



**Circle U.**  
European University Alliance

# Gender Equality Plan of the Circle U. Alliance

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# 1 Introduction

The Circle U. Alliance, bringing together nine universities across Europe, was established with the ambition to reimagine the role of higher education in addressing the main societal challenges. Rooted in the principles of openness, democracy, and sustainability, the alliance builds on the diversity of its members to foster transformative education, and active engagement with society. Central to this vision is the commitment to inclusiveness and equality, ensuring that excellence in academia is inseparable from the promotion of fair and just conditions for all who participate in academic life. The Circle U. Gender Equality Plan (GEP) is a strategic umbrella document designed to strengthen a shared commitment to gender equality across the nine member universities of the alliance. The Circle U. GEP serves not as a substitute for institutional strategies, but as an framework document that connects them, consolidates good practices, and identifies areas where joint initiatives can achieve added value.

This GEP acknowledges that while each member university operates within distinct national and institutional contexts, the alliance offers a unique opportunity to establish shared standards, foster mutual learning, and drive collective progress, as well as amplifies impact at the European level. The Circle U. Gender Equality Plan provides a shared vision and guiding principles for advancing gender equality in academia, defines key areas of action across research, teaching, and institutional life, and establishes a framework for monitoring of collective progress within the alliance and the European higher education and research area.

By adopting this plan, Circle U. Alliance positions itself as an agent of change, demonstrating that transnational cooperation can be a powerful instrument in overcoming persistent inequalities. The GEP is not a static document, but a living framework: it will evolve in dialogue with institutional stakeholders, in response to societal changes, and in line with the strategic development of the Alliance itself. In this way, the Circle U. GEP is both a commitment and a process – a collective journey towards embedding gender equality in life of our academic community.

## 1.1 EU-Level Regulations and Policy Priorities

This document responds to the requirements of the Horizon Europe eligibility framework and aligns with key European and international commitments, including the European Research Area (ERA) policy agenda, the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (particularly SDG 5: Gender Equality).

At the EU level, gender equality is a fundamental principle of the European Research Area (ERA) and a requirement under Horizon Europe. Since 2022, Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) have been an eligibility criterion for institutions applying for Horizon Europe funding. The European Commission (2021) outlines several elements considered essential for effective GEPs, including leadership endorsement, transparency, resource allocation, data collection, and capacity-building on gender equality.

The European Commission identifies five thematic priority areas:

- 1 Work–life balance 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 into research and teaching;**
- 5 Measures against gender-based violence and harassment (European Commission, 2021).**

The EIGE GEAR Tool (Gender Equality in Academia and Research) provides methodological guidance for designing and implementing GEPs, framing them not as static compliance documents but as processes of structural and cultural change supported by continuous monitoring (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022).

## 1.2 National Legal Frameworks and Obligations

Circle U. member universities are embedded in diverse national and legal contexts. These contexts directly influence the scope, design, and implementation of institutional GEPs.

Institutional GEPs and related strategies are already established across the nine Circle U. universities, each reflecting its national and institutional context (see Annex I and Annex II).

- **Aarhus University:** *Action Plan for Diversity, Gender Equality and Inclusion 2023–2025* – cross-university activities plus faculty-level measures; strong emphasis on leadership accountability and annual monitoring, with a new action plan to be launched in January 2026 (Aarhus University, 2023).
- **University of Belgrade:** *Gender Equality Plan 2019–2021*; draft 2024–2028 introduces intersectional data collection, mentoring, and awards for research excellence by women (University of Belgrade, 2019; 2024 draft).
- **Humboldt University of Berlin:** *Equal Opportunity Concept 2021–2023* and *Caroline von Humboldt Programme*: empowerment, work–life balance, organisational development. In 2025, statutes on protection against sexual harassment and gender-based violence entered into force (Humboldt University, 2021; 2025).
- **UCLouvain:** *Gender Equality Plan 2024–2027*: strong governance structures (Vice-Rector for EDI, networks and working groups), monitoring process, inclusive communication, work-life balance, gender in research and teaching (Université Catholique de Louvain, 2024).
- **King’s College London:** *Athena Swan Action Plan 2020/21–2024/25*: leadership, data, recruitment, career development, student engagement (King’s College London, 2020).
- **University of Oslo:** *Action Plan for Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion 2021–2024* (extended until 2025) addresses recruitment, student access, career support, and communication; next plan under development for 2026–2030 (University of Oslo, 2021).
- **Université Paris Cité:** *Professional Equality Plan 2025–2027*: pay gaps, governance, work–life balance, and combating harassment (Université Paris Cité, 2025).
- **University of Pisa:** *Gender Equality Plan 2025–2027*: work–life balance, leadership, recruitment and progression, integration of gender in research and teaching, and anti-violence measures (University of Pisa, 2025).
- **University of Vienna:** *Plan for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality (2019–ongoing)*: gender mainstreaming, career planning, non-binary inclusion, prevention of harassment, equal opportunity structures (University of Vienna, 2019).

