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Support Package 2

How to set up an Inclusive Gender Equality Plan

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List of Acronyms

CoP	Community of Practice
GE	Gender Equality
IGE	Inclusive Gender Equality
GEP	Gender Equality Policy/Plan/Program
IGEP	Inclusive Gender Equality Policy/Plan/Program
SPkg	Support Package
RPO	Research Performing Organisation
RFO	Research Funding Organisation
R&I	Research and Innovation
GI	Gendered Innovations
IGIP	Inclusive Gendered Innovation Policy/Plan/Program
IGI	Inclusive Gendered Innovation
EU	European Union
EC	European Commission

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Introduction: Aim of the Support Package

The "How to set up an Inclusive Gender Equality Plan" Support Package is a dynamic resource aimed at assisting individuals, organizations, and communities in fostering inclusive gender equality. It acknowledges that gender equality goes beyond binary perspectives and encompasses diverse identities and challenges. The resource offers insights and strategies to integrate diversity, inclusion, and intersectionality into gender equality policies, providing practical guides, toolkits, educational materials, and best practices. The goal is to empower users with knowledge and tools to create inclusive spaces in research and innovation environments.

Drawing on research from the INSPIRE Project, along with experience from the [GENERA](#) and [MINDtheGEPs](#) projects, as well as guidance from the [ACT Project Gender Equality in Central-Eastern Europe Community of Practice](#) (GEinCEE), the support package offers meaningful and up-to-date insights. It combines research findings with practical experience in developing Inclusive Gender Equality Plans, aiding efforts toward institutionalizing gender equality policies in various organizations.

Content of the Support Package

The support package is divided into four blocks. We start with defining gender equality plan (GEP) and inclusive gender equality plan (IGEP). Second, in the strategic guide that follows the introductory part, we provide clear guidelines in regard to setting up an inclusive GEP. We follow the [European Institute for Gender Equality's](#) GEP six-step development and implementation process and apply recommendations outlined in INSPIRE reports (see chapter Resources/INSPIRE Resources) and in INSPIRE's, CALIPER's and the EU's Policy Briefs (Palmen et al. 2023; Caliper 2023; European Commission 2022c). Then, in the third part, we provide information on relevant EU laws and regulations in the ERA and R&I ecosystem to set out the scene for inclusive gender equality change in your organisation. In the fourth part, we present facts on IGEP's success factors and their barriers to prepare you for effective development of your IGEP and for challenges that might arise during the process. Along the whole guide we supplement practical tips with useful templates and tools for developing IGEP.

1. What is Inclusive Gender Equality Plan?

According to the European Commission (2021c), **Gender Equality Plan (GEP)** is “a set of commitments and actions that aim to promote gender equality in an organisation through a process of structural change.” The GEP’s goal is to bring structural and cultural change to the organization. This is crucial in a context of a patriarchal matrix where institutional systems often perpetuate hierarchies, privileges, and gender inequalities.

The European Institute for Gender Equality’s [GEAR Tool](#) specifies that a **GEP should**:

- **Outline clear objectives and goals** (based on a comprehensive assessment of the current state),
- **Delineate specific actions** to enhance gender equality in both organisational settings and the wider realm of R&I,
- **Incorporate timelines** for implementing these measures and for assessing progress and success,
- **Assign distinct responsibilities** for various tasks and specify the overall governance and leadership accountability for steering the implementation, progress, and outcomes of the GEP, and,
- **Apply the six-step process** presented in Frame 1.

Frame 1. Steps for GEP development and implementation (GEAR tool)

- **Step 1. Getting started:** understanding the context of your organisation and finding support within and outside its structures.
- **Step 2. Assessing and analysing the status quo in your organisation:** conducting a thorough analysis of the current gender equality situation within the organisation to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement through data collection and evaluation.
- **Step 3. Setting up a GEP:** defining specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-related (SMART) objectives, targets and measures and developing a detailed action plan outlining specific measures and initiatives to achieve the set objectives and targets.
- **Step 4. Implementing a GEP:** putting the action plan into motion, ensuring that measures are effectively implemented and engaging stakeholders and communicate the importance of the plan throughout the organisation.
- **Step 5. Monitoring progress and evaluating a GEP:** establishing monitoring mechanisms to track the progress of the GEP implementation and regularly evaluating the effectiveness of measures and adjust strategies as needed.
- **Step 6. What comes after the GEP? Review and improvement:** reviewing the GEP to assess its overall impact and identify areas for improvement by using feedback and outcomes of monitoring progress to enhance, refine, and ensure sustainability of the plan for ongoing effectiveness.

See: [Virtual materials](#) prepared by the EU-funded project [SPEAR](#) that summarize the basic information on GEAR Tool GEP development and implementation steps; consult [GEAR Tool](#) for deeper understanding of the concept and specific actions that need to be undertaken in

each of the step, and Horizon2020 CHANGE project's ppt presentation on "[Designing, Implementing and Monitoring a Gender Equality Plan - Practical Insights for Newcomers](#)".

Watch: Webinars developed by the EU-funded project [Gender Equality Academy](#) to familiarize yourself with the idea of institutionalization of gender equality through organisational action plans and with arguments needed when lobbying for structural change in your organisation: [Introduction to Gender Equality Plans](#) (2020); [Creating your Gender Equality Plan. Towards gender aware research organisations: Basic keys to elaborate Gender Equality Plans](#) (2020); [Understanding and facilitating change for gender equality in research and the academia](#) (2020).

Inclusive Gender Equality Plan (IGEP) can be defined as strategic document that “aim to achieve equality for all in a specific organisation or institution. Therefore, Inclusive GEPs take diversity in the broader sense, including categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, class, age, sexual orientation, and disabilities in research teams at all levels, including management and decision-making. Moreover, Inclusive GEPs aim to combat any type of discrimination and harassment in R&IOs, and should provide guidelines to change inequality regimes, as well as addressing individual cases of discrimination and promoting inclusive knowledge production systems” (Chavez, Benschop 2023: 9; cf. European Commission 2022: 10).

Inclusiveness as an organisational participatory process

INSPIRE understands “inclusion” primarily as a participatory, transformatory process guided by non-negotiable core values such as feminism, care, social and epistemic justice, fairness, equality, solidarity, decolonialism, and democratic participation. This understanding runs throughout the INSPIRE project, shaping activities, methodologies as well as how we understand key concepts. An inclusive, participatory process is not an end in itself, but serves a purpose of change: it targets the systemic nature of social injustice. Core values guide the process and prevent it from being hijacked by anti-democratic, authoritarian agendas. Anchoring the understanding of “inclusion” in specific features of a participatory process builds upon the usage of the concept in the social-psychology literature on inclusive work cultures (Mor-Barak et al, 1998) This understanding counters the tokenist use of employees from marginalised groups. Rather, “inclusion” captures the quality of the interpersonal relations involved: to what degree do individuals feel valued in their uniqueness while being part of critical organisational processes such as access to information and resources, involvement in work groups and/ or the ability to influence decision-making processes. While much of the social psychology literature focuses on “inclusion” as an “outcome” – to feel valued and included – we suggest defining “inclusion” primarily via the concrete features of the underlying participatory process.

