INTEGRATING GENDER BALANCE IN CIRCLE U. ACTIVITIES:

CONTEXTUALIZING THE GENDER DIMENSION IN THE ALLIANCE

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SUMMARY

The report presents our findings regarding the different national contexts within the Circle U. alliance, the gender equality work at the different universities, including the different gender equality plans and the structure and organisation of gender equality work, the challenges, obstacles and barriers involved in this work, lessons learned, best practices from the universities, as well as several recommendations for advancing gender equality at the Circle U. member universities. Moreover, the report provides an itinerary that outlines a roadmap for the development, implementation, and follow-up of gender equality plans, along with a toolbox consisting of strategies and tangible actions to support gender equality initiatives at the institutional level. In addition, the report includes concise country reports that highlight the contextual factors specific to each of the nine Circle U. member universities.

1 STUDY

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This executive summary provides an overview of the main findings, lessons learned, and recommendations from the study on gender equality initiatives conducted within the Circle U. alliance. The study aimed to integrate gender balance in the activities of the alliance and contextualise the gender dimension within Circle U. by analysing contextual factors, organisational aspects of gender equality work, and gender equality plans in the nine member universities. The specific objectives of the study were to:

- Review relevant legislation and policies at member universities, identify national and university measures to promote gender equality, and examine how differences in national gender legislation and cultures among the Circle U. member countries might influence R&I collaboration within the alliance.
- Identify challenges, barriers, and obstacles related to gender mainstreaming in the activities of Circle U. universities.

The key findings are as follows:

- **Distinct national contexts:** The study highlights the importance of considering national and socio-cultural contexts when addressing gender inequality. Varying levels of governmental support for gender equality initiatives were observed across different countries.
- **Differences in Gender Equality Plans**: Gender equality plans varied in terms of focus areas, degree of engagement, number of activities, duration and renewal frequency, and integration of diversity and inclusion. Common areas included gender balance, non-discrimination, career development, leadership balance, and data collection.
- **Varying organisational structures and levels of involvement:** Gender equality work displayed variations in organisational structures and the degree of involvement of different actors, including the presence of different bodies, committees, and individuals. Challenges related to organisational structures included a lack of leadership commitment and a perception of gender equality as mere compliance with EU requirements.
- **Inadequate resource allocation:** Insufficient resources hindered the design and implementation of comprehensive and effective gender equality actions.
- **Traditional university cultures and structures:** Conservative, competitive, and hierarchical university cultures and structures perpetuated gender inequality.
- **Internal resistance:** The study reveals the existence of resistance to gender equality efforts within the organisation, and perspectives that gender disparities are individual choices rather than an organisational concern.

- **Lack of work-life balance:** Gendered responsibilities impact work-life balance, detrimentally affecting women's careers. This highlights the urgency to enhance efforts in creating policies and procedures that support work-life balance.
- **Societal attitudes, cultural norms, and gender stereotypes:** Patriarchal understandings of gender roles persist within universities, underscoring the need to address deeply ingrained stereotypes and beliefs.

To foster synergies and strengthen efforts towards achieving gender equality within the Circle U. alliance, this report offers the following recommendations:

- **Enhance commitment and prioritise gender equality across all member universities**

  Ensure that leadership at different levels at all member universities prioritise gender equality work by establishing clear lines of responsibility and implementing mechanisms to hold leadership accountable.

- **Foster closer collaboration on gender equality among member universities**

  Foster closer collaboration and coordination among member universities. Encourage the sharing of best practices, experiences, and human resources to support collective learning and improvement.

- **Cultivate a shared understanding of gender equality**

  To facilitate synergies among the Circle U. member universities, it is recommended to cultivate and promote a shared understanding of gender equality and gender equality work. This involves fostering an efficient and consistent approach to GEPs, aligning efforts, strategies, and initiatives to address cultural and structural barriers in a coordinated manner

- **Establish a common framework for gender equality work**

  The framework should provide guidance, set common standards, and allow for flexibility and adaptation to address the diverse structural and cultural barriers to gender equality in each university.

- **Implement systematic monitoring, evaluation, and follow-up of gender equality action plans**

  Develop a mechanism for systematic monitoring and evaluating the implementation and impact of gender equality actions within each university, providing dedicated resources to this task. Regularly assess progress, identify areas for improvement, and adapt actions accordingly.

- **Promote the sharing of results, experiences, and mutual learning among member universities**
  Establish platforms and mechanisms for sharing results, best practices, and lessons learned from the monitoring and evaluation process among member universities. Encourage universities with more experience and expertise in GEP implementation to serve as mentors or peer advisors to universities with less experience, facilitating knowledge sharing and collaboration.
- **Build capacities and expertise in gender equality**
  Foster competence and expertise in gender equality and gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation by leveraging the existing knowledge within the alliance. Utilise the collective knowledge and experience within the alliance to provide support and guidance to member universities lacking such capacities.

The recommendations adopt a culturally contextual approach, acknowledging the multifaceted nature of the gender equality issue. This approach emphasises the importance of tailoring initiatives to suit the distinct institutional contexts of member universities.

Furthermore, the report provides an **Itinerary** that outlines a roadmap for the development, implementation, and follow-up of gender equality plans, along with a **Toolbox** consisting of strategies and tangible actions to support gender equality initiatives at the institutional level. In addition, the report includes concise country reports that highlight the contextual factors specific to each of the nine member universities, as well as best practice examples. By considering the findings, recommendations, itinerary, and toolbox, member universities can collaborate towards achieving long-term and sustainable progress in advancing gender equality within the alliance.

2 INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on contextualising the gender dimension in the Circle U. alliance and is a part of the broader project entitled Empowering Research and Innovation Actions in Circle U. (ERIA). The following sections will briefly present the ERIA project, as well as how this specific study on gender fits into the larger project.

2.1 THE ERIA PROJECT

The ERIA project is a collaborative initiative within the Circle U. alliance, a European university alliance consisting of nine universities: Aarhus University (AU), the University of Belgrade (UB), Humboldt University of Berlin (HU), King's College London (KCL), Université catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain), the University of Oslo (UiO), Université Paris Cité (UPCité), the University of Pisa (UniPi), and the University of Vienna (UniVie). The ERIA project is carried out by members from each of these universities and is co-funded by the European Commission under the Horizon 2020 Science with and for Society (SWAFS) programme and the Circle U. member universities. The project is coordinated by the Université Paris Cité and has a duration of three years.

The overarching objective of the project is to pilot initiatives that enhance the interaction between academia and society, with a focus on common scientific agendas. This objective is pursued through three main strategies. Firstly, the project utilises Circle U. knowledge hubs as platforms to host and test activities that strengthen the connection between education, research, innovation, and service to society. These activities involve policy makers as well as citizens. Secondly, the project aims to empower the human capital within Circle U. by providing support and resources to staff and students, enabling them to make a positive impact on society. Thirdly, the project seeks to establish collaborations with other European universities to contribute to the development of the new European Area for Research and Innovation. These three lines of action are further specified through seven objectives, all of which are presented in the following table.[1]

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[1] Circle U. proposal template, p. 1-3

Table 1: Objectives of the Circle U. ERIA project

Lines of action	Objectives
I. Reinforcing the Knowledge Square through the Circle U. Knowledge Hubs	1. Fostering inter- and transdisciplinarity in research and innovation activities. 2. Fostering the co-construction of solutions with external stakeholders outside academia. 3. Making research more accessible to citizens and practitioners in order to engage them with science.
II. Strengthening human capital	4. Empowering early-career researchers in their career path within and outside of academia. 5. Increasing the international exposure of early-career researchers so as to contribute to defining their worldview, give them access to different knowledge, build their professional network, and also develop their inter-cultural and language skills. 6. Promoting the three European Union (EU) objectives for gender equality in research in Circle U.
III. Connecting to other European Universities	7. Structuring collaboration at the European level, among pilot alliances.

The seven objectives of the project are underpinned by five Work Packages (WP), comprising a total of fourteen activities. These are summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Work Packages and activities of the Circle U. ERIA project[2]

Work Package	Activities
WP1 – Coordination & Management	
WP2 – Fostering interdisciplinarity to co-construct solutions with other sectors	1. Setting up and awarding the Inter Circle U. Prize (Pilot Action) 2. Organising two Circle U. "sandboxes" (Pilot Action) 3. Networking for interdisciplinary research projects in the Knowledge Hubs (Pilot Action) 4. Analysing the effectivity and impact of the three transversal Pilot Actions in fostering inter- and transdisciplinary activities in research and innovation ("research on research" approach)
WP3 – Involving citizens and society in research and innovation	5. Democracy in Schools initiative (Pilot Action) 6. Training programme for practitioners on Climate (Pilot Action) 7. Public interactive lecture series on Global Health (Pilot Action) 8. Analysing the effectivity and impact of the three thematic Pilot Actions in engaging citizens and society in research and innovation ("research on research" approach)
WP4 – Strengthening human capital	9. Setting up an early-career researchers forum 10. Organising thematic summer schools for PhD students 11. Developing online doctoral training sessions on transversal issues

[2] Circle U. proposal template, p. 19

	12. Boosting international and inter-sectoral mobility of early-career researchers within Circle U.
	13. Integrating gender-balance in the Circle U. R&I activities ("research on research" approach)
WP5 – Structuring research and Innovation collaboration at the European level, among pilot Alliances	14. Actively participating in the Forum FOREU2 with other alliances

The study presented here aims to integrate gender balance into the Circle U. research and innovation activities through a "research of research" approach. The following provides a brief outline of the objectives of the study.

2.2 THE STUDY

This study is part of Activity 13 of the Circle U. ERIA project, which is divided into two sub-actions: Activity 13A and 13B. This study specifically falls within Activity 13A. The overarching objective of Activity 13A is to conduct a comprehensive study on the gender dimension in Circle U., providing a solid foundation for Activity 13B, which focuses on developing guidelines for a Circle U. gender equality plan. The study aims to:

- Review relevant legislation and policies at member universities and identify national and university measures to promote gender equality.
- Identify challenges, barriers, and obstacles related to gender mainstreaming in the activities of Circle U. universities.
- Examine how differences in national gender legislation and cultures among the Circle U. member countries might influence R&I collaboration within the alliance.

The outcome of this study is the report presented here, which provides key findings and recommendations for the Circle U. member universities. It serves as a foundational document for Activity 13B and the drafting of guidelines for the Circle U. gender equality plan. The "Women in Science" group will undertake this task, leveraging the insights provided in this report to inform their work.

3   METHODOLOGY

This section outlines and details the methodological issues related to the design, planning and completion of the study. The study employed two main approaches; firstly, a desk study that involved examining gender equality plans, national legislation, and other relevant information on equality at the universities within the Circle U. alliance; secondly, conducting interviews with employees engaged in gender equality work at each of the member universities.

3.1   DESK SEARCH: EXPLORING THE NATIONAL CONTEXTS AND UNIVERSITIES' GENDER EQUALITY PLANS

The study commenced with an initial phase that involved conducting a comprehensive desk search to investigate the diverse national contexts in which the universities within the Circle U. alliance operate. This phase took place in the first half of 2022, and as a result, the data primarily reflect the legislation and action plans that were in effect during that specific period.[3]

3.1.1   NATIONAL CONTEXTS

Firstly, a desk search was conducted to examine the national contexts in each of the nine member countries of Circle U. This search involved utilising various national and European websites, as well as previous projects by the European Union (EU) that focused on legislation related to gender equality and higher education institutions (HEIs). The objective of this process was to investigate the relevant legislation and cultural conditions that could impact gender equality efforts within the member universities. Specifically, this part of the study focused on legislation pertaining to GEP requirements, national funding, parental leave, recruitment, and anti-discrimination. Additional notes and information about the various laws, acts, and policies have also been included.

The collected information for each country has been summarised in concise individual country reports, which can be found in Appendix A-I. Each report includes an introduction with a table providing a summary of the relevant categories and instruments used in the respective country. These tables serve the purpose of offering a quick overview of the national context within which each member university operates. It is important to note that the tables are not intended for comparing or evaluating the countries or the member universities.

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[3] We acknowledge that some universities have since introduced new action plans, after the completion of this part of the study. However, our focus remains on the action plans and national legislation relevant during the first half of 2022, as the interviews conducted with university members centered around this timeframe and the GEPs that were active within it.

The information presented in the country reports encompasses legislation that may pose obstacles to the universities' gender equality work, as well as legislation that may promote and support such work. By considering these diverse aspects, a better understanding of the national contexts and their impact on gender equality efforts within the member universities of Circle U. has been achieved. This understanding served as the basis for the second part of the study, which involved conducting interviews with university employees engaged in gender equality work.

3.1.2 GENDER EQUALITY PLANS

In addition to the country reports, we examined the gender equality plan of each member university within Circle U. During this process, some of the GEPs had to be translated into English, which might have resulted in texts that are not as clear as the originals. To provide an overview of the actions and initiatives described in each GEP, we utilised a template (Appendix J). This template consisted of 15 categories, each containing several sub-questions that required answers based on accessible information from the GEPs, university websites, and additional communication with university staff. For example, the template helped us determine whether the university had an active GEP in place and whether it was publicly accessible. Where necessary, explanations for the collected responses were requested.

This process provided valuable insights into the gender equality efforts of each member university. These insights were then used to formulate relevant questions for the subsequent interviews. Furthermore, while formulating the interview guide, we considered any questions that may have emerged during the examination of the GEPs or as a result of the translation process from the original language to English. This approach was undertaken to ensure the accurate collection of information.

3.2 INTERVIEWS: GAINING INSIGHTS IN PRACTICES, CHALLENGES, AND EXPERIENCES

Based on the information obtained from the country reports and the insights derived from the GEPs, a preliminary interview guide was developed. Initially, it took the form of a general template, which was subsequently customised for each university and, in certain cases, tailored to suit different interviewees, taking into account all the information gathered during the desk research. The main objective of the interviews was to gain comprehensive insights into the universities' strategies for promoting gender equality, the experiences of employees engaged in gender equality initiatives, and the key factors, accomplishments, and challenges faced by the universities in this domain.

3.2.1 PARTICIPANT SELECTION

Interview participants were selected based on their involvement in gender equality initiatives at the universities, such as members of gender equality committees and dedicated gender equality personnel. A comprehensive list of employees engaged in gender equality work, spanning various faculties, departments, and hierarchical levels within each university, was compiled. This encompassed both management, and academic and administrative staff. From this list, individuals who were considered most knowledgeable about the gender equality efforts at their respective universities were identified. Invitations to participate in the interviews were sent to all selected individuals via email in the autumn of 2022. Three to four employees from each university were invited to take part in the interviews.

It is worth noting that all interview participants were women. This may be attributed to the significant representation of women among university employees involved in gender equality activities. In a few cases, the male employees who were invited to participate in the interviews did not respond to the invitation.

3.2.2 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

One ethical consideration arising from the interview study is the challenge of ensuring complete anonymity for the university employees involved in gender equality groups, committees, and other related activity. As these individuals are often publicly listed on the universities' websites, it may be difficult to guarantee full anonymity. To mitigate this, no quotes have been linked to specific universities in order to prevent the possibility of deducing the identity of any individual.

Furthermore, to prioritise transparency and informed consent, all interviewees were given the opportunity to receive the interview guide prior to the interviews. This allowed them to ask questions, seek clarification, and address any potential misunderstandings before the interview took place. Additionally, the interviewees received a data information sheet detailing their rights and how their data would be used and processed.

Lastly, the first draft of the report was shared with all interviewees and selected individuals involved in the ERIA project at the Circle U. member universities. This was done to provide them with the opportunity to review the report and identify any misunderstandings that may have occurred during the data gathering and report writing process.

3.2.3 DATA PROCESSING

All interviews were recorded and transcribed. The subsequent analysis involved manual coding using the NVivo software. The coding process primarily followed a deductive approach, focusing on the organisation of gender equality work, practices, facilitating factors, barriers, and challenges as predetermined themes. Finally, a second round of coding was conducted, incorporating new codes that emerged from the insights gained during the initial round of analysis.

4 FINDINGS

The following section outlines the data analysis carried out within the scope of this study. It encompasses the examination of various datasets, including national legislation from the Circle U. member countries, gender equality plans, and the organisational structure of gender equality initiatives within all nine universities. Additionally, the findings derived from the interviews are presented, covering two main aspects: firstly, the challenges, obstacles, and barriers that were identified; and secondly, the lessons learned, and best practice examples observed in the universities' gender equality endeavours.

4.1 DIFFERENT NATIONAL CONTEXTS WITHIN THE CIRCLE U. ALLIANCE

The first part of the desk research aimed to explore the contextual factors and how different aspects of national legislation and policy related to gender equality and higher education vary across the member countries of the Circle U. alliance. Within the national contexts, there are various areas of legislation that encompass general gender equality laws, anti-discrimination measures, public or subsidised child-care policies, and regulations concerning the labour market. Additionally, there are specific regulations related to parental leave, wage transparency, equal pay, gender quotas, sexual harassment prevention, the provision of flexible working options or part-time employment, funding specifically targeted at gender-related initiatives, and requirements for gender-balanced allocation of resources.

Within the higher education sector, contextual factors vary among the member countries of Circle U. in relation to gender mainstreaming, the requirement for GEPs, the implementation of certification or award systems, the establishment of gender quotas for leadership or scientific staff positions, and the obligation to monitor and report on gender equality progress.

Similarly, there are variations in contextual factors concerning recruitment practices, including policies promoting open advertisement of vacancies, the utilisation of gender-balanced short-lists, and the formation of gender-balanced assessment panels to ensure fair and unbiased selection processes. These contextual factors reflect the specific approaches and measures taken by each country to address gender equality in higher education, contributing to the diversity of legislation, policies and practices observed within the Circle U. alliance. The table below offers an overview of the similarities and differences in national legislation pertaining to gender equality and higher education institutions across the nine member countries of Circle U. This is based on the country reports compiled during the data collection phase of the study, all of which can be found in Appendix A-I. The country reports provide valuable insights into the specific approaches and measures taken by each country.

Table 3: Overview of existing legislation in the Circle U. member countries

Category	Instrument	Denmark	Serbia	Germany	UK	Belgium	Norway	France	Italy	Austria
General GE laws	Anti-discrimination	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Public or subsidised child-care	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Labour market	Parental leave	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Wage transparency/ equal pay	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Gender quota			X			X	X	X	X
	Sexual harassment	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	(X)	X
	Flexible working/part-time option	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Higher education	Gender mainstreaming	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	GEP requirement	X	(X)	X		(X)	X	X	X	X
	Certification system/Award system				X					
	Gender quota for leadership/scientific staff			X		X	X	X		X
	Monitoring/reporting requirement	X		X	X		X	X	X	X
	Gender budgeting in HE								X	
Recruitment	Open advertisement of vacancies	X		X	X		X	X	X	X
	Gender balanced short-list									X
	Gender balanced assessment panels	(X)		(X)	X	(X)	X	X		X
Regional funding	Gender/diversity policy	X	(X)	X	X	X	X		X	X
	Gender targeted funding			X	X	X				X
	Requirement for gender balanced funding allocation			X			X		X	X
Non-regulatory	Policy measures to promote GE in HEI	X		X	X	(X)		X		X

4.2 GENDER EQUALITY AT CIRCLE U. UNIVERSITIES

In order to discuss issues of gender equality and action plans within the Circle U. context, it is necessary to also consider Horizon Europe and the role of this programme in promoting gender equality in European universities.

4.2.1 GENDER EQUALITY IN HORIZON EUROPE

The issue of gender equality, particularly gender equality action plans, has gained significant attention in European higher education institutions in recent years, largely driven by the implementation of Horizon Europe,[4] the funding programme for research and innovation (R&I) initiated by the European Commission in 2021. Horizon Europe introduced a new eligibility criterion to reinforce gender equality as a cross-cutting priority: organisations seeking funds under this program are now required to have a gender equality plan in place.[5] This eligibility criterion applies to various categories of legal entities established in EU member states or associated countries, including public bodies, higher education institutions (both public and private), and research organisations (both public and private).

The Horizon Europe work programme outlines four mandatory process-related requirements that all GEPs must fulfil:

- Public document: A GEP is a formal document published on the organisation's website, signed by top management, and actively communicated within the organisation.
- Dedicated resources: A GEP must include a commitment to allocate sufficient resources and expertise in gender equality for implementation.
- Data collection and monitoring: A GEP should be informed by collecting and analysing sex-disaggregated data on personnel (and students, for the relevant organisations). Organisations should report progress annually based on specific indicators.
- Training: A GEP must include awareness-raising and training activities on gender equality for the whole organisation, as well as training on unconscious gender biases for staff and decision-makers.

Additionally, the Horizon Europe programme also outlines five recommended content-related requirements for GEPs:

- 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.

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[4] https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe_en

[5] https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gear/horizon-europe-gep-criterion

It is important to note that this study does not aim to assess whether the nine GEPs under consideration meet these requirements. The inclusion of the Horizon Europe programme requirements is solely for relevance, as it helps to consider the design of these GEPs and highlights the presence of both mandatory and recommended requirements.

4.2.2 THE GENDER EQUALITY PLANS FROM THE NINE CIRCLE U. UNIVERSITIES

As mentioned earlier, the nine national contexts in which the Circle U. universities and their GEPs exist are significantly diverse. Consequently, these differences may be evident in the GEPs themselves, encompassing variations in their content, structure, and approaches. Therefore, the following section will provide a concise overview of each of the nine GEPs, examining their similarities and differences in order to gain an understanding of their respective characteristics.

The GEP at **Aarhus University** is titled *Action Plan for Gender Equality at Aarhus University*[6] and is valid through the years of 2020-22. Hence, this action plan is currently outdated and a new one for 2023-25 has been created. However, because the 2020-22 action plan was current at the time at which the research for this study was conducted, this action plan is the one that has been considered for the purpose of this study. The GEP introduces four overarching focus areas, each of which are supported by three different activities. These focus areas and activities are grounded in AU's strategy for 2020-2025, and are particularly focused on research of high, international quality. The GEP's focus areas include:

1. Recruitment
2. Career development
3. Management
4. Work-place culture

The GEP presents a timeline for each of the activities, as well as an indication as to who is responsible for initiating, implementing, and concluding the activities.

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[6] Translated. Original title: Handleplan for ligestilling på Aarhus Universitet: https://newsroom.au.dk/fileadmin/ingen_mappe_valgt/Handleplan_for_ligestilling_2020-2022_-_endelig.pdf

At the **University of Belgrade**, the GEP is titled *Gender Equality Plan.*[7] The GEP was adopted by the Senate at UB in April of 2019 and is the first of its kind at UB. The next GEP at UB is to be submitted to the UB Senate for approval at the end of 2023. This new GEP will cover the period from 2023. The goal of the plan from 2019, which was considered for the purpose of this report, has been to initiate the process of developing a gender equality strategy and express UB's commitment to promoting gender equality at all levels. The main goals presented in the GEP were identified through a so-called Gender Equality Audit at UB, a self-assessment conducted in the period of September 2017 – March 2018.[8] These goals include the following:

1. Building institutional capacities for identifying relevant data and their continuous maintaining, as well as establishing systematic procedures and information systems for improving data collection and bridging data gaps. This data collection and monitoring are related to human resources, decision making, and curricula and research content.
2. Strengthening the visibility of gender equality and raising awareness about the importance and advantages of gender balance at all levels of the University of Belgrade.
3. Promoting gender diversity among all academic staff with a strong emphasis on women's participation in decision-making bodies and processes, in accordance with relevant legal regulations.

In the GEP, each of these three goals is supported by a number of actions. The nature of these actions is described, as well as the desired results from each action. Furthermore, the responsible party and the time frame for each action is also presented in the GEP. The GEP is "subject to regular annual monitoring and evaluation, and the Rectorate will deal with operationalisation, as well as monitoring the implementation of actions and the degree of achievement of results".

Humboldt University of Berlin's GEP is, roughly translated, titled *Updated Gender Equality Concept of Humboldt University of Berlin.*[9]

The GEP is from 2021, and it is a little different from the other GEPs that have been considered in this study so far, as it is a direct continuation of, as well as evaluation of, the GEP from 2018. The plan introduces seven main focus areas:

1. Women in top positions
2. Career and personnel development: Measures for young female scientists
3. Women in natural sciences at the Adlershof campus

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[7] Translated. Original title: План Универзитета у Београду за постизање родне равноправности

[8] http://www.bg.ac.rs/en/vest.php?id=1214
For additional information about the collected data, as well as a progress report on the development of the first Gender Equality Plan at the UB, see
http://www.bg.ac.rs/files/en/university/equality/UB_report_EN.pdf

[9] Translated. Original title: Fortentwickeltes Gleichstellungszukunftskonzept Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

4. Family-friendly university
5. Women on academic boards
6. Equality controlling at HU
7. Equality-focused communication

These seven focus areas are the same that were presented in the GEP from 2018, and hence, "the present [GEP] strategically further develops the *Gender Equality Concept* from 2018". Within each of these seven focus areas, the GEP presents an inventory of existing initiatives that have been implemented and/or completed through previous GEPs going back to 2008, as well as an overview of initiatives from the previous GEP from 2018 that have been completed or are designed to extend into the GEP from 2021. Since the research for this report was conducted, HU has introduced a new GEP. This plan came into effect in August 2023 and is titled *Gender Equality Program for Parity*.[10]

The GEP from **Université catholique de Louvain** that was considered for the purpose of this study was available on the university's website at the time the research for this study was conducted (May 2022). UCLouvain's GEP has since been replaced by a temporary one-year GEP, and therefore the GEP considered here is unfortunately no longer available. The new GEP is, however, available on the university's website.[11] The reason why this new GEP is only active for one year is due to the fact that UCLouvain is currently in the process of shifting to an EDI approach for 2024-2029. Nonetheless, the GEP that was considered for the purpose of this study was approved by UCLouvain's academic board in 2015, and the plan was active through 2015-2022. The gender policy action plan emphasises the following work lines:

- Raise the awareness of all players of the UCLouvain (students, administrative personnel, scientific and academic personnel) to the stakes of gender diversity and equality for everyone's well-being.
- Act to promote a balanced representation of men and women in the university's governance bodies.
- Make sure to promote gender equality while ensuring equal opportunities in the area of personnel policy (career management, assessment, promotion, etc.).
- Develop the training offer in gender studies (1st and 2nd cycles).
- Encourage and support gender research.
- Provide society with the expertise of UCL's players in the area of gender.[12] [13]

These work lines are further developed through five main focus areas:

1. Governance

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[10] Translated. Original title: Gleichstellungsprogramm für Parität
[11] https://uclouvain.be/en/discover/equality/gender-equality-plan.html
[12] https://uclouvain.be/en/discover/equality/work-lines.html
[13] UCLouvain's new GEP is particularly focused on efforts to combat harassment, a thematic area which makes up Axis 1 of this new GEP. This work is supported by a program called Respect, which aims to prevent and help victims of harassment.