Despite differences, all GEPs converge on all five core thematic areas aligned with the EU priorities.

## 1.3 Vision and Guiding Principles

The Circle U. Gender Equality Plan is designed as a complementary and integrative framework. It does not replace institutional GEPs but instead:

- Aims to establish shared principles and baseline indicators to allow comparability across institutions;
- Facilitates synergies and peer learning between universities at different stages of GEP maturity;
- Provides joint resources and initiatives (e.g., Women in Science Group, Female Founders Network, ED&I CoP);
- Encourages collaborative actions while respecting national and institutional autonomy.

In this way, the Alliance GEP enhances collective capacity and visibility, positioning Circle U. as a transnational actor of change and a model of inclusive excellence in European higher education and research area.

The Circle U. Gender Equality Plan is grounded in a set of shared principles that reflect both European policy frameworks and the diverse institutional realities of its member universities. These principles ensure that the Alliance's actions are coherent, inclusive, and contextually appropriate, while also setting a clear direction for long-term structural change.

### **Equality and Equity**

The alliance is committed to promoting both formal equality, where all individuals are treated the same, and substantive equity, which recognises that different groups may require different forms of support to achieve fair outcomes. In practice, this means addressing structural barriers and unconscious biases that affect access, participation, and progression in all academic domains.

### **Intersectionality**

The alliance acknowledges that gender inequality does not exist in isolation but intersects with other axes of inequality, such as age, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender identities, religion, disability, and migration background (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2024). Adopting an intersectional approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of how different forms of discrimination overlap and ensures that GEP measures are responsive to the needs of diverse communities and individuals.

### **Inclusion and Participation**

Meaningful progress in gender equality requires the active involvement of those most affected by inequality. The alliance therefore prioritises inclusive decision-making processes that engage students, academic and administrative staff, and external stakeholders from underrepresented and marginalised groups, ensuring that their perspectives shape both policy and implementation.

### **Transparency and Accountability**

All actions under the GEP must be guided by transparent procedures and grounded in reliable, gender-disaggregated data, when possible. The alliance promotes open monitoring and reporting mechanisms that make progress visible and foster accountability at all levels of governance, from institutional leadership to departmental units.

### **Contextual Sensitivity**

While working toward common goals, the alliance recognises the diversity of legal, cultural, and institutional contexts in which its members operate. This principle ensures that measures are adapted to local realities, building on existing strengths and respecting institutional autonomy, while still aligning with the shared values and commitments of the alliance.

## 2 Thematic priority areas and operational objectives

A desk analysis of the Gender Equality Plans of the nine Circle U. member universities (Annex I and Annex II) confirmed that all institutional plans already address the five thematic areas recommended by the European Commission: work–life balance, leadership and decision-making, recruitment and career progression, research and teaching, and the prevention of gender-based violence. Building on this shared foundation, the Alliance GEP reaffirms its commitment to advancing progress in all five areas across the alliance. At the same time, the analysis identified a set of cross-cutting priorities that require coordinated action at the alliance level. These are articulated as operational objectives in this document and will guide joint efforts over the next three years. The Alliance, through the Taskforce Gender Balance, ensures alignment and complementarity by providing coordination, and collective monitoring mechanisms that enable comparability, transparency, and mutual learning.

The five thematic areas represent what the Alliance collectively aims to advance – they define the substantive focus of the GEP and the domains where progress is expected across all member universities. The operational objectives, in turn, outline how this progress will be achieved through shared mechanisms, coordinated actions, and joint monitoring.

### 1 Work-Life Balance and Organisational Culture

- Promote measures that respect work-life boundaries, including flexible work arrangements and parental leave.
- Develop and promote policies that support staff and students with care responsibilities, fostering a culture that values care as part of collective well-being.

### 2 Gender Balance in Leadership and Decision-Making

- Establish targets to enhance representation of women and other underrepresented groups in leadership.
- Support mentoring and leadership training programmes across institutions.

