

# ACTonGender Policy Brief

## Towards More Equal, Diverse, and Inclusive Research

The [Community of Practice for Gender Equality in Central and Eastern Europe](#) gathers practitioners operating mainly in countries from this region who have committed to the promotion of institutional change to advance gender equality in their organisations. Stemming from both our experiences and research, this policy brief is intended to raise awareness of the versatile aspects spanning gender equality in the research and innovation (R&I) sector.

### Summary

Today, as an essential element of human rights, gender equality is becoming more important in respect to developing awareness on biases and existing inequalities. Equality has been recognised as a societal value that impacts the quality of life of its members. GEP is a tool that facilitates this process for institutional and social implementation. This *Policy Brief* is a short fundamental outcome of the activities taken by the GEinCEE CoP and presents the conclusions adopted on the basis of the Gender Equality Auditing and Monitoring (GEAM) survey provided in 12 RPOs and HEIs. Policymakers, research funders, leaders, and individuals may find information here about the major biases and issues identified regarding career advancement, work-life balance, decision-making process, mobbing, and sexual harassment. A set of specific solutions in the areas of equality, inclusion, awareness, diversity, and supporting activities with a list of related actions is recommended. They give very practical methods and measures that can be applied step by step in a given organisation. Considering the lessons learned, the benefits that can be gained by implementing gender equality measures are described, too.

### The goal and objectives

In recent years, awareness over the issues of gender equality in research and innovation (R&I) has increasingly become a concern in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), with a number of common trends to be discerned in the region. For instance, the percentages of female researchers working in higher education institutions (HEIs) and the government sector in CEE countries are generally higher than in the “old” European Union countries. At the same time, the presence of women in R&I in the business sector, as well as in the R&I funding bodies and in R&I policy-making bodies, is relatively low. Women are also underrepresented in senior career stages and in the management positions of HEIs. In addition, the level of adoption of Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) in HEIs and research performing organisations (RPOs) – perceived as an effective tool for institutional change – is significantly lower than in other regions of Europe (European Commission 2019).

Acknowledging that CEE countries require advanced R&I systems, grounded in the fullest possible exploitation of all available ideas, skills and talents, and recognising the importance of gender equality in these processes, as well as considering the peculiarities of the CEE region, we express an urgent call for:

- a greater understanding of the importance of gender equality in R&I among representatives of RPOs, HEIs, Research Funding Organisations (RFOs), policy-making organisations, NGOs, and entrepreneurs operating in the R&I sector, to bring gender equality to all institutional and political agendas and to unlock opportunities for efficient action in the CEE countries;
- the intensification of cooperation among institutions operating on all levels of national R&I systems in the CEE region, striving to ensure a broad and open exchange of information and experiences in regards to the implementation of gender equality measures so that less advanced institutions (and countries) can gain support and experience-based knowledge from more advanced ones;
- the commitment of RPOs, HEIs, and RFOs to examining the gender equality status quo and publishing data and achievements to build evidence-based policies and strategies;
- the incorporation of measures into national legislations and policies which facilitate the reconciliation of work obligations and personal life requirements, as well as measures preventing gender discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace;
- national policymakers and R&I funding agencies must provide bold incentives for RPOs and HEIs striving to implement structural change towards gender equality, including financial support.

## Target groups

This policy brief is intended for stakeholders from Central and Eastern Europe, including:

- science policymakers,
- research funders,
- leaders of HEIs and RPOs,
- governance of scientific associations, and
- individual academics and researchers.

This publication will enrich the understanding of the importance of gender equality in R&I and the need for legally binding measures and evidence-based interventions aiming at removing barriers to the recruitment, retention, and career progression of female and male researchers, balancing work-family life and gender-balance in decision-making bodies.

## GEAM fact sheet

### Methodology

The Gender Equality Auditing and Monitoring (GEAM) survey<sup>1</sup> was conducted between June 2020 and March 2021 among employees of the 12 GEinCEE CoP member organisations with the use of online questionnaires (computer-assisted web interviewing technique, CAWI).

The [GEAM questionnaire](#) was developed by the Horizon 2020 ACT project to monitor the state of gender equality in HEIs, RPOs, and RFOs. The tool is based on the Athena Survey of Science, Engineering, and Technology (ASSET) and measurement scales available in the scientific literature. The questionnaire (originally in English) was translated into the national languages of the organisations.

In total, 5,299 respondents took the questionnaire with 2,514 of them, i.e. 47%, completing the entire survey. Apart from in 3 of the 12 institutions, more women than men completed the questionnaire.