This process-oriented understanding of inclusion is also mirrored in terms of how inclusion is different from equality and diversity. While diversity captures the similarities and differences that exist between people linked to personal characteristics, equality and equity approaches recognise the historical and structural relations of inequality that are built upon and indeed structure these differences. Inclusion then suggests that these social justice concerns are not resolved by guaranteeing equal opportunities and equal numerical representation but require an organisational effort to facilitate belonging and value uniqueness, for example in decision-making. Participatory processes that go beyond tokenistic participation –such as participatory action research methods, as well as Communities of Practice (CoPs)– are key in sustaining organisational change processes, whilst ensuring that policies

developed are locally relevant, and can provide an effective way to integrating an intersectional perspective (extract from Palmen et al. 2023).

As indicated in the INSPIRE Policy Brief (Palmen et al. 2023: 2): “There is however little known on what ‘inclusive gender equality’ means or what an ‘inclusive gender equality plan’ should look like, or how it should be designed, implemented, monitored, and evaluated”. Moreover, the transition from traditional GEP to IGEP involves expanding the scope and strategies to address a broader spectrum of diversity. This shift typically includes recognizing and addressing inclusion as an organisational participatory process, and intersectionality within gender equality initiatives.

Integrating an intersectional perspective

Intersectional policies in R&I organisations aim to address inequalities and discrimination that occur on multiple, intersecting axes including but not limited to gender, race, ethnicity, ability, age and sexual orientation, and that operate on different levels. (...)

Key findings of the scoping review include how diversity policy is not interchangeable with intersectional policy. Although both notions focus on differences and multiple strands of discrimination, an intersectional policy recognises and addresses the unique needs that result from the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination (Beeckmans et al., 2023).

It is important to note that **intersectionality** is not simply about multiple identities, although often used in such a way (Verloo, 2006). More fundamental than adding (+) and addressing several social categories, an intersectional perspective identifies and challenges the “specific regimes of inequalities and asymmetries of power” that are attached to the simultaneity of these categories (Acker, 2006). The focus is on exposing the interlocking systems of oppression and privilege that exist not only on the individual and interpersonal level, but also on the level of systemic processes and social structures that focus on how classism, ableism, racism (not race), heterosexism, and cisgenderism are interlocked and how these and other systems of sameness and difference relate to power, and mutually reinforce each other (Cho et al, 2013) (extract from Palmen et al. 2023).

Based on recommendations outlined in INSPIRE reports (see chapter ‘Resources’/INSPIRE Resources) and in [Approaches to Inclusive Gender Equality in R&I](#) (European Commission 2022), **we recommend the following principles for the design and implementation of IGEP in your organisation** as presented in Frame 2.

Frame 2. Principles for the design and implementation of an IGEP

- **Participatory Processes (Inclusion):** Developing IGEP should be done through participatory processes involving diverse organisational stakeholders. It is crucial to engage decision-makers, implementers, and key target groups (staff, students, customers) in the planning and implementation phases.
- **Intersectionality:** IGEP should apply an intersectionality framework supported by clearly defined structural actions and objectives at policy and organisational levels. Mainstreaming gender equality through actions should be focused on specific social characteristics.

- **Data-Driven Approach:** IGEP must be grounded in data, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative measures. It should monitor career progression, decision-making bodies, leadership positions, research projects, teaching content, gender-based violence and sexual harassment. Data collection should include validated measures of gender, race, ethnicity, ability, age, sexual orientation, and other relevant markers of discrimination.
- **Context-Specific Design:** IGEP should be designed to be context-specific, aligning with national-level policies. It should incorporate an epistemic justice lens to address gendered power relationships and drive long-term changes. It should take advantage of Communities of Practice (CoPs) and/or networks to support change agents and interventions. In order to encourage innovative solutions rooted in specific local histories and contexts, it should aim at understanding local and contextual mechanisms.
- **Learning from Experience and Locally Situated Knowledge:** IGEP should be built on lessons learned from advancing gender equality while addressing specific patterns of discrimination and inequality experienced by marginalised groups. IGEP should emphasise the creation of sustainable, long-term impact by integrating locally situated knowledge into the design and implementation of GEPs. This approach encompasses drawing insights from practical encounters, past efforts, and the unique perspectives found in specific geographical, cultural, and social settings.
- **Resource Allocation:** Financial and human resources for the development and implementation of IGEP should be allocated. Those include for instance resources for training, competence building, and sustaining networks for collective action. It is also advisable to incorporate gender budgeting in IGEP.
- **Gender and Intersectionality Competence and Knowledge:** IGEP should address the importance of gender competence and knowledge within organisations. It is crucial to draw on local knowledge from within an organisation and from the other experienced organisations of similar background or context. Other strategies include providing training, engaging in gender equality networks, and commissioning gender expertise.
- **Clear Terms, Actions and Accountability:** IGEP should use clear terms for sex, gender, and other protected characteristics based on national legislation. They should clearly articulate actions, timeframes, responsibilities and emphasise transparency, monitoring, evaluation, and accountability.
- **Organisational Strategies:** IGEP should ensure organisational safety and inclusivity for work and/or study. It requires setting specific organisational objectives and actions. It is recommended to highlight the positive value of diversity through awareness campaigns, training, codes of conduct, and anti-harassment policies.

For more nuanced overview on recommendations regarding developing and implementing IGEPs see: INSPIRE Resources section of this document; [Approaches to inclusive gender equality in research and innovation \(R&I\)](#); [Towards Inclusive Gender Equality in research and innovation](#); CALIPER Project [Policy Briefs on Inclusive Gender Equality Plans in STEM fields](#), and GEinCEE CoP Policy brief [Towards more equal, diverse, and inclusive research](#).

2. Strategic guide for setting up an Inclusive Gender Equality Plan

Setting up an IGEP is not a checkbox exercise; it's an ongoing commitment to reflection and improvement. Designing and implementing an IGEP depends not only on having good technical tools but also on understanding the institutional context and engaging the community.

IMPORTANT! Understanding "global" and "holistic" nature of an IGEP is crucial for catalysing transformations across cultures, structures, and practices. However, it does not mean we recommend following an 'one-size-fits-all' approach. The opposite, **organisations should tailor their specific objectives based on their unique context, challenges, and opportunities.** This approach recognises that each organisation operates within a unique environment characterised by its own set of circumstances, constraints, and potential advantages. By tailoring objectives, organisations can create a roadmap that reflects their distinct identity, goals, and aspirations. For instance, [GENERA](#) Project developed the [Roadmap for the implementation of customized Gender Equality Plans](#) in the physics field basing on the most common problems identified in the field.

Check: The TARGET Project [Guidelines to Design a Customised Gender Equality Plan \(GEP\)](#); GE Academy training video [on GEPs in CEE region](#); GENDERACTIONplus [Manual on GEP in Horizon Europe](#) prepared by M. Chrobak-Tatara and A. Knapińska (in Polish), and Angela Wroblewski [Guidelines for the development of gender equality plans in Austrian higher education and research institutions](#) (in German).

2.1. Laying the foundations

Understand context-specifics

Preparing an IGEP involves considering a broad spectrum of factors that influence the experiences of individuals within an organisational setting. The nature of your institution, whether it's a university, a public or private research organisation, or a research funding body, significantly influences the approach to designing and implementing inclusive gender equality.