2. Personnel policy
3. Education
4. Research
5. Service to society

Within each of these five areas, a number of goals and initiatives are presented.

King's College London's GEP is titled *King's Athena Swan Action Plan 2020/21 - 2024/25.*[14] KCL's work with gender equality is relatively broad and includes equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) within and beyond gender. This EDI work is shaped by KCL's partnership with the Athena Swan Charter,[15] and an Athena Swan self-assessment framework has been adopted as a rigorous and transparent means of understanding and progressing gender equality across the university. KCL's GEP is a collaboration between the university and the Athena Swan Charter, and it is arranged into seven themes that work across and address nine thematic, cross-cutting programmes. These seven themes include:

1. Leadership and Data
2. Recruitment and Selection
3. Improved Working Environment
4. Improved Management Capability
5. Role Models and Visibility
6. Career Development
7. Student Facing Actions

Within each of these seven themes, a number of objectives are presented, as well as previous and future actions involved in achieving these objectives, a timeline and success criteria for each objective. These objectives address the following nine thematic programmes:

1. Flexible Working
2. Recruitment Improvements
3. Manager Capability
4. Family Friendly
5. Business Planning and Equality analysis
6. Staff Representation
7. Academic Pipeline
8. Women's Leadership
9. Trans Inclusivity

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[14] https://www.kcl.ac.uk/about/assets/diversity-assets/documents/finalised-athena-swan-action-plan-nov-2020-4-1.pdf
[15] https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan-charter

The **University of Oslo's** GEP is titled *Action Plan for diversity, equality, and inclusion 2021 – 2024*[16] and was adopted by the university board in 2021.[17] As the title suggests, the scope of this GEP is not limited to gender equality, and it is specified in the GEP that 'diversity' is to be understood as referring to, amongst other things, gender, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, age, and religion. The actions and goals set out by the GEP are divided into three sections focusing on gender balance and equality, diversity, and inclusion, as well as organisation and monitoring. Furthermore, the actions presented by the GEP are divided into seven themes. These seven themes include:

1. Recruitment
2. Recruitment of students
3. Skills development and career support
4. Communication and events
5. Diversity
6. Platform of knowledge
7. Specification of actions[18]

Along with the goals and actions presented within each of these themes, the responsibility for implementing these actions is clearly defined.

The **Université Paris Cité** has a GEP titled *Professional equality plan: Proposals from the Equalities Mission.*[19] The plan is from November 2020 and is focused on five main areas in which action needs to be taken:

1. Closing the salary gap
2. Career development
3. Reconciliation of professional and private life
4. Governance measures
5. Combating sexist and sexual harassment and violence

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[16] https://www.uio.no/om/strategi/likestilling/tiltaksplaner/action-plan---lim-2021-2024_07.02.2023.pdf

[17] Revisions for this plan were accepted in February 2023.

[18] The seven themes have now been changed to: Recruitment, recruitment of students, skills development and career support, communication and events, information base, management, and inclusion.

[19] Translated. Original title: Plan d'égalité professionnelle: Propositions de la mission ÉgalitéS. https://u-paris.fr/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/2021_PLAN-EGALITE-PRO.pdf

Within each of these five areas, a thorough explanation of the relevant challenges at UPCité is presented. This is followed by a number of goals and activities intended to address these challenges. The measurements used to determine whether the intended effects are being achieved is also presented, as well as the time at which each of the activities is initiated.

The **University of Pisa's** GEP is titled *Gender Equality Plan 2022-2024*[20] and was approved by the Academic Senate and Board of Directors at the university in 2021. The plan is structured around the following five thematic areas:

1. Balance between work and private life and organisational culture
2. Gender balance in leadership and decision-making
3. Gender equality in recruitment and career progression
4. Integration of the gender dimension in research and teaching content
5. Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

Within each of these five thematic areas, several different objectives are presented. Each of these objectives are thoroughly outlined, as the GEP offers details about the objectives' actions, sub-actions, direct targets, indirect targets, expected results, timelines, evaluation indications, and evaluation procedures.

The **University of Vienna's** GEP is titled *Plan for the advancement of women and equality at the University of Vienna.*[21] The plan is from 2019, and it can, but does not have to, be reviewed four years after being entered into force. The GEP is considered a legally binding document at the university and is implemented as such. According to UniVie, "This new plan goes beyond legal necessities and doesn't just aim to achieve equal opportunities for men and women, but also for disabled and/or chronically ill people. Furthermore, it sets out to secure the respectful treatment of trans, inter and non-binary people".[22] It is challenging to mention all the areas addressed in the GEP, but some of them include:

- Discrimination
- Gender mainstreaming
- Diversity
- Career planning, education, and training
- Infrastructure and tasks
- Collection duties, evaluation, and reporting duties
- Sexual harassment and bullying
- Personnel and organisational development

[20] https://www.unipi.it/images/pdf/gep22-24en.pdf
[21] Translated. Original title: Frauenförderungs- und Gleichstellungsplan der Universität Wien. https://satzung.univie.ac.at/alle-weiteren-satzungsinhalte/frauenfoerderungs-und-gleichstellungsplan/
[22] https://personalwesen.univie.ac.at/en/culture-equality/overview/legal-framework/

- Recruitment
- Teaching
- Students

To summarise, there is no universal, "one-size-fits-all" model for GEPs (for an overview, see Table 4). Among the nine GEPs discussed above, significant differences were observed in terms of their focus areas, number of activities, duration, and renewal frequencies. Some GEPs were extensive, spanning over 20 pages with detailed activity descriptions, while others were more concise, under 10 pages long. Similarly, the renewal frequencies of the GEPs varied, with some specifying timelines for renewal after a certain number of years, some allowing for potential renewal, and some not addressing renewal at all. Despite these variations, some common focus areas emerged across most GEPs, including:

- Recruitment of staff and students, with an emphasis on gender balance and non-discrimination.
- Career development, progression, and support, including skills development.
- Gender balance and equality in management, leadership, and decision-making bodies.
- Collection and monitoring of gender data.

While focusing on the content of the GEPs, it is worth noting an additional element of interest. Some GEPs explicitly mention a focus on diversity and inclusion in addition to gender equality, while others solely concentrate on gender equality.

Table 4: Overview of the GEPs implemented in the Circle U. member universities

	Title of GEP + years active	Focus areas
Aarhus University	Action Plan for Gender Equality at Aarhus University *2020 - 2022*	1. Recruitment 2. Career development 3. Management 4. Work-place culture
University of Belgrade	Gender Equality Plan *2019 - 2022*	1. Building institutional capacities for identifying relevant data and their continuous maintaining, as well as establishing systematic procedures and information systems for improving data collection and bridging data gaps in three areas: a. Human resources b. Decision making c. Curricula and research content 2. Strengthening the visibility of gender equality and raising awareness about the importance and advantages of gender balance at all levels of the University of Belgrade

		3. Promoting gender diversity among all academic staff with a strong emphasis on women's participation in decision-making bodies and processes, in accordance with relevant legal regulations
Humboldt University of Berlin	Updated Gender Equality Concept of Humboldt University of Berlin *2021 - 2023*	1. Women in top positions 2. Career and personnel development: Measures for young female scientists 3. Women in natural sciences at the Adlershof campus 4. Family-friendly university 5. Women on academic boards 6. Equality controlling at HU 7. Equality-focused communication
Université Catholique de Louvain	Gender Equality Plan *2015 - 2022*	1. Governance 2. Personnel policy 3. Education 4. Research 5. Service to society
King's College London	King's Athena Swan Action Plan *2020/21 - 2024/25*	1. Leadership and data 2. Recruitment and selection 3. Improved working environment 4. Improved management capability 5. Role models and visibility 6. Career development 7. Student facing action
University of Oslo	Action Plan for diversity, equality, and inclusion *2021 - 2024*	1. Recruitment 2. Recruitment of students 3. Skills development and career support 4. Communication and events 5. Diversity 6. Platform of knowledge 7. Specification of actions
Université Paris Cité	Professional equality plan: Proposals from the Equalities Mission *2020 - 2023*	1. Closing the salary gap 2. Career development 3. Reconciliation of professional and private life 4. Governance measures 5. Combating sexist and sexual harassment and violence
University of Pisa	Gender Equality Plan *2022 - 2024*	1. Balance between work and private life and organisational culture 2. Gender balance in leadership and decision-making 3. Gender equality in recruitment and career progression 4. Integration of the gender dimension in research and teaching content

		5. Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment
University of Vienna	Plan for the advancement of women and equality at the University of Vienna *2019 - unknown*	1. General provisions • Implementation of gender mainstreaming • Career Planning, Initial and Continuing Education and Training • Infrastructure and Responsibilities • Facilities for the Advancement of Women and Equal Treatment • Data Collection Obligations, Evaluation and Reporting Obligations 2. Affirmative Action Plan for Gender Equality • Reconciling work and family life • Measures to prevent discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying and violence • Transgender, intersex, and non-binary people • Balanced ratio of male and female students and graduates • Student evaluation of teaching 3. Affirmative Action Plan for the Advancement of Women • Human Resources and Organisational Development • Human Resources Recruitment • Teaching • Students • Professional Advancement and Career Planning

4.2.3 ORGANISATION OF GENDER EQUALITY WORK

In addition to the content of the GEPs presented above, it is also important to consider the structure and organisation of gender equality work at each of the nine Circle U. universities, as significant variations can be observed in this regard. The following section provides a brief overview of how each university organises its gender equality work.

Aarhus University has a Committee for Diversity and Gender Equality that is responsible for "ensuring that action is taken on initiatives that promote diversity and gender equality at AU".[23]

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[23] https://medarbejdere.au.dk/en/strategy/gender-balance-in-research/committee-for-diversity-and-equality

This includes drafting the GEP and following up on the activities and data concerning gender equality on a yearly basis. The Committee for Diversity and Gender Equality meets four times each year and consists of 14 members and a contact person. The top management of AU is represented, as the Rector and Pro-Rector of the university act as Chair and Deputy Chair, respectively, of the Committee. In addition to the chairs, each of AU's five faculties and the administration of the university are represented in the Committee by two members. Furthermore, both the top-management, the faculties and the administration are represented by one man and one woman. For example, the Rector of AU and the Chair of the Committee is male, while the Pro-rector and Deputy Chair is female. Each of the five faculties at AU also have their own gender equality committees, however, these are not directly involved in AU's GEP.[24] All 14 members participate in this Committee in addition to their other responsibilities at the university.

The **University of Belgrade** has a Committee for Gender Equality. This Committee consists of 14 members, all of whom were appointed by the Senate of UB in April 2023. The Committee consists of a President of the Committee, a Deputy President of the Committee, as well as representatives from some of UB's 31 faculties and 11 institutes, several employees of the UB Rectorate and one representative from the student population. The President of the Committee is the Vice Rector of UB, and the Secretary of the Committee is employed in the professional services of the Rectorate of UB. All 14 members participate in this Committee on an unpaid basis, as well as in addition to their other responsibilities at UB.

Humboldt University of Berlin has a network of women's representatives, consisting of one Central Women's Representative and several Decentralised Representatives. The goal of The Central Women's Representative is both to be representative of the interests of women at HU, as well as an advisor to the management and the central committees of the university in questions of equality and equal opportunities between men and women.[25] The central team of Women's Representatives is made up of nine members, including the Central Women's Representative, three Vice Central Women's Representatives and five Project Coordinators, each responsible for one of the university's projects or programs related to equal opportunities. The Project Coordinators are paid for by third party funding. The Central Women's Representative and the three Vice Central Women's Representatives are responsible for drafting, disseminating, and implementing the GEP at HU.

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[24] Although some of the representatives from AU's Committee for Diversity and Gender Equality are also members of the faculty-level committees.

[25] https://frauenbeauftragte.hu-berlin.de/de/en/frb/the-central-womens-representative

Most members of this central team work part-time, approximately 75%, however they do not have other responsibilities than gender equality work at HU. The decentralised representatives from HU's departments and faculties do this work in addition to their other work responsibilities at HU. These Decentralised Representatives receive a sort of paid leave of absence, called "Freistellungsanteile", which frees them from a certain percentage of their overall monthly work in their regular professions. This allows them to spend this time on their work as representatives.

The **Université catholique de Louvain** stands out a little when compared to the universities that have been discussed above. This is because the university does not have a group or committee that is responsible for gender equality work, but instead, it has five employees that are responsible for all things having to do with gender equality and UCLouvain's GEP.[26] These five employees include one Gender Contact Person, one Gender and Diversity Strategy Officer, one Project Manager (working on an anti-harassment program titled 'Together'), as well as two Advisors to the Rector for Gender, Equality and Inclusion from the academic staff. The two advisors to the rector are responsible for drafting the university's GEP, including the new GEP from 2024-2029, whereas the Gender Contact Person is responsible for supporting the implementation of UCLouvain's gender equality policy.

At **King's College London**, there is a number of employees that together make up what is called Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI). This relates directly back to KCL's GEP, as the focus of this plan is also on EDI, not only gender equality. The central EDI committee consists of 11 people[27] who act as governance, consultants, and project officers.[28] There is a mixture of full- and part-time EDI employees, as the governance and consultants work full-time, and the project officers work part-time in the EDI committee and part-time at different faculties across KCL. In addition to the central EDI team, there are a few more EDI teams at KCL, namely the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee (EDIC), Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Forum (EDIF) and the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion CAP (Combined Action Plans). The EDIC is chaired by the Director of EDI and has been tasked with overseeing and monitoring the implementation of KCL's EDI strategic goals.

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[26] https://uclouvain.be/en/discover/equality/contact-us.html

[27] This number is based on the people involved at the time the data was collected. This has since been changed to 13 people.

[28] https://www.kcl.ac.uk/professional-services/diversity

The EDIF is a body for staff and student voices, and lastly, the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion CAP (Combined Action Plans) is accountable for the delivery of the university wide EDI programme action plans.

The **University of Oslo's** gender equality work is composed of two main driving forces: a gender equality adviser and a Gender Equality Coordination Group[29]. The gender equality adviser is responsible for developing and implementing UiO's equality and diversity policy, acting as secretary to the Gender Equality Coordination Group and advising and counselling the university units and management on gender balance, equality and discrimination.[30] The Gender Equality Coordination Group is chaired by the Pro-Rector of UiO and consists of representatives from the management of the faculties at UiO, the gender research community, the students and the research administration department. The group's main task is to contribute to strategic discussions and formulate the goals of the gender equality work at UiO. The group consists of 14 members and a secretary, and they meet three times per semester[31]. The Gender Equality Adviser works full-time with UiO's gender equality initiatives, whereas the members of the Coordination Group participate in this group in addition to their other responsibilities across UiO.

The **Université Paris Cité** has a group called the Equalities mission[32] that is responsible for the university's gender equality work. The mission is responsible for raising awareness and training university staff on equality, diversity, and work-life balance, participating in the development of the professional equality plan, and raising awareness among students about equality and the zero-tolerance of discrimination.[33] The Equalities mission is also responsible for monitoring the actions implemented by the GEP, analysing their impact and proposing necessary adjustments. The group meets once a month and consists of a Vice-President in charge of equality, one full-time Equality Project Manager, as well as a number of Equality referents from the different faculties at UPCité, a representative from the Student Disability Centre, a Disability Correspondent, and a Campus Life Representative[34].

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[29] This has now been changed to 'Coordination group for diversity, equality and inclusion'.

[30] https://www.uio.no/english/people/los/opa/persarb/mariejta/index.html

[31] https://www.uio.no/for-ansatte/nettverk-moter/fellesadm/koordineringsgruppe-likestilling/index.html

[32] Translated. Original name: mission EgalitéS

[33] https://u-paris.fr/en/equality-mission/

[34] A service dedicated to students regarding sport, culture, social action, student health and disability, and community life.

The equality referents' primary work is at the faculties, and they therefore contribute to the Equalities mission in addition to this work.

The **University of Pisa** has a body called the Committee on Equal Opportunities, Wellness of Employees and Non-Discrimination (CUG). The CUG performs a variety of different tasks related to the university's gender equality work. These include, in broad terms, promoting equal opportunities, preventing discrimination, identifying potential discrimination experienced by employees, drafting positive action plans, promoting a positive work environment and work-life balance and, finally, monitoring all these actions.[35] The CUG consists of ten members from the university, five of which are active members and five of which are alternate members.[36] Among the five active members are the President and Vice-President of the CUG. In addition to these ten members, there are also eight representative members from trade union organisations, as well as two student representatives. UniPi also has the Equality and Diversity Office, which supports the CUG's activities by contributing to the implementation and evaluation of the GEP, providing practical support and tools to those involved in implementing the GEP, cooperating with and involving stakeholders to ensure the implementation of the GEP, raising awareness of the advantages of gender equality in universities, and lastly, assessing the progress towards gender equality.

The gender equality work at the **University of Vienna** is divided between three groups. These are the Human Resource & Gender Equality Department, the Gender Equality & Diversity Unit, and the Working Group for Equal Opportunities. The Human Resources & Gender Equality Department is responsible for organising, providing, and implementing personnel services, including jobs and recruitment, legal frameworks, career advancement, gender monitoring and countering sexual harassment and bullying.[37] The Gender Equality & Diversity Unit is a subunit of the Human Resources & Gender Equality Department. The aim of this unit is to provide services, ensuring equal opportunities for all university members, which include implementing the GEP in collaboration with the Rectorate. The unit consists of eight full-time employed members. Lastly, the Working Group for Equal Opportunities is the primary group working with gender equality at UniVie. One of the group's main responsibilities is writing the university's GEP, as well as proposing this plan and any amendments to the plan to the Rectorate.[38]

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[35] https://cug.unipi.it/comitato.html
[36] https://cug.unipi.it/i-membri.html
[37] https://personalwesen.univie.ac.at/en/
[38] https://gleichbehandlung.univie.ac.at/en/

All members of the group are selected on the basis of their experience and their competence in matters related to equal treatment and the advancement of women. At least half of the members of the group are women.

To summarise, similar to the GEPs, the structure and organisation of gender equality work at the nine universities are also highly diverse (see Table 5). As discussed above, there are significant differences in the actual organisation of this work, including the number of bodies, committees or individuals involved in the gender equality activities. Some universities have several units that work together while others have a single central unit. Some bodies are very large and include representatives from all areas of the universities, while others are smaller and consist of only a few members. Furthermore, a few universities have individuals dedicated solely to gender equality, rather than formal bodies and committees. The extent of involvement in the design and implementation of GEPs also differs. Some bodies and committees play a fundamental role in designing and implementing the GEPs, while others are involved in either one or the other. There is also a significant difference in the engagement of these committee members, ranging from full-time and part-time to voluntary contributors. Lastly, the composition of these bodies and committees and whether university leadership is represented, which may indicate the commitment of leadership to gender equality work, also varies across the universities.

Table 5: Overview of the organisation of gender equality work in the Circle U. member universities

	Name and composition of group	Meeting frequency	Management represented?	Responsibilities
Aarhus University	Committee for Diversity and Gender Equality *14 members + one contact person.* *All members participate in the committee on a voluntary basis in addition to work responsibilities. No members are paid for their work in the committee.*	4 meetings per year	Yes, rector and pro-rector are members of the committee	• Ensuring that action is taken on initiatives that promote diversity and gender equality at AU • Drafting GEP • Following up on a yearly basis on activities and data concerning gender equality
University of Belgrade	Committee for Gender Equality *14 members.*	Once a month. More often is necessary.	Yes, vice-rector is member of the committee	• Monitoring, planning, implementing and publishing results of implemented policies for equal opportunities at UB

	All members participate in the committee on a voluntary basis in addition to work responsibilities. No members are paid for their work in the committee.			• Raising awareness of cases of gender discrimination by UB authorities, as well as offering initiatives to address this • Participating in the preparation of general acts of the UB in connection with the realisation and improvement of gender equality • Participating in the creation of the GEP, as well as the report on the implementation of the GEP • Participating in the creation of the Risk Management –plan for Violation of the Principles of Gender Equality, as well as the report on the implementation of this plan • Assisting in performing a gender analysis of the UB budget • Submitting an annual report on their work to the Senate of UB • Performing other tasks to the realisation and improvement of gender equality at UB
Humboldt University of Berlin	The Central Women's Representative team (consists of a central management team, as well as many decentralised members from HU's departments and faculties) *Central team consists of nine members. Most members work part-time and are paid for their work. The decentralised members participate in addition to their other responsibilities and are paid for this work.*		No	• Drafting, disseminating and implementing the GEP • Representative of the interests of women at HU • Advisor to the management and the central committees of the university on matters of equality and equal opportunities between men and women

Université catholique de Louvain	Not a group, simply normal staff members and therefore no name. *5 employees.* *Part-time, paid work.*		Yes	• Drafting GEP • Supporting the implementation of the GEP
King's College London	Equality, Diversity & Inclusion *11 members.* *Some members work full-time, others part-time.*		Yes, the group is chaired by senior leaders.	• Responsible for all things having to do with gender equality • Aided by the existence of several EDI sub-groups
University of Oslo	Gender Equality Advisor *One person, full-time, paid work.* Gender Equality Coordination Group *14 members + a secretary.* *Members participate in addition to other work responsibilities.*	Three times per semester	Yes, the group is chaired by the pro-rector of the university	Gender Equality Advisor • Developing and implementing GEP • Acting as secretary for the Coordination Group • Advising the university management about gender balance, equality and discrimination Coordination Group • Formulate the goals of the gender equality work at UiO
Université Paris Cité	Equalities mission *9 members.* *Three members work full-time, the rest part-time in addition to other responsibilities.*	Once a month	No	• Raising awareness and training university staff on equality, diversity and work-life balance • Developing the Professional equality plan • Raising awareness among students about equality and zero-tolerance of discrimination • Monitoring actions implemented by the GEP, analysing their impact, and proposing necessary adjustments
University of Pisa	Committee on Equal Opportunities, Wellness of Employees and Non-Discrimination *10 members from the university + eight representative members from trade union organisations,*	Once a month	No	• Promoting equal opportunities • Preventing discrimination • Identifying potential discrimination experienced by employees • Drafting positive action plans • Promoting a positive work environment and work-life balance

	as well as two student representatives. *All members work part-time in addition to other responsibilities.*			• Monitoring all these actions
University of Vienna	Human Resource & Gender Equality Department *Normal HR department. Full-time staff.* Gender Equality & Diversity Unit *Eight full-time members.* Working Group for Equal Opportunities. *Members participate in the group in addition to other responsibilities.*		No	Human Resources & Gender Equality Department • Organising, providing and implementing personnel services, including jobs and recruitment, legal frameworks, career advancement, gender monitoring and countering sexual harassment and bullying Gender Equality & Diversity Unit • Provide services which aim at ensuring equal opportunities for all university members, which includes implementing the GEP in collaboration with the Rectorate Working Group for Equal Opportunities • Writing the university's GEP, as well as proposing this plan and any amendments to the plan to the Rectorate

4.3 CHALLENGES, OBSTACLES, AND BARRIERS

The following section presents a number of challenges, obstacles and barriers identified throughout the interviews conducted for the purpose of this study. These pertain to the implementation of GEPs and other gender equality work at the universities in question, as well as to the overall gender equality challenges within the universities. The challenges, obstacles and barriers will be discussed at different levels, i.e., institutional, organisational, and societal.

4.3.1 UNIVERSITY CULTURE

During the interviews conducted in the member universities of Circle U., the university culture emerged as a significant challenge in promoting gender equality. Interviewees consistently emphasised that the existing culture within universities presents a major obstacle to progress.

The identified problematic aspects of university culture encompass various dimensions, including the persistent gender imbalance, the conservative and traditional nature of universities, hierarchies that reinforce inequalities, evaluation methods that undervalue the work of women, and the allocation of disproportionate tasks that do not meaningfully contribute to their professional advancement and curriculum vitae.

Among the challenges discussed in the interviews, addressing the prevailing gender imbalances within university culture emerged as a recurring theme. The concept of the "leaky pipeline" and the need to address it were frequently mentioned by almost all interviewees in various contexts. It was consistently noted that women are underrepresented in leadership and management positions compared to men, particularly at the highest levels of the university hierarchy. While this trend is observable across universities in general, it is particularly pronounced in certain fields.

> "Because particularly in these male […] dominated professions, they just do not let women onto management positions […] They just ignore them, completely ignore them"

> "This is structurally reflected in the fact that there are far more men in research management, i.e., who is the project coordinator"

> "I think in management positions, mainly, there are more men than women"

> "we have the majority of women in [...] administrative staff, but if we see at the top level of administrative career the proportion is different. We have men"

According to the interviewees, the underrepresentation of women is not limited to management positions alone but extends to all well-paid roles, including full professorships. It was highlighted that there is a significant disparity in the number of women occupying these positions.

> "So, the higher paid the professorships are, the more the women's quota goes down"

Interviewees suggest that there is a direct correlation between the low number of female full professors and the proportion of women in management positions. More specifically, it is argued that because the pool of candidates for management positions often consists of full professors, and there are so relatively few female professors, it is difficult to achieve gender balance in leadership.

> "you have to pick the director of the department or the rector [who is] a full professor. The female full professors are very few. Then it's difficult to balance the governance"

In addition to fewer women being involved in management positions at universities, the relatively small share of female professors has another serious consequence. This relates to the student body and the lack of professors as role models they can identify with or aspire to.

> "if you look at the numbers in social sciences and humanities and in medicine, you have a domination of women students. But if you look at the teaching staff, you see it's a bit lopsided."

> "we have a very, very large gap between the number of girls that are students in that field and the number of women that we find in academic roles"

> "the students being less and less female in certain topics is also a consequence of having less [female] professors there because their role model is missing"

Furthermore, the interviewees focused on a key challenge faced by many women, namely that it generally takes women longer time to become professors compared to men.

> "women need on average more years to reach [professor ranks]"

According to the interviewees, the lack of gender balance at different levels within universities can be attributed to several factors. Interviewees emphasised that the culture, practices and procedures of most universities discourage women from pursuing academic careers and create challenges in retaining them. The highly competitive nature of academia further hinders the attraction of women to the field, while some women also encounter difficulties in feeling included and envisioning a viable university career for themselves.

> "It's really a very bad atmosphere full of competition, aggressive discourse, so, it's not favourable at all for any gender equality agenda"

> "women get off at some point. I mean, the women, it's not because they don't believe they can, I should say, but when the road gets there, it's so hard and uncertain, so women are quick to say 'well, it's not worth it'"

> "to convince [women] that, well, that is really an issue currently, to convince them that the university is a good working place."

> "Am I really willing to go this way? Is this the right atmosphere that I want to have for my workplace?"

