement by default in Horizon Europe[16].

RFOs may wish to consider the following questions through their GEP:

- Do funding programmes encourage or require prospective applicants to consider the gender dimension of their work, including the scope of their research inquiry and the potential impact of their research results on different groups?

- Do strategic, or 'grand challenge', research funding objectives include a gender dimension? Are there specific calls or opportunities that are designed to stimulate research around the gender dimension across different disciplines?

- Do funding decisions have processes for identifying or flagging where sex and/or gender analysis should be considered and mechanisms for evaluating how research projects account for the gender dimension, as part of evaluation criteria for research excellence and impact?

- Is sufficient expertise incorporated into decision-making processes, including peer review processes and panels, to assess the gender dimension of project applications or in other types of research assessment exercises?

[16] See section on "Gender equality and inclusiveness", p.15 of the Horizon Europe Programme Guide.

- Does monitoring of programme outcomes include the integration of the gender dimension?

  For example:

  - The number and proportion of applications, high quality applications and funded projects that have a gender dimension and which fully take gender into account.

  - The number and proportion of project-related peer-reviewed publications that include a gender dimension.

  - The number and proportion of innovations that can be classified as gender-sensitive and the innovations, market opportunities, programmes or policies resulting from integrating sex and/or gender analysis into R&I.

- Are there arrangements in place to raise awareness amongst researchers and prospective applicants about the gender dimension of R&I, including through academic conferences, briefings, and training opportunities?

Research performing organisations (RPOs) as well as **public organisations** with educational missions, such as science museums, can also take similar steps to ensure that the gender dimension is integrated into the research and educational activities of the organisation.

They may also wish to consider the following questions:

- Do prospective research projects include a gender impact assessment or similar, including the scope and design of research and the groups affected by its results?

- Do internal quality assurance and approval processes for research and teaching programmes review whether the gender dimension has been considered appropriately in their design?

- Is there support and leadership in place that enables and promotes the incorporation of sex and gender analysis into research design and reviewing teaching curricula?

Having well-developed, coordinated, and institutionalised gender studies activity in RPOs (including for examples a dedicated department or interdisciplinary research institute, research programmes, licence, masters and PhD programmes, accreditation procedures) is also important to provide evidence and inform on the latest advancements in gender knowledge and practice.

Box 14: Examples of measures to integrate the gender dimension into R&I content

The German Environment Agency (Germany): The German environment agency implemented a gender mainstreaming programme for its research activities as part of its GEP. Steps included a gender impact assessment process into the approval of all research projects, support for the integration of gender into research design, as well as steps to ensure effective presentation of gender-specific research results and outcomes.

Irish Research Council (IRC) (Ireland): The IRC was the first research funding organisation in Ireland to publish a gender strategy, which aims to support gender equality in research careers across all disciplines as well as support the integration of sex and gender analysis into research content. The Gender Strategy and Actions are published on the IRC's website, together with progress reports such as Promoting Gender Equality and the Integration of Gender Analysis in Research. The IRC is also a partner in the GENDER-NET Plus ERA-NET Co-fund and co-funds transnational research projects integrating the gender dimension in SDG related fields.

Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) (Ireland): SFI also now requires that applicants fully consider the potential biological sex and socio-cultural gender dimensions as key analytical and explanatory variables in their research, and demonstrate that they have given full consideration to any potential sex/gender aspects in their proposed research programme, as detailed in their Guidance for Applicants on Ethical and Scientific Issues (6. Sex/Gender in Research Statement).

Technology Agency of the Czech Republic (TA CR) (Czech Republic): The Agency provides guidance to researchers and applicants on the design of projects and proposals through its handbook on 'Gender Dimension in the content of research: When and how to take it into account in projects' and a dedicated website including videos developed by the Horizon 2020 funded GEECCO project.

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) (Canada): CIHR's Institute of Gender and Health (IGH) has created guidelines, tools and resources, including online training modules, to help researchers and reviewers better account for sex and gender in health research. CIHR expects all research applicants to integrate gender and sex into their research designs, methods and analyses and interpretation and/or dissemination of findings when appropriate.

Kilden genderresearch.no (Norway): Kilden, an independent sub-unit of the Research Council of Norway, has also produced a series of case studies examining how gender is relevant to different disciplines and areas of research. The handbook provides examples, ideas and guidelines for researchers who want to learn more about gender perspectives, also within fields where these perspectives do not necessarily seem obvious.

Box 15: The gender dimension in university curricula

Oxford Brookes University (UK): As part of the Horizon 2020 funded project GEARING ROLES, Oxford Brookes produced a diagnostic and self-assessment checklist for gender in the curriculum. The checklist poses questions for academics and other staff to examine how and where gender is integrated into the teaching curricula and to provide suggestions and options for considering potential approaches.

The **GARCIA Project**, funded under FP7, has produced a Toolkit for Integrating Gender Sensitive Approach into Research and Teaching.

