



Ministry of Education, Culture and
Science

Guide for drawing up gender equality plans



Advisory Committee
Diverse and Inclusive
Higher Education
and Research

Table of contents

1. Introduction	3
2. European Commission guidelines: compulsory and recommended elements of a gender equality plan	4
3. An intersectional approach	6
4. An integrated approach towards diversity and inclusion – numbers, institutions, and knowledge	7
5. The elements of a gender equality plan	9
0. Organization	9
1. Numbers	9
2. Institutions	10
3. Knowledge	11
6. Overview of priority areas, available information, best practices and examples	12
0. Organization (<i>practical requirements</i>)	12
1. Numbers (<i>composition of staff and students</i>)	13
2. Institutions (<i>structure and culture</i>)	15
3. Knowledge (<i>teaching and research subject matter</i>)	17
7. Literature	19

1. Introduction

The European Commission is making institutional gender equality plans a precondition for securing funding from [Horizon Europe](#), the framework programme for research and innovation. The precondition is part of the plans drawn up by the European Commission for promoting gender equality ([Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025](#); [Gender Equality in the European Research Area](#)). From 2022, every legal entity (government body, research or higher education institution) must have a gender equality plan in order to be eligible for funding from Horizon Europe.

This guide has been drawn up in the light of this new precondition and offers practical information, points for consideration, examples, and best practices for drawing up a gender equality plan. Formulating a gender policy can serve as a stepping stone towards a broader-based diversity policy. Here, too, the guide offers points for consideration and inspirational ideas.

2. European Commission guidelines: compulsory and recommended elements of a gender equality plan

The European Commission has produced a number of process-related requirements that gender equality plans must meet.

1. Public document

- The gender equality plan is a formal public document.
- The plan must be signed by the top-level managers of the institution in question.
- The plan must be available on the institution's website.
- The plan must be disseminated throughout the institution.

2. Resources

- Resources must be allocated to positions or teams dedicated to gender equality.
- Time should be set aside for others to work on gender equality.

3. Data collection and monitoring

- Data on sex or gender of staff and management is available.
- Annual evaluation of and reports on progress and results.

4. Training and capacity building

- The entire organization is involved.
- Tackling gender bias in people and in decisions.
- Joint action on specific subjects.

The European Commission has also named a number of recommended priority areas:

1. Work-life balance and organisational culture.
2. Gender equality in leadership and decision-making.
3. Gender equality in recruitment and career development.
4. Integration of the gender dimension in the subject matter of research and teaching.
5. Measures aimed at countering gender-related violence, including sexual harassment.

See also: [Horizon Europe Eligibility Criterion Gender Equality Plans](#).

The [Gender Equality in Academia and Research \(GEAR\) Tool](#) is a detailed European step-by-step guide for drawing up a gender equality plan.

More information about gender equality in the European Union is available on the [European Institute for Gender Equality website \(EIGE\)](#).

3. An intersectional approach

First of all, this guide follows the requirements and recommendations by the European Commission on promoting gender equality at research and higher education institutes. However, gender is always linked to other social categories, such as ethnicity, functional impairment, age, sexual orientation, and social class. This makes an intersectional approach necessary when drawing up a gender equality plan.

Intersectionality is based on the fact that ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, and functional impairment are closely interrelated (Crenshaw, 1990) and that diversity exists even within the 'gender' category. In concrete terms, this means that measures devised and implemented for the purpose of promoting gender equality should not be targeted solely at white, middle-class, heterosexual, cisgender women who have a permanent position. The great level of diversity within the group of women academics should be taken into account. Particular attention must also be given to gender non-binary and transgender people.

4. An integrated approach towards diversity and inclusion – numbers, institutions, and knowledge

We present the points that should be considered for an intersectional gender equality plan on the basis of four priority areas. The starting point is that the plan should have a sound basis and the organization should be well managed in order for the plan itself to be properly implemented. The other priority areas concern the measures that can be taken. Much has been written about the introduction of effective measures; there are no simple solutions (Kalev, Dobbin & Kelly, 2006) The effectiveness of measures is highly dependent on the context, and not all measures appear to be productive (Leslie, 2019). Various studies have shown that a collection of measures is required for gender equality to be achieved at universities (Buitendijk, Curry & Maes, 2019; Van den Brink, 2017). In this guide, we have categorized the collection of proposed measures as follows:

0. Organization

measures for a sound infrastructure (organization)

1. Numbers

measures that enhance gender diversity (quantitative representation)

2. Institutions

measures that make an institution (culturally and structurally) gender inclusive

3. Knowledge

measures that include gender in the production of knowledge and the development of the education curriculum

A sound infrastructure – adequate resources, clear targets, and an action plan – form the basis for the three groups of measures.