> "there are just a lot of people competing for the same position and therefore the atmosphere is not nice. And this is, I guess, this is one main reason why so few female postdocs or PhDs decide to [go for a professorship]"

In addition to the challenging environment, some interviewees also highlighted the "so-called Old Boys Networks, […] which prevent women [from getting] higher positions in science". This issue can be directly associated with another challenge identified in the interviews, namely, the conservative nature of universities as long-standing and traditional institutions that perpetuate norms and beliefs fostering gender inequality.

> "Because a university is […] an organisation with a long history. […] it taps into some general understandings of academia and excellence, so there are a lot of things that live in that culture […] But there are also some conservative […] some traditional values and approaches that live here"

This can, according to the interviewees, be directly linked to two other aspects of the university culture that reproduce inequalities. The first is the hierarchical system and power structure that characterise most universities.

> "Hierarchies in university structures and work that causes sexism, agism, racism etc."

> "universities are very [...] hierarchical structures, a structure of power where young researchers are depending on the professor, on the leader of the group, on the head of the group, for example, this dynamic, this approach, I believe favours gender inequality, gender imbalance"

The second challenge relates to the assessment procedures and methods used in connection with career advancement. According to the interviewees, these methods do not consider the diverse range of activities carried out by university staff and tend to value certain activities higher than others. Activities typically carried out by women, such as teaching and volunteering in committees, are often undervalued. In contrast, activities such as producing high numbers of articles, high citation rates and applying for grants, which are more commonly associated with men, also due to the fact that they usually are project managers, are highly regarded.

"Then you know that if you count for example citations and then you don't count that a person had to retrieve from working for three years because she had two children in two years"

"Some activity in academia, for example with students and teaching and graduations there is a huge amount of work which […] has to be done because it's our duty. It's not fun. It's not going to add much in your CV. […] these things turn out that women end up doing more than men because men have to do the 'important" things'"

"it seems like that's a stereotype that women are more […] competent to teach. And they do a good job. But because you teach more, the system is more rewarding for researchers than for teachers"

Lastly, the division of work and the way assessment procedures and methods function, in connection with career advancement, result in women being over-worked by tasks that are neither acknowledged not rewarded.

"so, the few women we have are over-worked".

In conclusion, the interviews conducted shed light on the challenges associated with the culture within universities, not only in specific institutional contexts, but also within academia as a whole. The prevailing gender imbalance, in particular as to decision making positions, emerged as a significant concern, with fewer women in management and leadership positions and a lower number of female professors. The 'leaky pipeline' phenomenon, where women face obstacles and delays in advancing their careers, was frequently discussed. These issues were attributed to various factors, including the competitive nature of academia, the sense of exclusion experienced by some women, and the presence of "old boys' networks" that hinder women's progress within different scientific fields. The conservative nature of universities as historic institutions was identified as a significant factor, perpetuating norms and beliefs that impede gender equality. Hierarchical systems, power structures and conservative cultures were highlighted as key challenges, hindering the promotion of gender equality within academia. Moreover, the assessment procedures and methods employed were found to disproportionately value certain activities over others, leading to the undervaluation of tasks typically performed by women, such as teaching and committee work. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including promoting gender balance at all levels within universities, fostering inclusive and supportive cultures, and reforming assessment procedures to recognise and value the diverse contributions of all university staff.

4.3.2 STRUCTURAL AND ORGANISATIONAL CHALLENGES

Throughout the interviews, various structural and organisational challenges were identified, including the lack of targeted gender equality actions, insufficient leadership and management support, and limited dedicated resources, which resulted in the de-prioritisation of gender equality work. In addition, other challenges related to the organisation of gender equality work were mentioned. The most prevalent challenge identified was the issue of insufficient effort in promoting gender equality. This was partly attributed to the ambiguity or overly specific formulation of some GEPs, which made it challenging to effectively implement the described actions. As a result, individuals who were not deeply passionate about this work may have been discouraged from becoming further engaged. For example, one interviewee states:

> "If you look at our current action plan, some of the activities are on the one hand very concrete, but in other ways they are very generally described. And that means that it has been difficult for some to understand what they are actually supposed to do. So even though you may have the will, it appears to be a difficult task. And it also means that if you don't have the will, then maybe it's a little bit easier to say that you've looked at it."

Another challenge identified in the organisation of gender equality work is the underutilisation of the full potential and resources available within the universities. The interviews revealed that there is often a missed opportunity to tap into the wealth of knowledge, skills, and perspectives that exist among the university staff. This underutilisation may stem from various factors, including a lack of awareness or recognition of the value that diverse individuals and perspectives bring to the table.

> "I just think [the university is] not using its potential because there is a wonderful human potential […] that is not being used sufficiently."

Furthermore, some interviewees suggested that the current efforts are insufficient because the existing GEPs and other gender equality initiatives are perceived as merely a way for universities to meet various national and European requirements. In other words, they consider the GEPs to be mere window-dressing with little real impact.

> "We have Gender Equality Law, Gender Equality Strategy, Action Plan, Strategy for Prevention and Combating Gender Based Violence. So, things are there. But [...] it's mainly formalistic without proper implementation."

> "OK, we have an action plan. But then what about that? Does anyone really […] care if we don't […] make the initiatives come alive?"

Another very frequently discussed aspect of these structural and organisational challenges was the issue of lacking leadership and management support for gender equality work.

> "But definitely most people [in management], I think, would be very supportive. But […] in terms of the actions they might not be willing to like, move as fast or they might not be willing to put as much money behind initiatives as we [(the people working with gender equality)] might want."

> "The [management's] priority was not equity at all. And it's still not the priority because there are other challenges linked to human resource and the finance and whatever."

> "There is no overt resistance, [...] but there is also not enough support."

As the quotes presented above suggest, there is room for improvement in terms of leadership and management commitment and support for gender equality work. This may be directly related to the next challenge identified through the interviews, which is that of lacking resources for gender equality activities. This includes both financial and human resources.

> "Gender policies are there, but not the finance."

> "Funding is always limited, and our resources are limited, and gender equality is always a nice way to save some money."

> "Things are moving very slowly, but how do you expect them to move any more rapidly when you only have one person that has to sort of make the machinery go. […] Like, there's a lot of things in the action plan that I really don't have time to follow up on [in] a meaningful way."

> "We don't have enough people [in human resources or the gender equality committee]. So, it's a real, a real difficulty actually. We lack some human resources."

There are a few additional challenges related to the structure and organisation of gender equality work that emerged from the interviews. While these challenges were not mentioned as frequently as the ones discussed earlier, they are worth considering as they offer interesting insights into how this work is approached in the member universities. Firstly, one interviewee argued that the top-down approach to creating university-wide gender equality policies and initiatives may not always be the most efficient or effective approach on its own.

> "So, it's a pure top-down model where you just sit and make some guidelines, action plans and catalogues of possible initiatives and whatnot. And then that's it, let's get started."

"A university is a very diverse organisation. [...] So when you [...] try to make decisions and make action plans that must apply to the whole [university], I just feel like "dream on". Because our reality is just so different, so it may work really well somewhere, but then somewhere else it doesn't work at all."

While the top-down approach can offer a clear and unified direction, it also carries the risk of potential drawbacks. These drawbacks include the lack of inclusivity and adaptability, as well as the setting of overly ambitious expectations. The top-down approach might limit involvement from individuals who are directly affected by gender inequalities, such as faculty, staff, and students. Thus, policies and initiatives developed may not fully reflect the needs and challenges faced by different groups within the university. Furthermore, this approach may not allow for flexibility and adaptation to different contexts and needs within diverse departments and disciplines. Gender equality challenges vary across faculties, departments, and research areas, and a "one-size-fits-all" approach may not be suitable for addressing the specific needs of each field. In addition, when policies are imposed from the top without active engagement and buy-in from all actors, i.e., staff and students, there can be resistance or a lack of commitment to their implementation. Finally, setting targets and designing GEPs without a state-of-play, context analysis and understanding of the underlying issues can lead to inefficient action plans. Without considering the complexities of the issue of gender equality and the existing barriers within the university culture, the initiatives may not effectively address the root causes of inequality.

Secondly, another interviewee highlighted a crucial aspect of gender equality work, emphasising that focusing solely on achieving gender balance among professors and leadership may lead to overlooking other important dimensions of gender equality. The perspective put forth suggests that gender equality should encompass a broader understanding beyond numerical representation. By solely concentrating on gender balance, universities may limit their approach to addressing gender disparities. While achieving gender balance in leadership positions is undoubtedly essential, it is equally important to consider other facets of gender equality, such as working conditions, career progression, and the overall experiences of women compared to men in academia. By taking a narrow perspective on gender equality, universities may miss opportunities to understand and address the underlying issues that contribute to gender disparities in research and academic environments. This could result in overlooking the specific challenges faced by women, such as biases in evaluation and promotion processes, work-life balance issues, and unequal access to resources and opportunities.

> "So, gender equality at the [university] is first and foremost something we do in order to have gender balance among the professors and the associate professors. […] You have this rather narrow perspective on what gender equality is and why we do it.
>
> And, and then you lose out on [knowledge about the working conditions of researchers and academics and the experience of women compared to men]."

Lastly, a few of the interviews also emphasised the fact that gender equality work and creating change is a long, slow process. Creating sustainable change in terms of gender equality requires considerable time and effort. Progress in achieving gender equality can be frustratingly slow, and change may not be easily noticeable. Transformations in cultural norms, policies, and practices often require sustained effort, persistence, and a long-term commitment. The following citation illustrates the different paces at which change occurs within a university setting. While the university as an organisation, with complex structure and extensive bureaucracy, may take time to change its direction, individual departments or units can adapt and move more swiftly.

> "[You know the] really big trucks, like the articulated lorries, [...] they take such a massive turning circle. The university is bigger than that. [It is] like an oil tanker [that] takes forever to get anywhere. And [...] the departments, they might […] be a caravan on the motorway, or they might be a little kind of mini, but they can move so much faster [than the university as a whole]."

> "[Nothing is really changing. ...] So, they say it will take 80 more years, 100 more years [before] we have equality because it's so slow."

This reflects the recognition that deeply entrenched biases, systemic barriers, and cultural norms can impede progress, highlighting the need for ongoing efforts. By acknowledging that achieving gender equality is a long-term endeavour, universities can develop achievable goals, sustain their commitment, and implement tailored activities to drive change.

In conclusion, the interviews conducted provide valuable insights into the challenges and complexities of gender equality work within the universities. The discussions encompassed various aspects, including the structure and organisation of gender equality work, the commitment of leadership, the need for inclusivity and adaptability to the specific context, window-dressing, and the need for a comprehensive approach beyond numerical representation.

Moreover, limited resources, both financial and human, can pose challenges to the organisation of gender equality work. Insufficient funding, inadequate staffing, and a lack of dedicated time and attention can impede the development and implementation of gender equality strategies. This can result in fragmented or ad hoc efforts that fail to address the root causes of gender inequality. In addition, the findings highlight the importance of including all actors and thus considering diverse perspectives and experiences when developing gender equality policies and initiatives.

Simply focusing on achieving numerical balance may overlook other significant dimensions of gender equality, such as working conditions, career progression, and the overall experiences of women in academia. Additionally, the interviews underscore the recognition that creating meaningful change is a long and slow process. It is essential to maintain the commitment to gender equality and persevere in advocating for change, being aware that even small steps contribute to overall progress. Achieving gender equality within universities requires ongoing a comprehensive approach, close collaboration between the different actors, and a long-term commitment to effectively address structural and organisational challenges.

4.3.3 INTERNAL RESISTANCE

The interviews conducted for this study have brought to light a significant challenge encountered in the pursuit of gender equality within universities, namely internal resistance. This resistance arises from various arguments and conflicts that contribute to a sense of reluctance or opposition towards gender equality initiatives.

The most prevalent argument identified in the interviews is the belief that gender equality has already been achieved and, therefore, no longer poses a problem that needs to be addressed. Those holding this viewpoint may argue that the presence of women in various roles within the university, including professors and students, is evidence of gender equality. Consequently, they question the necessity of gender equality initiatives and dismiss the need for further efforts in this regard.

> "There are definitely some who still don't think we have a diversity problem. Because they don't want to [be forced to] hire the 'least qualified' candidate just because it is a woman."

> "It still is [a common belief that gender equality is not a problem]."

"[Many people] say that gender equality already exists. [They ask where] do you see gender inequality in our university? […] We have women everywhere. We have women professors; we have women students. What is your problem? Many people have this kind of resistance."

Furthermore, some members of university staff attribute the lack of gender balance to women's career choices. They argue that it is not a matter of gender bias or discrimination within academia but rather a result of women opting for different career paths.

"People believe that it's not that we don't let women do scientific careers, it's them. They don't want it. They would rather do something else."

Another argument that emerged from the interviews is the perception that excessive support is being provided to women, resulting in a perceived disadvantage for men. This viewpoint raises concerns about the fairness and necessity of ongoing efforts to advance women's careers. It can generate resistance among individuals who perceive themselves as being disadvantaged by gender equality initiatives.

"What we encounter more in regards of challenges is a kind of rhetoric where, do we really need this anymore? Do we really need to advance women's careers? Isn't it… especially in a university context, isn't it men who are […] the minority? [...] So this kind of idea that gender equality has been achieved and what we're doing is kind of calling for more than [women] deserve."

Finally, in terms of the perception that gender equality is no longer a problem, there is a belief held by some that academia and universities are inherently immune to gender inequality and discrimination. This viewpoint asserts that universities are regarded as prestigious and intellectually superior institutions, and therefore, it is inconceivable for gender-based issues such as harassment or discrimination to exist within their walls. This perception can contribute to a dismissive attitude towards gender equality concerns.

"Many people at universities think that harassment and gender discrimination and gender-based violence can't exist within a university. [The] university is a high-status part of the environment [made up of only good people]."

Another aspect of internal resistance identified in the interviews is the discontent among some individuals regarding activities and initiatives exclusively targeted at women. These individuals express a sense of exclusion and argue that men are being left out of the efforts to promote gender equality. They question why resources are allocated only for women, leading to feelings of unfairness and resistance within the university community.

The dissatisfaction with activities exclusively for women is exemplified by objections raised when specific scholarships or mentoring programmes are created for women in STEM fields, for instance. Some individuals express anger and frustration, arguing that these opportunities should be equally available to men.

> "We decided […] to fund specific scholarships for women that wanted to attend summer schools in the STEM fields [...]. And […] some colleagues wrote to us [and were] furious, saying how is it possible that you are funding scholarships reserved only [for women]?"

> "My colleague who organises [the mentoring of female PhDs] had some comments from male colleague [asking why for women and not for men]?"

Additionally, some interviewees highlighted the challenge of internal resistance, which intersects with the relationship between gender equality and diversity. They expressed concerns that efforts to promote diversity could potentially divert attention and resources away from gender equality. There is a fear that broadening the scope to encompass other dimensions of diversity might dilute the focus on gender equality, resulting in limited resources and slower progress in addressing gender imbalances.

> "This move towards diversity is […] actually something that could potentially, at the very least, become a barrier to gender equality, rather than something that actually helps."

> "The funds that were formerly only for gender equality and family friendliness were opened up and had a new stamp on it for diversity. And now the same money is used for a lot wider issues and, of course, leaving less for just gender equality."

> "[Some people who are] very keen on gender equality are extremely negative towards diversity and inclusion because they are very afraid of what will happen to gender equality initiatives."

One interviewee describes this relationship between gender equality and diversity very aptly as a zero-sum game. The argument of a zero-sum game suggests that if resources are directed towards diversity initiatives, it may come at the expense of gender equality initiatives. This viewpoint reflects the belief that resources are limited and should be exclusively allocated to address gender imbalances. Staff holding this perspective worry that a shift towards broader diversity efforts could hinder progress specifically in advancing women's positions.

"But if you look at the discussion at the university, it's more like: We still have a big issue with women, and [...] it's a [zero-sum game], so if we are to put money towards diversity measures, then the women will lose out."

The discussion surrounding the relationship between gender equality and diversity sparks divergent opinions within the field of gender equality. Some individuals perceive it as a potential barrier to gender equality, while others argue for an integrated approach that recognises the interconnectedness of gender equality and broader diversity considerations.

To summarise, the interviews conducted for this study shed light on the challenge of internal resistance within the universities when it comes to gender equality. This resistance manifests in several forms, including more subtle forms, such as the perception that gender equality has already been achieved and the belief that gender inequality is a result of women's career choices and, thus, gender equality work is unnecessary. The argument that women's career choices are the primary reason for the lack of gender balance effectively shifts the responsibility away from the institution and onto the individual. Furthermore, some staff express discontent with activities and initiatives exclusively aimed at women, perceiving them as unfair and exclusionary. Finally, the interviews reveal that the challenge of internal resistance in some cases intersects with the notion of diversity. Some individuals express concerns that a focus on diversity might divert attention and resources away from gender equality initiatives, suggesting that advancements in one area might come at the expense of the other. Overall, these findings emphasise the importance of fostering ongoing dialogue within the universities to address internal resistance. This can be achieved by promoting buy-in and adopting an inclusive approach to gender equality.

4.3.4 WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Another challenge to gender equality that emerged from the interviews is the issue of work-life balance and the impact of family and care responsibilities. Specifically, societal expectations regarding family life and caregiving responsibilities were highlighted. This challenge encompasses various aspects, including the disproportionate burden of caregiving falling on women, the presence of a gender pay gap where men often earn more than women, the difficulty of balancing work and responsibilities after having children, and the existing legislation and norms surrounding parental leave. Furthermore, the interviews touched upon the dilemma faced by women who feel pressured to choose between their careers and starting a family.

The most frequently mentioned problem relating to family life, caring responsibilities and work-life balance was, not surprisingly, the fact that these responsibilities tend to fall on women. There is a general societal expectation that women are primarily responsible for family and home-related tasks, regardless of their job.

> "This became especially apparent during the pandemic that a lot of women could suddenly not teach the same way because they had their children at home, and they do the care work. The men work, the women do care work."

> "Yeah, family duties, housekeeping duties are, let's say 80%, on the women's shoulder. So, if there's somebody at home needing help: An old parent, a child, a disabled. It's the woman sacrificing the job and the man wouldn't."

> "So, the majority of those family care responsibilities are on women, even if they are professors and scientific researchers. They are the ones that are responsible, so, it's really difficult for them. If they decide to have two, three children, then they sometimes lose their career. And many of them have to choose."

As one of the quotes above suggests, some women's caring responsibilities are not limited to their young children. It can also mean taking care of elderly or unwell parents.

> "I was also thinking about the women who don't just care [for] their kids, but they care [for] their parents. Yeah, and that's also a women's job."

Another aspect that emerged from the interviews was the disparity in earnings between men and women, which often leads to women taking on a larger share of caregiving responsibilities in households. This perpetuates a cycle where women are less available for work, resulting in professional setbacks and continued earning disparities compared to their male counterparts. As the cycle progresses, it becomes more likely for women to prioritise staying at home, as the financial impact on the family is typically smaller when women miss work. This dynamic further reinforces the challenges faced by women in balancing their careers and family responsibilities, contributing to the broader gender inequality in the workplace.

> "In a stereotypical kind of family model like that, the man might earn a bit more. You know, it doesn't make any financial sense for the man to take like a long period of care, like parental leave."

> "It depends on how much money you can get. If the man earns more money than the woman, the woman is responsible for caring for people, because it's always about the money."

As the process described above unfolds, women frequently encounter ongoing setbacks in their careers. Some women persist in working but struggle to make up for lost ground, while others choose to leave their careers and cease working altogether. According to one interviewee, this situation is closely linked to the allocation of parental leave. Not only does the amount of parental leave available for women contribute to the stagnation of their careers, but also, the lack of parental leave available for men results in a scarcity of male role models who actively take leave to care for their children. Consequently, the norm of men taking parental leave fails to establish itself.

> "Making shared parental leave more accessible. Women kind of take time out for parenting, parental and caring responsibilities and therefore do not progress as fast or as far or leaving the workforce altogether. And then on the flip side of men not being able to access that shared parental leave, […] feeling like this kind of stigma or not seeing [...] male role models doing same."

The challenges faced by young women in academia were specifically emphasised during the interviews. Balancing academic pursuits with family responsibilities can be particularly challenging for young women.

> "Difficulties for young female scientist simultaneously having children and an academic career."

> "The main reason we started losing women is because a university career and family are so difficult to reconcile, and family is still seen as women's responsibility."

> "The timing of the academic careers […] are not good for women. Because the core of academic career is put in the period in which often women […] have children."

> "The beginning of the career, which is crucial in an academic career, coincides with the time where women have children."

In summary, the challenge of work-life balance encompasses multiple factors that have a significant impact on women's careers. Women often encounter numerous disadvantages when trying to balance their family responsibilities and professional aspirations. Consequently, many women feel compelled to make a difficult choice between starting a family and pursuing a career, as these two aspects frequently conflict with each other. This conclusion was evident in several interviews, emphasising the complex and pervasive nature of this challenge, especially for young women. Overcoming this challenge requires universities to develop strategies, structures, and practices that better support work-life balance.

4.3.5 SOCIETAL ATTITUDES, CULTURAL NORMS, AND GENDER STEREOTYPES

One of the most frequently mentioned challenges to gender equality and gender equality work in the interviews was that of the contextual societal factors, the national culture and the overall lack of attention paid to the issue in the nine Circle U. member countries. The interviews revealed a multitude of complex challenges concerning cultural norms and societal perceptions.

These include, but are not limited to, deeply ingrained gender stereotypes, the belief in male superiority and an expectation that women ought to conform to male norms to achieve success. Finally, the lack of national and governmental support for gender equality work was emphasised, as well as the effect of this on motivation for such work within the universities.

Interviewees highlighted that society is largely shaped by a patriarchal understanding of the relationship between men and women. This deeply rooted viewpoint was described as difficult to change.

> "I really think that our key issue is our deep-rooted prejudices about this patriarchal relationship between men and women."

The deeply ingrained cultural aspects make it challenging to address gender inequality effectively, continuing to disadvantage women.

> "[The causes of inequality] are deeply rooted in existing gender asymmetries and discrimination in society."

> "[The causes of gender inequality] have developed through many years and historically. […] it is deeply ingrained in us, and it is difficult to change. And [this] is one of the reasons why it is so difficult to do something about it."

One interviewee aptly highlights the complexity of this issue by emphasising that changing the prevailing mindset would require nothing short of a revolution.

> "I think the biggest challenge is actually the culture and changing the culture because […] gender equality or gender itself is such a core structure and concept in our society that basically, if you start pulling at one end, the entire structure starts to shake and if we aren't willing to [...] change how […] universities work […] I think we won't achieve gender equality. Period. You know, but this is, of course, it's basically revolution what is needed."

Moving on to the university world more specifically, the challenge posed by stereotypical perceptions of men and women are also prevalent here, as described by one interviewee.

> "Men were thought to be more cunning than women. Meaning that they were more intelligent, measured in brains and all that. And I actually think it is still like that."

This is supported by another interviewee who suggests that women have only been allowed into academia, as well as all other positions in society, because they have complied with the rules set out by men.

> "Women have, and this is valid for all positions in society, come in and done it on the terms and rules of the game that have been previously defined by men."

As mentioned earlier, the interviewees emphasised the lack of governmental support in advancing gender equality. The following quote exemplifies the detrimental impact that the absence of national and governmental support can have on the universities' motivation to engage in gender equality initiatives, ultimately affecting the current state of gender equality within the institutions.

> "And when you try to do different reforms, and this is not very successful, you start to lose that kind of motivation to engage in those things […] Especially when you receive from the national level that kind of message that there is no interest. Gender policies are there, but not finance, not very much implemented."

In conclusion, the interviews highlighted the significant influence of cultural and societal norms on gender equality work and the current state of gender equality at the universities. It is evident that the progress and effectiveness of gender equality initiatives at universities are closely intertwined with the broader societal norms and perceptions. The challenges posed by these general cultural factors underscore the need for comprehensive efforts to address deeply ingrained beliefs and stereotypes in order to foster change and promote gender equality within the universities. The detrimental impact of the lack of support from the government and other national bodies on gender equality work at the institutional level was a significant concern raised by the interviewees.

4.4 LESSONS LEARNED

Through examining contextual factors, analysing implemented GEPs, exploring organisational aspects, and conducting insightful interviews, this study has provided a wealth of valuable lessons. The following key takeaways emerge as the most significant findings:

Firstly, it is crucial to acknowledge the unique national contexts in which Circle U. universities operate. Each university operates within a distinct national context with its own gender equality legislation and policies. The level of support from national governments and other bodies significantly impacts the resources and motivation for gender equality work within universities. Therefore, variations in support across different national contexts must be considered.

Furthermore, substantial differences were observed in the GEPs and gender equality work among member universities. These differences encompassed focus areas, the number and duration of activities, and their renewal frequency. However, certain focus areas, such as gender balance, non-discrimination in recruitment, career development and support, gender balance in leadership positions, and data collection and monitoring, were prevalent across most GEPs. An ongoing debate exists regarding whether GEPs should exclusively focus on gender equality or incorporate aspects of diversity and inclusion.

The structure and organisation of gender equality work varied across the nine universities, including differences in the number of bodies, committees, and individuals involved. Some universities divided the responsibility among multiple bodies, while others assigned it to a single body or a few employees. The composition of those responsible for gender equality work also varied, involving full-time, part-time, and voluntary staff with different remuneration arrangements.

Moreover, the involvement of leadership, management, faculties, and departments in this work varied among the universities. Although there is a general consensus about the importance of leadership engagement, it is often lacking in practice. Limited management involvement and a lack of leadership involvement have been recognised as crucial obstacles, resulting in superficial work that fails to address the underlying factors contributing to inequalities. Active support and commitment from top-level management and leadership are essential for gender equality initiatives to gain traction and effect meaningful change. This highlights the need for a strong organisational commitment to gender equality, with leaders actively championing and prioritising these efforts.

Inadequate allocation of resources, both in terms of human and financial support, emerged as another challenge hindering the progress of gender equality work. Insufficient resources lead to superficial efforts that fail to address the root causes of gender inequalities. GEPs and related initiatives are sometimes seen as mere window-dressing, fulfilling requirements without leading to substantial changes. Recognising the importance of allocating adequate resources is crucial to enable comprehensive and effective gender equality work.

The study highlighted the pivotal role of university culture in perpetuating gender inequality. The competitive and hostile culture influenced by a conservative historical context reinforces societal norms and beliefs that impede progress towards gender equality. This environment exacerbates the "leaky pipeline" phenomenon, characterised by a gender imbalance in management and leadership roles and a disproportionately low representation of female professors. Women in academia face numerous obstacles and delays in advancing their careers due to this cultural dynamic. Additionally, the assessment system within universities tends to undervalue significant portions of women's work, further exacerbating the challenges they face in career progression and recognition.

