

**ERAC WORKSHOP ON “GENDER EQUALITY PLANS
AS A CATALYST FOR CHANGE”**

March 15, 2021

SUMMARY

This workshop was jointly organized by the EU Commission and the current Trio of presidencies (DE-PT-SI) as input for collecting views towards the focus of the incoming Slovenian presidency on “gender equality in the new ERA”.

More than 60 people representing EU MS, AC, ERA-Groups, ERA Stakeholders and the EU Commission attended the Workshop

The main objectives of the workshop were:

- to examine the potential of gender equality plans as a catalyst and policy instrument for more impactful progress on achieving gender equality goals and targets within the ERA,
- to look into the existing experience and identified needs from the Member States and Research Performing Organisations with gender equality plans and the HR award, and
- to exchange views on the next steps for GEPs implementation.

The workshop launched a policy debate on what national authorities in Member States can do together with the European Commission in the framework of ERA to support this policy objective.

Session 1 examined the State of play: Gender equality plan implementation at MS level.

The aim of this session was:

- to introduce gender equality plans as a policy instrument, their typical building blocks, prerequisites etc.,
- to deliver the results of the SWG GRI GEP survey and identify main needs from the perspective of MS and
- to share experience from Member States related to GEP requirements, their implementation, monitoring and use for institutional evaluation.

Session 2 examined the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality in research and Gender equality plans as an instrument for achieving better resilience.

The aim of this session was:

- to examine how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected gender equality in Europe, including among the research and innovation community, and disproportionately impacted the work and productivity of women researchers and funding opportunities of women innovators.

Session 3 examined the Supporting institutional development with Gender Equality Plans and HR Award.

The aim of this session was:

- to introduce Commission-supported and national projects and initiatives supporting institutional change through gender equality plans and
- to examine HR development through the HR Excellence in Research Award and potential synergies.

Session 4 focused on Co-designing the ERA Action on inclusive gender equality.

The aim of this session was:

- a discussion on co-creation and coordination of ERA actions in development and implementation of inclusive GEPs.

CONCLUSIONS

GEPs are among the most significant policy instruments to achieve long-term, sustainable advancement towards gender equality in Research and Innovation. The Commission's Communication "A new ERA for Research and Innovation" and the Council Conclusions on the New European Research Area paved the way to their preparation and implementation in the Member States and other countries, and for the further development of inclusive GEPs.

Advanced best practices on a national level were presented by Spain (GEPs requested by national law, a requirement also for the private actors) and Ireland (e.g. funding by RFOs linked to Athena SWAN accreditation), including at RFO level, and NO renewed their offer to support mutual learning.

Proactive practices were also presented by Czech Republic, including synergies with Structural Funds, but a clear "widening" GEP gap is confirmed by the survey on GEP uptake at the national level carried out by the ERAC SWG GRI.

Participants agreed that it was a highly opportune time to launch a policy dialogue and to take GEPs to the next phase building on the «nudge» for catalysing structural change created by the new GEP requirement introduced in Horizon Europe, and better addressing inclusiveness issues related to intersectionality.

It also became clear that this ambition can only be achieved through close cooperation between Member States, Commission and all other stakeholders in order to shape the main measures and instruments needed to contribute to the implementation of GEPs and to reach inclusive and sustainable institutional changes.

Summary of the main points the workshop addressed:

- The revision of the Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct by the ERA-related groups' Triangle Task Force is strengthening gender equality requirements and gender

mainstreaming including also diversity aspects, and synergies can be found with the GEP requirement under Horizon Europe

- Opening to intersectionality might entail data collection issues and will need more investigation
- The COVID-19 pandemic has been disproportionately affecting women researchers and long-term effect on career progression is to be expected and should be addressed in the ERA, in research assessment by academic and research organisations, and by RFOs particularly. Requirements on mobility should also be thought over, as remote work during this past year has also shown that scientific collaborations can be effective virtually.

Summary of the recommendations based on the SWG GRI survey report:

- There is a need for EU policy coordination to develop a common understanding of GEPs as a policy instrument.
- Promoting a common framework for inclusive GEPs is a way to build a common understanding of the framework for gender equality in R&I.
- Information regarding GEP uptake in public universities and research organisations is not readily available in EU countries.
- It is important that the Member States together with the Commission devise a GEP monitoring and evaluation methodology that would ensure substantive GEP implementation in the new ERA.
- A support is needed to build capacity for further developing, implementing and monitoring GEPs. A common capacity building approach could include European training for civil servants working in the R&I sector and for HEI and RFO leaders and managers.
- National authorities should provide support and resources for GEP development and implementation at a national level.
- As well, mutual learning activities are needed to address the significant disparity among countries in terms of the GEP implementation.

The incoming Slovenian Presidency announced an upcoming Declaration on gender equality in R&I to be presented in the GENDERACTION Conference of 8-9 July. The Portuguese Presidency also confirmed that the May 2021 Council Conclusions on research careers will address equal opportunities and gender issues, and will highlight GEPs as a promising tool to achieve more equality in research careers.

The Trio Presidencies expressed their strong commitment, and a high degree of agreement was reached, on the necessity to keep this priority high on the ERA Policy Agenda, and as a principle in the Pact for R&I.