- **Contextualise your own organisation** using organisational context assessment template (Annex 1). It will help situate your organisation in the broader context specifics (location, economics, type, etc.) and help determine objectives and measures that are suitable for implementation, identify areas where support for your activities can be sought (stakeholders) - within your organisation, as well as within the broader regional or national context and help identify target groups for your organization's gender equality initiatives. (see GEAR Tool, [Step 1](#)). To contextualise your organization you should:
 - **Determine the potential sources of information.** This may include internal data repositories, external databases, surveys, interviews, desk research, observations, focus groups, benchmarking etc.;

- **Learn about the national and regional context.** Browse Annex 2 and statistics such as [EIGE Gender Equality Index](#), [EIGE Country Specific information](#) in regards to Gender Mainstreaming or wider [EIGE Gender Statistics Database](#), or [GenderAction+ Data dashboard](#);
- If in place, **review existing documents**, such as organizational policies, strategic plans, performance reports, and internal and external communications;
- If not in place, **develop specific methods for collecting the required information**. This could involve quantitative methods (surveys) or qualitative methods (interviews or focus groups interviews with key stakeholders, including employees at different hierarchical levels and with diverse socio-economic characteristics, management, and relevant departments) **or perform alternative solutions**, like direct observations of organizational processes, interactions, and dynamics. You may shadow employees, attend meetings, or observe workflow patterns. Additionally, comparing the organization against industry/sector standards, best practices, or competitors can provide valuable insights into areas where the organization excels or needs improvement. **Seek input from internal and external consultants or experts with domain-specific knowledge** (see [INSPIRE database of experts](#)). Their expertise can offer fresh perspectives and help identify blind spots or overlooked aspects of the organizational context;
- Understand locally situated knowledge and practices to explore specific knowledge rooted in organisational and local/regional communities. This approach emphasises the importance of drawing insights from practical encounters, past efforts, and the unique perspectives found in specific organisational, geographical, cultural, and social settings. **Encourage active involvement of organisational and local stakeholders, for instance, feminist, LGBTQ+, student, staff, community members** in gaining knowledge about the specific context of your organization. This way you will ensure that solutions are tailored to the specific needs, challenges, and aspirations of the organisation and local population as well. Developing an IGEP is not an individual endeavor, but a collective and participatory action that requires courage, engagement, dedication, strength, constant awareness and learning, but foremost human and financial resources to run the process (see “Facts on inclusive GEP” section of this document).

Find support

Very often lack of financial and human resources is an obstacle during GEP development and implementation. To overcome this problem:

- **Find support within or outside your organization:**
 - If your organization does not have a developed GEP, **ensure, or** – if it does – **strengthen top management commitment** for

inclusive gender equality as it is crucial for the success of an IGEP and the establishment of an inclusive organisational culture (see “Facts on inclusive GEP” section of this document; and “GEP as eligibility criterion...”);

- **Search for internal and external (funding) opportunities** (see “GEP as eligibility criterion...” section of this document, check INSPIRE’s [Open Training Unit 1](#) on change catalysts/ become a sponsor);
- **Identify and engage diverse stakeholders/ allies and seek their support** (see GEAR Tool, [Step 1](#); Frame 3; and GE Academy workshops on how to [engage stakeholders/ men and students](#));

Frame 3. Stakeholders to be considered in IGEP development and implementation

- ✓ leadership and top management,
- ✓ employees at all levels,
- ✓ human resources (HR), budget, statistic professionals, diversity, equality and/or inclusion (DE&I) teams/bodies,
- ✓ women's networks and advocacy groups,
- ✓ men,
- ✓ trade unions and worker representatives,
- ✓ clients and customers,
- ✓ local community,
- ✓ social or student organisations,
- ✓ government and regulatory bodies,
- ✓ media and public relations bodies,
- ✓ suppliers and business partners,
- ✓ science or industry associations and networks,
- ✓ students and early career researchers,
- ✓ ethics committees and review boards,
- ✓ government funding agencies,
- ✓ international or local collaborators,
- ✓ NGOs,
- ✓ communities of practice.

- **Apply a Communities of Practice approach** to IGEP development and implementation (See Frame 4), by **joining already existing** (inside and/or outside your organization: see [ACT](#) and [INSPIRE](#) CoPs) **or establishing your own community of practice** (see [SPkg1](#)). Possible forms include: a working group, equality committee, self-assessment team, implementation team, GEP follow-up commission etc.;

Frame 4. CoP basics

A **CoP** is "a group of people who share an interest, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and deepen their knowledge and expertise on that topic through ongoing interaction that strengthens their relationships" (Wenger 2015: 2; see [SPkg1](#)). CoPs can be **inter-organisational** – including stakeholders belonging to the same organisation, and **intra-organisational** built up from representatives of different organizations. Applying a **CoP approach** should effectively encourage the active participation of individuals from various backgrounds in the design, implementation, and evaluation of IGEP initiatives. A CoP can serve as a platform for knowledge exchange, collaboration, and shared learning among individuals interested in advancing inclusive gender equality. The CoP approach embraces a **participatory approach** to IGEP and **engages stakeholders through inclusive processes**, i.e. workshops, group discussions, surveys, focus groups. It provides knowledge needed to make organisational self-assessment, incl. feedback on existing policies and practices to identify areas for improvement and gain insights into the specific challenges faced by different groups within the organisation. Involving a diverse group of stakeholders increases IGE buy-in and is also a very good idea for sustainable stakeholder involvement (see “Facts on inclusive GEP” section of this document).

For deeper understanding of the CoP approach to organisational change watch ACT Project Video on [CoPs](#). If you are considering establishing a CoP dive into [SPkg1](#) to find out more about the process. To familiarise yourself with tools needed for co-creating an IGEP when applying CoP approach see [ACT Co-creation Toolkit](#).

We also recommend watching the GE Academy webinars: [Session 1](#) and [Session 2](#) to gain theoretical and practical knowledge on applying intersectionality, inclusion and diversity in teams and organisations.

- **Search for internal/external experts on relevant topics and organisations in your country/region** fostering inclusive gender equality (see [INSPIRE's Stakeholders and Experts databases](#); and [GEinCEE CoP's online map of gender equality initiatives in CEE region](#)).

Which stakeholders and experts need to be engaged in your organisation's change process depends mainly on the context of your organisation, and can be finally defined after conducting a gender+ audit (see respective chapter of this document).

Understand basic terms and concepts

It is crucial to form the foundation for meaningful conversations, policies, and initiatives. Clarity in communication is essential for building awareness and consensus. When individuals have a shared understanding of basic terms related to inclusive gender equality, discussions around diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunities become more effective. To conceive a shared understanding of basic terms and concepts in regards to inclusive gender equality, we propose to:

- **Consider basic terms and concepts to be included in an IGEP** (see Frame 6);
- **Actively engage in the deployment of [participatory methods](#) to negotiate a shared language for your IGEP** (see Frame 5);
- **Create a glossary** that will help ensure consistency in language usage, preventing misunderstandings or misinterpretations. However, different cultures may have varied perspectives on gender roles and identities. A nuanced understanding of basic terms allows for cultural sensitivity, enabling individuals and organisations to approach inclusive gender equality **with awareness of diverse cultural contexts**.

Frame 5. Co-creation tools for defining basic terms and concepts

Consider employing one of the techniques for co-creation called “1-2-4-ALL” or “Brainstorming” from ACT [Co-Creation toolkit](#) or follow the tips and tools included in [GenderLAB Guide](#) to conceive your own understanding of terms according to your organisation’s needs and context. By doing so, you ensure that the terms and concepts applied in your IGEP are responsive to the evolving nuances of gender discourse and inclusive of diverse voices. Participatory methods not only empower individuals to contribute to the shaping of our shared language, but also cultivate a sense of ownership and commitment to the principles of inclusive gender equality.