Internal resistance to gender equality efforts within universities was identified as another significant challenge. Some individuals argue that gender equality has already been achieved and that any gender disparities arise from women's personal choices regarding their careers and ambitions. This perspective individualises the issue rather than recognising it as an organisational concern. Consequently, it fosters the belief that additional efforts towards gender equality are unnecessary, especially since current initiatives are perceived as disadvantaging men.

Furthermore, societal attitudes, cultural norms, and stereotypes prevalent within the member societies of Circle U. pose a key challenge in fostering gender equality within universities. The study observed persistent patriarchal notions regarding gender and gender roles across various countries, cultures, and academic institutions.

Lastly, the study has highlighted the critical issue of work-life balance, particularly concerning caregiving responsibilities, as a notable takeaway. The traditional belief that these responsibilities primarily fall on women perpetuates gender inequalities within university settings. Women in academia often encounter difficulties in effectively balancing their family life and career due to prevailing societal norms surrounding caregiving. The existing structures and practices within universities seem to force them to choose between the two. To address this challenge, it is essential for universities to develop policies and structures that actively support work-life balance.

4.5 BEST PRACTICES

As part of the study, the interviewees were requested to identify successful examples of gender equality initiatives implemented at their respective universities. In essence, they were asked to share their experiences regarding best practices in gender equality. These examples encompassed various aspects, such as the organisation and allocation of resources for gender equality work, as well as specific programs and training offered within the universities.

While only a few examples of the most frequently mentioned best practices are provided here, numerous others were discussed during the interviews. The highlighted examples include training and educational programmes for both staff and students, mentoring initiatives, efforts to promote work-life balance, dedicated support bodies for individuals experiencing discrimination or sexual harassment, and staff networks.

4.5.1 TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Throughout the interviews, it became apparent that a number of the Circle U. universities offer some kind of training or education about gender equality issues to their staff and/or students. Almost all of these training offers typically focus on raising awareness and training staff to recognise and address sexism, sexual harassment, gender-based violence and discrimination. For example, one interviewee describes a training offer aimed at recognising sexual harassment for representatives at the university.

> "They're linking those different representatives at the university level, providing trainings in [recognising sexual harassment]. Because people really don't recognise sexual harassment, you know, even women. You only recognise it when it's very severe."

Another university has compulsory training programmes for staff and students. More specifically, there is a training programme for the leadership at the university, in which awareness raising about harassment and gender-based violence is included. Similarly, the university also offers an online module for students to raise awareness about gender-based violence and consent.

> "An awareness-raising training on harassment and gender violence is integrated into the training program for managers. This training includes an online module to raise awareness of gender-based violence and the aggravating factor of power relations in the workplace, and more specifically in the university environment. All members of staff are also offered a more practical dimension, in particular on how to respond in concrete situations. Both these training offers are compulsory since 11/2022 for all employees in positions of responsibility. For students, we offer an online module to raise awareness about gender-based violence and the importance of consent, particularly in the university setting."

Furthermore, another interviewee highlighted that their university provides voluntary training on gender equality and discrimination for both staff and students. Despite the training being optional, it has garnered a high level of participation from individuals within the university community.

> "During the year, you have almost 10 days for the purpose of training about equity or discrimination questions. So, it's of course on a voluntary basis, but it's for all the persons working at the university. Additionally, the new students arriving at the university have a time where they are sensitised to issues of discrimination and the question of equity. It's actually for all the new students and most of them participate."

4.5.2 MENTORING PROGRAMMES

Another of the more frequently mentioned examples of an initiative that has been successful across several of the Circle U. universities is that of mentoring programmes. The mentioned mentoring programmes have had different purposes, as well as been aimed at different target groups. Most of the described programmes are intended to benefit women, but not all specify gender as the target group. For instance, one interviewee described an example of "mentoring programmes intended to advance young female scientists", while another interviewee mentioned a successful mentoring programme intended for post-doctoral staff.

> "We have these mentors for post-doctoral students. I think that it's rather good actually. I've had some evaluation reports showing that this is something the post-doctoral students really appreciate."

Another mentoring programme mentioned in the interviews focused on introducing young female staff to influential networks within the university. This taught them about what leadership work entails, preparing them for potentially taking on leadership positions one day.

> "The most relevant result of these mentorships was bringing these young women into certain circles of influential people. That would probably be the most relevant result that they had and possibly there would be an experienced gain in how to be in leadership."

Lastly, in terms of training offers, one interviewee mentioned a programme that combines mentoring, coaching, and training. The biggest success of this programme has been the establishment of cross-disciplinary student networks.

"Really well regarded above all is the mentoring program. It's a free semester program that we offer for predocs and postdocs, and it's not just mentoring, but also coaching and training. So, it's a combination of the three formats and this works really well, especially in helping establishing networks even across disciplines."

4.5.3 WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Moving on to the next example of a best practice, it became apparent throughout the interviews that activities or initiatives supporting work-life balance and families in general have also been successful practices across the universities. For instance, one interviewee described how their university provides office space for parents with young children, allowing parents to balance work and childcare when children are not ready to return to kindergarten or school after illness.

"We have a room where parents with young children can go to spend their office hours while the kids play, for example. So, if the kids are ill and cannot go to childcare, but they are not so ill that they cannot just play on their own, then the question is how can we work, right? So, there is an office space that you can use for this, for example."

Other universities have established family funds to create child-friendly offices and support staff on parental leave. This fund is used to pay for the creation of these offices, as well as to support members of staff that have to take a break from work because of parental leave.

"Actually, there's a family fund as well. […] And that is specifically for children/parent rooms or actually people who had to pause their postdoc, their dissertation because of parental leave, etc."

Another interviewee mentioned a Parents and Carers Fund intended to help parents returning to their careers after extended leaves, which has proven highly beneficial.

"The Parents and Carers Fund for academic and research staff, I think that's been quite successful. And from the review that we did, we did a survey of parents and carers, quite a few had received the funding from that fund. It was 90 percent of women who applied that received that funding. And it seemed like they were very much able to get their research back on track, get their careers back on track after returning from leave with the help from the funding."

Staying within the field of financial support for parents, another interviewee described a successful grant programme designed to support female scientists who have paused their careers due to care obligations. These care obligations are not strictly limited to parental leave and children but can also include caring for elderly relatives, sick parents, or partners.

"What's also very successful is the grant programme given to two female scientists who had to interrupt their career due to care obligations. So, say you had a baby, or you had to take care of your parents and you had to drop out of academia for a while. This grant, it's 10,000 euros to get you back into science, basically to give you the time to, for example, prepare a project and get third party funding or to finish your dissertation."

4.5.4 DESIGNATED SUPPORT BODIES

Another example of a successful practice identified throughout the interviews was that of having physical support centres or designated contact persons to support staff and students who have experienced harassment, discrimination, or violence. One interviewee described how making such a contact person more visible led to a significant increase in the number of people reaching out and raised awareness among staff regarding previously unknown issues.

"There's a person online that you can write an email to or call if you have problems. And just the visibility of this person to whom you can go if you have a more diverse problem has led to more problems surfacing and more people actually calling and writing an email. You know, people are talking to us about their problems, which beforehand they might not have."

Other universities have also seen a rise in the number of people reaching out for support and counselling after implementing such measures. For instance, another interviewee stated that they had the same experience at their university after making the responsible body more visible. At this university, the body that works to support victims of harassment and discrimination is the same body that is responsible for gender equality work and the university's GEP. Collaboration between the support bodies responsible for gender equality work and those addressing harassment and discrimination has proven effective in creating a more supportive environment.

"We did a lot of awareness raining to make our body more visible, and now the amount of given counselling is rising, so there's more people coming, and I don't think it's because there are more cases, but now people know that 'Oh, there is someone I can go to.'"

4.5.5 STAFF NETWORKS

A last example of a successful practice that is included here is that of staff networks, receiving support from the university. These networks were described by staff from the same university as having been extremely successful.

"We have five staff networks that are brilliant, that are self-sustained, independent but supported. [...] We have [staff networks for gender equality, for the LGBTQ+ community, for ethnic minorities, for people living with disabilities and, lastly, for parents and carers]. And each of those have a really important function to support their members and to communicate and we can collaborate on things like events or communications."

"Those networks are very active, especially the parents and carers network, in terms of supporting, providing that kind of safe space and support for colleagues and for women and enabling them to see other people who have caring responsibilities or are trying to balance work and life. It's hard to quantify that, I guess in terms of the impact, but in terms of having dropped in on some of their events and having listened to conversations, it sounds like a very supportive place for women to chat about their other kinds of responsibilities and how to manage that and how to progress their careers."

The networks provide important support, communication, and collaboration opportunities. University staff responsible for gender equality work, and diversity and inclusion initiatives often consult these networks to gain insights into relevant issues when developing new initiatives.

"We make sure that [the staff networks] are kind of linked into the work that we are doing, and they are the groups that we consult when we create certain things."

In summary, there are numerous examples of best practices in the area of gender equality within the nine Circle U. universities. The examples mentioned here represent only a selection of frequently mentioned practices across the universities; however, it is important to acknowledge that there are many more examples with their own distinct characteristics. It is worth noting that some of the focus areas of these best practices overlap, potentially suggesting the significance of interventions in these particular areas. For instance, the mentioned mentoring programmes, support for work-life balance and families, and staff networks aim to achieve similar goals, primarily enhancing the professional and personal success of particular staff members.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY

Drawing upon the findings of the study presented above and recent literature, this section offers recommendations aimed at facilitating synergies among the member universities of the Circle U. alliance. These recommendations encompass various levels, including the alliance and institutional levels, focusing on the organisation, implementation, and follow-up of GEPs. In addition, a Toolbox of strategies and actions is provided, which should be applied based on a thorough analysis of the current state and the specific needs of each university within the alliance. The recommendations adopt a culturally contextual approach, acknowledging the multifaceted nature of the gender equality issue and emphasising the importance of tailoring all initiatives to the distinct institutional contexts. It is essential to acknowledge that each gender equality policy instrument is both distinctive and contextual. Its uniqueness arises from its precise design and implementation within a specific context, encompassing socio-cultural and organisational dynamics, at a particular point in time, and within a distinct local administrative tradition.

5.1 FOSTERING SYNERGIES AMONG CIRCLE U. MEMBER UNIVERSITIES: RECOMMENDATIONS

To effectively address the challenges encountered by women in academia within the Circle U. alliance, it is crucial to foster synergies among the member universities, acknowledging and understanding the contextual factors that are unique to each university. By recognising the specific challenges, and tailoring strategies and initiatives to the distinct context of each institution, Circle U. can promote the creation of more inclusive and supportive environments for women in academia across diverse European settings. To facilitate the establishment of synergies among Circle U. member universities, the following recommendations are proposed:

A. Enhancing Commitment and Prioritisation of Gender Equality by All Member Universities

Despite the presence of GEPs, our study reveals variations in the level of commitment to gender equality work among member universities. The commitment and prioritisation of gender equality by all universities within the alliance is crucial for fostering a collaborative and impactful approach to addressing gender inequalities. Each university should showcase a strong dedication to gender mainstreaming by integrating it into its institutional values, strategies, policies, and practices.

University leaders, at various levels, play a pivotal role in driving change by engaging the entire organisation in gender equality work, setting a positive example, and ensuring accountability. Leaders should publicly demonstrate their commitment to gender equality, consistently emphasise its significance for research and innovation, allocate adequate funding and human resources, and actively promote its importance within their universities, faculties, and departments. Mechanisms to hold university leadership accountable may include the establishment of performance indicators, targets, and reporting systems that systematically assess progress in advancing gender equality. Promoting transparency and accountability through systematic public reporting can further strengthen the long-term commitment of university leadership to gender equality.

Recommendation 1: Ensure that leadership at different levels at all member universities prioritise gender equality work and integrate it into institutional values. Establish clear lines of responsibility and implement mechanisms to hold leadership accountable. Member universities should demonstrate a collective commitment to gender equality, maintaining its prominence, allocating sufficient resources (human and financial), promoting transparency, and actively fostering a supportive and inclusive environment.

B. Fostering Closer Collaboration on Gender Equality

Promoting close collaboration and synergies among member universities within the alliance is paramount for building a robust and effective alliance. Encouraging joint initiatives, collaborative projects, and programmes that harness the strengths and expertise of multiple universities can create a more comprehensive and impactful approach to addressing gender inequality.

Synergies can be created by engaging representatives from each member university in the process and establishing a working group or task force that includes staff and students to ensure a broad representation of perspectives. In this regard, encouraging open dialogue and knowledge sharing to co-create a framework that considers the specific needs and conditions of each university could lead to more effective and impactful efforts in promoting gender equality in research and innovation.

Recommendation 2: Foster closer collaboration and coordination among member universities. Encourage the sharing of best practices, experiences, and human resources to support collective learning and improvement. Establish dedicated platforms and task forces for regular communication and exchange among the universities to facilitate the co-creation of solutions and address gender inequality more effectively.

C. Cultivating a Shared Understanding of Gender Equality

To effectively address gender inequalities within the Circle U. alliance, requires the cultivation of a shared understanding of gender equality among the member universities. A shared understanding entails a collective agreement on the fundamental principles, values, and goals associated with gender equality in the specific context of research and innovation. By establishing a common understanding, the alliance can align their efforts, strategies, and initiatives to address barriers in a coordinated and impactful manner.

Recommendation 3: To facilitate synergies among the Circle U. member universities, it is recommended to cultivate and promote a shared understanding of gender equality and gender equality work. This involves fostering an efficient and consistent approach to GEPs, aligning efforts, strategies, and initiatives to address cultural and structural barriers in a coordinated manner.

D. Establishing a Common Framework for Gender Equality Work

This study has identified significant variation and disparities in the structure and organisation of gender equality work among the member universities of the alliance. To address these disparities and promote a more cohesive approach, it is recommended to establish a common framework for gender equality work. This framework would provide guidance on how to integrate gender mainstreaming into the design and implementation of GEPs and establish shared standards for gender equality work, fostering a unified approach across the alliance. By developing a common framework, member universities can align their efforts, share best practices, and learn from one another. It is important to note that a common framework does not imply a "one-size-fits-all" approach, but rather acknowledges the diverse structural, cultural, and organisational factors present in each specific context. The framework should be adaptable to address the unique challenges and barriers faced by each university while maintaining a consistent and collaborative approach across the alliance.

Recommendation 4: Establish a common framework for gender equality work within the alliance, considering the specific socio-cultural and organisational contexts of individual universities. The framework should provide guidance, set common standards, and allow for flexibility and adaptation to address the diverse structural and cultural barriers to gender equality in each university. It should also encourage regular communication and close collaboration among member universities to facilitate the sharing of experiences, best practices, and lessons learned.

E. Implementing systematic Monitoring, Evaluation, and Follow-up

While Circle U. member universities collect gender data and statistics, there is a notable absence of consistent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess and follow up on the implementation of GEPs and gender equality work in general. This discrepancy highlights a gap between the formal design and adoption of GEPs and their actual effectiveness in promoting gender equality. To bridge this gap and ensure tangible progress, it is crucial to develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework and tools to assess the progress of GEPs.

This framework should be based on a shared understanding of GEPs within the alliance, ensuring consistency and effectiveness while incorporating a multi-dimensional and context-specific approach. To facilitate this process, a dedicated coordination mechanism can be established, with designated contact persons in each university responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and following up on the implementation and impact of GEPs.

Regular assessments should be conducted to measure progress, identify areas for improvement, and share results and lessons learned among the member universities. This will enable evidence-based decision-making and support continuous improvement in gender equality work. Additionally, developing a system for member universities to report on their progress in implementing GEPs and making this data publicly available can foster transparency and accountability within the alliance.

Recommendation 5: Develop a mechanism for systematic monitoring and evaluating the implementation and impact of gender equality actions within each university, providing dedicated resources to this task. Regularly assess progress, identify areas for improvement, and adapt actions accordingly. Develop a reporting system for member universities to share their progress in implementing GEPs, making the data publicly accessible. This process will facilitate the identification of successful strategies and areas for further collaboration and improvement in gender equality work.

F. Sharing of Results, Experiences, and Mutual Learning

The sharing of results, experiences, and lessons learned plays a vital role in advancing gender equality work within the Circle U. alliance. To foster a collaborative and supportive environment, it is essential to establish mechanisms dedicated to sharing knowledge and facilitating mutual learning among member universities. These mechanisms can take the form of regular meetings, workshops, reports, or online platforms specifically designed for sharing information and best practices.

Encouraging a culture of mutual learning is crucial, where universities can openly exchange their experiences, successes, and challenges in gender equality work. By creating opportunities for member universities to share their results, best practices, and lessons learned, the alliance can benefit from collective intelligence.

Recommendation 6: Establish platforms and mechanisms for sharing results, best practices, and lessons learned from the monitoring and evaluation process among member universities of the alliance. Encourage universities with more experience and expertise in GEP implementation to serve as mentors or peer advisors to universities with less experience, facilitating knowledge sharing and collaboration. Foster an environment that promotes openness and mutual learning to enhance the effectiveness of gender equality initiatives across the alliance.

G. Building Capacities and Expertise

Developing expertise in the design, implementation, and evaluation of GEPs is a specialised field that may require additional support within the Circle U. alliance. Recognising that not all member universities may possess the necessary gender equality expertise or evaluation capabilities, it is essential to build capacities and empower universities to effectively monitor and evaluate their gender equality initiatives.

The alliance can play a vital role in facilitating capacity-building efforts by leveraging the expertise and resources within its network. Experienced member universities with proven competences in gender equality, and monitoring and evaluation, can serve as mentors or trainers to share their knowledge and experiences. Mentorship programmes can be established, fostering collaboration between universities with expertise and those seeking to develop their capacities in gender equality work.

Recommendation 7: Foster competence and expertise in gender equality and gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation by leveraging the existing knowledge within the alliance. Utilise the collective knowledge and experience within the alliance to provide support and guidance to member universities lacking such capacities. Implement mentorship programmes that pair universities with expertise in gender equality and monitoring and evaluation with those in need of support, facilitating knowledge transfer and capacity development.

5.2 ITINERARY TO DESIGNING, IMPLEMENTING, AND FOLLOWING UP ON GEPS

GEPs are instrumental in promoting gender equality within universities and fostering synergies among the member universities of the alliance. Well-designed GEPs, tailored to the specific context of each university, implemented efficiently, and followed up effectively, can contribute to long-term and sustainable progress towards gender equality. The process of developing and implementing GEPs entails several crucial steps, which involve the entire organisation. A brief itinerary[39] on each step along with corresponding recommendations are offered below. By following this brief itinerary and implementing the corresponding recommendations, member universities of the alliance can effectively design, implement, and follow up on GEPs. This approach will contribute to the advancement of gender equality and pave the way for fostering synergies among the member universities. It will create an environment conducive to collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and collective action, thereby strengthening the alliance's commitment to promoting gender equality in academia.

Step 1. State-of-play analysis

This step involves conducting a comprehensive review of the university's gender equality landscape. It entails analysing sex-disaggregated data on staff and students to identify existing gender imbalances and areas in need of improvement. The state-of-play analysis also involves assessing existing gender equality measures and initiatives within the university. This analysis establishes a baseline understanding of the current situation and sets the foundation for developing effective strategies and actions within the GEP.

Recommendation 1: Base policy on an in-depth analysis of contextual institutional issues and reliable data. Highlight the importance of evidence-based decision-making and a thorough understanding of the specific gender equality issues within the university. Identify the institutional challenges and map the existing competency in achieving gender balance. Ensure that all actions are informed by evidence and research on gender disparities and challenges.

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[39] The itinerary is based on the EIGE GEAR Tool, set up by the EC, see https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gear/what-gender-equality-plan-gep, the GENERA project https://genera-project.com/ and the KIF Committee's recommendations for gender balance, see https://kifinfo.no/en/kif-committees-recommendations-gender-balance

Step 2. Developing a strategy and designing the GEP

Once the state-of-play analysis is complete, it is crucial to develop a comprehensive strategy that outlines the goals, objectives, and actions to be undertaken within the GEP. The strategy should address the identified gender imbalances and challenges and be aligned with the university's overall vision and mission. It should consider the diverse needs and experiences of staff and students, promoting an inclusive and supportive environment for all.

When designing the GEP, it is essential to adopt a holistic and integrated approach. This approach recognises the interdependency of the identified areas of intervention. The GEP should encompass a range of issues that are relevant to the entire staff and the organisation as a whole. The following crucial elements need to be considered when establishing the GEP:

- Objectives: Clearly define the goals and objectives that the GEP aims to achieve.
- Measures: Outline the specific actions and strategies that will be implemented to address gender equality issues.
- Resources: Dedicate adequate human and financial resources.
- Indicators: Identify the key indicators that will be used to measure progress and assess the effectiveness of the GEP.
- Targets: Set measurable targets that represent the desired outcomes and milestones to be achieved.
- Timeline: Establish a timeline that outlines the duration and sequencing of activities within the GEP.
- Division of responsibilities: Clearly assign roles and responsibilities to individuals and entities involved in implementing the GEP.

Recommendation 2. Formulate strategies, concrete actions, clear objectives and allocate adequate human and financial resources. Align the GEP strategy with the broader institutional goals and values. Involve the leadership in developing the strategy and in the designing process to ensure commitment and support. Set clear, measurable, and time-bound objectives to guide the implementation process. Set short-term as well as long-term goals. Establish clear lines of responsibility and accountability, ensuring that all stakeholders understand their roles and contributions.

Recommendation 3. Recognise that hidden inequalities and biases are persistent and require continuous and comprehensive efforts, encompassing multiple actions, to achieve structural and cultural transformation. Gender equality actions should be seen as long-term commitments rather than one-time interventions.

Step 3. Implementing the GEP

Effective implementation of the GEP is crucial for translating strategy into action. This involves allocating resources, assigning responsibilities, and establishing mechanisms for monitoring progress. It is essential to engage all stakeholders and foster a sense of ownership and accountability throughout the implementation process. Regular communication, training, and awareness-raising activities can facilitate the successful execution of the GEP initiatives. Gender equality actions inherently challenge established norms, practices, and routines, which are deeply ingrained in the culture and structure of an institution. Implementing GEPs involves a transformative process that can be experienced differently by individuals in the organisation. It is crucial to acknowledge that resistance to change is a natural response and be prepared to address it effectively. Hence, implementing a GEP encompasses various aspects, including:

- Organising regular meetings with relevant staff: These meetings aim to foster ownership, motivation, and collaboration among staff members.
- Training the relevant staff: Providing training sessions helps equip staff members with the necessary knowledge and skills to actively contribute to the GEP's objectives and initiatives.
- Enhancing visibility of the GEP: Developing tailored key messages for different target groups, promoting activities, and encouraging staff involvement are effective ways to increase awareness and engagement.

Recommendation 4. Communicate the value and impact of gender equality in research and innovation both internally and externally. Increase awareness that inequalities and biases threaten meritocracy and the quality of scientific outcomes. Emphasise that gender equality and inclusion are integral to achieving excellence in research and innovation.

Recommendation 5. Keep gender issues in the foreground. Provide training and capacity-building opportunities to enhance the skills and knowledge necessary for effective implementation. Be flexible and test out new approaches. Commit the entire leadership at different levels – regularly train the leadership and hold it accountable.

Recommendation 6. Use a top-down and bottom-up approach. Inform and involve all actors in gender equality work to create GEP ownership and motivation. Establish bodies dedicated to gender equality work to drive change. Involve multiple actors and establish alliances with external actors. Anticipate and proactively address resistance by identifying strategies to navigate it effectively.

Step 4. Monitoring and evaluation

To ensure the effectiveness and impact of the GEP, a robust monitoring and evaluation system should be established, regularly assessing the progress made towards the set objectives, measuring outcomes, and identifying areas for improvement. Monitoring involves systematically collecting and analysing data to measure progress against identified indicators and targets. Monitoring and evaluation should be conducted using sex-disaggregated data and include both quantitative data (such as the representation of women in leadership positions or participation in decision-making bodies) and qualitative data (such as regular feedback from different actors and participants in actions). The findings should inform future decision-making and adjustments to the GEP initiatives.

Recommendation 7. Develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework tailored to the GEP's objectives and actions. Collect and analyse sex-disaggregated data to track progress and identify gender disparities. Involve stakeholders in the evaluation process through surveys, focus groups, or interviews to gather feedback and insights. Use the evaluation results to inform decision-making, adapt strategies, and improve the effectiveness of the GEP.

Recommendation 8. Foster a culture of transparency, where gender equality efforts are visible, and progress is tracked. Disseminate results and share them with staff and students. Transparency in reporting challenges and progress is important for accountability.

Step 5. Follow-up and sustainability

Following up on the GEP is essential to ensure sustainability and continued progress of gender equality initiatives. It involves regularly reviewing the GEP's implementation, monitoring outcomes, and identifying areas that require further attention. Lessons learned and best practices should be shared within the university and the alliance to facilitate mutual learning and improvement.

Recommendation 9: Establish mechanisms for ongoing follow-up and continuous improvement of the GEP. Reflect on the effectiveness of strategies and actions, taking into account emerging challenges and changing conditions, and review and update the GEP to ensure that actions remain relevant and effective. Share results, experiences, and lessons learned, fostering a culture of mutual learning.

5.3 A TOOLKIT TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY OBJECTIVES THROUGH GEPS

The following strategies and recommendations[40] aim to create sustainable structural and cultural change within universities, fostering gender balance.

A. Strategy One: Creating a Women-friendly Environment

In order to promote gender balance and inclusivity within universities, it is crucial to create a women-friendly environment that supports the integration, progress, and success of women researchers. This not only benefits individual women researchers but also enhances the overall research environment by harnessing a broader range of perspectives and talents.

Promoting Women's Integration in the Environment:
- Provide direct and personalised support to facilitate the integration of women into the university environment.
- Establish specific services and resources for newcomers to ease their onboarding and transition process.
- Create opportunities for communication, learning, and interaction within the research environment.
- Facilitate networking opportunities and mentorship programmes to foster professional connections.
- Organise special events that promote integration and community-building among women researchers.
- Establish procedures to address and prevent and combat discrimination, gender-based violence, bullying, and harassment.

Involving Senior Managers and Leadership in the Change Process:
- Ensure the proactive involvement of senior management and leadership in gender equality initiatives.
- Encourage leaders to actively participate and assume visible roles in these programmes.
- Senior management's commitment is crucial for driving cultural transformations within the organisation.
- Strong support from leaders facilitates the mobilisation of personnel at all levels.
- Strong support from leaders enables the creation of a friendly climate for women, allocation of appropriate resources, and prevention or resolution of potential resistance and conflicts.

Promoting Work-Life Balance:
- Establish a network of services and in-house resources to support work-life balance.
- Provide comprehensive information on available resources and services to assist women researchers.
- Customise work processes to accommodate the specific needs of women researchers.
- Reduce the burden of family responsibilities by implementing flexible working arrangements.