### 3 Gender Equality in Recruitment and Career Progression

- Ensure transparent, bias-aware recruitment, academic performance evaluation, and promotion processes that recognise diverse career paths and contributions.
- Monitor gendered patterns in hiring, evaluation outcomes, and retention, with particular attention to structural barriers and criteria of academic excellence, in line with the principles of responsible research assessment (CoARA, 2022).
- Monitor gender balance amongst students and consider prevention mechanisms concerning underrepresentation of male students across the Circle U alliance

### 4 Gender Dimension in Research and Teaching Content

- Promote integration of gender perspectives in research design, methodologies, and curricula.
- Encourage and support projects, networks, and knowledge hubs that prioritise gender-sensitive innovation.

### 5 Prevention of Gender-Based Violence and Harassment

- Strengthen reporting systems, support services, and protection mechanisms for victims. Promote a zero-tolerance culture through awareness campaigns, staff training, and student engagement.

## 2.1 Operational Objectives

### 1 Build gender and diversity competence across the alliance

Strengthen knowledge, skills, and institutional capacity related to gender equality through targeted workshops, and peer-learning activities for academic and administrative staff.

## **2 Develop and apply shared indicators for monitoring progress**

Establish a common set of indicators to track progress on gender equality across member universities, enabling evidence-based reporting and comparability while respecting institutional contexts.

## **3 Enhance data collection and analysis**

Improve the systematic collection, interpretation, and use of gender-disaggregated and intersectional data to guide equality actions within the alliance.

## **4 Promote inclusive leadership and institutional responsibility**

Foster leadership practices that value inclusion, transparency, and accountability by encouraging universities to exchange experiences, review progress collectively, and integrate gender equality objectives into institutional decision-making. Leadership representatives are encouraged to actively contribute to annual reports and indicator reviews to strengthen institutional responsibility and shared learning.

## **5 Advance awareness and prevention measures**

Develop and share awareness-raising and prevention resources through the central repository, supporting member universities in delivering training, campaigns, and other activities aimed at preventing discrimination, harassment, and gender-based violence.

# **3 Monitoring**

Monitoring of the Circle U. Gender Equality Plan should be embedded in the existing practices and reporting systems of member universities. The alliance does not propose the creation of new monitoring bodies but recommends that universities build on their current gender equality structures, human resources offices, research administration, and equality units. The aim is to ensure that gender equality measures are regularly assessed, comparable across institutions, and integrated into institutional self-assessment and planning.

To support this process, Circle U. recommends the adoption of a minimal set of common indicators. These indicators are non-binding but provide a shared framework for comparability and peer learning. The development of a set of indicators will form part of the first stage of GEP implementation and will be completed within six months from its launch. This process will involve consultation and joint work among all member universities to ensure relevance and comparability, after which each university is expected to collect and analyse data annually, using existing institutional mechanisms (HR, research or data management office, equality units etc.). Each university may further expand or adapt indicators to reflect national and institutional obligations. Alliance-level reporting on this should remain comparative serving the purpose of peer learning and identification of challenges and opportunities. Some parts of the annual report to the Alliance Task Force (TF) Gender Balance will be mandatory for all alliance members to complete, while others will be left to their individual discretion.

# **4 Resources and Shared Practices**

To strengthen collaboration and reduce duplication of efforts, the Circle U. Alliance will use and further develop existing digital infrastructure to host a shared repository of resources on gender equality. The repository will gather and make accessible key materials produced by member universities, including toolkits, handbooks, training manuals, and policy documents relevant to gender equality in academia. This activity will be coordinated by the Taskforce Gender Balance, with the University of Belgrade responsible for technical setup, curation, and maintenance, while all universities will contribute resources developed within their institutions.

In addition to this new repository, several resources have already been developed within the Alliance, such as mentoring schemes, unconscious bias training, inclusive teaching toolkits, and digital platforms for sharing

practices, listed in the Table 1. Together, these resources will serve as a collective foundation for implementing and monitoring the Circle U. Gender Equality Plan and supporting staff and students across all universities.

**Table 1. Existing Resources** provides an overview of key resources developed so far within the Circle U. Alliance, illustrating how they may be used at the alliance level.