The first group of measures is aimed at increasing gender equality in terms of numbers: improving recruitment, advancement, and retention of women academics. Achieving greater visibility of women academics is also part of this process.

The second group of measures is aimed at changing cultural and structural organizational processes that produce and sustain gender inequality. The third group of measures focuses on making knowledge production and dissemination (research and education) inclusive. Gender policy can only be effective if these three paths are followed simultaneously: increasing diversity among students and staff will not be successful without a restructuring of institutes and without taking into account diversity in knowledge production and in the curriculum (Bonjour, Van den Brink & Taartmans, 2019; Schiebinger & Schraudner, 2011).

5. The elements of a gender equality plan

An effective gender equality plan contains measures aimed at:

o. Organization

First, the organizational basis for a gender policy must be in order. This means making sufficient resources (FTE, budget) available and formulating clear goals to draw up, adjust and (continue to) implement a gender equality plan; it should be possible to modify it as necessary, and it should be implemented on a permanent basis. A gender equality plan can be divided into different stages or phases (Ellemers et al., 2018). Gender-specific data is collected during the analysis phase – procedures, processes, and practices are critically evaluated in order to identify gender inequalities and prejudices. The objectives are formulated during the planning phase – decisions are taken on what actions and measures should be taken in order to overcome the problems that have been identified. Resources and responsibilities are also allocated during this phase, and agreements made about the timeline. The implementation phase sees activities carried out, while efforts at expanding the network of stakeholders are actively pursued. They can also be involved using the group model construction (Lansu et al., 2020). This method aims to support groups in making decisions on problems for which several solutions are possible and no one solution is the best. The aim is to shape a group process in which consensus is reached. Central to this is the involvement in the decision-making process of all parties, who may have conflicting interests. Finally, during the monitoring phase, the process and progress are regularly evaluated. The findings from the monitoring phase make it possible to fine tune and improve any interventions that are made in order to achieve optimum results.

1. Numbers

A lack of gender diversity in terms of numbers may indicate a lack of inclusivity, especially if the numbers show a pyramid construction (greater diversity at lower levels, but less diversity at high levels). Evidence of the ‘leaky pipeline’ (Ysseldyk et al., 2019) or the glass ceiling provide starting points for targeted policies. Gender equality figures are published annually by the Dutch Network

of Women Professors. The Advisory Committee on Diversity and Inclusion in Higher Education and Research is considering options for examining other social categories. Measures in this category are aimed primarily at increasing gender diversity in the various scientific fields and hierarchical layers. This could involve the creation of special positions for women academics, as well as measures aimed at enhancing the visibility of women on committees, panels, and in external communications. An intersectional approach requires of such measures that diversity within the gender category is taken into account.

2. Institutions

Gender balance in academic ranks is not sufficient for the purpose of creating an inclusive and safe working environment. Measures for improving the numbers may be important, but they are ineffective if nothing is done about the structure and culture of the organization in question (Buitendijk et al., 2019; Täuber, 2020). Then, the so-called ‘revolving door effect’ kicks in; organizations succeed at bringing in under-represented groups, but fail to keep them in. This makes it necessary to create an inclusive structure and culture for all employees.

- **Structure.** The ways in which universities are structured can lead to inequality between different groups. Studies have shown that male and female academics in the Netherlands do not receive equal pay (De Goede, Van Veelen & Derks, 2016). Moreover, there are small but significant and systematic differences between men and women when it comes to the allocation of work duties, the availability of resources, and results of negotiations on terms and conditions of employment (Van Veelen & Derks 2019). The differences are small, but their cumulative effect over an entire career can lead to major inequalities. Other areas of focus in relation to structure are a lack of transparency in recruitment and selection; the allocation of tasks (over-representation of women in teaching and academic service); temporary contracts (over-representation of women with temporary contracts); guarantees of fixed positions; the physical environment (accessibility, representation); options for and actual take-up of maternity and parental leave.

- **Culture.** In general, one of the features of the academic world is that of an individual-based, hierarchical, and competitive culture. This can lead to a ‘chilly climate’ (Maranto & Griffin, 2011). This may be a breeding ground for the exclusion or isolation of groups, discrimination, and misconduct (Naezer et al., 2019; Sian, 2019). Nor does the image of ‘the ideal academic’ – white, male, energetic and passionate, always available, healthy, and without any care duties – contribute to an inclusive culture with equal opportunities for different groups of academics (Bleijenbergh et al. 2013; Herschberg et al., 2018; Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012). Studies have shown the existence of implicit bias in evaluations of both research and teaching (Chávez & Mitchell, 2020; Van der Lee & Ellemers, 2015; Moss-Racusin, 2018). This could materially affect advancement opportunities.