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[40] The Toolkit is primarily based on the results of the PRAGES, STAGES and EFFORTI projects.

Supporting Early-Stage Career Development:

- Develop policies and regulations to sustain the career growth of early-career researchers.
- Provide personalised assistance and training opportunities for early-stage researchers.
- Support women in developing career plans and aspirations.
- Encourage mentoring and networking opportunities to facilitate the sharing of experiences in career development.
- Provide support to early-stage researchers to navigate in the research environment.
- Increase diversity in candidate pools for hiring and promotions.
- Allocate dedicated funds for the professional development of early-stage women researchers.
- Provide training to decision-makers, department heads, and evaluation committees to recognise and address gender bias in their processes.

B. Strategy Two: Promoting Gender-Aware Science

Challenging gender stereotypes and biases in science and creating an inclusive and diverse scientific community are key to expanding perspectives, methodologies, and research agendas, ultimately advancing scientific knowledge. The following actions aim to challenge and mitigate gender biases and stereotypes deeply ingrained in scientific processes, fostering a more balanced and representative scientific community.

Introducing Awareness of the Gender Perspective in Science:

- Develop programmes that promote awareness of the gender perspective in science and technology.
- Address the gendered assumptions that influence research priorities, methods, and interpretations.
- Create initiatives that challenge the masculine/gendered representation of scientific knowledge.
- Disseminate information that contrasts gender stereotypes and promotes gender equality in science.
- Adopt gender-sensitive language in scientific communication.
- Promote gender-sensitive education and curricula that challenge cognitive skill stereotypes.

Gendering Scientific Contents and Methods:

- Challenge the belief in the gender-blindness of science and highlight its limitations.
- Challenge prevailing notions of excellence in scientific research.
- Conduct awareness-raising activities, education, training, and dissemination efforts to highlight the gendered nature of science.
- Develop concrete programmes that legitimise women's approaches and perspectives in scientific research and innovation.
- Promote gender studies in science and technology departments.
- Incorporate the gender dimension in research design, methodology and analysis.
- Raise awareness of the advantages of gender-aware science and technology.
- Recognise and acknowledge the existence of different ways of conducting research and different approaches to science and technology, avoiding simplistic gender stereotypes.

C. Strategy Three: Supporting Women's Leadership in Science

To support women in attaining key positions in research practice, management, innovation, and science-society relationships, the following actions can be taken.

Supporting Women in Key Research Positions:

- Provide high-profile women with opportunities to increase their visibility and attain leadership positions in scientific practice.
- Systematically disseminate information on high-profile women researchers to raise awareness and recognition.
- Promote women researchers' access to top-level scientific and professional networks and research environments.
- Deliver integrated training packages to enhance the skills and competencies needed for high-level positions.
- Provide successful role models for women researchers to inspire and guide their career aspirations.
- Disseminate information about available positions and career opportunities to ensure equal access.
- Allocate funds and resources, and reserve positions specifically for women researchers.

Implementing and Monitoring Institutional Measures for Gender Balance:

- Introduce new institutional bodies and regulations to address gender imbalances in high-level positions.
- Disseminate information about the new policies and regulations to ensure transparency and understanding.
- Monitor the impact of these policies and regulations to assess their effectiveness and make necessary adjustments.

Supporting Women in Research Management Positions:

- Monitor the representation of women on boards and committees and share the data to raise awareness.
- Provide training and guidance on the application process for serving on boards and commissions.
- Modify rules and procedures for appointing board and committee members to promote gender balance.
- Develop training and awareness-raising initiatives targeted at leaders to address biases and promote inclusivity.
- Proactively search for women candidates and make their profiles available and visible for board and committee positions.

Strengthening Women's Visibility and Role in Science Communication:

- Provide training in communication skills to enable women scientists to effectively communicate their research.
- Promote the visibility of women in science through media coverage, public speaking opportunities, and recognition.

- Encourage women's participation in the flow of scientific communication, including conferences, seminars, and public events.
- Recognise and reward women's scientific excellence in communication.

Increasing Women's Influence in Innovation and Science-Society Relationships:

- Strengthen women's orientations and skills related to innovation and the management of technology.
- Promote new research environments that foster innovation and gender balance.
- Facilitate women's connections with different innovation actors, such as industry leaders, entrepreneurs, and policymakers.
- Support mobility schemes that enable women scientists to gain experiences in innovation.
- Provide resources and opportunities for women to pursue top positions in innovation, such as leadership roles in research and innovation, entrepreneurship, and technology transfer.

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7 ABBREVIATION LIST

AU – Aarhus University

CAP – Combined Action Plans

CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

CUG – Committee on Equal Opportunities, Wellness of Employees and Non-Discrimination

DFF – Independent Research Fund

EDI – Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

EDIC – Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee

EDIF – Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Forum

EIGE- European Institute for Gender Equality

ERA – European Research Area

ERIA – Empowering Research and Innovation Actions in Circle U.

EU – European Union

GAP – Gender Action Plan

GE – Gender equality

GEP – Gender Equality Plan

HEI – Higher education institution

HU – Humboldt University of Berlin

IEWM – Institute for Equality of Women and Men

KIF – Committee for Gender Balance and Diversity in Research

KCL – King's College London

MINT – Mathematics, Information Sciences, Natural Sciences and Technology

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

R&I – Research and Innovation

RPO – Research performing organisation

RTDI – Research, technology development, and innovation

RTI – Research, technology, and innovation

UB – University of Belgrade

UCLouvain – Université catholique de Louvain

UiO – University of Oslo

UN – United Nations

UniPi – University of Pisa

UniVie – University of Vienna

UPCité – Université Paris Cité

8 GLOSSARY[41]

Gender

Social attributes and opportunities associated with being female and male and to the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as to the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialisation processes. They are context- and time-specific, and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed, and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies, there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is also an important concept to understand in terms of 'gender identity'.

When referring to gender in the context of this report, it is used in a heteronormative and binary manner. This is done because many of the universities considered in this report approach the definition of this concept differently. Hence, 'gender' is used here as an umbrella term intended to simplify and encompass the different universities' approaches. We acknowledge that this is a narrow definition and encourage future work in the alliance to embrace a wider definition that is more inclusive, e.g., to trans and non-binary people.

Sex

Biological and physiological characteristics that define humans as female or male. These sets of biological characteristics are not mutually exclusive, as there are individuals who possess both, but these characteristics tend to differentiate humans as females or males.

Gender identity

Each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical, or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.

Gender equality

Equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born female or male.

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[41] Most of the definitions found in this chapter are based on EIGE's definitions.

Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, thereby recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development.

Gender Equality Plans

A set of commitments and actions that aim to promote gender equality in an organisation through a process of structural change.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

EDI strives to ensure fair treatment and opportunity for all. It aims to eradicate prejudice and discrimination on the basis of an individual or group of individual's protected characteristics.

Equality: Equality refers to the state of being treated fairly and without discrimination. It emphasises equal rights, access, and opportunities for all individuals, irrespective of their race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic. Equality aims to ensure that everyone has an equal chance to thrive and succeed.

Diversity: Diversity recognises and values the range of human differences, including but not limited to ethnicity, gender, age, disability, socio-economic background, religion, sexual orientation, and nationality. It acknowledges that diversity brings unique perspectives, experiences, and strengths to any environment. Embracing diversity promotes inclusivity and enriches organisations and societies as a whole.

Inclusion: Inclusion entails creating an environment where everyone feels respected, valued, and supported, and where their contributions are acknowledged and appreciated. It involves actively removing barriers, biases, and prejudices that hinder the full participation and engagement of individuals from diverse backgrounds. Inclusion ensures that all individuals have a sense of belonging and are empowered to reach their full potential.

Intersectionality

Analytical tool for studying, understanding, and responding to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics/identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination. It starts from the premise that people live multiple, layered identities derived from social relations, history, and the operation of structures of power.

Gender stereotypes

Preconceived ideas whereby females and males are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their gender. Gender stereotyping can limit the development of the natural talents and abilities of girls and boys, women, and men, as well as their educational and professional experiences and life opportunities in general. Stereotypes about women both result from, and are the cause of, deeply engrained attitudes, values, norms, and prejudices against women. They are used to justify and maintain the historical relations of power of men over women as well as sexist attitudes that hold back the advancement of women.

Structural and cultural change

Structural Change: Structural change refers to making systematic and institutional modifications to policies, practices, procedures, and organisational structures in order to eliminate barriers and create a more inclusive environment. It involves addressing the underlying systems, rules, and processes that perpetuate inequalities and hinder equal opportunities. Structural change may include revising recruitment and promotion procedures, implementing diversity quotas, establishing supportive policies and programs, providing training and development opportunities, and ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities. The aim is to create a framework that enables equal participation, representation, and advancement for all individuals.

Cultural Change: Cultural change involves transforming the values, beliefs, attitudes, and norms within an organisation or society to foster a more inclusive and equitable culture. It requires challenging and changing deep-rooted biases, prejudices, stereotypes, and discriminatory practices. Cultural change encompasses promoting awareness, understanding, and respect for diversity, challenging discriminatory behaviours, fostering a sense of belonging and respect for all individuals, and creating an inclusive climate where diversity is embraced and celebrated. It involves engaging stakeholders, promoting dialogue, and encouraging a collective commitment to inclusivity and equality.

Gender mainstreaming

Systematic consideration of the differences between the conditions, situations and needs of women and men in all policies and actions. Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development, and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated into all policies at all levels and all stages, by the actors normally involved in policymaking. Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programmes, in all areas and at all levels.

Work-life balance

Achieving balance between not only domestic tasks and caring for dependent relatives, but also extracurricular responsibilities or other important life priorities.

Gender budgeting

Application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process. It entails a gender-based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process, and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality.

Gender pay gap

Percentage of men's earnings and represents the difference between the average gross hourly earnings of female and male employ-ees.

Gender bias

Prejudiced actions or thoughts based on the gender-based perception that women are not equal to men in rights and dignity.

Unconscious bias

Sexism is linked to beliefs around the fundamental nature of women and men and the roles they should play in society. Sexist assumptions about women and men, which manifest themselves as gender stereotypes, can rank one gender as superior to another. Such hierarchical thinking can be conscious and hostile, or it can be unconscious, manifesting itself as unconscious bias.

Sexual harassment

Any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature occurs, with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Acts of sexual harassment are, typically, carried out in the context of abuse of power, promise of reward or threat of reprisal.

Gender-based violence

Violence directed against a person because of that person's gender, gender identity or gender expression, or which affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately. Gender-based violence and violence against women are terms that are often used interchangeably as it has been widely acknowledged that most gender-based violence is inflicted on women and girls, by men.

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9.2 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

List of projects and other sources that focus on promoting gender equality in research and innovation, and research organisations in Europe:

ACT - Advancing Gender Equality in Research and Innovation: Website

Aarhus University GEP 2020-2022: Document

CASPER - Collaborative Approach to the Socioeconomic Impacts of Gender Equality Research: CASPER

EIGE - European Institute for Gender Equality: EIGE

EGERA - Effective Gender Equality in Research and the Academia: Website

EFFORTI - Evaluation Framework for Promoting Gender Equality in Research and Innovation: Website

ERIA – Empowering Research and Innovation Actions in Circle U.: Announcement on Circle U.'s Website

EQUAL-IST - Gender Equality Plans for Information Sciences and Technology Research Institutions: Website

FESTA - Female Empowerment in Science and Technology Academia: FESTA

GARCIA - Gendering the Academy and Research: Combating Career Instability and Asymmetries: Website

GEAR - Gender Equality in Academia and Research: GEAR

GEARING-Roles - Gender Equality Actions in Research Institutions to Transform Gender Roles: Website

GEECCO - Gender Equality in Engineering through Communication and Commitment: Website

GEMS - Gender Equality Measures in Science and Research: Website

GENDERA - Gender Equality in Research and Innovation: Website

GENERA - Gender Equality Network in the European Research Area: GENERA

GENDER ACTION - Gender Equality in Science and Innovation: Website

GENDER-NET Plus - Gender Equality in the European Research Area: Website

GENDERTIME - Gender Diversity Impact on Team Excellence: Website

GENOVATE - Transforming Organisational Culture: Website

GenPORT – Gender Portal https://www.genderportal.eu

King's Athena Swan Action Plan: Document

LIBRA - Leveraging Institutional Transformation for Gender Equality in Research and Innovation: Website

PLOTINA - Promoting Gender Balance and Inclusion in Research, Innovation, and Training: Website

PRAGES - Promoting Gender Equality in Science: PRAGES

SPEAR - https://gender-spear.eu/

STAGES – Structural Changes to Achieve Gender Equality in Science: STAGES

SUPERA - Supporting the Promotion of Equality in Research and Academia: Website

Université Paris Cité action plan: Document

University of Belgrade action plan: Document

University of Belgrade TARGET Guide: Document

University of Belgrade TARGET Report: Document

University of Oslo action plan: Document

University of Pisa action plan: Document

University of Vienna action plan: Document

10 APPENDIX

APPENDIX A) COUNTRY REPORT, DENMARK

Introduction

In Denmark, several actors are responsible for gender equality (GE) policies. These include the Danish Parliament's Gender Equality Committee, the Ministry of Digital Government and Gender Equality, (and previously the Ministry of Transport under which the Ministry of Equality was placed),[1][2] the Ministry of Employment[3] and the Danish Institute for Human Rights. The four actors have different areas of responsibility. The Danish Parliament's Gender Equality Committee, established in 2011-12, focuses on addressing GE issues at both national and international levels. Their main responsibilities include dealing with bills and proposals from parliament and conducting continuous parliamentary supervision of the government's management of GE legislation.[4] The Danish Institute for Human Rights has an advisory role in the area of GE and was appointed as the national organ of gender equality in 2011. The institute is obligated to promote, evaluate, and monitor GE in Denmark, as well as prevent discrimination. They can also refer cases of discrimination to the Board of Equal Treatment.[5]

Since 1999, the Danish government has appointed a Minister of Gender Equality to develop and coordinate GE policies. The Minister works towards promoting equal opportunities for women, men, and the LGBTQ+ community in various aspects of society, including the labour market, education system, and family life. Additionally, the Minister is responsible for Danish participation in international GE work in institutions such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), and the Nordic Council of Ministers.[6] Regarding labour market regulations, the Ministry of Employment is the responsible actor for GE. The Minister of Employment ensures equality and equal treatment in this area of society.[7]

In the context of research, technology development, and innovation (RTDI), multiple actors play a role in promoting GE. These include the Ministry of Higher Education and Science, the Agency for Science and Higher Education, the Agency for Institutions and Educational Grants, the Ministry of Industry, Business and Financial Affairs, the Independent Research Fund (DFF), the Danish Council for Research and Innovation Policy (DFiR), the Danish National Research Foundation (DNRF), and the Innovation Fund Denmark. Universities Denmark, the association of Danish universities, also plays a coordinating role in addressing GE issues in the sector.[8]

The following table provides an overview of existing legislation (2022).

Category	Instrument	In place
General GE laws	Anti-discrimination [1]	X
	Public child-care, or subsidised child-care	X
Labour market	Parental leave [2]	X
	Wage transparency/equal pay	X
	Gender quota [3]	
	Sexual harassment [4]	X

	Flexible working/part-time option	X
Higher education	Gender mainstreaming [5]	X
	GEP requirement [6]	X
	Certification system/award system	
	Gender quota for leadership/scientific staff [7]	
	Monitoring/reporting requirement	X
Recruitment	Open advertisement of vacancies	X
	Gender balanced short-list	
	Gender balanced assessment panels[9]	(X)
National funding	Gender/diversity policy [8]	X
	Gender targeted funding	
	Requirement for gender balanced funding allocation	
Non-regulatory	Policy measures to improve GE in DFF and Innovation Fund Denmark [9]	X
	Principles for recruitment and selection procedures - Danish Universities [10]	X
	Recruitment and selection practices at university level [11]	X

Notes to specific laws

[1] Anti-discrimination

Discrimination is illegalised by the Act on Prohibition of Discrimination on the Labour Market, which specifies that both direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of gender as well as race, skin colour, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, national or social origin, political ideology, age or disabilities is prohibited.[10] In addition, the Act on Equality between Men and Women prohibits discriminatory treatment of men and women when it comes to conditions of employment, and includes legislation protecting women from dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy and parental leave.

[2] Parental leave

The act on parental leave in Denmark ensures certain rights for parents in the event of childbirth. Prior to the changes implemented in August 2022, the mother was entitled to four weeks of paid pregnancy leave before the birth, while the father was entitled to two weeks of paid paternity leave immediately after the birth. Following the birth, the mother was required to take two weeks of mandatory maternity leave, followed by an additional twelve weeks of voluntary maternity leave that could not be transferred to the father or co-parent. In total, parents were entitled to 48 weeks of paid parental leave, which could be distributed as they saw fit.[11]

As a consequence of the EU directive on work-life balance for parents and careers (introduced in 2019), Denmark's act on parental leave changed from August 2022. This means that the 48 weeks of leave will be equally distributed between the parents. Moreover, nine of the weeks will be earmarked for fathers, meaning that 11 weeks of the parental leave cannot be transferred to the other parent.

However, as a result of the EU directive on work-life balance for parents and careers introduced in 2019, Denmark's act on parental leave underwent changes starting from August 2022. Under the new regulations, the 48 weeks of leave will be equally distributed between the parents. Additionally, nine weeks of the parental leave will be specifically earmarked for fathers, meaning that these 11 weeks cannot be transferred to the other parent.[12]

[3] Gender quota

The Act on Gender Equality in Denmark does not impose specific requirements for gender quotas. However, ministries are obligated to strive for gender equality in the composition of committees. Additionally, the Act requires state companies, including universities, to have policies that aim to increase the representation of women in leadership positions.[13]

Specifically, state companies with more than 50 employees are required to establish measurable targets for the underrepresented gender on their boards. They are also expected to implement gender equality policies to increase the representation of the underrepresented gender in other management levels. However, no sanctions or consequences are imposed on companies if these targets are not achieved.

While the Act does not mandate gender quotas, it encourages organisations to actively pursue gender equality in their leadership positions through the establishment of measurable targets and the implementation of gender equality policies.

[4] Sexual harassment

In Denmark, sexual harassment is considered both a form of gender discrimination and a workplace issue. The approach to addressing sexual harassment is based on political, union, and legal perspectives, with a focus on overcoming obstacles related to dealing with sexual harassment in the workplace.[14] As a result, sexual harassment is addressed through various legislations in Denmark, including the Constitution of Denmark, the Working Environment Act, the Educational Environment Act, the Gender Equality Act, the Equal Treatment Act, and the Equal Pay Act. These laws collectively provide a framework for preventing and addressing sexual harassment in different contexts, ensuring that individuals have legal protections and avenues for recourse when faced with such behaviour.

[5] Gender mainstreaming

The Danish Gender Equality Act mandates that all public authorities strive for gender equality and integrate this vision into their public management practices. Additionally, Denmark is bound by international obligations to incorporate gender equality into all political endeavours, as outlined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the EU regulations. To fulfil these obligations, Denmark adopts the approach of gender mainstreaming assessment (ligestillingsvurdering).

This method involves systematically assessing policies, initiatives, and decision-making processes to ensure that gender equality considerations are taken into account.[15]

[6] GEP Requirement

According to the Danish Act on Equality between Men and Women, state institutions, public authorities, and state-owned companies employing more than 50 people, including research-producing organisations and universities, have an obligation to report on specific gender equality-related conditions to the Ministry of Equality. This reporting must take place once every three years or upon request. The reporting requirements encompass various aspects, such as providing information on the current gender distribution within management and other staff positions. Additionally, organisations are expected to report on their objectives and measures for promoting gender equality. These reports serve as a means of monitoring and assessing progress in achieving gender equality within these institutions and ensuring compliance with the Act on Equality between Men and Women.[16]

[7] Gender quota for leadership/scientific staff

In Denmark, there is no gender quota specifically mandated for leadership or scientific staff. However, universities are required to adhere to paragraph 11 of the Act on Gender Equality. This paragraph outlines certain obligations for companies and institutions, including universities, which are as follows:

1. Reporting on gender composition: If a company or institution does not have an equal gender balance in the board, meaning a 60/40 gender divide, they are required to report on the gender composition of the highest management body.

2. Setting targets: The company or institution must set a specific target for the underrepresented gender in the highest management body and provide a time period within which it is expected to achieve this target.

3. Developing a policy: If the company or institution does not have equal gender balance in management in general, they must develop a policy for achieving equal gender composition in the upper levels of management.

[8] Gender/diversity policy

Regarding gender and diversity policies in the research sector, the Act on the Independent Research Fund (DFF) and the Danish Council for Research and Innovation Policy (DFiR) stipulate that DFF is obligated to aim for an equal gender composition in the board and in the formation of committees. While there is no explicit gender quota, these requirements and obligations aim to promote and advance gender equality in leadership and management positions within universities and research organisations in Denmark.[17]

[9] Policy measures to improve GE in DFF and Innovation Fund Denmark

DFF implemented an equal opportunities policy in 2013, aiming to address barriers and structural issues that unintentionally favour male researchers and applicants. The policy introduces various initiatives and targets to improve the gender composition within the organisation. These initiatives primarily focus on raising awareness to achieve a better gender balance.

Additionally, the policy requires all applications for larger funds to consider the gender composition within the specific project, although it is not a criterion for fund allocation. DFF monitors the following targets on an annual basis:

1. Gender distribution among applicants: The gender distribution among applicants for Independent Research Fund Denmark should align with the gender distribution in academic environments.

2. Grant allocation: Men and women should receive grants at a similar level, proportional to their share of applications, across the various areas of the fund.

3. Career progression: Men and women should progress from one academic level to the next at an equal rate, ensuring a more balanced gender distribution at the highest academic levels in Denmark.[18]

Innovation Fund Denmark has implemented four initiatives to address gender imbalance in relation to funding applications. These initiatives include appointing female ambassadors for each funding program to provide female role models in research, incorporating gender diversity visions into their entrepreneur strategy, adjusting demands and phrasing in application forms for specific research partnerships, and increasing awareness of gender diversity in their panels and in relation to candidates for Innovation Fund prizes.[19]

[10] Principles for recruitment and selection procedures - Danish Universities

Danish universities have jointly established guidelines to standardise principles in the recruitment and selection processes for permanent positions. These principles emphasise the need for open advertising of vacancies and the use of inclusive language to attract a diverse range of applicants. By adopting this approach, universities aim to attract more international applicants and individuals from underrepresented genders. Additionally, the guidelines recommend that assessment panels strive to include representatives of both sexes whenever feasible.[20]

[11] Recruitment and selection practices at university level

The Danish universities have developed individual action plans to address gender equality issues, including initiatives focused on creating a more unbiased recruitment process. However, the level of specificity and elaboration of these measures varies among universities. For example, Aarhus University's action plan specifies that assessment panels for permanent positions should include representatives of both sexes and that candidates of both sexes should be short-listed if they meet the necessary qualifications.[21] The gender equality plans of the University of Copenhagen and Aalborg University provide a general commitment to developing and implementing measures aimed at reducing bias in the recruitment process.[22]

Conclusion

GE policies in the higher education and research sector in Denmark are primarily governed by Danish labour law, which emphasises equality and equal treatment of men and women in the labour market.

Furthermore, the Danish Act on Equality between Men and Women extends this requirement to state institutions, public authorities, state-owned companies (with more than 50 employees), research producing organisations, and universities, obliging them to report on their progress and measures taken to promote gender equality.

While legislative requirements provide a foundation, GE measures in the higher education and research sector are largely determined at the institutional level. Different institutions, including funding agencies and universities, develop their own guidelines and action plans to address GE issues. These plans often express general aims rather than strict obligations or concrete numerical goals. Institutions commit to taking measures, although the level of elaboration may vary, towards achieving gender equality in the sector. However, there are no penalties specified in case the stated objectives are not fully realised.

Unlike neighbouring countries such as Norway, Denmark has been hesitant to implement gender quotas. However, according to the Act on Gender Equality, universities are required to report on the gender composition of their management boards if it does not meet a 60/40 gender divide. Additionally, universities are mandated to establish action plans aimed at promoting gender equality in top management and other positions.

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[2] The Danish government has since changed, and gender equality now falls within the Ministry of Digital Government and Gender Equality: https://english.digmin.dk/

[3] EFFORTI (2018) p. 23

[4] https://www.ft.dk/da/udvalg/udvalgene/liu/arbejde (17-05-2022)

[5] https://menneskeret.dk/koen-ligestilling (17-05-2022)

[6] https://www.trm.dk/ligestilling (19-05-2021)

[7] https://bm.dk/arbejdsomraader/arbejdsvilkaar/ligestilling/lovgivning-om-ligestilling/ (17-05-2022)

[8] EFFORTI (2018) p. 52

[9] There are no legislative requirements for gender balanced assessment panels in Denmark, but the association of Danish Universities have guidelines that urge the universities to strive towards this.

[10] EFFORTI (2018) p. 20

[11] https://www.retsinformation.dk/eli/lta/2019/67 (23-05-2022)

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APPENDIX B) COUNTRY REPORT, SERBIA

Introduction

The Republic of Serbia is a unitary state that recognises the importance of local self-government in autonomous provinces. While these provinces have the autonomy to pass their own legislation, they are still obligated to adhere to constitutional responsibilities.[1] The Law on Gender Equality, implemented in 2021, plays a crucial role in defining the bodies responsible for promoting gender equality. These bodies, including the Government, ministries, the Coordination body for Gender Equality, and entities within autonomous regions and local self-government bodies.[2] In 2014, the Coordination body for Gender Equality was established to effectively coordinate the government's efforts in the field of gender equality.[3]

Furthermore, Serbia has appointed a Commissioner for the Protection of Equality since 2010, following the enactment of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination in 2009. This independent state authority, the Commissioner, plays a vital role in preventing all forms of discrimination, including gender-based discrimination.[4]

Research in Serbia is predominantly funded by national funds managed by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development.[5] These funds include the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia and The Innovation Fund, which contribute to the advancement of research initiatives within the country.

The following table provides an overview of existing legislation (2022).