Frame 6. Basic terms and concepts to be included in IGEP

- ✓ gender equality,
- ✓ gender equity,
- ✓ (inclusive) gender equality plan/ policy/ strategy etc.,
- ✓ diversity,
- ✓ inclusion, and
- ✓ intersectionality.

For **relevant definitions** search in: [INSPIRE Glossary \[link\]](#) and/or [EIGE terms and definitions](#), [Stonewall's list of LGBTQ+ terms](#); [Gender-based violence glossary of UNISAFE Project](#); [Intersectionality Glossary](#); [Gendered Innovations Glossary](#); [Participatory Research Glossary](#); ACT Project Glossary Videos: [Gender, Sex, Cisgender and transgender, sexual orientation](#); [Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien, Trans. inter*. non-binary. Teaching and learning spaces at universities. Designing teaching and learning spaces at universities in a gender-reflective, anti-discriminatory and respectful way](#) (in German); Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien, [Vademecum for Gender Equitable Universities](#) (in German).

To **understand intersectionality** and how it can be addressed in a GEP check: ACT [Video](#) and [Booklet](#) on Intersectionality; GE Academy webinars: [Intersectionality in institutional change processes in academic organisations](#), and [Applying intersectional perspectives in research and innovation. The cases of urban cycling and artificial intelligence](#); [Factsheet](#) issued by the European Commission on gendered innovations that offers a comprehensive overview explaining the significance of integrating a sex, gender, and intersectional analysis into Research and Innovation (R & I).

Conduct gender+ audit

Conducting a thorough assessment of your organisation's current gender diversity and inclusion situation within the organisation serves to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement through data collection and evaluation. This step is necessary to recognise objectives and target groups that need to be addressed in the plan. In this step you are going to collect organisational quantitative and qualitative data through desk research, focus groups, interviews, surveys (See GE Academy online workshops titled "Institutional gender analysis": [day 1](#), [2](#) and [3](#); GEAR Tool, [Step 2](#)). During the audit:

- **Define inclusive metrics** (see Frame 7);
- **Strive for maximum comprehensiveness**, covering the **five substantive areas of intervention**, namely organisational culture and work-life balance, gender balance in leadership and management, gender equality in recruitment, selection and career progression, integration of a gender dimension in research and education, and combating gender-based violence (See [Guide](#) of TARGET project, p. 20 to consult specific aspects and documents for auditing in the area of careers, decision-making and content);

- **Use publicly available resources for self-assessment.** We recommend using [GEAM Tool](#) that covers substantial areas for gender equality, can be conducted among diverse target groups and is available in 14 languages (incl. English). For more tools check Frame 8;

Frame 7. Relevant data for gender+ audit (inclusive metrics)

- ✓ gender identity,
- ✓ sexual orientation,
- ✓ race and ethnicity,
- ✓ nationality,
- ✓ socioeconomic status,
- ✓ age,
- ✓ disability status,
- ✓ religion and belief systems,
- ✓ migration status,
- ✓ language,
- ✓ role in the organization,
- ✓ etc.

Frame 8. (Inclusive) GE self-assessment tools

- ACT's [Gender Equality and Monitoring \(GEAM\) Tool](#)
- Institutional gender equality awareness tool (chapter 3.1 of [TARGET Guide](#));
- [Gender equality and social inclusion self-assessment tool](#) (available in: English, French and Portuguese);
- EIGE's [Gender Impact Assessment](#);
- GENERA template for data collection on careers in [GENERA Roadmap](#)
- UNISAFE's [Gender-based Violence Self-assessment tool](#)

- **Apply alternative solutions for data collection and analysis.** You can use **data available in your organisation**. Evaluate whether policies or programs are inclusive and equitable for individuals with multiple intersecting identities, consider intersectional factors and how they may impact individuals differently within the organisation. **If no relevant data is in place** or some measures are only collected you should **include data collection** (from staff, students or customers and/or beyond gender) **as a goal/measure for your IGEP** to ensure better availability of data in the future **or apply co-creation tools for data collection** and analysis presented in Frame 9.

Frame 9. Co-creation tools for data collection & analysis

Using resources and knowledge present in your community of practice can be an **alternative tool for data gathering purposes**. For instance, using SWOT and/or PASTEL tools (see [ACT CoP Co-creation Toolkit](#) and [ACT video](#) introducing it) you can assess organisation's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in diverse areas as well as focus on specific issues that may arise during the IGEP implementation process. Another

participatory and alternative methods could be "[Mapping and Power Analysis](#)". Both will help you identify factors, target groups and preliminary measures relevant to your plan. For **analysis purposes**, you can employ "What I need from you" technique to recognise available resources and decide on bodies and/or individuals that will carry out the analysis. To reflect on findings and possible solutions for identified problems you can apply "W3: What, So What, Now What" technique. To see a description of the tools and how to run the process see ACT Co-creation Toolkit.

- **Be as inclusive as possible** by ensuring representation from diverse groups, from different departments, levels, and backgrounds as it helps capture a comprehensive view. Include quantitative and qualitative data (See the Institute of Development [guidelines](#) that allow your organization to be disability inclusive while doing research, and follow steps proposed in [Gender equality and intersectional analysis toolkit](#) to collect and analyse data with an inclusive and intersectional lens);
- **Interpret findings** by examining how intersecting identities (gender identity and/or sexual orientation and/or race and ethnicity/ age etc.) and power dynamics influence individual's opportunities, access to resources, and experiences of violence and discrimination within the organization. As this is not an easy task to be performed individually you should:
 - **search for support inside and/or outside the organisation**, i.e.
 - **seek experts** in identified problematic areas **within your own working environment and/or CoP**;
 - **request expert** (from [INSPIRE database of experts](#)) to run the intersectional data collection and analysis workshop for your CoP/ organization or to support your CoP/ organization in gender+ analysis of collected data;
- **Write a report using gathered information** (Check SPEAR Project [status quo assessment report](#) as a good example). **Remember to use inclusive communication** (see how to do this with the Holistic inclusive language [toolkit](#)) and **make your organisational self-assessment report public** to build trust among employees, students and customers and to increase their interest in fostering inclusive gender equality.

2.2. Introduce change

Design IGEP

Results from audits of your organization's gender+ landscape are your driving force for designing IGEP. In design phase clearly articulate what you want to achieve with your IGEP. Goals and objectives set the overall direction for the IGEP, providing a clear sense of purpose and vision. They articulate what the organisation hopes to accomplish in terms of gender+

equality. Goals and objectives should align with the broader mission and values of the organisation. This ensures that gender equality efforts are integrated into the overall strategic vision of the organisation.

