

## Gender in Horizon 2020: The Case of Gender Equality Plans

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### Introduction

Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) are initiatives applied in the public as well as private sector aimed to define both the legal framework and the operational conditions to implement gender mainstreaming. To create a GEP the organisations identify a set of strategic actions that will allow them to reach the expected results in terms of gender equality<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> *Gender Equality Plans in the private and public sectors in the European Union*. The research paper was requested in 2017 by the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality and commissioned, overseen and published by the Policy Department for Citizen's Rights and Constitutional Affairs,

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/583139/IPOL\\_STU\(2017\)583139\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/583139/IPOL_STU(2017)583139_EN.pdf)

In the specific context of research organisations and higher education institutions, the European Commission considers Gender Equality Plans of research organisations and higher education institutions as a set of actions aiming at:

1. Conducting impact assessment / audits of procedures and practices to identify gender bias;
2. Identifying and implementing innovative strategies to correct any bias;
3. Setting targets and monitoring progress via indicators.<sup>5</sup>

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) describes four main phases in which a GEP can be organised: analysis, planning, implementation and monitoring. EIGE emphasises two relevant aspects: « Initiatives such as adhering to a Charter or adopting general gender equality objectives do not constitute per se a gender equality strategy/plan, as these commitments have to materialise into a concrete set of steps and actions to be undertaken. For the same reason, a broader diversity or anti-discrimination strategy and/or plan addressing gender among other issues, should not automatically equal to having a gender equality plan. Indeed, if such a strategy does not rely upon sufficient data on gender, and only addresses gender through a limited number of measures and indicators, it is unlikely that gender equality will actually be achieved»<sup>6</sup>.

Horizon2020 (H2020) is the eighth Research and Development Framework Programme, one of the main financing programmes of the European Union (EU), with a nearly €80 billion budget. The gender dimension is explicitly integrated into several topics across all the sections of the Work Programme.

Some critical views about how gender addressed in H2020 were put forward in previous round tables, published in this journal, in which experts on gender studies in twelve European countries debated the current situation of gender studies in Higher Education (HE), pointing to the main challenges in the field and suggesting what should be focused on

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<sup>5</sup> European Commission Communication on *A Reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth* (COM (2012) 392 final), [http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/era-communication\\_en\\_2012.pdf](http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/era-communication_en_2012.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gear/what-gender-equality-plan-gep>

in the future. Some of the scholars referred to the H2020 programme emphasising its potential in promoting gender equality and foreseeing critical aspects.

The previous Programmes, in particular the sixth and seventh, established the basis for the current H2020 initiative in gender issues, both in its positive and less positive aspects.

H2020 pays special attention to the promotion of gender equality in Higher Education, for example through specific calls for promoting Gender Equality in Research and Innovation (GERI). More specifically, the topic GERI.4 - Support to research organisations to implement Gender Equality Plans establishes three challenges: to remove barriers to the recruitment, retention and career progression of female researchers; to address gender imbalances in decision-making processes, and to strengthen the gender dimension in research programmes. As Gender Equality Plans have been developed also in the previous EU R&D programme, there are now relevant experiences of Academic partners that have developed Gender Equality Plans within an EU funded proposal.

We are now, at the end of 2017, at the midterm of H2020, and thus at an opportune point to start collecting comments and experiences on aspects related to the creation and implementation of GEPs.

## **A Model for Change: Experience in Practice**

It is important to reflect upon how ideas and experience, which developed in distant and diverse institutions/countries/cultures might be applicable in a wider EU higher education setting. All of the 3 contributions have resonance and relevance to driving gender equality.

Each contributor was asked how to make a persuasive case for gender equality; the strategies they recommend for overcoming resistance to GEP implementation; how successes can be embedded and institutionalised; and the role and importance of Unconscious Bias Awareness (and other forms of) training.

Through our partnership in the INTEGER FP7 project, we recognised the necessity to create a sense of urgency and to reinforce the high-level policy shift that each partner

institution would have to activate, through key actors as change agents. Strategic level ‘buy in’ was critical to ensuring changes at all levels, reinforced by inviting distinguished guest speakers from the US and EU to present the case for institutional transformation for gender equality and embedding gender into the University’s culture. To further reinforce strategic commitment in Trinity College Dublin (TCD) the Athena SWAN initiative was incorporated into the university’s Strategic Plan 2014-19 and a video *Driving Excellence through Gender Equality*<sup>7</sup> that featured the Provost and Vice Provost pledging their support for gender equality and diversity in Trinity College Dublin was produced and distributed.

The INTEGER project created Teams to effect institutional changes. The TCD team composition was modelled on Athena SWAN Self Assessment Teams, following consultations with Athena SWAN award holders. Team members were appointed to act as prime movers.

Underlying the actions towards gender equality was the vision enshrined in the acronym/logo: INstitutional Transformation for Effecting Gender Equality in Research (INTEGER).

Gender disaggregated data were deemed essential to defining the problem and identifying opportunities, thorough data collection (Focus Groups and Survey) and review of policies, procedures and practices, to identify barriers to gender equality and to draw up the actions necessary to address these. To make the necessary gender equality actions more accessible and comprehensible INTEGER partners produced the visual metaphor of the INTEGER Wheel as the roadmap action plan framework to be followed.