Category	Instrument	Description
General GE laws	Anti-discrimination [1]	X
	Public child-care, or subsidised child-care	X
Labour market	Parental leave [2]	X
	Equal pay [3]	X
	Gender quota	
	Sexual harassment [4]	X
	Flexible working/part-time option [5]	X
Higher education	Gender mainstreaming [6]	X
	GEP requirement [7]	(X)
	Certification system	
	Gender quota for leadership/scientific staff	
	Monitoring/reporting requirement	
	Ranking on 'gender action'	
Recruitment	Open advertisement of vacancies	
	Gender balanced short-list	
	Gender balanced assessment panels	
National funding	Gender/diversity policy [8]	(X)

	Gender targeted funding	
	Requirement for gender balanced funding allocation	
Non-regulatory		

Notes to specific laws

[1] Anti-discrimination

The Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination in Serbia effectively outlaws discrimination based on a comprehensive range of characteristics. This includes race, skin colour, ancestry, citizenship, national affiliation or ethnic origin, language, religious or political beliefs, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, financial position, birth, genetic characteristics, health, disability, marital and family status, previous convictions, age, appearance, and membership in political, trade union, and other organisations.[6] Discrimination specifically based on gender is further prohibited by the Gender Equality Act.[7]

[2] Parental leave

Regarding parental leave, the Labour Law stipulates that employed women are entitled to leave from work due to pregnancy and childbirth, known as maternity leave, as well as leave for childcare, referred to as parental leave. The total duration of both leaves combined amounts to 365 days.[8]

Maternity leave can commence 45 days prior to the expected delivery if medically necessary, or 28 days before the expected delivery in other cases. Following childbirth, employed women are mandated to take a full three months of maternity leave. During maternity leave, women are entitled to maternity pay.[9]

After the initial three months of maternity leave, mothers are entitled to an additional nine months of parental leave. However, if a woman gives birth to a third child or subsequent newborn child, the total period of maternity leave and parental leave is extended to two years in total. Parental leave is granted to only one parent at a time. Once the child has reached three months of age, it is possible for the father to exercise the parental leave for the remaining period until the expiration of the 365 days from the day of the child's birth. This has to happen in accordance with Article 94, paragraph 6 of the Labour Law, as well as in agreement with the employed mother who used the initial three months of maternity leave.[10] If the mother is unemployed, the right to parental leave also accrues to the father.[11] The Labour Law also allows fathers to take seven days of paid paternity leave immediately following the birth.[12]

[3] Equal pay

Article 104(2) of the Labour Law establishes the principle of "equal pay for equal work," guaranteeing that employees are entitled to receive the same earnings for performing the same work or work of equal value with an employer.[13]

[4] Sexual harassment

The Labour Law, enacted in 2005, prohibits harassment and sexual harassment in the labour market. The law defines harassment and sexual harassment as any unwelcome behaviour directed at or violating the dignity of a job seeker or employee, which creates a fear-inducing, hostile, degrading, or offensive environment.[14]

Sexual harassment outside the scope of the labour market is further prohibited by the Gender Equality Act. According to the act, sexual harassment is defined as any unwanted verbal, non-verbal, or physical act of a sexual nature that aims to violate personal dignity, establish an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, degrading, or offensive environment based on sex.[15]

On July 7, 2021, the University of Belgrade adopted the Regulation on Prevention and Protection Against Sexual Harassment at the University of Belgrade.[16] These regulations apply to all member institutions of UB. According to these regulations, all UB members are obliged to appoint a Commissioner for Equality who is responsible for dealing with cases of harassment, as well as acting in accordance with the internal procedures adopted by the member institutions.

It is noteworthy that no Serbian Research Performing Organisations (RPOs) have implemented policies specifically targeting the prevention of sexual harassment and gender-based violence, as highlighted in the UniSAFE report on Gender-Based Violence in Universities and Research Organisations. The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development holds responsibility in this area, as stated in the Law on Science and Research.[17]

[5] Flexible working/part-time option

Article 39 of the Labour Law allows for the establishment of part-time employment for a limited or unlimited period. However, employees cannot request a reduction in working hours within an existing employment relationship.[18]

[6] Gender mainstreaming

The Gender Equality Act mandates gender equality in all aspects of public and private life in Serbia. Public authorities are required to develop active equal opportunity policies in all spheres of public life, encompassing planning, decision-making, and implementation phases that affect the positions of women and men.[19]

Furthermore, the Serbian government has adopted a National Strategy for Gender Equality, most recently for the period 2021-2030, aiming to promote gender mainstreaming across all areas of public policy.[20] The updated version of the Gender Equality Act from 2021 assigns specific obligations to authorities and bodies operating within the higher education sector. According to the law, these entities must strive to promote gender mainstreaming in all aspects of the educational process, including the elimination of gender stereotypes and sexist content from programs and books, the inclusion of content related to gender equality, the promotion of equality and increased visibility of vulnerable social groups, the use of gender-sensitive language, and the integration of the gender perspective in the education programs for teaching staff.[21]

[7] GEP requirement

The National Strategy for Gender Equality (2021-2030) recognises the importance of action plans in achieving gender equality in higher education. However, Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) are not currently a legal requirement. Nevertheless, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality has initiated a process to include a requirement for the development of a GAP in future accreditation standards for higher education institutions. These standards will also mandate universities to adopt measures for identifying and addressing gender inequalities while monitoring their implementation.[22] However, according to a Bill on gender equality, adopted by the Serbian government in 2021, all public institutions, including universities, that have more than 50 employees have an obligation to appoint a person in charge of gender equality.[23] This person has certain obligations and duties, including monitoring and reporting on the achievement of gender equality, etc.

[8] Gender/diversity policy

The Law on the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia includes limited provisions for promoting gender balance in funding. It states that the Science Council of the Fund should consider gender equality when appointing new members, but it does not specify how this should be practiced.[24]

The Innovation Fund of the Republic of Serbia has established an internal gender equality policy in which it outlines certain commitments. Among these commitments is the promotion of gender diversity in staff and efforts to increase female participation in decision-making bodies. However, the specific measures the Fund will implement to fulfil these commitments are not specified.[25]

Conclusion

Gender equality work in Serbian universities is primarily governed by central laws that apply to the labour market and society as a whole. These laws, such as the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination, the Labour Law, and the Law on Gender Equality, provide a framework for addressing gender equality in various sectors, including higher education. While the Serbian government has adopted a National Strategy for Gender Equality, which recognises the importance of gender equality in higher education, there are currently no specific requirements for implementing gender equality measures in Serbian universities. However, efforts are being made by the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality to introduce a Gender Action Plan requirement in future accreditation standards, and there is already a requirement for all public institutions to appoint a person to be in charge of issues of gender equality. This indicates a growing recognition of the need to address gender equality in the higher education and research sector.

It is important to note that the Serbian context generally has fewer legal requirements related to gender equality in higher education compared to other European countries. However, the National Strategy for Gender Equality and ongoing efforts to introduce a GAP requirement demonstrate a commitment to advancing gender equality in Serbian universities.

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[2] European network of legal experts in gender equality and non-discrimination (2021) p. 2

[3] https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/es/countries/europe/serbia/2014/coordination-body-for-gender-equality (24-06-2022)

[4] https://equineteurope.org/author/serbia_cpe/ (24-06-2022)

[5] https://www.euraxess.rs/serbia/doing-research-serbia/national-funding (24-06-2022)

[6] The European Commission (2021) p. 8

[7] The European Commission (2021) p. 8

[8] The European Commission (2021) p. 45

[9] The European Commission (2021) p. 45

[10] The European Commission (2021) p. 48

[11] The European Commission (2021) p. 48

[12] The European Commission (2021) p. 51

[13] The European Commission (2021) p. 30.

[14] UniSAFE (2021) p. 4

[15] *The Gender Equality Act Article 10(7)* in The European Commission (2021) p. 23.

[16] http://bg.ac.rs/files/sr/univerzitet/univ-propisi/Pravilnik_sprecavanje_zastita_seksualno_uznemiravanje.pdf

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[18] The European Commission (2021) p. 53.

[19] The European Commission (2021) p. 8-9

[20] The Government of the Republic of Serbia (2021)

[21] The Government of the Republic of Serbia (2021) p. 39

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[23] Law on Gender Equality, §64

[24] Law on the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, "Official Gazette of the RS", No. 95/2018

[25] Innovation Fund of the Republic of Serbia. (n.d.). *Gender Equality Policy.*

APPENDIX C) COUNTRY REPORT, GERMANY

Introduction

On a federal level, gender equality policies are structured within the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ), but are at the same time regarded as an autonomous policy field of the German government. As such, gender policy is a cross-cutting responsibility for all government bodies. However, the BMFSJF is notably responsible for the strategic design and coordination of GE policy, the realisation of political goals, programs, international cooperation, and the participation in legislative procedures. GE is also its own department within the BMFSFJ, whereas in other ministries GE work is dealt with by smaller units. Furthermore, all federal ministries have an equal opportunity commission that works across the ministries and exchanges knowledge with colleagues in other ministries.[1]

Within the higher education and research sector, GE policies are legislated at the state level and each Länder (the federal states in Germany) is responsible for implementing GE measures.[2] Its' legal anchoring therefore varies from state to state.

The following table provides an overview of existing legislation (2022).

Category	Instrument	In place
General GE laws	Anti-discrimination	X
	Public child-care, or subsidised child-care	X
Labour market	Parental leave [1]	X
	Wage Transparency / Equal Pay [2]	X
	Gender quota [3]	X
	Sexual harassment	X
	Flexible working/part-time option	X
Higher education	Gender mainstreaming [4]	X
	GEP requirement & GE Unit [5]	X
	Certification system/Award system	(X)[42]
	Gender quota for leadership/scientific staff	X
	Monitoring/reporting requirement	X
Recruitment at HEIs	Open advertisement of vacancies	X

[42] Despite there being no national legislation concerning certification or award systems, there are financial incentives within the financing of higher education in the federal state of Berlin. More specifically, those universities focusing on issues of gender equality are rewarded financially (Hochschulverträge).

	Gender balanced short-list	(X)[43]
	Gender balanced assessment panels	(X) Only 10 % are balanced
Regional funding	Gender/diversity policy	X
	Gender targeted funding [6]	X
	Requirement for gender balanced funding allocation [7]	X
Non-regulatory	Measures to promote GE in HEIs	X

Notes to specific laws

[1] Parental leave

In Germany, parents are entitled to parental leave regardless of gender. Paid maternity leave includes six weeks before the birth and eight weeks after birth. Germany does not have paternity leave, but fathers can take parental leave. Parental leave allows parents to reduce employment up to three years per child, until the child is eight years old. During parental leave, parents can apply for parental leave benefits. There are two types of parental leave compensation: the Elterngeld and ElterngeldPlus. For the Elterngeld, the amount of financial support received is dependent on the wage of the parent, which therefore increases the incentive for the primary supporter to make use of this leave. In addition, partnership-months give parents that take at least two months shared parental leave an additional two months to their overall period of parental leave. The ElterngeldPlus allows parents to be more flexible when combining parental leave and part-time job(s). This compensation allows parents to receive half of the benefits offered by the Elterngeld compensation, but can take twice the amount of leave. Parents can work up to 30 hours per week and receive 24 months of ElterngeldPlus. Four additional months are added if parents work between 25-30 hours a week, for four consecutive months, at the same time. Furthermore, with ElterngeldPlus, the partnership-months become four months of entitlement for a partnership-bonus, encouraging fathers who wish to have more time with the family to choose the scheme.[3]

[2] Wage Transparency/Equal Pay

In 2017, Germany adopted the Transparency in Wage Structures Act. The purpose of the Act is to address income inequality between men and women, and to enforce the right to equal pay for equal work or work of equal value. The Act obliges employers with more than 500 employees to report on pay. The Act also gives women who work in companies with more than 200 employees the right to be informed of the criteria and procedures used to determine salaries and the so-called median salary of their male colleagues who perform the same or at least a comparable job.[4]

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[43] In the federal state of Berlin, gender-balanced shortlists are mandatory for all areas in which women are underrepresented. Specifically, §6 of the State Equality Act (LGG) from November 2010 states, "In areas where women are underrepresented, either all female applicants or at least as many women as men shall be invited for interview, provided they have the qualifications for the post or function specified in the advertisement and applications from women are received in sufficient numbers."

[3] Gender Quota

In 2015, the Law for the Equal Participation of Women and Men in Leading Positions was adopted. The law installs a gender quota of 30% of the underrepresented sex in company boards for companies that have a stock exchange listing. This quota is also binding for all matters of employee participation in supervisory boards. For the public sector, the Law on the Appointment and Deputation of Women and Men in Bodies under the Control of the Federal Government was modified so that the 30% quota was also binding for all boards in which the federal government holds at least three seats. In addition, an amendment to the Federal Equality law requires the federal administration to set target gender quotas for women and men on every management level, as well as develop measures to reach these targets.[5]

[4] Gender mainstreaming

The German Research Foundation (DFG), which is funded by the federal government and the Länders, has established Research-Oriented Standards on Gender Equality which are seen as "one of the most comprehensive measures for the promotion of GE in research."[6] The main purpose of the standards is to increase the number of women at various academic career levels as well as raise awareness on GE issues. For that, DFG has developed an online toolbox to support institutions' efforts. Member of the DFG (mainly large universities) are self-committed to comply with the GE-standards. The members all have to report on gender equality measures, set targets for the participation of women at different academic levels and report on their progress. The reports are evaluated by the DFG and the evaluation score is taken into consideration when the universities apply for DFG funding. The DFG standards have reached high recognition in German academic and research milieus as well as in the German political sphere.[7]

[5] GEP requirement & GE Unit

Germany has a legal GEP requirement for HEIs at the state level through the Higher Education Acts of all Länders, which oblige universities to issue GEPs. For Research Performing Organisations (RPOs) it is legislated at the federal level.[8] By the Higher Education Acts of All Länders, all public institutions, including universities, are legally required to appoint a 'Women's Representative', who is bound to monitor and report on GE measures taken by the given university. The Women's Representative's mandate is only to ensure that the equal opportunities laws are respected and followed, and thus, must not take into account the goals and strategies of the institution. One of the Women's Representative's main tasks is to develop a GEP that shows the distribution of women on the different hierarchical levels, as well as recommend solutions to how the university can overcome GE challenges. Furthermore, the Women's Representative often has a seat in the decision-making processes with veto-right in recruitment processes, and his/her position is secured by law and cannot be dismissed before the end of his/her term.[9]

[6] Gender targeted funding & [7] Requirement for gender balanced funding allocation

There are different examples of state programmes on gender targeted funding. One program by the State Baden-Württemberg (similar programmes can also be found in other states) is the *Mathilde Planck Program*.

It aims to support gender equality between women and men at universities of applied science, to enhance the presence of women in professorships at these institutions and to create networks between the participants and the universities. The program started in 1997 and finances teaching assignments which are awarded to women.[10] Evaluations of the program have shown that it has had a positive impact on the percentage of female professors.

On the federal level, the German Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) have, through the program *Women to the Top*, funded 116 research projects on career orientation and career paths of women in business and research organisations. This has been done with a sum of 37.2 million Euros through the years of 2007-15.[11]

Another program called *Program for Women Professors*, which is also sponsored by the BMBF together with the Länders, allocates funding to institutions if they qualify with GE standards. Institutions can compete for funding of gender specific professorships based on their gender action plans and gender work in general. "Universities and advanced technical and arts colleges have the opportunity to receive funding for up to three tenure-track positions for women. The first five years of each contract are financed with up to 150,000 Euros per year, which makes this a strong economic incentive for the universities to develop convincing gender equality plans and to implement gender equality measures so that they can receive funding."[12]

Conclusion

Germany has implemented a range of measures to promote GE both in the general labour market and within the higher education and research sector. At the general labour market level, initiatives have been introduced to facilitate parental leave for both parents, aiming to create a more balanced distribution of childcare responsibilities. The Transparency in Wage Structures Act has been adopted to address the gender pay gap, promoting equal pay between men and women. Additionally, Germany has implemented a gender quota of 30 percent representation for the underrepresented sex on boards in certain private enterprises and public organisations, promoting gender diversity in leadership positions.

Within the higher education and research sector, the German Research Foundation has played a significant role in promoting gender mainstreaming. They have established Research-Oriented Standards on Gender Equality, which members voluntarily commit to implementing to enhance gender equality in research and academia. Legislation also mandates universities to have GEPs and appoint Gender Equality Officers, who are responsible for monitoring and reporting on the progress of gender equality initiatives within their institutions. This ensures that universities have a structured approach to addressing gender imbalances and promoting equality.

Furthermore, various funding schemes, both state and federally sponsored, encourage universities to actively work towards enhancing the role of women in research and science.

These schemes provide financial support and incentives for initiatives that promote gender equality and diversity in research projects. Overall, Germany has taken important steps to advance gender equality in both the labour market and the higher education and research sector.

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APPENDIX D) COUNTRY REPORT, UNITED KINGDOM

Introduction

In the United Kingdom, the Government Equalities Office (GEO) plays a vital role in addressing various forms of discrimination, including gender inequality. While the GEO oversees equality issues across the government, specific departments have the primary responsibility for addressing certain issues. For instance, the Home Office is in charge of tackling violence against women and girls.[1]

The Minister for Women and Equalities heads the GEO and is responsible for developing an equalities policy that upholds individual autonomy and dignity, while also promoting equal opportunities for all. This minister plays a crucial role in driving forward equality initiatives.[2]

To ensure accountability and scrutiny, the Women and Equalities Committee, appointed by the House of Commons, examines the policy, administration, and expenditure of the Government Equalities Office. They hold the Minister for Women and Equalities and the GEO accountable for the government's performance in addressing equalities issues.[3]

The following table provides an overview of existing legislation (2022).

Category	Instrument	Description
General GE laws	Anti-discrimination [1]	X
	Public child-care, or subsidised child-care [2]	X
Labour market	Parental leave [3]	X
	Wage transparency [4]	X
	Gender quota [5]	
	Sexual harassment [6]	X
	Flexible working/part-time option [7]	X
Higher education	Gender mainstreaming [8]	X
	GEP requirement [9]	
	Certification system / Award system [10]	X
	Gender quota for leadership/scientific staff	
	Monitoring/reporting requirement	X
	Ranking on 'gender action' [10]	X
Recruitment	Open advertisement of vacancies	X
	Gender balanced short-list	
	Gender balanced assessment panels	X
National funding	Gender/diversity policy	X
	Gender targeted funding [11]	X
	Requirement for gender balanced funding allocation	

Non-regulatory	Measures to promote GE [12]	X

Notes to specific laws

[1] Anti-discrimination

The UK Equality Act 2010 is a comprehensive legislation that safeguards individuals with protected characteristics from discrimination both in the workplace and in wider society.[4] Additionally, the Human Rights Act 1998 outlines fundamental rights and freedoms that are applicable to all individuals in the UK. This act incorporates the rights enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights into British domestic law.

Although there is no specific legislation focused on discrimination in the higher education sector, the sector is bound by the aforementioned Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998, which provide the framework for addressing discrimination.

[2] Public child-care, or subsidised child-care [5]

In the UK, during term time, three and four-year-old children, as well as certain two-year-olds from disadvantaged backgrounds, are offered 15 hours of free childcare and early education per week. In 2017, the government introduced an additional 15 hours for children whose parents work at least 16 hours per week at the minimum wage. Parents can also receive assistance with additional childcare costs through tax-free programs implemented since 2017, as well as through the childcare element of universal credit. However, there have been concerns raised about the affordability of formal childcare in the UK, with Professor of Early Childhood, Eva Lloyd, highlighting the challenges faced by most parents in accessing affordable formal childcare (see footnote 6).

[3] Parental leave

In the UK, statutory maternity leave lasts for 52 weeks, and statutory maternity pay can be paid for up to 39 weeks. Employees are required to take at least two weeks off after giving birth, or four weeks if they work in a factory. Men can avail of one or two weeks of paid paternity leave.[6] In the UK you can also get shared parental leave and statutory shared parental pay. The UK also offers shared parental leave and statutory shared parental pay, allowing parents to share up to 50 weeks of leave and up to 37 weeks of pay between them.[7]

[4] Wage transparency

In the UK, equality legislation emphasises the importance of addressing pay differences. In addition, legislation in Wales and Scotland requires higher education institutions (HEIs) to establish objectives or equality outcomes to tackle pay inequalities in the public sector. The Equality Challenge Unit produces an annual statistical report and conducts institutional equal-pay reviews, providing analyses of the gender pay gap.[8]

Since 2017, companies with over 250 employees are obligated to comply with regulations on gender gap reporting. This means that they are required to report and publish specific figures regarding their gender pay gap.[9]

[5] Gender Quota

The UK has adopted a voluntary approach to gender quotas. This approach was established in 2010-2011 during Theresa May's tenure as Minister for Equality. The Davies Report, published in 2011, made ten recommendations, including the recommendation for FTSE100 boards to achieve at least 25 percent representation of the underrepresented gender. This target was later increased to 33 percent in 2015. The FTSE250 companies were also advised to strive for this representation by 2020.[10]

[6] Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is considered unlawful discrimination under The Equality Act 2010[11] in the UK. However, it is important to note that there is currently no specific legislation in place that directly addresses sexual harassment within higher education institutions. In 2018, the Parliament report on sexual harassment of women and girls in public places emphasised that universities, as public bodies, have legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998 to ensure freedom from sexual harassment. However, it also pointed out that the central government has not imposed specific legal obligations on HEIs to address sexual harassment. While the general legal framework exists to address sexual harassment, the absence of specific legislation tailored to HEIs means that institutions have more flexibility in determining their approach to combating sexual harassment.[12]

[7] Flexible working/part-time option

In the UK, all employees, not just parents and caregivers, have the right to request flexible working hours. To be eligible for this, employees must have been working for the same employer for a minimum of 26 weeks.[13]

[8] Gender mainstreaming

The state of gender mainstreaming in the UK has been described as highly fragmented and disconnected from general policies and agendas, with limited evaluation taking place. Unlike some countries, the UK does not have a Constitution that enshrines the principles of gender equality. Instead, the Government Equalities Office (GEO) lacks an equality strategy document, and individual government departments are responsible for ensuring compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).[14]

Even though efforts towards gender mainstreaming in general in the UK may be described as above, there seems to be more successful efforts towards gender mainstreaming within the higher education sector. This is in large because of the Athena Swan Charter which most of the universities in the UK have joined.

[9] GEP requirement

Gender equality plans (GEPs) are not mandatory in the UK. However, the Equality Act 2010 does introduce duties to eliminate discrimination and promote equal opportunities. In Scotland, these duties are particularly far-reaching, with public institutions required to set equality objectives every four years and report on their progress every two years.[15] Although GAPs are not obligatory, most universities have implemented them as a result of their participation in the Athena SWAN Charter.

[10] Certification system / Award system

The Athena SWAN Charter operates as a certification and award system. The Charter is designed to promote and recognise the efforts of higher education and research institutions in advancing the careers of women. Initially established in 2005 to support women in science, it expanded in 2015 to include arts, humanities, business, law, and social sciences. Institutions that join the Athena SWAN Charter are expected to systematically assess and promote gender equality through action planning, and they can apply for awards to acknowledge their achievements.[16]

Another initiative addressing gender diversity issues specifically in physics departments is the Institute of Physics' Project Juno.[17] Additionally, the development of the Equality Challenge Unit Race Equality Charter Mark is underway in the UK. This charter aims to enhance the recruitment, retention, and success of black and minority ethnic academics. It recognises the intersectionality between race and gender, thereby including minority female academics.[18]

[11] Gender targeted funding

While the UK government has not fully embraced gender budgeting and gender impact analysis in its budgets, there are some gender-targeted funding initiatives from non-governmental sources.[19] For instance, there are career funding schemes available for female researchers with family commitments. The Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowship supports exceptional young scientists who require flexible working arrangements due to personal circumstances, such as parenting or caregiving responsibilities. This funding provides salary support for up to five years and covers research expenses, allowing researchers to work part-time or transition between full-time and part-time roles. Additionally, support for family-related expenses, such as childcare during conferences, may be available.[20] Furthermore, the Daphne Jackson Trust offers two-year part-time fellowships with mentoring and retraining opportunities for researchers who have taken a career break of two years or more, often due to family-related reasons. The trust reports that over 90% of fellowship recipients are women.[21]

[12] Measures to promote GE in HEI

The Aurora programme, launched in 2013 by the UK Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, takes a partnership approach by collaborating with universities and colleges committed to providing participants and role models/mentors. The program aims to increase recognition of women's leadership progression across higher education institutions.[22] In addition, there are networks addressing intersectionality issues, such as the Black Sister Network, established as part of Black British Academics in 2013.

The network aims to acknowledge the intersection between gender and race/ethnicity, promote solidarity, engage in collective activism, develop strategies to address intersectional inequalities, and conduct interdisciplinary research on race and gender to inform the work of Black British Academics. It also provides a platform for sharing experiences through counter narratives.[23]

Furthermore, The Senior Women's Leadership Development Programme is specifically designed for women in senior positions in higher education. This programme aims to facilitate their career advancement, expand their roles, raise their profiles, and increase their impact, with the ultimate goal of achieving greater gender parity in senior leadership positions.[24]

Conclusion

The UK higher education sector operates within the framework of the UK Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998, which set the foundation for addressing and preventing discrimination. While there is no specific legislation targeting discrimination in higher education, the sector is still bound by the obligations outlined in these laws.

Regarding gender quotas, the UK follows a voluntary approach rather than implementing mandatory quotas. However, companies with over 250 employees are required to comply with gender gap reporting regulations, which entail reporting and publishing specific figures related to their gender pay gap. This promotes transparency and accountability in addressing gender disparities.

To promote gender diversity and inclusion within the higher education sector, many institutions in the UK voluntarily participate in the Athena SWAN scheme. While gender action plans are not mandatory, the Athena SWAN scheme has gained significant traction in the UK higher education sector. It provides a structured framework for institutions to actively address gender imbalances and create inclusive and equitable academic environments. The scheme serves as a platform for institutions to actively assess and improve gender diversity, inclusivity, and career progression through action planning. By participating in the scheme, institutions can report their progress and achievements, potentially receiving awards and recognition for their efforts in fostering gender diversity among staff and students. Through this voluntary initiative, higher education institutions in the UK are working towards advancing gender diversity and equality in their institutions.

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APPENDIX E) COUNTRY REPORT, BELGIUM

Introduction

The Belgian Federal Government holds the main executive power in Belgium, but regional and municipal governments have authority over various political areas. This division also affects the policy area of gender equality, which is influenced by both federal and regional governments. For instance, laws concerning working condition are adopted at the federal level, while municipalities are responsible for laws concerning education.[1] The main actors working with gender equality at the federal level are the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Employment, Economy and Consumers.[2] In addition, Belgium has a federal Institute for Equality of Women and Men (IEWM), which works as a semi-independent organisation with an advisory role in relation to both government and other public authorities. IEWM also contains a specialised unit which is responsible for promoting gender mainstreaming at the federal level.[3]

Policies promoting gender equality in research in Belgium are influenced by the French and Flemish-speaking Ministries of Higher Education and Research and Ministries of Equal Opportunities,[4] as well as actors connected to the universities and other higher education institutions. In the Flemish-speaking regions, the actors involved in this work are the Flemish Inter-University Council (VLIR) and the Flemish Higher Education Council (VLUHR), whereas the main actor in the French-speaking regions is the Academy of Research and Higher Education (ARES). Since 2016, a federal-level decree has ensured the establishment of the Committee for Women in Science, which works to promote gender equality in research across universities in the French-speaking community. In addition, in 2020, a Commission on Gender in Higher Education was introduced with the aim of creating a space for discussion of gender related themes, including how to fight sexual harassment and violence in the workplace.[5]

The main independent funding bodies in Belgium are the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO) and, in the French-speaking community, the Fund for Scientific Research (FNRS). Both have introduced requirements intended to promote gender equality in research.[6] See below for examples of this.