When designing IGEP you should:

- **Strengthen the commitment of top-level managers;**
- **Clearly define objectives, target groups, measures/actions and indicators** related to achieving inclusive gender equality **within a specified timeframe** (see TARGET Guide's [chapter 4.2](#) and [chapter 4.3](#); GEAR Tool, [Step 3](#); [SPEAR COMPASS Guide](#); [GENERA's PAM Tool](#) designed for the physics field). Ensure that objectives address a range of gender-related issues and are tailored to the unique needs of your organisation (see SMARTI Objectives' guiding questions in Frame 11 and guiding questions for concrete measures in Frame 12);
 - **Get inspiration from others.** Research and review best practices and successful (inclusive) gender equality initiatives implemented by other organisations in your industry or similar contexts **and identify measures that have proven effective in fostering inclusivity**. Consider measures for: organisational culture and work-life balance, gender balance in leadership and management, gender equality in recruitment, selection and career progression, integration of a gender dimension in research and education, against gender-based violence; mitigating the effects of COVID-19; data collection and monitoring; training: awareness raising and capacity building and gender-sensitive research funding procedures (see Frame 10);

Frame 10. Examples of measures for IGEP

- ✓ [GENERA's Toolbox](#);
- ✓ [GENERA Fields of Action](#);
- ✓ [GEAR Action Toolbox](#);
- ✓ [SPEAR Best practice examples](#);
- ✓ EIGE [Gender Equality Training Guide](#);
- ✓ European Commission's Gendered Innovations reports from [2013](#) and [2020](#);
- ✓ [Approaches to Inclusive Gender Equality in research and innovation](#) (Annex C)
- ✓ [Champions' for \(Inclusive\) Gender Equality](#) (example of sustainable, newcoming and inclusive measures that were awarded by EU);
- ✓ [PLOTINA's Library of Actions](#)
- ✓ [INSPIRE GEP Repository](#) [\[link\]](#).
- ✓ [SPEAR Repository of Project Partners' GEPs](#)
- ✓ [SAGE Repository of GEPs](#)
- ✓ [GENERA Repository of GEPs](#)
- ✓ [UR Repository of GEPs from Polish RPOs, RFOs and HEIs](#)
- ✓ [Lineamientos generales para la IG](#) of Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), México
- ✓ [GenEX. Programa para la Igualdad de género](#) of Facultad de Ciencias Exactas y Naturales de la Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA), Argentina
- ✓ [Política para la Igualdad de Género](#) of Universidad de Chile, Chile

- ✓ [Plan UNR Feminista](#) of Universidad Nacional de Rosario (UNR) - Argentina
- ✓ [Política de igualdad de Género](#) of Universidad de El Salvador, El Salvador
- ✓ [La Propuesta de Gestión Institucional 2021 – 2025](#) of Universidad Tecnológica Nacional (UTN), Argentina

The EFFORTI [Impact Story Knowledge Base](#) is worth considering as a resource as it includes different comprehensive models for GEPs and measures effectiveness based on the latest scientific findings.

Frame 11. Guiding questions for SMARTI objectives

Specific: What specific aspect requires attention or improvement? How do intersecting identities, such as gender, ethnicity, age, and abilities, influence this objective? Are there particular groups within the organisation that require specific attention in the pursuit of gender equality?

Measurable: How will we measure progress toward achieving gender equality objectives with an intersectional focus? What quantitative indicators can be used to assess the impact on different intersecting identities? Are there existing metrics that capture the experiences of diverse groups in relation to the gender equality goal?

Achievable: Given the diversity within our organisation, is the objective realistically attainable for all employees, considering their intersecting identities? What resources, support, or adjustments might be necessary to make this goal achievable for all individuals? Are there potential barriers faced by specific groups that need to be addressed to ensure achievability?

Relevant: How does the objective align with our organisation's commitment to intersectionality and inclusivity? In what ways does achieving this goal contribute to a more inclusive and equitable workplace for individuals with diverse identities? Are there additional measures needed to ensure that the objective is relevant to all employees?

Time-Bound: By when do we aim to achieve this gender equality objective with consideration for diverse identities? What are the key milestones and deadlines for different phases of the initiative, accounting for intersectionality? How will we ensure that progress is continuously monitored and adjusted within specific timeframes?

Inclusive: How does the proposed objective foster inclusivity for individuals of all gender identities and intersecting backgrounds? Are there potential unintended consequences or negative impacts on certain groups that need to be mitigated? Are there specific data points related to intersecting identities that should be captured and analysed?

- **Clearly assign roles, responsibilities and resources** (see TARGET Guide's [chapter 4.2](#); GEAR Tool, [Step 3](#)). This process involves specifying who is responsible for implementing various aspects of the plan, what their roles entail, and ensuring that adequate resources, both human and financial, are allocated to

support these efforts. It ensures that the plan is not solely reliant on individual efforts but is integrated into the organisational structure;

- It is strongly recommended to **establish an Inclusive Gender Equality Body/ Committee/ Office/ Advisory Board or alternative**. This dedicated entity should play a pivotal role in advancing gender equality initiatives and fostering a culture of inclusivity within your organisational framework. Mainly, it should provide strategic guidance on inclusive gender equality policies, initiatives, and practices aligned with organisational goals and establish a robust monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness of gender equality initiatives and identify areas for improvement;
- **Seek support**, i.e.,
 - **external funding sources**/projects/innovations, at regional, national and/or local level, to support (inclusive) gender equality initiatives (see “GEP as eligibility criteria” section; GEAR Tool, [Step 3](#));
 - **within your work environment and/or CoP** (see Frame 13).

Frame 12. Guiding questions for defining concrete measures

- + What is the target (what should be accomplished by implementation of this measure)?
- + What is the target group (which group will be particularly affected by implementation of this measure)?
- + What is the timeframe (when is start and end date of measure implementation, monitoring and evaluation)?
- + Who is responsible (which persons/departments are responsible for implementing, monitoring and evaluation of this measure)?
- + What resources will be required (human/financial/any other)?

Source: developed further basing on Caprile 2021: 28.

Frame 13. Co-creation tools for design and implementation of IGEP

Apply “Plan of change” technique to outline the logical sequence for your plan/activity (design it), and “Critical uncertainties”, “Storyboards” and/or “The world café” technique to develop strategy for or to plan your IGEP implementation (see ACT Co-creation Toolkit).

- **Create an IGEP** (see Annex 3/Outcome 4 for template of IGEP and Annex 4/ Outcome 5 for Worksheet on Action Plan).

Implement IGEP

Following the establishment of the IGEP, the subsequent step is its implementation with an intersectional and inclusive lens.

- **Form the designated implementation team** (possibly a sub group of your community of practice; see [GENERA Roadmap](#) to familiarise yourself with Implementation Team logic), creating a task force focused on executing GEP measures within the predetermined timeline. **Emphasise the institutionalization of these measures and schedule regular meetings with the implementation team** to ensure long-term sustainability, collectively design, plan, and discuss progress, achievements, and areas for improvement;
- **Establish clear communication channels:** ensure transparent communication about the IGEP goals, progress, and expected outcomes. Highlight achievements and areas for improvement. Use inclusive language that considers diverse perspectives;
- **Provide intersectional training:** offer personalized coaching, awareness sessions, campaigns, or workshops throughout IGEP implementation for the implementation team and relevant stakeholders;
- **Collaborate with external experts:** seek guidance and collaboration with external organizations or experts specializing in diversity and inclusion to bring fresh perspectives and insights (GEAR Tool, [Step 4](#)).

To find out more about factors affecting implementation process see: ‘Facts on inclusive GEP’s success factors and barriers’ chapter of this document and consult [PLOTINA’s key issues for implementation](#).

2.3. Sustain and deepen change

Monitor and evaluate IGEP

Remember that monitoring and evaluation are critical components of IGEP. Incorporating relevant indicators and evaluation actions ensures that progress can be tracked, and the effectiveness of interventions can be assessed. Monitoring and evaluation actions are not the subject of this support package. A detailed and comprehensive guide on how to monitor and evaluate IGEP can be found in [Support Package 4 Sustaining and deepening change \[link\]](#).

For preliminary information concerning monitoring and evaluation of IGEPs consult “Facts on inclusive GEP” section of this document. You may also use [GENERA PAM Tool](#) for setting up the indicators to strategically sustain and deepen initiated change towards inclusive gender equality.