The **GENDER-NET ERA-NET**, also funded under FP7, developed a Manual with guidelines on the integration of sex and gender analysis into research contents, recommendations for curricula development and indicators as well as an accompanying online tool.

The **Xarxa Vives network** of 22 higher education institutions in Spain, France, Andorra and Italy, has created a series of handbooks examining in depth how gender can be incorporated into the curricula of different subjects. The handbooks are published in multiple languages and range from natural and physical sciences, medicine to social sciences and humanities subjects. The handbooks examine how gender may be addressed or represented in university teaching in ways that are specific to different subjects, and the different resources that academics may draw on in their teaching.

Charité-Universitätsmedizin Berlin (Germany): The Institute of Gender in Medicine of Charité has been a pioneer in developing a full medical curriculum on gender medicine for undergraduates as well as Masters Courses. The components and outcomes of this new curriculum have been detailed in a 2015 publication.

5.5 Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is an issue that is often underestimated in research organisations and universities. All organisations are subject to relevant local laws and regulations and many organisations are likely to have existing employment policies that cover dignity and harassment at work.

A GEP may consider **what measures the organisation takes to combat gender-based violence and sexual harassment**, including behaviour that violates any individual's dignity or that creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Through a GEP, organisations may wish to consider **examining the prevalence** of sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence and **take further steps** to ensure that they have clear organisational policies and measures on sexual harassment that address the following dimensions:

- **Behaviours:** Establishing and codifying the expected behaviours of employees, and students where relevant, including the actions that are considered sexual harassment. A code of conduct can clarify when relationships are and are not considered harassment, but it should also ensure that potential victims or witnesses of harassment are not deterred from reporting instances. It may clarify how interpretation of these behaviours depend on differences of power or authority within different relationships, such as between junior or senior staff, or thesis advisor and PhD candidate.

- **Reporting:** A policy may outline how all members of the organisation can report instances of sexual harassment, including where they are the victim of harassment or witness harassment. This would include clear, visible, and robust reporting channels. These channels would address barriers to reporting, including concerns that reports may not be taken seriously, and make clear what can be done to investigate anonymous reports.

- **Investigation:** A policy can set out visible and easy to understand information for all staff and students about the investigatory and decision-making process, including associated timescales. The policy can set out arrangements to ensure investigations are independent and fair and clarify the range of actions that may result from the investigation, as well as information about appeal processes and how this can be accessed.

- **Support for victims:** The policy may consider how advice and information on their options are provided to victims or witnesses when a report has been made. This can also include what practical support is available, such as counselling or other forms of pastoral support, both within the organisation or through external organisations where appropriate and how staff or students are signposted towards it.

- **Disciplinary measures and prosecution:** The policy should also cover disciplinary/grievance procedures for perpetrators at organisation-level and may also cover guidance and support for reporting to the police, and legal proceedings against those suspected abusers or harassers, including court cases.

A GEP can also consider how the whole organisation can be mobilised to establish **a culture of zero tolerance** toward sexual harassment and gender-based violence. This includes communications activities that identify the problem but also measures to ensure

that all members of the organisation are empowered to change attitudes, intervene where necessary and create an inclusive and safe culture for the whole organisation.

Activities may include training – including through interactive 'forum' theatre – for all staff on expectations, policy, and processes as well as practical advice on how to deal with different situations, such as through 'bystander' training. In addition, broader campaigns and awareness-raising may also be developed to communicate these issues and expectations to the wider organisations, for example a student community.

Box 16: resources for combating gender-based violence

The **Universities Supporting Victims of Sexual Violence: Training for Sustainable Services** project was funded by the European Commission's Justice, Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020 DAPHNE strand). It has developed a range of training materials alongside other resources and material that have been deployed in universities and research institutes around Europe and which can be accessed on its website along with other materials.

The **It Stops Now Toolkit** is a free resource, which aims to empower staff and students in higher education institutes to combat sexual violence and harassment. The project was also funded by European Commission's 2014-2020 DAPHNE strand. It includes advice and guidance on developing harassment and disclosure policies, supporting staff and running campaigns.

UniSAFE is a Horizon 2020 funded project launched in 2021 that aims to produce better knowledge on gender-based violence and sexual harassment in RPOs, and to translate this knowledge into operational tools for higher education, research organisations and policymakers. The project will be publishing resources and analysis across the interrelated issues of prevention, protection, prosecution and disciplinary measures, provision of services, partnerships, and policies.

Sciences Po Bordeaux (France): Established a sexual harassment monitoring unit in December 2018 as part of the implementation of its GEP through the SAGE project, funded by Horizon 2020. The unit comprises the Gender Equality Officer, an occupational psychologist, a legal officer and a prevention officer. Sciences Po has since set up a commission on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) involving academic staff and students. In January 2021, the report recommended increasing the support available to victims of harassment and violence, improving the prevention of harassment through enhanced training and improving the clarity and strength of disciplinary procedures.

Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities (Spain): In 2019 following the State Pact against Gender-based violence, the Spanish Ministry required all public research organisations to have a protocol for addressing sexual harassment. Supporting actions have been implemented with the universities and the national Rectors Conference, including training for counsellors on sexual harassment; studies on the impact of sexual harassment, aggressions, and abuse in academia; prevention campaigns on university campuses (particularly against 'date rape'); and training and prevention programmes against gender-based violence in academia. *Source: ERAC SWG GRI's May 2020 report on Sexual Harassment in the Research and Higher Education Sector: National Policies and Measures in EU Member States and Associated Countries*

Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (France): The French ministry has launched a national action plan against sexist and sexual violence in higher education and R&I organisations since 2017, involving the creation of several stakeholder working groups which led, among other actions, to the development of training networks and of a national communication campaign. A funding programme was also launched in 2020, supporting 24 different projects. Moreover, the implementation of measures "preventing and dealing with discrimination, violence, moral or sexual harassment and sexist behaviours" is one of the requirements of the mandatory GEPs imposed for public institutions, as per the Law of 6 August 2019 on the Transformation of the public service (Article 80), and the ministry has been providing support to concerned establishments.

6 Further resources

The GEAR tool produced by DG Research and Innovation and EIGE has extensive step-by-step advice and resources about the development of GEPs in R&I organisations. In addition, EIGE has produced a range of resources on key gender equality issues that are relevant to all types of organisations. Examples of these resources include:

- A roadmap for setting up a GEP
- Success factors for GEPs
- Toolkit for gender sensitive communication

Over 200 research performing and research funding organisations have been supported for the implementation of GEPs, through 30 collaborative projects, under FP7 and the Horizon 2020 Science with and for society (SwafS) work programme. These projects have produced a wealth of knowledge, resources, and tools on gender equality in R&I.

GEP projects funded under Horizon 2020 and now completed or well advanced include:

- LIBRA: Unifying innovative efforts of European research centres in the life sciences to achieve gender equality
- GENERA: Gender Equality Plans of Research Institutions and Organisations in the physics research field
- PLOTINA: promoting gender balance and inclusion in research, innovation and training
- SAGE: Systematic action for gender equality in higher education and research
- EQUAL-IST: Gender equality in information science and technology
- Baltic Gender: Baltic Consortium on Promoting Gender Equality in Marine Research Organisations
- TARGET: Gender Equality Innovating Institutions in the Mediterranean basin
- GEECCO: Gender Equality in Engineering through Communication and Commitment
- CHANGE: Challenging Gender (In)Equality in science and research
- R&I PEERS: Pilot experiences for improving gender equality in research organisations in Mediterranean countries
- SUPERA: Supporting the promotion of Equality in Research funding and Academia
- Gender Smart: Gender in Science Management of Agriculture & life sciences, including Research and Teaching
- GEARING ROLES: Gender Equality Actions in Research Institutions to transform Gender Roles
- SPEAR: Gender Equality Plans in Research Performing Organisations and collaborative learning.

More GEP projects are ongoing and links to all GEP-related projects funded under Horizon 2020 are accessible through CORDIS.

The ACT Project has been supporting 8 different communities of practice across Europe and Latin America to enable research performing and funding organisations to collaborate, share good practices and develop joint initiatives to promote GEP implementation. Over 130 institutions from 26 countries currently belong to the ACT CoPs. CoPs are either regionally based (Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, Slovenia), thematically based (Gender Budgeting, Strategies targeting early career researchers) disciplinary based (GENERA- physics and LifeScience CoP) or according to the type of organisation (Research Funders). Further resources on developing a GEP are outlined in **Box 2**.

The European Commissions' policy report Gendered Innovations 2 provides methodologies, case studies and recommendations for integration sex and gender analysis, as well as intersectional analysis, in a number of scientific fields of particular relevance to Horizon Europe.

The League of European Research Universities (LERU) Policy Group on Equality, diversity and inclusion has also published a range of reports on gender equality in research and innovation including Women, universities and research: excellence without gender bias, Gendered research and innovation: Integrating sex and gender analysis into the research process, Implicit bias in academia: A challenge to the meritocratic principle and to women's careers - And what to do about it and Family Leave for Researchers at LERU Universities.

A **FAQ** on the GEP eligibility criterion in Horizon Europe is available on the Funding & Tenders Portal, as well as through the Commission's Gender Equality in R&I policy page.

Questions relating to the GEP eligibility criterion can also be sent to:
RTD-HORIZON-EU-GENDER-EQUALITY-PLAN@ec.europa.eu

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The EU Open Data Portal (http://data.europa.eu/euodp/en) provides access to datasets from the EU. Data can be downloaded and reused for free, for both commercial and non-commercial purposes.

This Guidance supports organisations to meet the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) eligibility criterion of Horizon Europe. Certain categories of legal entities applying to Horizon Europe must have a GEP or equivalent strategy in place to be eligible for funding. The Guidance builds on existing materials, good practices and resources that support gender equality in research and innovation (R&I).

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