The following table provides an overview of existing legislation (2022).

Category	Instrument	Description
General GE laws	Anti-discrimination [1]	X
	Public child-care, or subsidised child-care	X
Labour market	Parental leave [2]	X
	Equal pay	X
	Gender quota	
	Sexual harassment [3]	X
	Flexible working/part-time option [4]	X
Higher education	Gender mainstreaming [5]	X
	GEP requirement [6]	(X)

	Certification system	
	Gender quota for leadership/scientific staff	
	Monitoring/reporting requirement [7]	X
Recruitment	Open advertisement of vacancies	
	Gender balanced short-list	
	Gender balanced assessment panels	(X)
Regional funding	Gender/diversity policy [8]	X
	Gender targeted funding [9]	X
	Requirement for gender balanced funding allocation	
Non-regulatory	Recruitment and selection practices at university level [10]	(X)

Notes to specific laws

[1] Anti-discrimination

In Belgium, discrimination is illegalised by the *Gender Act 2007,* which prohibits discrimination based on gender, for instance, discrimination related to parenthood, pregnancy, and transsexualism. The law was updated in 2014 to illegalise discrimination based on "gender identity" and "gender expression".[7]

[2] Parental leave

Since 1971, *The Working Conditions Act* has provided protection for the rights of women on the labour market in terms of pregnancy and childbirth, as it provides mothers with 15 weeks of maternity leave (six weeks of prenatal leave and nine weeks of postnatal leave). In 2001, the *law on employment and quality of life* introduced ten days of paternity leave.[8] After January 1st, 2021, this was upgraded to 15 days.[9]

In Belgium, the FNRS "gives an extension of a mandate or a grant" if the researcher's work is delayed due to parental leave.[10] In addition, female researchers are entitled to "one year's extension per child when applying for fellowships and contracts".[11] Normally, a candidate is required to submit a PhD application within three years of completing their master's degree, however, in the event of childbirth, the candidate is allowed one more year for applying. The FWO allows researchers to extend their fellowship by one year if they take more than three months of parental leave.[12]

[3] Sexual harassment

In 2002, the Wellbeing at Work Code was updated to include protection against sexual harassment.[13]

[4] Flexible working/part-time option

In 1985, the federal government introduced career breaks/time credits, which gave all employees the opportunity to take a break from the labour market or reduce their working hours for a period of time. In this period, the employee will receive a compensatory allowance from the government if a previously unemployed person fills their position.

In 2002, the private sector introduced a new career break system called "time credit", which provided different opportunities for employees to suspend their working activity partly or entirely for a limited period of time.[14]

[5] Gender mainstreaming

In 2007, Belgium adopted the so-called *law on gender mainstreaming*, which stipulates that the promotion of equal opportunities must be integrated at all policy levels (including policies in Higher Education).[15] The IEWM supports this process through their advisory role and the provision of guidelines and tools for the implementation of gender mainstreaming.[16] Legislation at the regional level in Belgium also reflects this federal ambition. In 2008, the Flemish community adopted the Framework Decree on equal opportunities and equal treatment, which states that gender equality must be considered in all Flemish policies.[17] Similarly, the Walloon government adopted a gender mainstreaming decree in 2014 to fight discrimination. Similarly, the French-speaking community adopted two decrees in 2016, aiming at integrating the gender dimension in all legislative work.[18]

[6] GEP requirement

In 2014, the VLIR established a High-Level Task Force, which aimed to support the development of a gender policy at the five Flemish universities in Belgium. The VLIR developed an overall Gender Action Plan (GAP), which was approved by the relevant ministries. This action plan obliged the universities to formulate GAPs tailored to the individual institution as well as an Inter-University Charter on Gender Equality, which is evaluated by the VLIR once every two years.[19]

[7] Monitoring/reporting requirement

The VLIR's GAP includes yearly monitoring of the Flemish universities' progress in terms of "fixing the numbers" (i.e., promoting gender balance).[20] Similarly, the French-speaking community monitors gender balance and gender policies through an annual report compiled by the individual university's Gender Contact Person.[21]

[8] Gender diversity policy

FWO's HR strategy includes an Equal Opportunities Policy, which aims to ensure a diverse composition of researchers – both in terms of gender, age, and nationality. In relation to gender, FWO states that they strive "to ensure that no more than two-thirds of the members of its expert panels are of the same gender".[22] In addition, they seek to counter unconscious bias in the selection processes through awareness-raising initiatives.[23]

[9] Gender targeted funding

The Flemish and French-speaking communities have introduced different GE promoting requirements that the universities must meet in order to receive public funds.

In 2013, the Flemish Government initiated the so-called Diversity Parameter in its Special Research Fund, which is the primary funding agency for the Flemish Universities. The *Diversity Parameter* determines how a smaller amount of the public funds are distributed to the universities.

The amount of funds allocated to each university is based on the number of female postdocs and the number of female researchers in tenure track positions.

The ambition is to promote a more equal gender distribution in higher positions in all fields in academia. Simultaneously, the Special Research Fund has introduced a new priority rule, which stipulates that female candidate must be prioritised when the qualifications of male and female candidates are equal. The Special Research Fund requires the universities to comply with this rule if they are to receive funding.

The French-speaking community requires universities to appoint a Gender Contact Person as a condition for receiving public funds. The Gender Contact Person is obliged to:

- Compile an annual report on gender balance, including a list of gender policies within the university.
- Facilitate networking between all people involved in gender issues at the university.
- Ensure better visibility for gender matters.
- Propose an action plan to foster gender balance at the university, in collaboration with academic authorities.[24]

[10] Recruitment and selection practices at university level

In terms of promoting gender balance in the recruitment and selection practices in RPOs, Belgium has no formalised, legal directions for universities and other institutions. However, some of the individual Belgian universities have introduced requirements in this respect. For instance, since 2014-15, Université Libre De Bruxelles (ULB) has required that committees or panels intervening at the various stages in the process of recruitment, appointment, and promotion "must, to the extent possible, have at least one third of their members from each gender". In addition, in 2016-17, ULB introduced new rules concerning promotion, aimed at countering the tendency for there to be fewer women at higher stages of academic careers. The rector is obliged to ensure that the gender balance of staff members at the higher levels is at least equal to the gender balance at lower levels.[25] Other universities show a similar focus but are less specific in their requirements. For instance, the GEP at University of Antwerp states that "the promotion procedure for Tenured Academic Staff takes gender into account",[26] and the GAP of Ghent University states that "instruments were created for gender neutral recruitment and selection procedures".[27]

Conclusion

GE policies in Belgium's higher education and research sector are shaped by both federal and regional/municipal regulations. Federal laws pertaining to working conditions, parental leave, anti-discrimination, and gender mainstreaming provide a broad framework, while more specific policies addressing higher education and gender are formulated at regional/municipal levels. The Flemish and French-speaking governments adopt distinct approaches to tackle the gender imbalance in the research sector. However, both regions have implemented policies and measures to address this issue. For example, they have introduced gender-related requirements that must be met in order to receive public funding, emphasising the importance of gender equality in research.

When it comes to recruitment and selection practices, Belgium does not have specific legislation promoting gender-balanced recruitment. However, individual universities have taken the initiative to implement various measures supporting the recruitment and advancement of female researchers. These measures aim to create a more inclusive and diverse research environment.

While Belgium's approach to gender equality in the higher education and research sector may vary between regions, the overarching goal remains the same: to address gender imbalances and foster a more equitable environment. Through the implementation of policies, requirements for public funding, and initiatives at the university level, Belgium is making strides towards achieving greater gender equality in academia.

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APPENDIX F) COUNTRY REPORT, NORWAY

Introduction

Norway has established a unique structure for addressing gender equality, with dedicated committees outside of the ministries. In the Higher Education and Research sector, the Committee for Gender Balance and Diversity in Research (KIF), appointed by the Ministry of Education and Research, plays a crucial role. Its mandate is to support and provide recommendations for promoting gender mainstreaming across all institutions in the sector. The committee carries out its mission through various means, including its website, annual network conferences for gender equality officers at research institutions, seminars, and reports. Additionally, the committee raises awareness about gender imbalances, operating independently of national policies and priorities. Its primary function is to advise the Ministry of Education and Research, universities, university colleges, research institutes, and other stakeholders on gender equality matters.[1]

Another key player in promoting gender equality in Norway's research landscape is the Research Council of Norway. As a national strategic and funding agency for research activities, the Research Council holds a significant role in advising the government, governmental administration, and the research community on research policy. The council actively strives to be a driving force in advancing gender equality both nationally and internationally, emphasising the integration of a gender perspective in research. In its recent policy paper, the council outlined three specific objectives to strengthen these efforts: 1) assuming a greater national responsibility for equality, 2) working more systematically within the administration of research funding, and 3) enhancing the knowledge base to inform research and innovation policy.[2]

The following table provides an overview of existing legislation (2022).

Category	Instrument	In place
General GE laws	Anti-discrimination	X
	Public child-care, or subsidised child-care	X
Labour market	Parental leave [1]	X
	Equal pay	X
	Gender quota [2]	X
	Sexual harassment	X
	Flexible working/part-time option	X
Higher education	Gender mainstreaming	X
	GEP requirement [3]	X
	Gender quota for leadership/scientific staff	X
	Monitoring/reporting requirement	X
Recruitment	Open advertisement of vacancies	X
	Gender balanced short-list	
	Gender balanced assessment panels	X

National funding	Gender/diversity policy	X
	Gender targeted funding	
	Requirement for gender balanced funding allocation [4]	X
Non-regulatory		

Notes to specific laws

[1] Parental leave

Parental leave in Norway underwent changes with the adoption of a new law in 2018. Under this law, each parent is entitled to a designated number of weeks, either 15 or 19, after the birth of their child. Additionally, there is a shared parental leave period of 16-18 weeks that can be taken by each parent. The specific number of weeks may vary depending on whether parents choose 100% or 80% coverage. In total, parental leave can range from 49 to 59 weeks. The mother has the option to take three paid weeks before the birth voluntarily, but she is required to take six weeks after the birth for health reasons, which are included in her quota. After the initial six weeks, the mother has the flexibility to use her remaining weeks as she wishes, as long as they are taken within the first three years after the child's birth. Parents who opt for part-time work during their parental leave can extend their paid leave period if they choose to receive less than full payment.[3]

[2] Gender Quota

In Norway, positive discrimination and quotas have traditionally been considered important instruments in promoting gender equality. The Programme on Gender Balance in Senior Positions and Research Management (BALANSE) of the Research Council of Norway with a total budget of approximately €16 million and a lasting period of 10 years (2012–2022) aims to increase awareness among research leaders and management in identifying, developing and recruiting female research talents (Research Council of Norway 2017). Moreover, the Norwegian Gender Equality Act requires public institutions to have at minimum 4:6 ratio of sexes in company boards, panels, and committees. This also applies to higher education and research institutions i.e., on scientific boards and in management positions.[4]

[3] GEP requirement

The Norwegian Equality and Anti-discrimination Act mandates that both public and private employers with more than 50 employees must engage in active equality work that address relevant topics to promote equality and submit annual reports on its implementation. These reports should include information on the current state of gender equality, the steps taken by institutions to meet the requirements, and biennial reports on the gender pay gap, involuntary part-time work, and gender distribution at different levels of positions. In 2020, the law was expanded to also require employers to conduct a risk analysis of discrimination and other barriers to gender equality in order to promote gender equality in the workplace.[5] Further, it is required by the Norwegian Research Council to have a GEP.

To comply with the requirements of the act, the Ministry of Higher Education and Research requires Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to work actively and systematically to promote equality, including working to have recruitment strategies that ensures that both staff and students reflect the existing diversity in the population. Institutions must submit annual reports to the ministry, detailing the progress made in promoting gender equality and the measures taken to prevent discrimination between men and women. Gender equality initiatives within institutions are also discussed during budget negotiations between the ministry and the institutions. Additionally, the Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombud has the authority to investigate whether institutions are in compliance with the law and if their gender equality efforts are satisfactory. However, the Ombud can only issue statements and does not have the power to impose sanctions if institutions fail to comply with its requests.[6]

[4] Requirement for gender balanced funding allocation

The above-mentioned BALANSE programme aims to promote gender equality and gender balance in research through three main activities: BALANSE projects, knowledge development and new research, and the establishment of a national learning arena. Through funding projects, the program supports initiatives that drive cultural and structural change. Applicant institutions are required to provide an analysis of the major structural and cultural challenges they face in terms of gender equality and outline the measures they will take to address these challenges. Eligible applicants include universities, university colleges, research institutes, and research-intensive trade and industry, but not individual researchers.[7]

Additionally, in 2003, the Research Council established the Centres of Excellence (SFF) scheme to enhance Norwegian research by creating specialised research groups of high international quality. However, after the initial round, these research groups were primarily dominated by male directors and researchers. In response, the application call for the second round placed strong emphasis on gender balance and the recruitment and career development of female researchers. A portion of the grant was allocated to incentivise the implementation of proactive measures. The success of these efforts led to the establishment of another research scheme called the SFI, which focuses on research groups collaborating closely with innovative industries and public enterprises, where women are underrepresented. The Council introduced gender equality requirements in the applications for SFI, resulting in significant improvements in women's representation within these domains.[8]

Conclusion

In conclusion, Norway has implemented comprehensive measures to promote gender equality and balance in various sectors, including higher education and research. The Research Council of Norway plays a pivotal role in driving gender equality initiatives and supporting research institutions through funding programs such as BALANSE and Centres of Excellence (SFF and SFI).

Norway has also enacted legislation to enforce gender equality requirements, such as the Equality and Anti-discrimination Act, which mandates the development of Gender Equality Plans and annual reporting on gender equality progress. Institutions, both public and private, are required to conduct risk analysis of discrimination and actively work towards promoting gender equality at the workplace.

Norway's commitment to gender equality is further exemplified by the gender quota requirements for company boards, panels, and committees, including those in the higher education and research sector. The Gender Equality Act necessitates a minimum 4:6 ratio in these positions, promoting greater representation of women. The efforts made by Norway in promoting gender equality have led to notable achievements, such as increased gender balance in research management, enhanced career opportunities for female researchers, and improved representation of women in research groups collaborating with industry and public enterprises. Overall, Norway's has a proactive approach to gender equality, backed by legislation, funding programmes, and organisational initiatives.

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[1] https://kifinfo.no/en

[2] GENDER-NET (2015) p. 22

[3] Norway Country Note (2020) p. 1

[4] GENDER-NET (2015), p. 13

[5] ERAC (2015) p. 17

[6] LOVDATA: https://lovdata.no/dokument/NLE/lov/2017-06-16-50

[7] Forskningsrådet (2017), p. 4

[8] GENDER-NET (2015) p. 31

APPENDIX G) COUNTRY REPORT, FRANCE

Introduction

At national level, the government body in charge of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in France is the Service for Women's Rights and Equality between Women and Men (SDFE). SDFE is placed under the responsibility of the General Directorate for Social Cohesion, within the Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, and Women's Rights. Coordinating 26 regional and 100 district Delegations for Women's Rights and Gender Equality, the SDFE is providing France with an essential institutional network to implement a gender mainstreaming strategy.

In 2001, the Ministry set up an Office that was to be responsible for promoting equality in science and technology through developing equal opportunity strategies and fighting discrimination and gender-based violence within the sector. Best practices from other EU member states on their work on gender equality is also shared within the Office's 'Europe' working group.[1]

The following table provides an overview of existing legislation (2022).

Category	Instrument	In place
General GE laws	Anti-discrimination	X
	Public child-care, or subsidised child-care	X
Labour market	Parental leave [1]	X
	Wage transparency [2]	X
	Gender quota [3]	X
	Sexual harassment	X
	Flexible working/part-time option	X
Higher education	Gender mainstreaming [4]	X
	GEP requirement [5]	X
	Certification system/Award system	
	Gender quota for leadership/scientific staff	X
	Monitoring/reporting requirement	X
Recruitment	Open advertisement of vacancies	X
	Gender balanced short-list	
	Gender balanced assessment panels	X
Regional funding	Gender/diversity policy	
	Gender targeted funding	
	Requirement for gender balanced funding allocation	
Non-regulatory	Policy measures to improve GE in HEIs [6]	X

Notes to specific laws

[1] Parental leave

In France, parental leave can be taken by both parents and can last a total of one year, however with the possibility of being renewed twice until the child is three years old. However, 16 weeks of maternity leave is obligatory, with at least two of the weeks being taken before the birth. In 2001, paternity leave became recognised for fathers who are employed or civil servants. Paternity leave can only be taken after the birth; it must be 14 consecutive days and must be taken within the first four months after birth. In 2015, France adopted the "*prestation partagée d'éducation de l'enfant (PreParE)",* which is a form of parental leave where each parent must take the same amount of leave (up to a year).[2] For the Higher Education and Research field, women and men's situation related to parental, maternity, and paternity leave was secured in a 2012 decree. Notably, researchers are allowed to take a relief from teaching duties for a period after parental leave to catch up with their research field.[3]

[2] Wage transparency

The Labour Code states that companies with 50 or more employees must produce a written annual report for the work representatives, comparing the situation of men and women in the company, comprising information on, amongst other things, terms of recruitment, pay, working conditions, balance between professional and private life, etc., supported by relevant statistically indicators.[4] Employers must submit the relevant information and employees can directly consult the report. The report is one of the most important GE-measures forcing employers to address the issue of equal pay.

[3] Gender Quota

Since 2011, France has had quotas for company boards, thereby requiring firms with over 500 employees to have at least 40% of board seats represented by each sex. In 2012, with Law "Sauvadet" the law extends quotas to account for nominations to executive functions in public services, juries for civil service examinations and other examinations required for public administration, i.e., to be hired as a researcher in a university. Furthermore, the law puts sanctions in place to target those administrations who do not reach the 4:6 ratio of representation for the underrepresented sex by 2018.[5] For the higher education and research sector, the law on Higher Research and Education (Law Fioraso) complements Law Sauvadet, installing a legal requirement for balanced representation of men and women in universities' governing boards.[6]

[4] Gender mainstreaming

In 2013, the Ministry for Education, Higher Education and Research, in co-operation with the Ministry for Women's Rights, signed the Equality Charter. This was the first policy document containing objectives for promoting gender equality in the HEI sector. The same year, the Law Fioraso was adopted, introducing the requirement of gender-balancing quotas (see above), a GE-unit, and sex-disaggregated data, as well as making it compulsory for higher educations and research centres to have a structural equal opportunities program.[7] To secure the implementation of the law, the Ministry monitors progress through its Roadmap on Gender Equality, through which assessments are made and recommendations are given on how to reach the targets.

It also allows for the ministry to be proactive and set further objectives, such as quotas, for management and administrative positions.[8] Following the Law Fioraso in 2013, the Ministry also developed a national GAP. In addition, HEIs are implementing the Equality Charter, which requires signatory institutions to produce sex-disaggregated data, gender-sensitive communication, awareness-raising and preventing violence against women.[9]

[5] GEP requirement

Since the adoption of Law Fioraso, French universities are required to have a GEP and a GE-unit that works for gender equality and for securing the implementation of the GEP within the institution. The unit must report on gender issues such as salary gaps, professional gender diversity, the fight against gender-based violence at the workplace, etc.[10] Furthermore, the unit is also responsible for producing gender statistics to help monitor and evaluate progress on gender issues within the institution. Two times a year, the Ministry publishes the statistics in a report for the National Strategy for Higher Education and the National Strategy for Research.[11]

[6] Policy measures to improve GE in HEI

France's largest research organisation, and Europe's largest basic research organisation, the National Centre for Scientific Research (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique - CNRS), was the first institution to set up an operational structure to foster gender equality. This was done in 2001 through the establishment of Mission pour la place des femmes (MPDF). MPDF is a unit in charge of designing, coordinating, implementing, and assessing GE-actions. They have four main focus areas:

1. Promoting professional equality between women and men within CNRS
2. Promoting gender research and the integration of the gender dimension in research contents
3. Reaching out to young people, especially young women, and developing new role models
4. Developing partnerships in France, in Europe and around the world[12]

Measures are also taken to promote gender equality in top-level leadership. France currently has two committees working on this. The committee for equality (COMEGAL), set up by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, meets twice a year to discuss how top-level higher education and research leaders can contribute to the advancement of the national measures to promote GE. Secondly, CNRS' Steering Committee for Gender Equality was set up to anchor gender equality issues at the top levels of leadership and mainstream them across the institution.[13]

Conclusion

France has implemented a range of measures at the national level to promote gender equality within institutions and society as a whole. Notably, it has taken significant steps to encourage equal parental leave through the PrePar E scheme. Additionally, the country has prioritised wage transparency by incorporating it into the Labour Code. One of the most prominent advancements in France's pursuit of gender equality is the implementation of gender quotas. These quotas were established by Law Sauvadet and Law Fioraso in 2011 and apply to company boards in larger firms as well as public boards. The HEI sector goes even further by implementing quotas at lower management levels, ensuring greater gender diversity and representation.

Furthermore, France has made progressive efforts within the higher education and research sector. Institutions are required to develop Gender Equality Action Plans (GAPs) that outline their strategies and initiatives for promoting gender equality. In addition, dedicated Gender Equality units have been established to implement and monitor the progress of institutions in achieving gender equality goals. The availability of sex-disaggregated data is another important aspect, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of gender disparities and facilitating targeted interventions.

The CNRS has played a vital role in advocating for gender equality in academia since 2001. Its efforts have been instrumental in pushing for policy changes and promoting gender equality within research and academic institutions across France. Overall, France's comprehensive approach, which includes gender quotas, GAPs, Gender Equality units, and the involvement of organisations like the CNRS, showcases the country's commitment to advancing gender equality in the higher education and research sector.

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[2] EFFORTI (2018) pp. 29-30

[3] EFFORTI (2018) p. 42

[4] EFFORTI (2018) p. 22

[5] EFFORTI (2018) p. 43

[6] GENDER-NET (2015) pp. 13-14

[7] EFFORTI (2018) pp. 38-39

[8] GENDER-NET (2015) p. 14

[9] EFFORTI (2018) p. 39

[10] ERAC (2021) p. 15

[11] GENDER-NET (2015) p. 20 (in the footnote)

[12] GENDER-NET (2015) p. 17

[13] GENDER-NET (2015) p. 25

APPENDIX H) COUNTRY REPORT, ITALY

Introduction

In Italy, the Department for Equal Opportunities (DEO) of the Italian Presidency of the Council of Ministers is the government body responsible for gender equality. It was established in 1996 with the general mandate of promoting women's human rights. However, the DEO faces challenges in fulfilling its mandate due to insufficient funding. Italy also has an independent gender equality body, the National Equality Counsellor (Advisor), which operates at the national, regional, and province levels. The mandate of the Advisor is to monitor the treatment and conditions of women in the labour market.[1]

In the higher education and research sector, gender equality policies fall under the purview of the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR). The MIUR is responsible for coordinating research policy through the National Research Program (NRP). The NRP emphasises the importance of gender balance on recruitment and selection panels and encourages research institutions to promote equal opportunities and incorporate a gender dimension in their research.[2]

The following table provides an overview of existing legislation (2022).

Category	Instrument	In place
General GE laws	Anti-discrimination [1]	X
	Public child-care, or subsidised child-care	X
Labour market	Parental leave [2]	X
	Equal pay	X
	Gender quota [3]	X
	Sexual harassment	(X)[3]
	Flexible working/part-time option	X
Higher education	Gender mainstreaming [4]	X
	GEP requirement [5]	X
	Certification system	
	Gender quota for leadership/scientific staff	
	Monitoring/reporting requirement	X
	Gender budgeting in HE [6]	X
Recruitment	Open advertisement of vacancies	X
	Gender balanced short-list	
	Gender balanced assessment panels at HEI	
National funding	Gender/diversity policy	X
	Gender targeted funding	
	Requirement for gender balanced funding allocation	

Non-regulatory		

Notes to specific laws

[1] Anti-discrimination

Italy's National Code of Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, established in 2006, ensures equal treatment of men and women in all areas of employment.[4] In 2010, Italy adopted Law 183/2010 to set up the Unique Guarantee Committee for Equal Opportunities in Public Administrations to promote workers' well-being and combat discrimination (CUG).[5] The CUG addresses various forms of discrimination, such as those based on gender, age, sexual orientation, race, ethnic origin, disability, religion, and language. It serves as a comprehensive tool against workplace discrimination, covering economic treatment, career advancement, job security, and access to work.[6]

Public administrations in Italy are required to adopt a Positive Action Plan (PAP) under the Equal Opportunity Code. The responsibility for developing the PAP lies with the CUGs, which must review and update it every three years. The PAP aims to remove barriers to equal opportunities between women and men in the workplace. In 2019, the Ministry of Public Administration strengthened the CUGs, which are now required to report annually on the compliance with the objectives of the three-year PAPs. They also monitor the performance of managers and non-executive staff, identify pay gaps between women and men, and establish an internal counselling desk to address any form of violence or discrimination in the workplace.[7]

In 2021, additional measures were introduced with Law no. 162/2021 as an amendment to the Equal Opportunity Act. The amendment expands the definition of "discrimination" to include treatment based on gender, age, personal or family care needs, or the state of pregnancy, maternity, or paternity. It also specifies three criteria for determining discrimination: disadvantageous treatment compared to other employees, limitation of opportunities to participate in the company's decisions and activities, and limitation of career advancement. The law grants applicants and employees rights during the recruitment phase and imposes reporting obligations on companies with more than 50 employees. Non-compliance with the law's obligations may result in economic sanctions. Furthermore, the law introduces a Gender Equality Certification tool designed to certify employers' effective implementation of policies and measures to reduce the gender gap.[8] Employers who obtain the certification are eligible for reductions in social security contributions.[9]

[2] Parental Leave

In Italy, working mothers are entitled to 5 months of compulsory maternity leave, of which two months can be taken before the birth and three months after. During maternity leave, women receive 80% of their salary as compensation. Working fathers are entitled to 7 days of compulsory paternity leave, during which they receive 100% salary compensation. Paternity leave can be taken within 5 months of the child's birth and can overlap with the mother's maternity leave. An additional day of leave can be granted to fathers if the mother transfers a day from her leave. Parents can also take optional parental supplementary leave until the child reaches the age of 8.

