

Synthesis report on selected structural change initiatives and indicators for monitoring of state-of-play and progress



Acknowledgments



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1. Introduction

This synthesis report was prepared as part of the GENDER-NET ERA-NET project (2013–2016). It builds on the lessons learned from three previous GENDER-NET reports:

- Deliverable 2.5 Analysis report on existing plans and initiatives at national level
- Deliverable 2.6 Analysis report on existing plans and initiatives in selected research institutions
- Deliverable 2.7 Analysis report on existing awards and corresponding stimulatory initiatives

Based on these three analysis reports,¹ this synthesis report presents a selection of promising structural change initiatives and indicators for monitoring the state-of-play and progress. These initiatives and indicators are expected to have a significant positive impact on gender equality in research institutions.

1.1. GENDER-NET ERA-NET (2013–2016)

GENDER-NET is a pilot transnational research policy initiative funded by the European Commission under the Science in Society work programme of the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). This European Research Area Network (ERA-NET) is designed to address the common challenges still facing European research institutions in achieving gender equality in research and innovation. These challenges concern the persistent barriers and constraints to the recruitment, advancement and mobility of women in the European academic system, the lack of women in decision-making positions, and the limited integration of the gender dimension in research programmes and content. GENDER-NET brings together a balanced partnership of 12 national programme owners from across Europe and North America (i.e. ministries, national research funding agencies and national organisations) with a shared commitment to gender equality and synergistic expertise in gender and academic issues. More information on GENDER-NET can be found on the project's website: www.gender-net.eu

The Research Council of Norway is a GENDER-NET partner, and co-leader of Work Package 2, dedicated to “Gender Equality in Research Institutions through Structural Change”. The Research Council is also the owner and manager of the Initiative on Gender Balance in Senior Positions and Research Management (BALANSE), one of the programmes considered in this research, and therefore has an interest in ensuring that this scheme is successful.

¹ These three deliverables reports are available here : <http://www.gender-net.eu/spip.php?article55&lang=en>

GENDER-NET Partners:

- CNRS (France) Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (project coordinator)
- MENESR (France) Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche
- MINECO (Spain) Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness/Secretariat of State for Research, Development and Innovation
- ECU (UK) Equality Challenge Unit
- WBF (Switzerland) Department for Economy, Education and Research of the Swiss Confederation /State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation
- CIHR (Canada) Canadian Institutes of Health Research
- HEA (Ireland) The Higher Education Authority/Irish Research Council
- F.R.S. - FNRS (Belgium) Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique
- RPF (Cyprus) Research Promotion Foundation
- MESS (Slovenia) Ministry of Education, Science and Sport
- NAS (USA) National Academy of Sciences
- RCN (Norway) Research Council of Norway
- MOST (Israel) Ministry of Science, Technology & Space (*late-entry partner, November 2015*)

GENDER-NET Observers:

- DFG (Germany) German Research Foundation
- DNCD (Germany) Dual Career Network Germany
- NSERC (Canada) Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada

Expert Advisory Board (core group):

- Anke Lipinsky (Germany), Senior Researcher, GESIS-Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, Center of Excellence Women and Science
- Alice Hogan (US), Consultant, former National Science Foundation
- Londa Schiebinger (US) Professor, Stanford University
- Carl Jacobsson (Sweden) Senior Adviser, Swedish Research Council

In acknowledgment of the common interests and overlap of their respective national programmes and policies, the partners have joined forces to:

- carry out joint assessments of existing national/regional initiatives
- define priority areas for transnational collaborations
- implement a selection of strategic joint activities

This was undertaken in an effort to reduce fragmentation across the European Research Area and help to reach a critical mass of ministries, research funders, universities and research institutions across Europe engaging in the development and implementation of gender equality plans or related initiatives, and requesting gendered content in research programmes and projects.

1.2. Report focus

This report presents an inventory of successful national practices based on the research described in three previous GENDER-NET reports:

- *Analysis report on existing plans and initiatives at national level (D2.5)*
- *Analysis report on existing plans and initiatives in selected research institutions (D2.6)*
- *Analysis report on existing awards and corresponding stimulatory initiatives (D2.7)*

Based on the recommendations from these three reports, and elements from discussions in the GENDER-NET workshops in connection with these tasks, this synthesis report proposes some selected initiatives and indicators for monitoring the state-of-play and progress of implementation. The report attempts to define some core elements of transnational strategic initiatives.

During the last decade, the policy approach has shifted in general from “fixing the women” to “fixing the institutions”. Furthermore, experience shows that research institutions are deeply rooted in structures that are not easily “fixed”. The emphasis has thus been on the need for *structural change*.