3. IGEP's success factors and barriers – practical tools

The growing literature identifies a range of factors that must be taken into consideration when planning and implementing gender equality institutional change in R&I through GEPs. These include both success factors and barriers. The success factors are seen as conditions that should be achieved throughout the whole process to make it effective and fully inclusive, not as necessary to initiate change.

3.1. Success factors

- **Conducive national legislative and policy frameworks with binding measures**

Conducive national legislative and policy frameworks are a key structural facilitator of institutional change for gender equality in RPOs and RFOs. Together with regional and international laws and policies they can constitute powerful tools for introducing GEPs in R&I organisations (Bonder and Martelotte 2023; Palmen and Kalpazidou Schmidt 2019; Sekuła and Pustułka, 2016). They can require GEP establishment, predefine which objectives and measures should be implemented and be equipped with sanctions for non-compliance. In the absence of legally binding measures, the governance frameworks may provide at least positive incentives for introducing gender equality measures. However, European countries differ significantly in legislation and policies for integrating gender equality in research institutions, similarly as in general gender equality legislation and policies.

To verify the current status quo of the gender equality policy framework in European countries, consult:

- Annex 2. Legal and policy framework for inclusive gender equality plans in R&I
- INSPIRE country cluster reports: [Central West Country Cluster Report](#), [Central & East Europe Country Cluster Report](#), [North West Country Cluster Report](#) and [Southern Country Cluster Report](#);
- the [GEAR tool](#);
- GEinCEE CoP's [online map of GE bodies and legislation in Central and Eastern European universities and research centres](#).

- **Top-management commitment**

Where the legislative and policy frameworks are not optimal for a successful implementation of gender equality measures, top-management commitment (as well as bottom-up participation and buy-in) is widely identified as a key process that facilitates a successful implementation of the gender equality interventions. Top-management commitment ranges from the ministry level, through to regional and city government levels to the programme level and implementing institutions, i.e. research organisations and companies. For example, governmental bodies may play an important role in steering the agenda and paving the way for an institutional acceptance that gendered inequalities must be tackled (Palmen and Kalpazidou Schmidt 2019).

At the level of RPOs and companies it is indispensable to establish clear leadership and responsibility for organisational change, as “only an observable full commitment of an institution’s governing body will guarantee the long-lasting effect of a gender policy since this proximity to ‘power’ prevents a gender policy from becoming just another policy paper, guaranteeing that the policy is actually carried out, is continuously tested against ‘reality’ and adapted to changing needs and challenges by implementing new measures” (European Commission 2012a: 27). Managers must work top-down (not only bottom-up) by starting with changing the management culture as well as developing key gender competences. If the organisational leaders are not convinced of the relevance of equality measures, human resources can be hindered in the implementation of sustainable actions and mobilization of staff may not be achieved (Palmen and Kalpazidou Schmidt 2019). In other words, leadership commitment sets the tone for the organisation and signals to employees that gender equality is a priority. The indispensable role of the top-management support in the implementation of gender equality measures has been identified in a wide variety of settings, including Central and Eastern Europe (Krzaklewska et al. 2023), and Latin America (Bonder and Martelotte 2023).

- **Multi-stakeholders' involvement**

It is acknowledged that gender equality policies should be a multi-actor responsibility as regards to formulating priorities, supporting institutions with implementation, assessment of performance and continuous monitoring. Firstly, it is critical to involve a range of organisational stakeholders in a participatory GEP process (Krzaklewska et al. 2023). These include not only authorities, but also different organisational units (e.g. university faculties), various groups of employees (e.g. administrative, academic and technical staff) and students (Bonder and Martelotte 2023; Sekuła and Pustułka 2016), including the minority groups. Their involvement can lead to increased awareness, better identification of gender-related challenges, and the development of solutions that are more likely to be accepted and implemented. Communities of practice also play a vital role in supporting the change agents in the equality interventions and drive systemic changes forward in each organisational level (Chaves and Benschop 2023, Sekuła et al 2023).

Additionally, engaging with external stakeholders demonstrates a commitment to broader societal goals and can enhance the credibility of an organisation's gender equality efforts. Partnership with NGOs or specialised agencies may also serve to mitigate insufficient resources for gender equality activities at the organisational level (Ranea-Triviño et al. 2022). Well established collaboration with other research organisations, social movements as well as science policymakers (in the form of alliances, networks, or communities of practice) can enhance the sustainability of organisational change (Bonder and Martelotte 2023; Krzaklewska et al. 2023; Sekuła and Pustułka 2016).

To find out which stakeholders need to be engaged in the GEP development and implementation process, see the respective section in the [GEAR Tool](#), where you will also find the main arguments to get them on board.

- **Framing synergies with other initiatives and linking gender equality issues to wider concepts**

The way in which GE is framed, communicated and promoted is of critical importance. Framing synergies with other initiatives and linking gender equality issues to wider concepts is crucial for fostering a comprehensive and integrated approach to addressing gender disparities. This strategy involves connecting gender equality efforts with broader organisational goals, social issues, and sustainability initiatives.

Moreover, strategic framing of gender equality – e.g. by relating it to the issues of work-life reconciliation or sustainable development goals – may help generate interest in it among key stakeholders (Krzaklewska et al. 2023). The framing of gender issues as being inextricably linked to excellence in R&I facilitates fostering buy-in from implementing institutions and could be used as a pro-active strategy to tackle resistance at different levels (Palmen and Kalpazidou Schmidt 2019). Linking gender equality to the broader issues of diversity and inclusion contributes to a more comprehensive and nuanced approach to organisational culture change. An inclusive approach may attract support from a wider range of stakeholders. For example, the UK Athena Swan program and charter for higher education and research institutions encourages institutions to consider intersectionality and inclusivity beyond gender (Beeckmans et al. 2023).

- **Sufficient resources, gender expertise, awareness and competence within organisations**

Gender equality interventions, including IGEPs, should be equipped with sufficient human, financial and institutional resources (Palmen and Kalpazidou Schmidt 2019; Sekuła and Pustułka 2016). These also include adequate organisational structures with decisive power of gender equality bodies, and personnel with gender expertise (Bonder and Martelotte 2023). Sufficient resources ensure that gender equality initiatives are effectively developed, implemented, and sustained. They enable organisations to allocate funds for necessary initiatives, such as gender-specific training, awareness campaigns or mentorship programs (EIGE 2016), e.g. training for recruitment committees to recognize and overcome biases and providing support for women to advance in their careers, mentoring for women applying for leadership positions, awareness-raising campaign for faculty, staff and students on gender inequalities and the benefits of diversity. Allocation of resources is also needed to: introduce family-friendly policies, such as flexible work arrangements, research on gender-related issues within the institution and provide support services for individuals who experience gender-based discrimination and harassment.

- **Institutional change rooted in the organisational aims and structure**

GEPs should be embedded in existing structures and management procedures, which will strengthen the sustainability of planned interventions, as opposed to standalone initiatives that may depend on personal changes and not be integrated into the institutional fabric. Integrating GEPs with organisational aims ensures that they align with the core values and mission of the institution. Simultaneously, it will guarantee the incorporation of gender-sensitive and gender-specific actions into standard management procedures (e.g. gender training or gender-sensitive recruitment and promotion; EIGE 2016; Sekuła and Pustułka 2016) as well as into the financial processes and procedures (European Commission 2021c).