Using an open recruitment strategy, invitations to participate in the electronic survey were sent to all employees working in scientific, research, and/or teaching, administrative, and technical positions. Participation in the survey was open and voluntary. Therefore, the results reflect the views of those who chose to answer the survey voluntarily.

GEAM survey results were analysed by individual organisations. The following analysis is based on the summaries of the results developed by participating organisations. Its aim is to present the main tendencies which are common to all or most of the participating institutions.

### Main results

Generally, the participants perceive their universities and research institutes positively (e.g. notice good relationships between employees), yet women are more interested in change in gender equality than men. In terms of equal treatment, the survey participants highlighted concerns in the following areas:

#### 1. Career advancement

Many respondents felt that men were granted "better" conditions for career development. Women are more likely to report unfair and nontransparent division of tasks. Additionally, women report a stronger feeling of being neglected in having access to resources. Attractive tasks, e.g. those that are beneficial for promotion, are more frequently assigned to men, while the lower scored tasks (caring for students, teaching, reporting on inequalities at the university) typically fall to women. The most important barrier to the promotion of women is limited access to informal circles of influence. Women are encouraged or invited to apply

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<sup>1</sup> For information about the tool and the questionnaire, please follow the link: <https://geam.act-on-gender.eu/>

for career advancement less often than men. Finally, women feel they have to perform more than men to achieve the same status.

## 2. Work-life balance

The survey results confirm that university employees are overloaded with teaching and administrative work. Both women and men reported long and excessive working hours over nights and weekends – which can potentially add to their burnout. However, in some universities, more women reported working overtime, which may indicate that working culture is more competitive for women and, following that, this may negatively affect their private lives, families, and relationships. In general, women reported a larger burden from work-family conflict. For example, at one of the research institutes, 90% of women arrive at work too tired to function well because of household work; meanwhile, more than two-thirds of men had never experienced this feeling. Although all respondents with care responsibilities more often report family-work conflict, more women draw attention to the so-called “maternal wall”, meaning that becoming a mother constitutes a significant barrier in fostering their careers. Also, women more often declared using WLB measures such as flexibility in working time/space, remote work (pre-pandemic).

## 3. Decision-making

The survey confirms the presence of vertical segregation. The gender imbalance at higher-level positions has been relatively unchanged: the respondents highlight the domination of men and limited opportunities for women to be appointed to these positions. Men are more frequently found in high-power positions (such as rectors or deans) and prevail in the positions of department or institute directors.

## 4. Sexual harassment, mobbing

The survey reveals that mobbing and sexual harassment are still present in both research and academia: up to 1/5 of respondents declared that they had personally experienced harassment or mobbing in the past 12 months. In addition, in some institutions, the employees reported that they most often struggle with harassment and mobbing from their superiors.

### Policies towards gender equality

Little or no commitment of universities and research institutes to promoting gender equality is discernible. A proactive attitude is missing, particularly in the area of proposed pro-family solutions that do not go beyond the regulations resulting from the *Labor Code*. Many respondents believe there is no progress regarding gender equality: they highlight a lack of commitment of management, lack of coordination and monitoring, and the absence of data reflecting the gender equality status in RPOs and HEIs. In general, many respondents are unaware of their rights in the workplace or where they can seek support regarding inequalities, which may prove particularly problematic in cases of mobbing and sexual harassment.