3. Knowledge

Academic studies point to the exclusion of groups and perspectives from the content of research. Studies show that failure to acknowledge gender differences when setting up and carrying out a research project can lead to costly errors. For example, cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death among women in Europe, but for years the phenomenon was only researched in relation to men (Maas et al., 2011; Den Ruijter et al., 2015). When social groups have structurally limited access to science, this affects the production of knowledge. Reflecting on how knowledge production in one’s own field is affected by such processes of exclusion should be a core feature of all academic practice. This also applies to the educational practice: the gender dimension should be better integrated in the education curriculum (Verdonk et al., 2016; Wekker et al., 2016).

6. Overview of priority areas, available information, best practices and examples

Elements that the European Commission has made compulsory for gender equality plans are shown with an asterisk (*) in the list below. Priority areas that the European Commission has recommended are marked with a double asterisk (**).

o. Organization (practical requirements)

Priority areas	Best practices, examples, and resources	Literature
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public statement and document* • Objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erasmus University Rotterdam Gender Equality Plan • Gender Equality in Academia and Research (GEAR) Tool • Intersecting inequalities – Gender Equality Index (EIGE) • Leiden University - Main Objectives and Diversity and Inclusion Workplan 2020 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buitendijk et al. (2019) • Ellemers, Sahin, Jansen & van der Toorn (2018)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific allocation of resources/budget and positions* 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bonjour et al. (2020)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed (advisory) team (different departments, positions, and backgrounds) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erasmus University Rotterdam – Roles and responsibilities • Leiden University Diversity and Inclusion Expertise Office, faculty page Governance and Global Affairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bonjour et al. (2020) • Lansu et al. (2020) • Vinckenburg (2017)

Priority areas	Best practices, examples, and resources	Literature
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection, monitoring, and evaluation* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GenderTime Project • Gender Equality Actions in Research Institutions to TraNsform Gender Roles (GEARING-Roles) • Women professors monitor 2020 (The Dutch Network of Women Professors) • She Figures (European Commission) • Monitor (Cultural) Talent to the Top • Cultural Diversity Barometer (Statistics Netherlands, only available in Dutch) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ellemers, Sahin, Jansen & van der Toorn (2018)

1. Numbers (composition of staff and students)

Priority areas	Best practices, examples, and resources	Literature
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender equality in management and decision-making roles/ gender quota** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erasmus University Rotterdam 25/25 policy • Women professors monitor 2020 (The Dutch Network of Women Professors) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arday (2018) • Derks (2017) • Voorspoels (2018)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating positions especially for women/ preferential policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irène Curie Fellowship Program (Eindhoven University of Technology) • Rosalind Franklin Fellowship (University of Groningen) • Preferential policy for women in employment – information for employers (Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, only available in Dutch) • Aletta Jacobs chairs for female academics (University of Groningen) • Philip Eijlander Diversity Program (Tilburg University) • Delft Technology Fellowship (Delft University of Technology) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Täuber (2019) • Van den Brink & Stobbe (2009)

Priority areas	Best practices, examples, and resources	Literature
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring career progress ('leaky pipeline') 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Careers and Gender Inequality: Leaky Pipeline and Interrelated Phenomena in Seven European Countries (GARCIA Working Papers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liu et al. (2019)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of role models (for staff and students) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Athena's Angels First female Rector Magnificus and President of the Executive Board (Leiden University) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bakken (2005)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocation of positions and tasks (who has temporary positions, poor terms and conditions of employment, uncertain contracts, invisible duties) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Babcock et al. (2017) Guarino & Borden (2017) Herschberg et al. (2019) Heijstra, Steinþórsdóttir & Einarsdóttir (2017) Murgia & Poggio (2018)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nominations for awards, prizes, committees, and scholarships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Just say 'no' to manels' (Nature Index) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Van den Brink & Benschop (2014) Bouvry et al. (2019)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representation in internal and external communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Diversity Symposium (Leiden University) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Horvath & Szczesny (2015)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentor and sponsorship programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross Mentoring Programme (Talent to the Top, only available in Dutch) Mentoring for Change (Universities Australia Executive Women) Sponsorship: Creating Career Opportunities for Women in Higher Education (Universities Australia Executive Women) Gender-sensitive Mentoring Programme in Academia: A Design Process (GARCIA Working Papers) Boardroom coaching (Talent to the Top, only available in Dutch) LNVH Mentoring Programme (The Dutch Network of Women Professors) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bohnet (2016) Leenders et al. (2020) O'Connor et al. (2020) De Vries, & Van den Brink (2016)