According to the 2011 European Commission report entitled “Structural change in research institutions: Enhancing excellence, gender equality and efficiency in research and innovation” (European Commission 2011), *structural change* is defined as a change in institutions in terms of the representation and retention of women at all levels of their research careers.

Furthermore, the preconditions for and essential elements of structural change are:

- the creation of an evidence base, e.g. through sex-disaggregated data on recruitment, retention, promotion, pay, and committee representation; gender impact assessments; and staff surveys

- the augmentation of top-level support
- the development of management practices that recognise and aim to mitigate or overcome gender barriers

Structural change thus means:

- making decision-making practices more transparent
- removing unconscious bias from institutional practices
- promoting excellence through diversity
- improving research by integrating a gender perspective²
- modernising human resources management and the working environment

² This issue is not included in the material that this report is based on, but is a main focus in other GENDER-NET reports (D3.9, D3.10, D3.11 and D3.12)

2. Main findings

An important finding from the research is that a gender-responsive national policy context (i.e. creation of legal and policy frameworks, initiatives, and awards for promoting gender equality in S&T) is a significant driving force for stimulating gender equality and enacting structural change in research institutions. Another external factor that activates structural change dynamics and builds critical mass is transnational and inter-institutional cooperation between selected institutions.

Gender equality plans are essential instruments for implementing structural change at the institutional level. Local challenges may vary among institutions, and hence the gender action plans must be tailored accordingly.

2.1 Assessment of existing plans and initiatives at national level

The analysis report on existing plans and initiatives at national level was based on national and regional best practice examples which aimed to have an impact on gender equality in research institutions. The purpose was not to describe all existing initiatives, but to identify pro-active and innovative initiatives that could serve as a basis for recommendations on transnational activities. Partners and observers of GENDER-NET share a common commitment to promoting gender equality in research, and most of them are regarded as key players at European and international levels. Hence, the scope was limited to GENDER-NET partners and observers, and they were asked to report on selected initiatives in their country.

The research focused on the following aspects:

- objectives and description of each initiative
- means of implementation
- the existence of success criteria and evaluations
- legal, cultural or other aspects that could impact transferability

The respondent countries were Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, the UK and the US.

2.2. Assessment of existing plans and initiatives in selected research institutions

The analysis report was based on selected institutional action plans and initiatives in order to analyse the impact of national and regional initiatives at an institutional level and explore whether they can inform the design of national/regional initiatives. GENDER-NET project partners from countries where national-level initiatives exist were invited to select leading institutions in their countries for the assessment. The research focussed on the following aspects of reported gender equality measures:

- Does the measure increase institutional capacity to ensure gender equality?
- Does the measure eliminate organisational and structural barriers?
- Is the measure implemented as part of a national/regional programme?
- What changes have taken place at an institutional level as a result of the respective national/regional programme/initiative/award?

The report summarises the most common and the most innovative practices. The respondent countries were France, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Spain, Switzerland and the UK.

2.3. Assessment of existing awards and corresponding stimulatory initiatives

The analysis report on existing awards and corresponding stimulatory initiatives looked at a range of award schemes which aim to affect the institutional/departmental environment in respect to gender equality. The scope of the analysis was the limited number of known schemes, and the research focussed on the following aspects:

- Are there characteristics and aims that broadly define these schemes?
- What is the process and impact of the schemes?
- Do they enact structural change, and if so, what characteristics of the schemes do so?
- Can these characteristics be transferable to a transnational context?

The schemes came from Australia, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Norway and the UK, and the European Commission.

2.4. Findings at the national/regional level and the institutional level

The assessment of national and regional-level initiatives and the assessment of institutional-level initiatives concentrated on five thematic areas, consistent with the five thematic areas that the GENDER-NET project aimed to cover as part of its WP2:

- Identifying **decision-making structures and procedures** at regional and national levels
- Anchoring gender equality issues at **leadership level**
- **Recruitment, retention and advancement** of women researchers
- Improving **work environment, work-life balance and dual careers**
- Facilitating incoming/outgoing **researcher mobility** for women researchers

2.4.1. Decision-making structures and procedures

The reports show that legal regulations on gender equality are well developed in many countries.

Gender equality plans (GEPs) are mandatory by law in some countries (Spain, Norway, Germany and France), a requirement for research funding in one country (Belgium) and regarded as a crucial instrument in all countries. At an institutional level, GEPs which involve the whole institution and have the commitment of the management are significant.

Institutions report on the importance of creating structures dedicated specifically to gender equality, preferably attached to the highest level of governance, as well as on the need to allocate sufficient resources to gender equality work. Gender equality units/officers and networks have played a crucial role in the implementation of GEPs at both the national and the institutional level.