- **Realistic and tailored targets**

Setting up realistic targets raises their likelihood to be achieved, which fosters a sense of progress and motivation among stakeholders, who are more likely to support and commit to the plan if they perceive the targets as achievable and grounded in the organisation's reality. Setting unattainable goals can lead to frustration and a lack of commitment to the overall GEP. By setting achievable goals, organisations can also better plan for the necessary financial, human, and time resources required to implement the GEP. Realistic targets are also easier to measure and track over time (Palmén and Kalpazidou Schmidt 2019), and allow to define responsibilities within the institution (EIGE [Success factors](#)). Establishing clear benchmarks allows organisations to monitor progress, identify areas for improvement, contributing to a sense of accountability. Tailoring targets to the complex organisational context ensures that they address the organisation's particular issues and are relevant to its circumstances (European Commission 2021c; Palmén and Kalpazidou Schmidt 2019). Tailoring targets to the specific context involves consulting a diverse range of stakeholders. This inclusive approach ensures that the GEP reflects the perspectives and needs of all relevant parties, contributing to its effectiveness (EIGE [Success factors](#)).

- **Comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of interventions**

Comprehensive monitoring of the effects of gender equality interventions is deemed to enhance the obligation of the organisational leadership and other stakeholders to actively promote gender equality (Palmén and Kalpazidou Schmidt 2019). Monitoring instruments increase the robustness and sustainability of gender equality interventions and promote accountability as well as stakeholder engagement through continuous monitoring of indicators and reporting of the progress achieved. It provides opportunities to ensure visibility through regular progress reports and helps to identify areas for further improvement (EIGE 2016a). Follow-up indicators increase the validity and sustainability of gender equality interventions and should be tailored to the GEP's objectives and activities (EIGE [Success factors](#)). Evaluation depends on the existence of monitoring mechanisms and makes it possible to draw on lessons learned from implemented initiatives, improves the effectiveness of future strategies and GEPs (EIGE 2016a), and provides visibility and measurability of actual progress (EIGE [Success factors](#)). The GENOVATE project provides a useful [tool for carrying out an evaluation of a GEP](#). For both designing evidence based, realistic and tailored targets, and monitoring and evaluation, there is the necessity to obtain sex and gender disaggregated data as well as data on intersectional dimensions such as age, nationality and disability (EIGE 2016; Palmén and Kalpazidou Schmidt 2019).

To read more about facilitating factors for implementing GEPs, please look into:

- EIGE [Success factors for gender equality plan development and implementation](#)
- CHANGE [Monitoring GEPs in RPOs](#)

To make a self-assessment of the factors affecting the inclusive gender equality change process in your organisations please consult the [Impact Driver \(ID\) model](#) developed under the framework of the Horizon 2020 CASPER project.

3.2. Barriers to implementing GEPs and how to overcome them

Barriers hindering the effective implementation of gender equality interventions operate both within implementing organisations and outside them. Some of these challenges are related to a lack of success factors, others may take forms of resistance, or are institutional and/or administrative barriers that need to be tackled in a range of ways. Suggestions on how to overcome these challenges are provided.

Within organisations there emerges such hindering operational factors such as insufficient resources, lack of data, and lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, but also structural aspects such as lack of stakeholders' engagement, resistance to change, and the impact of neoliberalism.

● Insufficient resources

Lack of resources, both financial and human, has been widely identified as an important barrier to achieving gender equality objectives (Sekuła and Pustułka 2016; Krzaklewska et al. 2023). This may encompass lack of funding for the activities foreseen in the GEP, including gender equality trainings, adding gender equality responsibilities to the workload of already overburdened staff, or offloading this task to inexperienced or junior staff (EIGE Resistance and common challenges). In this context efficient implementation of the measures is too frequently dependent on the volunteer work and activism of some staff, which is unsustainable both for the person and for the institution (Ranea-Triviño et al. 2022).

To overcome this challenge, the resources needed to develop and maintain a GEP must be clearly articulated, agreed upon, and documented in the early stages of the plan design. Some of the resources might be looked for outside the institution, as regional and/or national funding organisations might designate specific funding streams or grants to support gender equality initiatives in HEIs and research institutes (see e.g. the EC Horizon Europe programme call: [HORIZON-WIDERA-2024-ERA-01-11](#): Support to the implementation of inclusive GEPs). It is also important to ensure that the decisions developed in gender equality bodies are binding, as it has been found that they “tend to be equipped with advisory tasks rather than broader decision-making competences” (Lipinsky 2014: 18).

A lack of gender competence, experience and knowledge also hinders an optimal implementation of GEPs (Bonder and Martelotte 2023; Krzaklewska et al. 2023; Palmén and Kalpazidou Schmidt 2019). This also involves limited knowledge on and awareness of intersectionality (Beranek and Walker 2023; Myers and Baisner 2023), including lack of adequate terminology (Hofman et al. 2023). The problem of insufficient knowledge inside the organisations may require: drawing on the knowledge and experience of more experienced organisations (Hofman et al. 2023), support from gender equality networks (at national, regional or international level), and the commissioning of gender expertise to enhance institutional capacity and knowledge (EIGE [Resistance and common challenges](#)).

● Lack of data

Lack of access to institutional data, including both sex/gender-disaggregated data and audit of gender inequalities (Bonder and Martelotte 2023), as well as data on how multiple discriminations – such as based on race/ethnicity, religiosity, (dis)ability, and sexual orientation – intersect for staff and students (Beeckmans et al, 2023; INSPIRE Policy Brief 1;

Myers, Baisner 2023), remains an important challenge in the gender equality work. Even if data is collected within an organisation, there might be barriers to access to particular types of data, e.g. sharing evidence on gender-based violence may be seen as a threat to the reputation, or damage to the public image, of the organisation (Krzaklewska et al. 2023). Yet, lack of data makes it harder to acknowledge different experiences. Thus, it is important to design inclusive gender equality policies, translate them into effective measures and verify their effectiveness. Sometimes it is possible to formulate the general audit of the organisational status quo based on administrative data already collected, but it is not always easily accessible. To gain access to these records from the responsible administrative staff, it might be necessary to receive the top management support, e.g. in the form of signed document proving the validity and the purpose of the requests. If specific data is not readily available in the organisation, it is necessary to include a specific activity in the GEP to ensure that this data will be collected in a standardised form in the future. It is recommended to include into the analysis both quantitative data (e.g. obtained from the HR department or from an organisation-wide survey) and qualitative data (e.g. obtained through individual or group interviews), to firstly map the inequalities in the organisation and then monitor the effects of the implemented measures. In this context, “there is a need for more research that goes beyond gender and that includes the experiences and intersectional needs of minoritised staff and students in the policymaking processes of R&I organisations” (INSPIRE Policy Brief 1: 6).

To conduct a survey on working conditions and gender equality in your organisation, please consult the [GEAM tool](#) developed by the H2020 project ACT, which enables interested researchers and gender equality practitioners with little experience in the social sciences and survey methodology to construct high-quality questionnaires. The INSPIRE project develops new modules of this tool, including a survey for students.