<b>TABLE 1. EXISTING RESOURCES</b>	<b>ORIGINATING UNIVERSITY / ALLIANCE BODY</b>	<b>TYPE OF SUPPORT</b>
<b>Women in Science Group</b>	Circle U. alliance initiative	Networking, peer support, advocacy
<b>Female Founders Network</b>	Circle U. alliance initiative	Entrepreneurship support, capacity-building
<b>ED&amp;I Task Force (Community of Practice)</b>	Circle U. alliance	Coordination of ED&I activities and knowledge-sharing
<b>Unconscious Bias Training Modules</b>	Developed by KCL, Aarhus, Humboldt	Training programme
<b>Mentoring Programmes for Early Career Researchers</b>	Vienna, Oslo, Belgrade (pilot)	Mentoring scheme (Knowledge-sharing)
<b>Toolkits for Inclusive Teaching and Research</b>	UCLouvain, Paris Cité, Pisa	Practical toolkits
<b>Digital Platform for Sharing Practices</b>	Circle U. (IT infrastructure under CU2030)	Online knowledge hub

## 5 Implementation: action plan for GEP

	YEAR 1: 2026	YEAR 2: 2027	YEAR 1/2	YEAR 3: 2028
<b>Action</b>	Action 1 – Development of Common Indicators	Action 2 – Self-Assessment Process	Supporting Measure A – Establishment of the Circle U. Central Repository for Gender Equality Resources <i>(Linked to Action 1 – Development of Indicators and Action 2 – Self-Assessment)</i>	Action 3 – Reporting and Peer-Learning Review
<b>Description of the Action</b>	Organisation of a Circle U. workshop in Belgrade “Indicators for Monitoring and Evaluation of the GEP: A Collaborative Workshop” to develop a shared set of quantitative and qualitative indicators for monitoring gender equality in academia. Indicators will ensure comparability across universities while remaining adaptable to institutional contexts.	Implementation of annual self-assessment across all member universities using the common indicators. Adjustment and refinement of indicators based on national frameworks and institutional needs.	A shared digital repository will be created within the Circle U. infrastructure to collect, organise, and disseminate alliance-wide materials relevant to gender equality in academia — including institutional GEPs, training manuals, toolkits, policy briefs, and research outputs. The repository will serve as a long-term knowledge base supporting the implementation, monitoring, and peer-learning activities of the GEP.	Preparation of progress reports by each university and organisation of an alliance-wide online workshop to review results, exchange lessons learned, and plan for the next GEP cycle.  Optional internal trainings may be held to address identified needs.

<b>Responsibility</b>	University of belgrade (host and coordinator)	All member universities	<p>Coordination: taskforce gender balance (tf gb)</p> <p>Lead university: university of belgrade (responsible for technical setup, content curation, and maintenance)</p> <p>Contributors: all member universities (providing materials, guidelines, and examples of institutional practice)</p>	<p>University of belgrade (coordination and realization of online workshop);</p> <p>All member universities (internal workshops – optional)</p>
<b>Expected Output</b>	Set of agreed alliance-wide indicators to be integrated into institutional monitoring systems (Responsibility of TF Gender Balance).	Institutional self-assessment reports providing baseline data and insights into progress and challenges (Responsibility of all member universities).	An operational digital repository integrated into the Circle U. platform, accessible to all universities and serving as a knowledge hub for GEP implementation and monitoring.	Consolidated Circle U. progress report; shared good practices; recommendations/guidelines for GEP 2029–2031 cycle (Responsibility of TF Gender Balance).
<b>Timeline</b>	Q1–Q2 2026: Organization of a workshop in Belgrade. Q3 2026: Realization of the workshop in Belgrade. Q4-Q6 2026: Finalisation of	Q1-Q4 2027: Preparation and launch of annual self-assessment. Q5-Q10 2027: Completion of self-assessment and internal review. Q11 2027: Start of Data	Q2–Q3 2026: Technical setup of the repository (parallel to Action 1 – development of indicators)	Q3 2028: Submission of university-level reports to the TF Gender Balance  Q4-Q6 Drafting of alliance synthesis report. Q7-Q9 2028: Preparation of the

	indicators (within 6 months from GEP launch).	analysis and Preparation of university-level reports.	<p>Q4 2026–Q1 2027: Upload of initial resources</p> <p>2027 onwards: Continuous updating and use for self-assessment and peer-learning</p>	<p>online report review workshop, aimed at synthesising annual progress reports and formulating joint recommendations to guide the next implementation cycle.</p> <p>Q10 2028: Implementation of the online report review workshop, serving as a joint planning for the subsequent Circle U. GEP cycle.</p> <p>Q12 2028: Final progress report prepared and submitted to the Management Board.</p>
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The Circle U. GEP will cover an initial three-year cycle (2026–2028), in line with the Circle U. 2030 project. The implementation will follow a phased approach:

- Development of common indicators: A collaborative process coordinated by the TF Gender Balance during the first six months of implementation.
- Annual self-assessment: Each university is expected to conduct an annual review of its gender equality actions, using the set of alliance indicators once established.
- Supporting Measure A – Central repository for gender equality resources: A shared digital space within the Circle U. infrastructure will be used and further developed to host key materials, including toolkits, handbooks, training manuals, and policy resources.
- Reporting: Each university will submit an annual progress report every March, covering activities and data from the previous academic year.
- Peer-learning reviews and internal trainings: Institutions with more established GEP structures are encouraged to share experiences with those developing their systems, through workshops or bilateral exchanges. Furthermore, internal capacity-building training activities will be organised in parallel to these actions (optional activity) to strengthen institutional competence.