The findings show that monitoring and evaluations help to ensure the long-term, sustainable and effective implementation of gender equality policies at the institutional level.

2.4.2. Anchoring gender equality issues at leadership level

It is commonly recognised among GENDER-NET partners that leadership commitment and involvement is a critical, decisive factor for progress. However, surprisingly few national-level measures specifically target leaders. Only two institutional initiatives were reported – *top-level leadership committees* and *training on gender equality for leaders*. The assessment suggests that initiatives that increase leaders' involvement are crucial to improving gender equality in the research sector and should be further developed. The two initiatives reported were initiated only recently, and although there are preliminary positive outcomes, the impact and sustainability are so far unknown.

One outcome of the assessment suggests that measures targeting buy-in and commitment from leaders at all levels are important. Committed leaders who demand dedication to gender equality measures and results from their teams help to ensure the successful implementation of the GEP, gender mainstreaming and structural change.

2.4.3. Recruitment, retention and advancement of women researchers

There has generally been a shift from measures targeted at individual women researchers' career development to measures that promote women in research by improving institutions' gender equality efforts. One core example is to provide public or institutional funding for instruments and results based on gender equality plans at the institutions instead of funding for the promotion of individual women. The material also provides examples of initiatives in which gender

equality requirements are linked to general funding mechanisms. This can be done in several ways:

- A special emphasis on gender balance embedded in general calls for proposals for research funding, in which applicants are requested to give a concrete description of how the project would contribute to the recruitment and promotion of women researchers and gender balance among principal investigators. These requirements can be an integral part of the assessment and evaluation procedures. Seed money has also been allocated to stimulate activity
- Special requirements (e.g. institutional gender equality plans, gender targets, preferential treatment of women applicants) are embedded in some national funding schemes
- Institutions can receive funding for tenure-track positions for women if their work to promote gender equality meets certain standards

In addition, some national programmes promote women researchers through a competition for funding, and these programmes are normally based on the institutions' gender equality plans and gender equality efforts. Gender equality activity is also one of the criteria for evaluation in award schemes. As one example, the Research-Oriented Standards on Gender Equality, which the member institutions voluntarily commit to implementing, make the equality efforts of research institutions count in their applications for research funding.

Furthermore, there are examples of national initiatives that enhance the careers of individual women researchers through professional development, and other initiatives that enhance researchers' skills and professional development in general.

Institutions have started to change their modus operandi in favour of transparent, gender-balanced recruitment and promotion regulations and procedures. The majority of the selected institutions reported that they set targets (quotas remain rare) to promote women researchers and to ensure better representation of women researchers in leadership and decision-making positions.

2.4.4. Improving work environment, work-life balance and dual careers

Universal welfare benefits vary widely among respondent countries, and this is reflected in the reported measures. Some of the countries with less generous welfare schemes have introduced what could be described as compensatory measures, e.g. different kinds of childcare support, and there are examples of career-funding schemes for women researchers with family commitments. At the national level, some measures also specifically promote research careers,

e.g. extension of grants or relief from teaching duties after parental leave, which in turn may benefit women researchers.

At the institutional level, reported measures target both women and men on an equal basis, and the initiatives vary – from the lesser-addressed issue of equal remuneration to the commonly discussed provisions for childcare.

There are other examples of small, but important means of improving the work environment and work-life balance, e.g. family-friendly meeting hours and flexible work/study schemes, as well as targeted support for early-career researchers (where there is usually greater instability).

A number of institutions, especially in Germany and Switzerland, reported that they have policies, programmes and networks to support dual career couples, and several institutions also report anti-harassment measures.

2.4.5. Facilitating incoming/ outgoing researcher mobility for women researchers

Researcher mobility is considered to be a powerful tool for realising the objectives of the ERA through knowledge dissemination, network building, career promotion and general enhancement of research quality. Specific EU funding is provided to support researcher mobility, such as the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions. Additionally, there are policy initiatives at the EU level to reduce obstacles to mobility, e.g. the Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct, EURAXESS, etc. Mobility has thus become an increasingly important factor for the individual researchers' career opportunities.

However, only a few national initiatives promoting researcher mobility seem to take gendered challenges into consideration, meaning there is a need for a more flexible approach that tackles the potential obstacles to women researchers' career development. No women-only mobility schemes were reported. The assessment also demonstrates that there is little systematic monitoring of the gender impact of mobility schemes at national level.