This leave amounts to 30% of pay and can be shared between the two parents for a maximum of 6 months in the first 3 years of the child's life or the 3 years following the child's entry into the family through adoption or guardianship.[10]

[3] Gender quota

In 2011, Italy enacted the Gender Parity Law to promote increased representation of women on corporate boards. The law introduced quotas for gender diversity on the boards of directors and statutory auditors of public companies. It mandated quotas for three consecutive board renewal terms, starting with a 20% quota for the underrepresented gender in the first renewal, and increasing to 33% for the second and third renewals. In 2020, the law was extended to cover six consecutive board renewals and raised the quota to 40% representation of the underrepresented sex. Additionally, the law established economic sanctions for firms that fail to meet the requirements.[11] Under Law 162, even unlisted organisations controlled by public bodies are obligated to appoint directors based on gender balance criteria.[12]

[4] Gender mainstreaming

In 2011, the Ministry of Education, University and Research signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department for Equal Opportunities (DEO). The memorandum aimed to coordinate and promote government action in implementing gender equality policies across various sectors, including health, research, education, family, employment, environment, elective appointments, and gender representation. It encompassed measures to ensure human rights for women and men, eliminate discrimination based on social categories, incorporate a gender perspective in all government initiatives, implement gender budgeting, conduct research, and carry out statistical surveys.[13] However, due to government instabilities, the memorandum has not yet been implemented as of 2020.[14]

[5] GEP requirement

Since Horizon Europe adopted GEPs as eligible requirements for funding, the CRUI has developed a design and implementation manual for universities. This manual builds upon the Positive Action Plan (PAP) to ensure compliance with the new EU GEP requirements. As a result, many universities have participated in and coordinated structural change projects to support the design and implementation of GEPs.[15]

[6] Gender Budgeting

In 2018, the Rectors' Conference of Italian Universities (CRUI) launched a gender working group with the aim of promoting gender equality within the university system. The group initially focused on disseminating and utilising gender budgeting as a tool to incorporate gender equality measures into university policies and strategies.[16]

Conclusion

Italy has made significant efforts to advance gender equality in both the public and private sectors. One noteworthy measure is the implementation of gender quotas on the boards of public enterprises, requiring a representation of at least 40 percent for the underrepresented sex. This step aims to enhance gender diversity and inclusion in decision-making positions.

Furthermore, the introduction of Law 162 has brought about additional progressive measures for gender equality, including the implementation of gender equality reporting. This reporting requirement enables organisations to monitor and assess their progress towards achieving gender equality goals.

In the public sector, Italy has established the National Code of Equal Opportunities between Women and Men, which mandates public administrations to develop Positive Action Plans spanning three years. These plans are designed to identify and eliminate barriers that hinder gender equality within public institutions. The creation of Gender Equality Committees (CUGs) within public organisations is another significant development in Italy's pursuit of gender equality. These committees play a vital role in promoting and ensuring gender equality within their respective organisations.

In the higher education and research sector, the gender working group of the Conference of Italian University Rectors (CRUI) has made notable strides. Their efforts include the development of a gender budgeting tool, aimed at fostering gender equality within universities. This initiative underscores the commitment of Italian academic institutions to promote gender equality in academia.

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[2] Italy | European Institute for Gender Equality (europa.eu) (24-06-2022)

[3] Currently, there is no specific law in place that addresses sexual harassment at work. However, there are precedents and case law that recognise unfair dismissal on the grounds of sexual harassment National Labour Law Profile: Italy (ilo.org) (24-06-2022)

[4] Italy – Watchdog (eu-watchdog.com) (24-06-2022)

[5] Gender Segregation and Higher Education (2020) p. 78

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APPENDIX I) COUNTRY REPORT, AUSTRIA

Introduction

In Austria, one of the primary actors responsible for working with gender equality is the Department for Women and Equality, which falls within the Federal Chancellery. The Department for Women and Equality plays a primary role in coordinating actions having to do with issues of equality. The department carries out investigations, initiates gender-specific projects, monitors and reports on issues related to discrimination against women, etc. The department is also responsible for the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Gender Mainstreaming/Budgeting that was established in 2000. The Inter-Ministerial Working Group is working towards creating the basis for implementation of gender mainstreaming at the federal level.[1]

Another Austrian body involved in the national gender equality work is the Equal Treatment Commission. This commission deals with matters involving discrimination under the Austrian Equal Treatment Act.[2]

With regards to gender equality in research and teaching, the Ministry of Education, Science and Research and the Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology are both important national actors.[3]

The following table provides an overview of existing legislation (2022).

Category	Instrument	Description
General GE laws	Anti-discrimination [1]	X
	Public child-care, or subsidised child-care [2]	X
Labour market	Parental leave [3]	X
	Wage transparency [4]	X
	Gender quota [5]	X
	Sexual harassment [6]	X
	Flexible working/part-time option [7]	X
Higher education	Gender mainstreaming [8]	X
	GEP requirement [9]	X
	Certification system / Award system [10]	
	Gender quota for leadership/scientific staff [11]	X
	Monitoring/reporting requirement [12]	X
Recruitment	Open advertisement of vacancies [13]	X
	Gender balanced short-list	X
	Gender balanced assessment panels [14]	X
Regional funding	Gender/diversity policy	X
	Gender targeted funding [15]	X

	Requirement for gender balanced funding allocation [16]	X
Non-regulatory	Measures to promote GE in HEIs [17]	X

Notes to specific laws

[1] Anti-discrimination

In Austria, the principle of equality is embedded in the Federal Constitutional Law. Specifically, Article 7 of this law states that "all nationals are equal before the law", and this therefore prohibits any discrimination or privilege based on, for example, sex.[4]

Additionally, since 1979, the Equal Treatment Act has regulated the equal treatment of men and women working in private enterprises.[5]

[2] Public child-care, or subsidised child-care

Since 2009, part-time day-care has been free of charge for all 5-year-olds in Austria. Preschool education became compulsory in 2010. In different Austrian provinces, child-care is free of charge for the following age-groups: In Burgenland and Vienna all-day care is free for children under 6, in Lower and Upper Austria part-time day-care is free for children between the ages of 2.5-6, and lastly, in Tyrol part-time day-care is free for children between 4-6.[6]

In a report published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2022, it is concluded that the cost of child-care in Austria is low compared to, for example, the United Kingdom: "Gross childcare fees range from less than 5% in Austria and Germany, where parents living in the capitals benefit from free public childcare, to more than 80% of median female earnings in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, where the market is dominated by private childcare providers and there are no fee regulations."[7]

[3] Parental leave

Maternity leave is the statutory time off work for maternity reasons. No woman is allowed to work eight weeks (or 12 weeks in case of high-risk pregnancies) before and after her expected due date. This is intended to prevent any stress on, or risk for, the (expectant) mother and the (unborn) child. Maternity benefit is provided as financial compensation during the maternity break.[8]

Parental leave starts when maternity leave ends, and it is common for fathers to share parental leave with mothers. It is possible for the parents to alternate between taking leave. This can happen twice during the period, but there must be at least two months between these switches.[9]

[4] Wage transparency

In 2011, Austria introduced two initiatives intended to promote wage transparency. These included a legal requirement to state the minimum wage in job vacancy advertisements, as well as a requirement for companies with a specific number of employees to present biannual reports on income. This number of employees required to warrant these reports has since 2014 been 150.[10]

[5] Gender quotas

In 2017, the Act on Equality between men and women in supervisory boards was adopted in order to raise the share of women in leadership positions. This was an important step to achieve gender equality in leadership positions. This law states that there must be at least 30 percent women as well as 30 percent men on supervisory boards in publicly traded companies, as well as in companies with more than one thousand employees. If a company does not reach the required quota of female board members, the respective appointment becomes invalid due to the fact that they do not live up to the gender quota. Similarly, in the federal government, a quota system was introduced in order to raise the percentage of women among state-nominated members of the supervisory boards of (at least 50 percent) state-owned companies to 40 percent over the course of the current legislative period (until 2024). The quota is a voluntary commitment by the federal government and is directly addressed to the supervisory board members nominated by the federal government.[11]

[6] Sexual harassment

[7] Flexible working/part-time option

In connection with childbirth, parent are entitled to part-time work under certain conditions. This continues until the child's 7th birthday or until they are enrolled in school (if this is later than their 7th birthday). The arrangements around the part-time work, e.g., the beginning and extent of it, are arranged with the employer. The conditions to get part-time work are fulfilled if one of the parents are employed in a company with more than 20 employees and this employment has existed uninterruptedly for at least three years.[13]

[8] Gender mainstreaming

As mentioned above in section [1] Anti-discrimination, the principle of equality is embedded in Article 7 of the Federal Constitutional Law, stating that "all nationals are equal before the law". The constitutional basis for gender mainstreaming is provided by the amendment made to Article 7 in 1998, which introduced the responsibility to implement measures to achieve de facto equality for men and women. This responsibility belongs to authorities at all levels. In Austria, gender budgeting has been included in the Constitution as a gender mainstreaming tool since 2009. The earliest governmental action on gender mainstreaming in Austria was the decision to establish the Inter-ministerial Working Group for Gender Mainstreaming. The purpose of this working group is to make a strategy, involving all ministries, focused on implementing gender mainstreaming at the federal level. Gender mainstreaming criteria for all departments and ministries, including legislation, funding programs and public procurement, were established in 2011. In general, it seems that Austria has very successfully implemented gender mainstreaming. An important tool used to do this is gender budgeting, as well as the use of gender-neutral language.[14]

[9] GEP requirement

In Austria, public universities are required to enact and implement an equal opportunity plan, as well as a women's promotion plan. Both are linked to the Federal Equal Treatment Act, which applies to public universities. The Federal Equal Treatment Act includes an obligation to promote women and forbids gender-based harassment, as well as discrimination based on gender, religion or ideology, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, and age.

The obligation to adopt equality plans and women's promotion plans in higher education is anchored in the University Act. The University Act applies to all public universities in Austria. For other research areas, such as non-university research and research funding institution, there are currently not any requirements to have a GEP.[15]

[10] Certification system/Award System

In Austria, a Diversity Award has been introduced to counteract the underrepresentation of women. The award is given to higher education and research institutions that have implemented diversity management in their organisational structures and work processes.[16]

[11] Gender quota for leadership/scientific staff

Since 2009, there has been a quota regulation for decision-making bodies at Austrian Universities. This was introduced through an amendment to the Universities Act from 2002. This regulation means that all university bodies, like the rectorate, council, senate, and all commissions installed by the senate, must fulfil a quota of female members. When the quota was introduced in 2009, the requirement was 40% women, but around 2014 this was increased to 50%. The quota regulation considered a strong instrument, as it contains sanctions for non-compliance.[17]

[12] Monitoring/reporting requirement

In Austria, all public universities are required by law to have an Equal Treatment commission. This commission monitors discrimination.[18]

[13] Open advertisement of vacancies

In the higher education sector, there is a requirement to openly advertise vacancies. According to the Universities Act §107: "All vacant posts shall be advertised by the rectorate". There are a few exceptions where advertisement of vacancies is not mandatory.[19]

[14] Gender balanced assessment panels

According to the Universities Act §20, all collegial bodies must consist of at least 50% women.[20]

[15] Gender targeted funding

In Austria, there are different awards focusing on gender or women specifically. An example of this is the Gabriele Possanner Award, which the Ministry of Education, Science and Research grants for gender research. Additionally, since 2010, the Austrian Cooperative Research (ACR) has awarded a female researcher who works in their technical and scientific network with the ACR Women Award. Moreover, there is the Käthe-Leichter-Preis, which is awarded annually by the Chancellor's Office and other ministries.

This award is given for outstanding achievements in the field of gender and women's studies in different scientific disciplines. Since 2016, the Ministry of Education, Science and Research has awarded higher education and research institutions with the Diversitas-Preis every two years for innovative achievements in the field of diversity management.[21]

L'Oréal-UNESCO and the Ministry of Science have funded grants for female doctoral students and post-doctoral academics since 2007.[22]

[16] Requirement for gender balanced funding allocation

In 2009, gender budgeting was included in the Austrian Constitution. The Inter-ministerial Working Group for Gender Mainstreaming has the task of promoting gender budgeting at all levels. From 2013, all federal ministries have been obliged to consider gender equality in all steps regarding budgetary measures, so this includes planning, implementation, and evaluation. They are also obliged to implement effective equality between men and women as a principle of outcome-oriented impact assessment.[23]

Some of the large funding organisations in Austria have requirements concerning gender for their funding. Some examples include:

- The Austrian Science Fund (FWF) has implemented several gender equality initiatives and they have, for example, implemented a balanced participation of male and female researchers as a criterion in three of their programs (Young Independent Researcher Groups, Special Research Programmes, and Research Groups).
- The Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG) also has gender criteria as an important part of all funding schemes. They also have several funding programmes with focus on gender equality. Some examples are the w-fFORTE and Laura Bassi programme.[24]

[17] Measures to promote GE in HEI

Some examples of measures in Austria to promote GE in HEI are:

- The W-fFORTE project. This is implemented by the Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs, together with the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG). The W-fFORTE offers career coaching to female researchers as well as entrepreneurs in research and innovation. The project also hosts a quarterly co-create careers circle for researchers (in the early stages of their career), and it also organises workshops on working in mixed teams. These aim at improving the career prospects for women in research and technology.[25]
- The Ministry of Education, Science and Research has, under the umbrella of the young science programmer, proposed several measures to encourage women into the fields of Mathematics, Information Sciences, Natural Sciences and Technology (MINT). In 2014, the Ministry commissioned a study on achieving cultural and structural change towards gender equality in higher education and research. It also analyses universities' publicly available gender monitoring data (Datawarehouse [5]). In 2018, the Ministry published a report on gender equality in science and research in Austria, but this has yet to be updated.[26]
- The Federal Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology has the FEMtech project. FEMtech seeks to increase the visibility of women in research, technology, and innovation (RTI). The FEMtech project also aims to improve the working conditions and career opportunities for women in research and technology. Lastly, the FEMtech project aims to advance gender equality in industrial and non-university research. The project facilitates network meetings between gender equality experts, practitioners, and women in RTI, where they inform women about funding. The project also has a large database with current data on equal opportunities in research and technology, as well as female experts in Austria.[27]

Conclusion

In Austria, the principle of equality is deeply rooted in the Federal Constitutional law, and the Equal Treatment Act specifically addresses the equal treatment of men and women in the workplace. At the national level, Austria has implemented various measures to promote equality in society, including the use of gender budgeting as a key policy tool for gender mainstreaming.

Within the higher education sector, Austria has made significant efforts to address inequalities. Institutions of higher education are mandated to have gender equality plans in place and to implement gender quotas. These measures aim to ensure a more balanced representation of men and women in academic positions and leadership roles within universities.

The combination of legal frameworks, such as the Equal Treatment Act, and policy initiatives like gender budgeting and gender equality plans, demonstrates Austria's commitment to promoting equality at both the societal and educational levels.

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APPENDIX J) TEMPLATE FOR OVERVIEW OF GE WORK

1. Gender equality/action plan	

1. Gender equality/action plan in place
 	
   a. Mandatory process-related requirements:
 	
      i. Public document
         1. Published on the university website and actively communicated within the university
         2. Signed by top management
         3. Includes clear goals
         4. Includes detailed action and measures on how to achieve these goals
 	
      ii. Dedicated resources
         1. Dedicated resources and expertise in gender equality to implement the plan and the sustainable, organisational changes involved
 	
      iii. Data collection and monitoring
         1. Details how the university will collect and analyse disaggregated sex/gender data on personnel and students, and how the university plans to ensure that data is published and monitored on an annual basis
 	
      iv. Training
         1. Includes awareness-raising and training actions on gender equality that engage the whole organisation and are aimed at staff and decision-makers (e.g. activities that cover unconscious gender biases, communication activities, and gender equality training that focuses on specific topics or addresses specific groups)
 	
   b. Recommended content-related (thematic) areas:
      i. Work-life balance and organisational culture
         1. Considers work-life balance (e.g. parental leave policies, flexible working time arrangements, and support for caring responsibilities)
         2. Considers sustainable transformations of organisational culture (e.g. creating an open and inclusive working environment and ensuring the visibility of women and proper valuation of their work)	

> ii. Gender balance in leadership and decision-making
>> 1. Considers how to ensure that women can take on and stay in leadership positions (e.g. targeted gender training for decision-makers, adapting selection and appointment processes, quotas, committees)
>
> iii. Gender equality in recruiting and career progression
>> 1. Considers how to ensure equal opportunities for men and women to develop and advance their careers (e.g. establishing recruitment codes of conduct, gender equality officers involved in relevant committees)
>
> iv. Integration of the gender dimension into researching and teaching content
>> 1. Considers how sex/gender analysis will be included in the research and educational outputs produced (e.g. commitment to incorporating sex/gender in research, incorporating gender dimension in teaching, capacity for developing methodologies that incorporate sex/gender analysis)
>
> v. Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment
>> 1. Considers steps towards ensuring clear institutional policies on sexual harassment and gender-based violence

2. Clear guidelines on how to implement the GEP across the university

3. Measures in place to monitor the progress of gender equality/action plans, including instigated initiatives

4. Institutional anchorage for the continuous revision and renewal of gender equality/action plans

5. Gender diversity other than binary gender is explicitly included in GEP/GAP (e.g. agender, bigender, gender fluid, etc.)

6. Diversity other than gender is explicitly included in GEP/GAP (e.g. sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background etc.)

2. Gender equality group/committee

7. Dedicated gender equality working group(s)/committee(s)
   a. One or more employee(s) working full-time or primarily in group/committee
   b. Employee(s) partaking in the group/committee on the side of academic/administrative responsibilities
   c. One or more members from rectorate/university top-management

8. Dedicated gender equality personnel/bodies (i.e. those mentioned directly above) participate in gender equality work being done at the departmental/institutional level (i.e. activities *outside* the framework and initiatives of the GEP itself, e.g. by giving feedback on job postings, participating in job interviews, etc.)	
9. Gender diversity other than binary gender (e.g. agender, bigender, gender fluid, etc.) is included in the work of (gender) equality working groups/committees as a separate focus	
10. Diversity other than gender (e.g. sexual orientation ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background etc.) is included in the work of (gender) equality working groups/committees as a separate focus	
3. Non-discrimination	
11. Gender balance in the attribution of tasks (i.e. goal of or realised equal distribution of e.g. research, teaching, and administrative tasks)	
12. Gender sensitive study and working conditions (e.g., different study plans/professional responsibilities during pregnancy)	
13. Guidelines regarding personal conduct of staff	
14. Gender diversity other than binary gender is explicitly included in guidelines regarding non-discrimination (e.g. agender, bigender, gender fluid, etc.)	
15. Diversity other than gender is explicitly included in guidelines regarding non-discrimination (e.g., sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background etc.)	
4. Gender balance	
16. Goal of gender balance in decision-making bodies	
17. Goal of gender balance in research/teaching positions	
18. Goal of gender balance in administrative/technical staff	
19. Goal of gender balance in students in different study fields	
20. Goal of gender balance in the staff and scientific committees of conferences, colloquiums, etc.	
21. Goal of gender balance in invited guest professors and lecturers	
22. Institution of quotas	

23. Gender diversity other than binary gender included in gender balances (e.g. agender, bigender, gender fluid, etc.)	
24. Diversity other than gender included in balances (e.g. sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background etc.)	
5. Visibility (of women)	
25. Activities to make women and their research visible (for example, introduction of awards reserved for women)	
26. Public promotion of female role models	
27. Promotion seminars for female academic staff	
28. Gender diversity other than binary gender included in visibility work (e.g. agender, bigender, gender fluid, etc.)	
29. Diversity other than gender included in visibility work (e.g. sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background etc.)	
6. Recruitment	
30. Recruitment practices are explicitly intended to promote gender balance (in different positions, fields, etc.)	
31. Recruitment practices are explicitly gender sensitive	

32. Introduction of gender diverse:
  a. Search committees
  b. Assessment committees
  c. Hiring committees	

33. Encouraging women to pursue academic careers
  a. Focusing especially on female students and/or researchers in the begging of their careers
  b. Specifically within fields of study where women are underrepresented such as the mathematics, information technology, natural sciences and technology (MINT) subjects	

34. Gender-sensitive and inclusive language used in job adverts and research calls	
35. Revision of internal policies regarding appointments (i.e. external recruitment of executives, scientific and technical/administrative personnel) according gender sensitivity	

36. Gender diversity other than binary gender included in guidelines, goals, or initiatives regarding recruitment (e.g. agender, bigender, gender fluid, etc.)	
37. Diversity other than gender included in guidelines, goals, or initiatives regarding recruitment (e.g. sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background etc.)	
7. Advancement and career progression	
38. Promotion practices are explicitly intended to promote gender balance (in different positions, fields, etc.)	
39. Assessment practices are explicitly gender sensitive	

40. Introduction of gender diverse:
  a. **Search committees**
  b. **Assessment committees**
  c. **Hiring committee**	

41. Mentoring programmes for:
  a. **Young female academics in the beginning of their careers**
  b. **Female students from non-academic backgrounds**
  c. **Women in natural sciences**
  d. **Female postdoctoral fellows**
  e. **Underrepresented groups other than gender**	

42. Introduction of chairs and positions reserved for women	
43. Scholarship offers exclusively for women	
44. Support for career development (e.g. counselling, workshops, networking, etc.)	
45. Female staff is explicitly encouraged to pursue academic management positions, promotions and financial bonuses	
46. Revision of internal policies regarding promotions (i.e. internal recruitment of executives, scientific and technical/administrative personnel) according to gender sensitivity	
47. Gender diversity other than binary gender is explicitly included in guidelines, goals, or initiatives regarding advancement and career progression (e.g. agender, bigender, gender fluid, etc.)	
48. Diversity other than gender is explicitly included in guidelines, goals, or initiatives regarding advancement and career progression (e.g. sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background etc.)	

8. Monitoring and data collection	

49. Concrete measures for monitoring the gender balance in:
    a. Decision-making bodies
    b. Academic staff
    c. Technical/administrative staff
    d. Student body
 	
50. Concrete measures for monitoring appointments and promotions
    a. Statement of intention to monitor
    b. Introduction of concrete measures for monitoring
 	
51. Concrete measures for monitoring other goals/activities, e.g. the distribution of tasks
 	
52. The gender distribution of recipients of bonuses and/or research funding from the university is monitored
 	
53. All departments identify and monitor their most urgent gender equality challenge(s)
 	
54. Reasons for employee resignations are monitored (and systematically investigated)
 	
55. Gender diversity other than binary gender included in guidelines regarding monitoring and data collection (e.g. agender, bigender, gender fluid, etc.)
 	
56. Diversity other than gender included in guidelines regarding monitoring and data collection (e.g. sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background etc.)	

9. Management	

57. Management is explicitly responsible for contributing to and supporting gender (binary) equality work (e.g. the goal of increasing the gender balance between men and women, non-discrimination efforts, or measures against sexual harassment)
 	
58. (Goal of) Gender diversity other than binary gender (e.g. agender, bigender, gender fluid, etc.) is explicitly included in
    a. The composition of management
    b. The responsibilities of management (i.e. managers work or are explicitly obliged to work towards…)
 	
59. (Goal of) Diversity other than gender (e.g. sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background etc.) is explicitly included in
    a. The composition of management
    b. The responsibilities of management (i.e. managers work or are explicitly obliged to work towards...)	

10. Funding	
60. Funding dedicated for female researchers	
61. Funding targeted to gender research	
62. Targeted funding practices to encourage departments, research organisations, and/or research units to promote gender equality	
63. Women are explicitly encouraged to apply for funding for research projects	
64. Gender diversity other than binary gender is explicitly included in guidelines regarding funding (e.g. agender, bigender, gender fluid, etc.)	
65. Diversity other than gender is explicitly included in guidelines regarding funding (e.g. sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background etc.)	
11. Research practices	
66. Researchers are explicitly encouraged to integrate the gender dimension in their research (design practices, etc.)	
67. Gender diversity other than binary gender included in guidelines regarding research practices (e.g. agender, bigender, gender fluid, etc.)	
68. Diversity other than gender included in guidelines regarding research practices (e.g. sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background etc.)	
12. Courses, workshops, education, etc. for staff	

69. Gender awareness and gender bias (included in) training courses for:
    a. Management
    b. Academic staff
    c. Technical/administrative staff
    d. Students	

70. Those involved in recruitment are offered training courses on gender-sensitive recruitment	
71. Courses on how to prevent and handle gender-based violence and sexual harassment	
72. Courses on how to create a safe and inclusive working environment	
73. Self-assertion and self-defence courses offered to women	
74. Gender diversity other than binary gender included in courses, workshops, education, etc. for staff (e.g. agender, bigender, gender fluid, etc.)	

75. Diversity other than gender included in courses, workshops, education, etc. for staff (e.g. sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background etc.)	
13. Education and teaching (students)	
76. Teaching curricula and texts are reviewed to ensure gender balancing	
77. Teaching curricula and texts are reviewed to ensure the incorporation of a gender dimension	
78. Provision of gender and women's studies or modules (i.e. they are offered by the university as part of the GEP or otherwise)	
79. Gender diversity other than binary gender included in education and teaching (e.g. agender, bigender, gender fluid, etc.)	
80. Diversity other than gender included in education and teaching (e.g. sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background etc.)	
14. Work-life balance, including care and family life	
81. Work-life guidelines for staff	
82. The balance between professional and personal life is supported institutionally	
83. Family obligations are considered when determining working hours and/or responsibilities	
84. Part-time/flexible working arrangements in place (e.g. extended leave, flexible hours, working from home, etc.)	
85. Support schemes for staff during periods of absence/extended leave (e.g. financial, social, psychological, etc.) due to personal or family needs	

86. Support schemes in place for those returning from prolonged leave
    a. For women employees
    b. For other employees
    c. For students	

87. Care services and facilities (for children, elderly, etc.)	
88. Partners are explicitly encouraged to take paternity/parental leave	
89. Alternative family constellations are recognised (not only the "nuclear family")	

90. Gender diversity other than binary gender is explicitly included in guidelines regarding work-life balance (e.g. agender, bigender, gender fluid, etc.)	
91. Diversity other than gender is explicitly included in guidelines regarding work-life balance (e.g. sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background etc.)	
15. Gender-based violence, sexual harassment, etc.	
92. Whistle-blower program in place	
93. Support system in place for victims of sexual and gender-based harassment, violence, etc.	
94. Gender diversity other than binary gender is explicitly included in guidelines regarding gender-based violence and sexual harassment (e.g. agender, bigender, gender fluid, etc.)	
95. Diversity other than gender is explicitly included in guidelines regarding gender-based violence and sexual harassment (e.g. sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic background etc.)	
Questions and topics for interviews	
Targeted the different university settings	