This framework allows for flexibility and respects institutional autonomy, while providing a common ground for collective reflection. By relying on a small number of shared indicators and embedding monitoring within existing processes, the Circle U. Alliance can ensure that progress is measurable, comparable, and sustainable without imposing new administrative burdens on universities. The specific indicators will be developed during the first six months of implementation, and annual reporting will be a mandatory requirement for all member universities, ensuring a consistent and transparent monitoring process across the alliance.

Until the alliance-wide indicators are finalised, reports will draw on the five thematic areas defined in the Circle U. GEP (page 6 of this document), in line with the European Commission’s recommendations for institutional gender equality plans. The following elements therefore represent the mandatory components of each annual report and will later be complemented by the agreed indicator framework:

#### **1 Gender distribution in academic careers**

Data on gender balance in permanent academic positions, disaggregated by category (full professors, tenure-track, and permanent post-doctoral positions).

#### **2 Representation in decision-making bodies**

Data on gender balance regarding positions in senior academic and administrative leadership or governance bodies.

#### **3 Equal pay**

Gender pay gap at the professor level and gender distribution in the allocation of bonuses or performance-based rewards.

#### **4 Institutional measures and awareness campaigns**

Description of measures, training activities, and campaigns implemented to improve working conditions, particularly regarding work–life balance and the prevention of harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

#### **5 Reporting and incident management**

Number and nature of reports related to sexism, discrimination, or sexual harassment, accompanied by information on follow-up mechanisms and preventive actions.

#### **6 Engagement of men in equality initiatives**

Percentage of male staff participating in internal trainings and awareness-raising activities addressing gender inequalities and gender-based violence in academia.

These reports will serve as the basis for alliance-level synthesis and for identifying areas where additional support or capacity-building is required.

**REPORTING SCHEDULE:**

- **Annual university reports:** submitted each **March (starting March 2028)** to the TF Gender Balance, covering activities and data from the previous academic year.
- **Alliance progress synthesis:** prepared in the **first quarter of 2028 (Q6 2028)** based on institutional inputs.
- **Indicator review:** every two years, to ensure continued relevance and alignment with evolving national or EU frameworks.

## 6 Annexes

### 6.1 Annex I: National Legal Frameworks

COUNTRY/UNIVERSITY	KEY REGULATIONS	INSTITUTIONAL OBLIGATIONS RELEVANT TO GEPS	RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY
<b>Denmark/Aarhus University</b>	Act on Gender Equality (2000, amended); Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming	Annual gender equality reporting; measures to improve gender balance in leadership	Ministry for Gender Equality; Aarhus University Equality Office
<b>Serbia/University of Belgrade</b>	Law on Gender Equality (2021); Anti-Discrimination Law	Mandatory gender equality measures in education; data collection disaggregated by sex; GEPS at universities encouraged	Ministry of Human and Minority Rights; University of Belgrade Equality Commission
<b>Germany/ Humboldt University</b>	Federal Equality Act; Berlin Higher Education Act	Gender equality targets in recruitment and governance; statutes on sexual harassment	Berlin Senate; Humboldt University Centre for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging
<b>Belgium/ UCLouvain</b>	Gender Mainstreaming Act (2007); Federal Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence	GEPS required in public institutions; diversity and inclusion measures	Institute for Equality between Women and Men; UCLouvain EDI Office
<b>United Kingdom/ King's College London</b>	Equality Act (2010); Athena Swan Charter	Institutions must demonstrate compliance with equality duties; Athena Swan awards linked to funding eligibility	Equality and Human Rights Commission; KCL Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit
<b>Norway/ University of Oslo</b>	Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act (2018)	Mandatory equality plans in public institutions; proactive duty to prevent discrimination	Ministry of Culture and Equality; University of Oslo Equality Office
<b>France/ Université Paris Cité</b>	Law on Professional Equality (2019); Decree on Equality Plans in Higher Education	Mandatory professional equality index; institutional equality plans; anti-harassment measures	Ministry of Higher Education and Research; Université Paris Cité Equality Office
<b>Italy/ University of Pisa</b>	Code of Equal Opportunities (2006,	Universities must adopt three-year GEPS;	National Conference of University Equality

	amended); Law on Universities (2010)	reporting on gender balance and harassment prevention	Bodies; University of Pisa Equality Office
<b>Austria/</b> University of Vienna	Universities Act (2002, amended); Federal Equal Treatment Act	Each university must adopt a <i>Plan for the Advancement of Women</i> ; quotas in governance bodies	Federal Ministry of Women, Science and Research; University of Vienna Culture and Equality Unit, Equal Opportunities Working Party