2.5. Award schemes – main findings

Eight different award schemes were assessed. Six are specific to higher education/research, while two are more general. Three are specific to certain disciplines, and one is a Europe-wide scheme that is not gender specific but includes consideration of gender equality amongst other criteria. Some of the award schemes considered have a limited number of potential recipients, while others do not. Three schemes have progressive levels of award.

Some of the award schemes considered provide rewards for actions that have already been implemented, and some provide a framework in which research institutions commit to adopting actions. One of the schemes also provides

funding to implement actions. Award schemes may exist in the absence of strong legislative directives requiring research institutions to work toward gender equality among researchers, or they may reward practice that goes beyond what is required by law, or they may act as an incentive or strategy for better compliance with the law.

In one award scheme, holding an award is a requirement for certain types of research funding.

Findings indicate that award schemes, together with gender equality measures, can be an effective means of driving and creating structural change in the context of research institutions. Elements inherent to awards such as prestige, recognition, competition and reputation are valued by higher education institutions in diverse national contexts.

In terms of structural change, the impact of some award schemes has been demonstrated on certain indicators of women's representation and retention, for example, women's perception of improvement in their career development.

3. Recommendations

3.1. Strategic initiatives on transnational level

The main objective of this report is to promote the design and development of transnational strategic initiatives to achieve gender equality. It is obvious that measures must be contextualised in order to be regarded as relevant. But, as findings in this report show, there is room for and much to gain from transnational cooperation regarding implementation and further development of measures.

The findings summarised above show that a great deal of activity is taking place at both the national and the institutional level. Based on the findings, one of the general recommendations is to further improve the interaction between institutional and national initiatives, e.g. develop tailored institutional gender equality plans that harmonise with national initiatives and regulations. GEPs are required to ensure the quality of measures and actions, the establishment of responsible structures, allocation of resources, monitoring and evaluation of mechanisms. A national award scheme and/or transnational award scheme could serve as an incentive to implement GEPs.

In the following section, we have chosen to highlight three areas: research funding, researcher mobility and leadership. These areas illustrate two core elements vital for improvement; first, essential elements for further progress are not yet followed up by appropriate measures; and second, there are national examples with solid proof of a high impact factor, but the successful approach is not yet transnationally adopted.

Research funding

Funding mechanisms are structural means. The material shows successful examples of how gender equality considerations can be embedded in funding mechanisms with significant impact on gender balance, which implies a broader range of researchers and less waste of talent, thereby improving the quality of research. However, these initiatives are not yet transnationally acknowledged or adopted. There is a great need for knowledge transfer and high potential for pan-European progress based on learning from best practice of integrating gender equality considerations in the design of research funding schemes and procedures. Some key elements are:

- In calls for proposals, research-funding organisations should require applicants to provide a concrete description of how the project would contribute to the recruitment and promotion of women researchers and gender balance among principal investigators
- These requirements should be an integral, mandatory part of the assessment and evaluation procedures
- Seed money can be allocated to stimulate new initiatives

- Funding schemes and other mechanisms that enhance mobility should address gender and family-related issues

Researcher mobility

Researcher mobility is considered to be an effective tool for realising the objectives of the ERA. Mobility has thus become an increasingly important factor for the individual researchers' career opportunities. However, surprisingly few national initiatives that promote researcher mobility take gendered challenges into consideration, meaning there is a need for a more flexible approach that tackles the potential obstacles to women researchers' career development. There is a general need for awareness raising and better coherence between policy and funding initiatives at EU level, such as Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, the European Charter and Code for Researchers, etc. and national and institutional initiatives promoting researcher mobility. Systematically monitoring the effects on gender distribution would be a key factor. Work-life balance measures that target challenges specific to the research sector should be further developed.

Leadership

It is generally recognised that leadership commitment is a precondition for sustainable progress. Examples show that leadership commitment has a decisive impact on increasing the pace of recruiting women and improving gender balance, and thus supporting structural change. Yet the material shows that measures specifically targeting leadership involvement are few and new. While a couple of promising initiatives have recently been taken, there is a clear need to further develop methods to strengthen leadership involvement at institutional, national and transnational levels. Innovative solutions and greater efforts are needed. Policy initiatives should emphasise and prioritise this aspect.

3.2. Recommendations for a transnational award

It has been demonstrated that support from governments, and particularly, conditionality in relation to research funding are positively linked to participation in award schemes. This will be an important consideration going forward in the development of a transnational gender equality award scheme.

When gender equality is not the primary focus of an award scheme, little action or impact is seen, and it is therefore recommended that any transnational award scheme has a gender focus.

Impact has been demonstrated within schemes that are adequately resourced.