2. Institutions (structure and culture)

Priority areas	Best practices, examples, and resources	Literature
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment and selection** <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transparency and accountability in procedures - Training and capacity building committee members - Gender-neutral vacancies - Gender-neutral recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toolkit for organizing workshops 'precarious positions' for early career researchers (GARCIA Working Papers) Toolkit for organizing reflexive working groups for selection committee members (GARCIA Working Papers) Appointments of professors in the Netherlands (M/F). Myths, facts, and recommendations (The Dutch Network of Women Professors, only available in Dutch) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bohnet (2016) Van den Brink et al. (2011) Dutt et al. (2016) Herschberg et al. (2019) Nielsen (2016) Bhopal (2016) Picardi (2019)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition and rewards (DORA)/ changing the norm of 'the ideal academic'/ diverse career paths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition and Rewards Programme Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Van den Brink & Benschop (2012) Banchevsky et al. (2016)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work-life balance, organizational policy (dual career policy)** 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bos et al. (2019) Herschberg et al. (2014) Misra et al. (2012)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender budgeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender budgeting in academia – toolkit (GARCIA Working Papers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jónasdóttir et al. (2016) Bago d'Uva & Garcia-Gomez (2020)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equal distribution of material resources 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> De Goede, Van Veelen & Derks (2016) Van Veelen en Derks (2019)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive leadership development/focus on gender in leadership programmes** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toolkit: Gender sensitive PhD supervision (Female Empowerment in Science and Technology Academia) Course Academic Leadership, including a module on diversity and inclusion (Leiden University) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ashikali et al. (2020) Bourke & Titus (2020)

Priority areas	Best practices, examples, and resources	Literature
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preventing an individual-based and competitive culture ('chilly climate') and micro-aggression** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toolkit: Gender sensitive PhD supervision (Female Empowerment in Science and Technology Academia) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Britton (2017) Van Engen et al. (2019) Vacarro (2012) Beemyn & Brauer (2015) Fine (2017) Valentine & Wood (2018)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender bias training** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building, training, and support (GEARING Roles Project) Implicit bias training (Leiden University) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moss-Racusin et al. (2012) Dobbin & Kalev (2018)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support networks, diversity networks, student associations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Dutch Network of Women Professors Halkes Women Faculty Network (Radboud University Nijmegen) DEWIS, women's network of scientists (Delft University of Technology) Twente women's network (only available in Dutch) D&I networks and community (staff and students) – Sophia, LGBT+, LUDEN, Access and Support Network (Leiden University) Local and national academic networks for women in science (overview) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fisher & Kinsey (2014) Dutt et al. (2016)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of the physical environment (accessibility, art, names of buildings, photos, gender-neutral toilets) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessibility assessment carried out by Ongehinderd (Leiden University) Sculptures provide more diverse view of University's history (Leiden University) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arday & Mirza (2018) Moriña (2017)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures against gender-related violence and sexual harassment** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Security: measures at each university (Association of Universities in the Netherlands, only available in Dutch) Breeding ground and prevention of undesirable behaviour in academia (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ahmed (2019) Naezer et al. (2019) FNV/VAWO (2019)

3. Knowledge (teaching and research subject matter)

Priority areas	Best practices, examples, and resources	Literature
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration of diversity dimensions in research (gender, ethnicity, nationality, social class, functional impairment)** - Training research groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gendered Innovations 2: How Inclusive Analysis Contributes to Research and Innovation (European Commission) Toolkit for Integrating Gender-Sensitive Approach into Research and Teaching (GARCIA Working Papers) Network Intersectionality & Health Netherlands Dutch Society for Gender and Health Gender and Health Knowledge Programme (Netherlands Organisation for Health Research and Development, only available in Dutch) Gender and Mental Healthcare Alliance (only available in Dutch) Tailored Healthcare Alliance (only available in Dutch) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stuij, Muntinga, Bakker, Bendien, & Verdonk (2020)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration of diversity dimensions in teaching (gender, ethnicity, nationality, social class, functional impairment)** - Modules on gender, intersectionality, and inequalities - Part of Basic Teaching Qualification course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comenius Network – Inclusion track (only available in Dutch) Learning pathway: interculturalization and diversity (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Faculty of Medicine, only available in Dutch) - Minor Amsterdam Global Health Multidisciplinary minor Gender & Diversity (VU Amsterdam) Minor Gender and Diversity in Science, Society and Culture (University of Groningen) Foundations of Global Health (Maastricht University) Gender course catalogue (Atria Institute on Gender Equality and Women’s History, only available in Dutch) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verdonk et al. 2016 Wekker et al. 2016

Priority areas	Best practices, examples, and resources	Literature
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum check 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beyond diversity: a broad look at inclusive higher education (Inclusion track initiation document, Comenius Network, only available in Dutch) • Toolbox Diversity in Education (Utrecht University) • Toolkit for Integrating Gender-Sensitive Approach into Research and Teaching (GARCIA Working Papers) • PhD course: Intersectionality & I (Amsterdam Public Health, APH) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrews (2019) • De Jong et al. (2017) • Moriña et al. (2015) • Vazquez (2015) • Verdonk & Janczukowicz (2018)

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