## 6.2 Annex II: Overview of the GEPs in the Circle U. member universities

UNIVERSITY	TITLE OF GEP + YEARS ACTIVE	DESCRIPTION
Aarhus University	Action Plan for diversity, gender equality and inclusion (2023–2025)	<p><a href="#">Action Plan for diversity, gender equality and inclusion 2023-25.</a></p> <p>The Action plan for gender equality, diversity and inclusion 2023-25 provides a clear framework for these efforts that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• define mandatory cross-university activities – as well as activities that reflect local needs.</li> <li>• maintain leadership focus by assigning clearly defined managerial roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>• involve staff.</li> <li>• contain a model for annual follow-up that emphasises local development as well as managerial accountability</li> <li>• is informed by data.</li> </ul> <p>The action plan contains four cross-university activities. In addition, each faculty, the administration and Business and Innovation have designed a local activity.</p> <p>The <i>Action Plan for Gender equality, Diversity and Inclusion 2023-25</i> was approved by the Senior Management January 25<sup>th</sup> 2023.</p>
University of Belgrade	<a href="#">Gender Equality Plan (2019–2022)</a>	A draft version for the 2024–2028 period exists, with the main change being the introduction of intersectionality in data collection at the university level. One of the goals is to develop an instrument and methodology for collecting data and then to plan activities based on the assessment of the current situation. Another addition is research on mentoring and activities that contribute to the development of early-

		career staff, as well as awards for the best research work by women.
Humboldt University of Berlin	Updated Equality (2021–2023) Gender Concept	<p>The Centre for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion &amp; Belonging comprises the areas of gender equality &amp; equity, family support, anti-discrimination and diversity, antisemitism and the office of the Berlin Equal Opportunities Program.</p> <p>Gender Equality and Equity</p> <p>At the Office of Gender Equality and Equity, our tasks include the advancement of women, gender equality &amp; equity and gender diversity at the university. We provide confidential advice in cases of sexualised harassment, discrimination and violence. <a href="https://chancengerechtigkeit.hu-berlin.de/en/zentrum-chancengerechtigkeit/geschlechtergerechtigkeit-und-gleichstellung">https://chancengerechtigkeit.hu-berlin.de/en/zentrum-chancengerechtigkeit/geschlechtergerechtigkeit-und-gleichstellung</a></p> <p>The <b>Gender Equality Strategy</b> is called „Caroline von Humboldt Programme“ and comprises the areas Empowerment, Communication, Work-Life-Balance and Organisational Development: <a href="https://frauenbeauftragte.hu-berlin.de/en/gender-equality-strategy">https://frauenbeauftragte.hu-berlin.de/en/gender-equality-strategy</a></p> <p>In addition, the "<a href="#">Statutes for Protection against Sexual Harassment, Sexualised Discrimination and Violence and Stalking</a>" came into force for the entire HU on 9 January 2025.</p> <p>Recent campaigns include a <a href="#">FLINTA* Action week</a> in November 2024, and the <a href="#">#MenForEquality Campaign</a>.</p>
Université Catholique de Louvain	Gender Equality Plan (2024–2027)	<p><b><a href="#">Gender Equality Plan de l'UCLouvain 2024-2027</a></b></p> <p>The main aspects of gender equality covered include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Structural Governance and Monitoring</b> (Establishment of a dedicated Vice-Rector for EDI and an EDI office, Development of EDI networks within faculties and institutes, Creation of working groups on EDI themes, Implementation of a dashboard for monitoring actions, Analysis of existing data collection tools, Assessment of diversity in research)</li> <li><b>Communication and Visibility</b> (Development of an EDI website and intranet, Formulation of an EDI communication approach, Organization of training on inclusive communication, Continuation of the renaming process to reflect inclusivity, Encouragement of EDI visibility measures within entities.)</li> </ol>