## Recommendations

BIAS / NEED	RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
<b>A. Equality</b>	<b>S-A1.</b> Equal treatment for all employees	<b>A-A1.1</b> Preparing and implementing a Gender Equality Plan with its continuous evaluation and monitoring, publishing the measures and results on the institutional web page <b>A-A1.2</b> Implementing effective anti-discrimination procedures for the entire academic community
	<b>S-A2.</b> Transparent recruitment process and career progression	<b>A-A2.</b> Reviewing the recruitment and advancement processes, to implement measures ensuring that equal treatment is respected both formally and practically
	<b>S-A3.</b> Fair and square salaries	<b>A-A3.</b> Developing policy that ensures similar salaries for similar position with similar background and responsibilities regardless of gender
<b>B. Inclusion</b>	<b>S-B1.</b> Non-stereotypical division of administrative tasks	<b>A-B1.1</b> Developing recommendations and measures on the gender-balanced division of administrative tasks <b>A-B1.2.</b> Regular monitoring of the gender division of administrative tasks
	<b>S-B2.</b> Equal access to flexible working time	<b>A-B2.</b> Creating institutional rules of flexible working time for all employees regardless of their position, work type, tenure, family situation, etc.
	<b>S-B3.</b> Inclusion of underrepresented groups in formal and informal decision-making bodies	<b>A-B3.1.</b> Developing recommendations and guidelines on balanced representation of various groups in decision making bodies. <b>A-B3.2.</b> Considering introduction of temporary special measures, e.g. quotas, for underrepresented groups
	<b>S-B4.</b> Full inclusion of staff returning from childcare leave	<b>A-B4.1</b> Developing internal rules and procedures preventing exclusion during and after childcare leave. <b>A-B4.2.</b> Developing mentoring programmes for those returning after a break
<b>C. Awareness</b>	<b>S-C1.</b> Awareness raising of organisational authorities on gender equality issues	<b>A-C1.</b> Organising obligatory periodic training, workshop and lectures for the top management, e.g. on implicit bias, requiring the related certificates
	<b>S-C2.</b> Enhanced awareness of all employees	<b>A-C2.</b> Organising training sessions for academics, administrative staff, and students to increase the awareness level regarding equality, inclusion and diversity, as well as unlawful behaviour (e.g. mobbing, harassment)
	<b>S-C3.</b> Non-discriminatory communication and language	<b>A-C3.1.</b> Developing guidelines on non-discriminatory language in official documents <b>A-C3.2.</b> Responding with appropriate measures towards cases of exclusive and sexist language <b>A-C3.3.</b> Introducing guidelines for gender-sensitive language
<b>D. Diversity</b>	<b>S-D3.</b> Diverse work environment	<b>A-D3.</b> Include diversity in the communication strategy through the use of pictures of employees with different genders, ethnic backgrounds etc. on institutional websites, promotional materials and internal communication
<b>E. Support</b>	<b>S-E1.</b> Systematic research and data collection on equal treatment	<b>A-E1.1.</b> Running a periodic and systematic survey, adjusted individually to the institution's needs <b>A-E1.2.</b> Using the information collected to monitor the progress made on gender equality in the institution
	<b>S-E2.</b> Official organisational body responsible for equal treatment	<b>A-E2.</b> Establishing a position of equal opportunity officer (or similar), with a given office, staff support and financial resources
	<b>S-E3.</b> Career mentoring	<b>A-E3.</b> Creating institutional support for career advancement and mentoring for under-represented groups
	<b>S-E4.</b> Strategic alliances with external bodies	<b>A-E5.</b> Making strategic alliances with external bodies involved in gender equality actions to support each other and exchange good practices

## The benefits for organisations

Implementing measures aimed at the enhancement of gender equality when treated from a cross-cutting perspective (a horizontal policy) requires improvements in order to attain long-lasting effects. Strategic gender interests are concerned with challenging deeply entrenched forms of gender discrimination in the legal system, sexual violence and harassment, the lack of representation in leading positions, exclusion from decision making bodies, and discrimination in the workplace. With organisations paying more attention to ethics and social responsibility, gender equality is increasingly seen as a social justice issue and organisational value. A gender equal organisational culture also brings effects by:

- creating a cohesive and productive workforce and improving teamwork,
- fostering the retention of employees in the organisation by securing fair and safe work conditions and careers for workers,
- enhancing the ability to attract talent by building the reputation of an organisation as a valued employer which observes fair hiring procedures and rules for promotion,
- boosting workplace diversity, which allows for greater creativity, innovation, and productivity.

## GEinCEE CoP'S Member organisations

This brief was produced collectively by the members of the GEinCEE CoP. For further information relating to the content of this policy brief, please contact [actongender@uj.edu.pl](mailto:actongender@uj.edu.pl)



## PROJECT INFORMATION

<i>PROJECT NAME</i>	Communities of Practice for Accelerating Gender Equality and Institutional Change in Research and Innovation across Europe
<i>ACRONYM</i>	ACT
<i>COORDINATOR</i>	Dr. Jörg Müller, Fundació Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (FUOC), <a href="mailto:jmuller@uoc.edu">jmuller@uoc.edu</a>
<i>CONSORTIUM</i>	Open University of Catalonia (Spain), Portia (United Kingdom), NOTUS (Spain), Joanneum Research Forschungsgesellschaft mbH (Austria), Advance HE (formerly Equality Challenge Unit) (United Kingdom), Loughborough University (United Kingdom), Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) (Argentina), Technical University Berlin (Germany), Karolinska Institute (Sweden), Science Foundation Ireland (Ireland), Federal Environmental Agency (Germany), Deutsches Elektronen-Synchrotron (Germany), Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) (France), Fundació Centre de Regulació Genòmica (CRG) (Spain), Jagiellonian University (Poland), ZRC SAZU (Slovenia) and University of Iceland (Iceland)
<i>DURATION</i>	May 2018 - October 2021 (42 months)
<i>WEBSITE</i>	<a href="https://act-on-gender.eu/">https://act-on-gender.eu/</a>