Based on the available material, an award scheme for research-performing organisations (RPOs) focussed on gender equality in research, together with

other measures, can be an effective way to create structural change. The report on award schemes recommends exploring the possibility of a transnational award scheme.

3.3. Recommendations for transnational indicators

The lesson learned so far is that the work on indicators is a complex issue. Statistics and indicators should monitor structural changes and their effects, albeit without increasing bureaucracy or burdensome reporting. Such monitoring should be used to inform policy development and to create a common knowledge base for statistics at national and institutional levels.

Hence, a general recommendation at this stage would be to initiate monitoring aligned with existing statistics and indicators such as national statistics, Eurostat, She Figures, EIGE, recommendations from the Science Europe Working Group on Gender and Diversity, etc.

For qualitative indicators, the EC expert group on policy indicators for RRI has recently suggested a set of indicators for gender equality which attempt to address institutional processes, cultural change, unconscious gender bias, workplace arrangements to support women researchers and the integration of the gender dimension in research content.³ These suggestions are similar to those already discussed within the framework of GENDER-NET.

For future development it is necessary to bear in mind that duplicate systems and reporting should be avoided; thus an approach towards aligning statistics and proposed indicators from GENDER-NET, the RRI expert group and other stakeholders in an integrated system monitoring essential aspects of gender will be favourable.

Based on the findings discussed in this synthesis report, recommendations on the development of indicators have been put forward in four specific areas, which are equally relevant for institutional and national levels. These areas have been selected based on the following criteria: the measures they represent are essential for the development of gender equality, they bring attention to the actual situation and can thus possibly initiate debate, and they are relatively easy to operationalise for data collection.

1. Gender equality plans

Do these exist? Approved at what level in the organisation? What is the system of implementation and monitoring?

³ https://ec.europa.eu/research/swafs/pdf/pub_rri/rri_indicators_final_version.pdf#view=fit&pagemode=none

2. Leadership involvement

Involvement at leadership level is essential for successful implementation of the GEP, gender mainstreaming and structural change. The involvement of leaders can be monitored by asking questions about structures that support leadership involvement, e.g. one possible way is to monitor the regularity of target-setting and follow-up processes at leadership level.

3. Funding instruments

Targeted funding is among the most powerful instruments for promoting gender equality, and it is possible to monitor the existence, or lack, of various instruments such as promoting gender balance in general calls for funding, special requirements in funding schemes, funding instruments to promote mobility, work-life balance and dual careers, etc..

4. Mobility

Researcher mobility is considered to be a powerful tool for realising the objectives of the ERA through knowledge dissemination, network building, career promotion and general enhancement of research quality. Although researcher mobility is often monitored at the institutional, national or ERA level, few of these efforts explicitly address gender dimensions. As a first step, existing statistics and indicator producers should be asked to improve their products, and if this is not successful, specific data collection should be developed.

With reference to the three WP2 reports, the recommendations suggest an approach through the ERA processes and by continuing GENDER-NET as an instrument.

With regard to GENDER-NET, the recommendation is to further develop indicators in consultation with higher education and research institutions, learning from their experiences and supporting inter-institutional cooperation and capacity building.

Recommendation for implementing the ERA roadmap⁴ at national and European levels:

- Establish a platform to stimulate transnational learning on how to interlink measures that implement structural change
- Develop joint ERA indicators on structural/cultural change which impacts gender equality at institutional level to allow comparability between nations and between institutions

4 ERA roadmap, priority 4: http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/index_en.htm

The GENDER-NET ERA-NET

GENDER-NET is a pilot transnational research policy initiative funded by the European Commission under the Science-in-Society work programme of the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (2013-2016).

It is the first ERA-NET (European Research Area Network) to be dedicated to the common challenges still facing European research institutions in achieving gender equality in research and innovation i.e. the persistent barriers and constraints to the recruitment, advancement and mobility of women in the European scientific system, the lack of women in decision-making, as well as the limited integration of the gender dimension in research programmes and contents.

Coordinated by French CNRS, GENDER-NET brings together a balanced partnership of national research programme owners (e.g. ministries, national research funding agencies and other national organisations) as well as a number of Observer organisations, from across Europe and North America, all with a shared commitment to gender equality and synergistic expertise in gender and science issues.

Based on the mutual opening of their respective programmes and policies, partners have joined forces to carry out joint assessments of existing national/regional initiatives, to define priority areas for transnational collaborations and implement a selection of strategic joint activities, in an effort to reduce fragmentation across the ERA and help reach a critical mass of ministries, research funders, universities and research institutions across Europe engaging in the implementation of gender equality plans or related initiatives and fostering the integration of sex and gender analysis in research contents.

For more information, please visit our website : www.gender-net.eu

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