- **Lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms**

Monitoring of GEPs' implementation and evaluation of the results of gender equality initiatives are not yet standardised. This is due to the broad variability in GEPs' scope and characteristics, stemming from the country's context with different legal requirements and gender equality initiatives. The lack of monitoring and evaluation processes in GEPs is a big challenge for their implementation, as it makes it difficult to assess the outcomes of implemented measures and make informed decisions for future actions (Löther et al. 2023). Without monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, there may be as well a lack of accountability for the implementation of gender equality initiatives and institutions may not be held responsible for the progress (or lack thereof) in addressing gender disparities, leading to complacency and a reduced sense of urgency. When monitoring and evaluation are absent, there is also a lack of transparency and communication of the results, which may lead to a breakdown in trust among stakeholders and hinder their future collaboration.

To effectively incorporate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms into the GEP implementation process it is necessary to start with establishing clear goals and objectives for gender equality initiatives and define their measurable indicators (e.g. the share of staff members who have passed gender competence training is used as one of several indicators of the gender competence of the institution). They provide a basis for monitoring and evaluating progress. It is also important to incorporate monitoring and evaluation into the design phase to guarantee that data collection and assessment mechanisms align with the GEP objectives. Investing in building institutional capacity for monitoring and evaluation may include training for staff, hiring

or designating personnel with expertise in evaluation. If it does not exist, it is inevitable to develop and implement reliable data (both quantitative and qualitative) collection systems to gather information on relevant indicators (for a standardised instrument to collect quantifiable, gender-segregated data on working conditions, beliefs and biases, organisational culture and climate and individual behaviours in research organisations look at the [GEAM](#) survey). The collected data needs to be regularly reviewed and analysed. It is also advisable to involve various stakeholders, including faculty, students, administrators, and external experts in the monitoring and evaluation process, as their perspectives can contribute with valuable insights and enhance the credibility of the evaluation. To effectively monitor and evaluate the implementation of GEPs necessary resources, both financial and human, need to be allocated. Finally, the results of the monitoring and evaluation of the GEP should be communicated with regular reports, updating leadership and informing the relevant stakeholders. Both collecting and publishing disaggregated data on the sex and/or gender of personnel (and students, where relevant), as well as carrying out annual reporting based on indicators are mandatory in order to be eligible for Horizon Europe (EIGE [Step 5: Monitoring progress and evaluating a Gender Equality Plan](#); Wroblewski & Eckstein 2018).

- **Lack of stakeholders' engagement**

Difficulties in insufficient engagement and mobilisation of stakeholders include: insufficient interest and lack of official involvement of the organisational senior management, lack of early stakeholder engagement, lack of participating men, lack of awareness and/or understanding of gender equality issues, as well as the belief that that the requirement for a GEP or work on gender equality contradicts the commitment to scientific excellence or promotion on merit, and that gender equality measures and GEPs are unnecessary (Hofman et al. 2023; EIGE : [Palmen et al. 2023](#); [Krzaklewska et al. 2023](#)). To avoid these challenges later in the implementation phase it is important to take time to identify who needs to be communicated with and engaged in the development and roll-out stages of a GEP and ensure that the representatives of all identified groups of stakeholders are involved in these processes. Their involvement may be direct or indirect (depending on the stakeholder profile) and may include workshops, group discussions, seminars, focus groups, interviews, written feedback circles or one-on-one meetings with the team/person responsible for development of the GEP. The use of participatory and co-creation approaches and creating gender equality committees, networks and/or working groups in which faculties, departments, students, trade unions and other stakeholders are represented will help to ensure sustainable stakeholder involvement (EIGE [Which stakeholders to involve and how?](#)). [In this context, especially researchers of younger generations may be important agents of change \(Hofman et al. 2023\). Better engagement of various stakeholders may](#) also require the reformulation of implemented policies to include clear actions and responsibilities (naming who bears responsibility for particular activities (Chaves and Benschop 2023)).

- **Resistance to change**

Resistance of different forms, at different levels and from different actors, has been identified as an important obstacle to successful implementation of gender equality interventions (Bonder and Martelotte, 2023; [Krzaklewska et al. 2023](#); [Palmén and Kalpazidou Bonder & Martelotte, 2023](#)). Resistance can be both explicitly and implicitly expressed, with the latter manifesting in individual's insufficient or lack of engagement in the GEP implementation. Resistance can be personal, motivated by individual beliefs, and institutional, when taking the

form of systematic and on-going pattern of non-engagement and lack of support and embedded in organisational structures and/or resource allocation. Resistance can be directed towards the very idea of gender equality (when e.g. seen as being a threat to the value of meritocracy) or to specific measures (such as e.g. gender quotas). It can be performed by both organisational leaders and rank-and-file employees, individual offices or faculties and/or other types of stakeholders (Verge et al. 2018; Tildesley et al. 2022).

While resistance is a normal and frequent consequence of organisational change initiatives, it may stall or abort them, if not properly addressed. It may be needed to incorporate a number of actions to overcome resistance, including leaders', employees' and students' training and awareness-raising on the value of gender equality, as well as involving multiple stakeholders in identifying and naming problems and resistance points, and finding solutions to them. Framing synergies with other initiatives within an organisation and linking gender equality issues to wider, uncontested concepts such as research excellence or responsible Research and Innovation ([RRI](#)) might prove to be effective strategies to tackle resistance (EIGE [Resistance and common challenges](#); Palmén and Kalpazidou Schmidt 2019).

See also other relevant sources on the topic: 1. "[Dealing with resistance](#)" chapter of the Gender Institutional Transformation Guide; 2. [FESTA Handbook On Resistance to Gender Equality in Academia](#); 3. ACT Project "Resistance to change" [video](#).

- **Neoliberalism**

It has been acknowledged that the neoliberal system, in which higher education and research institutions currently operate, also hinders inclusive gender equality change initiatives. Through the use of market principles of cost recovery and profit generation and favouring discourses of competitiveness and individual choice and responsibility, it portrays the unequal status quo as natural, reasonable, and fair. The competitive environment may also discourage collaboration and shared responsibility for gender equality initiatives. Neoliberal policies often advocate for reduced governmental intervention and support. This may lead to diminished funding for initiatives that promote gender equality in higher education, as the state may be less involved in addressing systemic gender disparities. Moreover, by reliance on temporary and precarious jobs, it reproduces and amplifies existing inequalities and power asymmetries, as these forms of employment affect women disproportionately. By valuing research over teaching and service, it further hinders change to inclusive gender equality (Chaves and Benschop 2023; INSPIRE Policy Brief 1 2023; Krzaklewska et al. 2023). To facilitate change and counteract the negative impact of neoliberalism, epistemic justice, care and solidarity need to become core values, and the appreciation of teaching, service and leadership activities should go alongside research work (Chaves and Benschop 2023). The concept of epistemic justice especially points to the need of disrupting traditional gender–power relations in academic and research institutions to bring about sustainable, gender-equal institutional change (Clavero and Galligan, 2021). At the organisational level it is also necessary to recognise and address the challenges faced by women in academia, particularly in balancing professional and personal responsibilities, take steps to address the precarious employment conditions by advocating for fair labour practices, job security, and equal opportunities for career advancement.

- **External barriers**

Important external factors hindering the effective implementation of GEPs include lack of inclusive gender equality laws and policy frameworks at the national level; vertical and horizontal segregation in the workplace, negative connotations associated with the term 'gender' (so called anti-gender ideology, conservative backlash) and narrow understanding of gender issues within a society, as well as traditional and conservative gender norms and unequal distribution of reproductive and care-work. (Beranek and Walker 2023; Bonder and Martelotte 2023; Hofman et al. 2023; Krzaklewska et al. 2023).

To read more about barriers for implementing GEPs, please look into:

- EIGE [Resistance and common challenges](#).

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