

# GENDER IN HORIZON EUROPE

## AN UNFINISHED BUSINESS

The European Commission has launched a proposal for the next EU Research & Innovation Programme (2021-2027), called “Horizon Europe”. This Briefing Paper is a call to action towards a proper integration of gender mainstreaming in Horizon Europe based on the evidence provided by official reports and recommendations regarding Gender in Research & Innovation from gender experts and stakeholders across Europe. The aim is to strengthen gender equality in the ERA community and structures as well as to innovate gender equality policy implementation in the scientific field.

### **Gender in Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe: Challenges in the transition**

Horizon 2020 has become the Framework Programme for R&I that made gender mainstreaming visible and real in the European scientific policy. Horizon Europe faces the challenge to continue with this effort on a three-fold foundation:

- Gender balance in the research teams, careers and decision-making
- Structural changes in Research Performing and Funding Organisations towards gender equality
- Integration of the sex/gender analysis in the research content

Horizon 2020 has been a reference model for national policies on women, gender

and science. It included gender issues as a cross-cutting issue and included research topics which explicitly addressed gender dimension in the research content. The two-fold strategy developed until now to mainstream gender equality consisted of: 1) rules of procedure to integrate sex/gender analysis in research proposals and to promote gender balance, and 2) specific topics to fund the implementation of gender equality policies in research institutions and research on gender issues in R&I to bring evidence-base for gender equality policies. The impacts include more and better Gender Equality Plans in research institutions across Europe, a modest reduction of the leaky pipeline (see ERA Progress Report, 2017) and increasing gendered innovations in the European scientific production. Moreover, there is

**Horizon 2020  
Interim Evaluation  
of Gender Equality, 2017**

**25%** women among  
project leaders

**50%** women in advisory groups

**14%** funded projects  
with a comprehensive  
integration of the  
gender dimension

greater awareness in the scientific community and among policy makers on the importance of gender diversity in research teams, evaluation panels and boards. This advancement towards gender equality has contributed to changing the way we think about research and innovation but there is still much room for improvement.

### **Lessons learned from gender expertise**

Horizon Europe has the unique opportunity to take a leading position on gender mainstreaming and integrate in this new Framework Programme some of the most salient recommendations pointed out by the Helsinki Group and by the EC Report on the Interim Evaluation of Gender Equality as a Crosscutting Issue in Horizon 2020, particularly the need to:

- Attain gender balance in research teams and high-level positions (only 25% women project leaders)
- Develop a detailed system of gender indicators to monitor the R&I workforce
- Improve gender balance in decision-making (now 50% in advisory groups, but 37% in evaluation panels)

- Better integration of the gender dimension in research content (only 14% of funded projects show a comprehensive integration of gender)
- Develop more detailed key performance indicators on the integration of the sex/gender analysis into research
- Increase gender training within funded projects
- Reinforce institutional change (Gender Equality Plans) and other projects (RIAs, CSAs, ERA-Nets) for gender equality

### **Recommendations to strengthen Gender in R&I**

The goals of Horizon Europe will only be accomplished if gender equality is properly integrated because:

- **To strengthen the EU's scientific and technological bases** requires **sex/gender analysis methods to eliminate gender bias**.
- **To boost Europe's innovation capacity, competitiveness and jobs** implies a **high-quality Human Resources policy**, that is, not wasting the talent of half of the population.
- **To deliver on citizens' priorities and sustain our socio-economic model and values** requires **gender balance in decision-making, work-life balance and the elimination of barriers facing women in the research field**.

Moreover, since Horizon Europe aims to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals, special attention should be given to **SDG 5 "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls"** in the production of knowledge and innovation in Europe.

Thus, general recommendations for a better inclusion and visibility of gender equality goals and the gender dimension in R&I content include:

- To add **gender equality as a specific area of intervention – and funding** – in the cluster *Inclusive and Secure Societies* (Pillar II “Global Challenges and Industrial Competitiveness”)
- To effectively integrate **gender as a cross-cutting issue** in the Framework Programme
- To reinforce **gender balance and gender in research content in the Rules of Procedure** for Horizon Europe
- To review the formulation and application of the **evaluation criteria** from a gender perspective
- To ensure that **gender expertise** is included in expert groups, research teams, evaluation panels and advisory groups, and more urgently, in the negotiations of Horizon Europe
- To guarantee the **participation of women and gender equality stakeholders** in the consultations with the civil society to define the Horizon Europe “Missions”
- To maintain a specific **funding line for Gender equality** issues in “Strengthening the European Research Area” Pillar

## **Pillar II Global Challenges and Industrial Competitiveness**

### **Cluster Inclusive and Secure Societies**

Democracy

Social and economic transformations

#### **Gender equality**

Protection and security

Cultural heritage

Disaster-resilient societies

Cybersecurity

## **Conclusions**

The design of Horizon Europe has given great importance to the links between inclusive societies, R&I and global challenges. The gender dimension is crucial to design inclusive societies as well as to produce responsible R&I, and constitutes a global challenge in itself as stated in the UN Sustainable Development Goals. **Horizon Europe should not lose this momentum to advance gender equality in order to make R&I investments shape a more inclusive future based on better science and innovation.**

## **References**

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