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. <b>Work-Life Balance and Organizational Culture</b></li> <li>4. <b>Gender Balance in Leadership and Decision-Making</b></li> <li>5. <b>Gender Equality in Recruitment and Career Progression</b></li> <li>6. <b>Integration of EDI in Research and Teaching</b></li> </ol>
King's London	College <a href="#">King's Athena Swan Action Plan (2020/21–2024/25)</a>	King's College London's Athena Swan Action Plan 2020/21-2024/25 is structured across seven overarching sections and nine thematic, cross-cutting programmes. These themes emerged from a rigorous self-assessment process and focus on areas requiring targeted effort, such as Leadership & Data, Recruitment & Selection, Improved Working Environment, Career Development, Role Models & Visibility, and Prevention of Harassment. Each of the nine thematic programmes (for example Flexible Working, Women's Leadership, Trans Inclusivity) is sponsored by an Executive Dean and supported through cross-institutional partnerships to embed gender equality more deeply across both academic and professional services domains.
University of Oslo	<i>Action Plan for Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion (2021–2024)</i>	<p>The University of Oslo's policy for diversity, equality and inclusion is anchored in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Action Plan for Diversity, Gender Equality and Inclusion 2021-2024 (pdf)</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The duration of this action plan has been extended until 2025 following an approval of the Rector. A working group appointed by the Pro-Rector will develop a new action plan for the 2026-2030 period in 2025.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Université Paris Cité	<i>Professional Equality Plan (2025–2027)</i>	<p>The <b>UPCité Gender Equality Plan (2025–2027)</b> is structured around four main thematic areas, each addressing key dimensions of equality, diversity, and inclusion within the university context:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Professional Equality and Pay Equity:</b> Focuses on strengthening gender-disaggregated data collection, monitoring pay gaps, assessing promotion processes, and ensuring that family or parental leave does not negatively affect career progression.</li> <li>2. <b>Equal Access to Careers and Responsibilities:</b> Promotes gender balance in recruitment and career development, combats bias through training and awareness, supports mentoring and gender</li> </ol>

		<p>diversity in all professions, and highlights underrepresented groups in academia.</p> <p>3. <b>Work–Life Balance and Parenthood:</b> Aims to enhance communication and policies around flexible work arrangements, parental leave, and the right to disconnect, while supporting parents through guidance materials, improved service adaptation, and childcare access.</p> <p>4. <b>Prevention and Response to Gender-Based and Sexual Violence:</b> Strengthens reporting systems, awareness campaigns, and victim support mechanisms through specialized training, communication tools, and data monitoring on discrimination and harassment.</p> <p>5. <b>Transversal Axis – Institutionalization and Governance of Equality Policy:</b> Ensures that equality, diversity, and inclusion principles are anchored in the university’s strategic governance, communication, and partnerships, including responsible procurement and coordination with broader institutional plans.</p>
University of Pisa	<p><i>Gender Equality Plan (2025–2027)</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Gender Equality Plan (GEP) 2025-2027</a> approved by the University’s governance at the end of the 2024 and published on the UNIPi’s website.</p> <p>This GEP is in continuity with the <a href="#">GEP 2022-2024</a> and is in connection with the objectives of the <a href="#">Strategic Plan of the University of Pisa 2023-2028</a>.</p> <p>The GEP of UNIPi is closely connected with the <a href="#">Gender Budgeting</a> (Bilancio di Genere dell’Università di Pisa) which is realised annually and it provides an accurate analysis of the university context in all its components (students, researchers, professors, technical and administrative staff). This analysis highlights both the positive and negative aspects that characterize the university environment. Taking these aspects into account, it is possible to elaborate the GEP which identifies strategies, measures and policies to resolve, on one side, the critical aspects and, on the other, to turn the positive aspects into virtuous best practices. Gender Budgeting is the starting point to elaborate a GEP, it is fundamental to have a clear vision of the tendencies of the University. Moreover, the Gender Budgeting includes a section dedicated to the monitoring report of the GEP, which allows to measure the level of achievement of the GEP’s objectives.</p>

		It is possible to consult all the documents (GEP and Gender Budgeting) in a specific section titled <a href="#">Gender Policies</a> on the UNIFI's website.
University of Vienna	<a href="#">Affirmative Action Plan for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality</a> (2019–)	The University of Vienna's Affirmative Action Plan emphasises the advancement of women and the promotion of gender equality, diversity and inclusion across all organisational levels. It commits to increasing women's representation in all units and levels, eliminating discrimination, and ensuring equal access to opportunities, infrastructure and resources. Key measures include gender-mainstreaming processes, monitoring and reporting gender-disaggregated data, gender-sensitive recruitment and promotion practices, and support for work–life reconciliation and prevention of harassment. The plan also mandates regular evaluation, clear accountability structures and the integration of gender equality objectives into development plans and performance agreements of organisational units.

## 6.3 Annex III: Glossary

### Key Terms and Definitions

#### Gender Equality

Gender equality refers to the state in which women, men, and people of diverse gender identities enjoy the same rights, responsibilities, and opportunities in all spheres of life. In the academic context, this means eliminating structural and cultural barriers that hinder equal participation in teaching, research, decision-making, and institutional life. It goes beyond formal equality and requires transformative measures that address both representation and institutional culture (cf. ERA Policy Agenda 2022–2024; Horizon Europe eligibility requirements).

#### Gender

*Gender* refers to the socially constructed roles, norms, behaviours, and relations associated with being female, male, or of diverse gender identities. Unlike biological sex, which is rooted in physical and physiological differences, gender is shaped by cultural, historical, political, and institutional contexts. It influences how individuals are perceived, how they participate in society, and the opportunities available to them.

#### Gender in Academia

Gender in academia refers to the ways in which gendered roles, expectations, and inequalities are reproduced, challenged, or transformed within higher education and research institutions. It encompasses: representation of women, men, and gender-diverse persons in academic careers and leadership positions, access to and progression through different disciplines (e.g. gender gaps in STEM and SSH), integration of gender perspectives into curricula, pedagogy, and research content, and institutional cultures, policies, and practices that may either reinforce or mitigate gender inequalities.

#### Gender-Sensitive Institutional Culture

Gender-sensitive institutional culture refers to the set of values, practices, procedures, and representations that affirm equality and actively prevent discrimination. This includes the use of gender-sensitive language, transparent

recruitment and promotion criteria, inclusive teaching and learning practices, and leadership accountability for equality outcomes. While numerical balance is an important indicator, it must be combined with qualitative changes in institutional practices to ensure that diverse voices are equally valued and influential.

### **Gender Dimension in Research and Innovation**

The *gender dimension in research and innovation* refers to the systematic consideration of sex and gender as relevant variables in the design, implementation, and evaluation of research projects and innovations. It involves integrating gender analysis into research questions, methodologies, and dissemination to ensure scientific excellence, social relevance, and inclusivity. Addressing the gender dimension helps to avoid biased outcomes and enhances the quality and impact of knowledge production (European Commission, *Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans*, 2021).

### **Gender Mainstreaming**

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy to integrate a gender perspective into the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies, programs, and practices. In the higher education and research context, it means ensuring that knowledge about gender is systematically embedded in teaching curricula, research design and funding, as well as institutional governance.

### **Diversity and Inclusion**

*Diversity and inclusion* in academia encompass policies and practices that recognise, respect, and value differences in gender, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, and other identity markers. Diversity refers to the representation of varied groups, while inclusion denotes the creation of institutional cultures and environments where all individuals feel valued, respected, and able to contribute fully. Together, they promote equity and strengthen academic excellence by broadening perspectives and fostering innovation (Council of Europe, *Higher Education and Research for Sustainable Societies*, 2019). Gender diversity and inclusion emphasize the recognition and active support of diverse gender identities, including transgender and non-binary persons, and the creation of institutional environments in which all individuals can thrive. This concept builds on the commitments of several Circle U. members (e.g. University of Vienna, Humboldt University, Université Paris Cité) to explicitly address the rights and needs of LGBTQI+ communities within their GEPs.

### **Intersectionality**

Intersectionality highlights the fact that gender inequalities intersect with other dimensions of discrimination, such as ethnicity, class, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Intersectional approaches recognize that individuals may experience multiple and overlapping forms of disadvantage. Recent EU policy frameworks incorporate intersectionality as a guiding principle for data collection and institutional action.

### **Prevention and Protection against Violence and Discrimination**

This concept refers to institutional mechanisms designed to prevent and respond to violence based on gender, sexual harassment, and discrimination. *Violence based on gender and sexual harassment* in academia encompass any act of violence, intimidation, or harassment directed at individuals based on their gender, including sexual harassment and abuse of power in professional or educational contexts. Such behaviours undermine dignity, equality, and safety within the academic community. Addressing them requires clear institutional policies, reporting mechanisms, and preventive measures to build inclusive and respectful environments (European Institute for Gender Equality – EIGE, *Gender-Based Violence*).

### **Work–Life Balance**

*Work–life balance* refers to the ability of individuals to reconcile professional duties with family and personal responsibilities. In academic institutions, it includes measures such as parental leave, flexible working

arrangements, accessible childcare, and institutional support for caregiving roles. Promoting work–life balance enhances career sustainability, prevents gendered career interruptions, and contributes to the retention and progression of diverse talent in higher education and research (Directive (EU) 2019/1158, *Work–Life Balance Directive*).