Initially, change was driven by internal forces concerned with recruiting, retaining and progressing women students and staff in STEM. To change attitudes and behaviours that often impede progress towards gender equality, namely perceptual, emotional, cultural and cognitive blocks, external experts/speakers were invited to lead Unconscious Bias Awareness sessions in INTEGER partner institutions. TCD adopted a cascade process, working from the top-down.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.tcd.ie/tcgel/resources/multimedia.php>

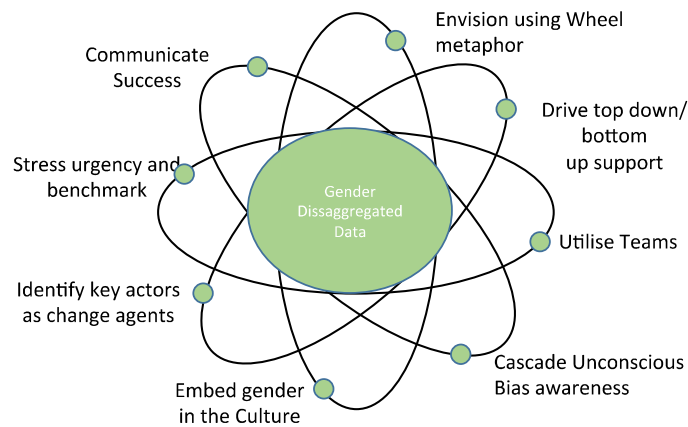
In order to anchor/institutionalise the gains from INTEGER and build upon them required an external stimulus which was provided by the establishment of an Athena SWAN national committee which led to the extension of the Athena SWAN awards to Irish HEIs. A further and significant external force emerged in the form of the Report of the Expert Group of the HEA (funding body for all Irish HEIs) National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions<sup>8</sup> (June 2016). This high level report acknowledged the importance of the Athena SWAN process and, in a number of key recommendations, will require awards for access to HEA and national research funding.

INTEGER introduced important and timely engagement opportunities in the form of: cascading, networking, conferences and exchanges of experience, site visits, presentations of survey findings/recommendations for action and, most importantly, their adoption by governing bodies (Council and Board).

All these critical change management elements were incorporated into the SAGE Model for Institutional Change in HEIs, and thus the experience and learning from INTEGER will continue to feed in to our next generation H2020 project SAGE: Systemic Action for Gender Equality:

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<sup>8</sup> [http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/hea\\_review\\_of\\_gender\\_equality\\_in\\_irish\\_higher\\_education](http://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/hea_review_of_gender_equality_in_irish_higher_education)



### **SAGE Model for Institutional Change in HEIs**

In the following pages, experiences from three Countries, Austria, Italy and Turkey, are described through a debate guided by relevant aspects and challenges emerged through the previous experiences done at the Trinity College Dublin.

## **1. How can one make a persuasive case for gender as a major priority in the face of competing priorities/diminishing resources (time/money)?**

**Brigitte Ratzer** (Austria) - Spoken from the Austrian background it is important to mention the national legislation that strongly supports efforts to include gender as a major priority in Higher Education Institutions. “Austria’s equality policy in science and research consists of a policy mix of strategies, instruments and measures based on a three-dimensional approach to equality, corresponding to the ERA objectives<sup>9</sup>”.

<sup>9</sup> ERA Roadmap 2016, <https://www.era.gv.at/object/document/2581>

The Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy monitors the progress in increasing the share of women in all areas and at all hierarchy levels where they are still under-represented. In a similar way, performance agreements with universities include a chapter about “societal engagement” with gender being a major topic. In sum the boundary conditions are quite favourable for making change happen and for encouraging male and female actors to take action.

Given this background there is a central answer to the question above that comes to my mind immediately: legal compulsion. But this is of course not a prerequisite that is always easy to establish. Another option that turns out to be favourable in the Austrian context is financial inducement. This means that building up gender is made a “business case” and thus financially attractive for key movers in their organisations. Research Funding Organisations (RFOs) that expressly require gender balance in teams and gender dimensions in research obviously provide a strong incentive. We observed a growing interest in gender issues at TU Wien when research proposals for Horizon2020 programs were written within gender flagged topics. Also our two major national funding organisations - the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG) and the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) - started to place more emphasis on gender balance in research teams as well as gender aspects in the research content.

National legislation that includes gender indicators in university budgets can also create a momentum towards making gender a priority. In Austria the university budgets contain a small share that is distributed on the basis of indicators and one out of five indicators included gender targets. Since this has been only a negligible share of the university budgets, the effect has been rather small so far. But at times even small incentives can make a huge difference as we have experienced at TU Wien. In 2014 the rectorate of TU Wien announced to additionally establish two female professorships and two tenure track positions for women. All eight faculties could compete for these positions with proposals on future programs for the advancement of women as the basis of their decision making. This competition turned out to be the most successful gender equality measure TU Wien has accomplished to date. A majority of faculties immediately started affirmative action

measures, built up knowledge within the faculty - and all these measures were initiated by male deans. The current task is to support these activities and make them a long-term commitment rather than a fleeting star.

**Barbara Poggio (Italy)** - In recent years both the crisis and the affirmation of the neoliberal agenda also within universities have reduced the attention and resources needed to confront the issues of gender equality (Equinet 2012). These changes lead to questioning about which the most appropriate arguments are to press the academic world to engage in.

A vast body of literature highlights how promoting gender equality in scientific and research organizations can have positive consequences from a number of different perspectives (European Commission 2012, Eige 2017). One argument put forth in the debate refers to respecting the regulatory constraints in European and individual states' legislation concerning discrimination and gender equality. It should be noted, however, that Italy still lags behind in this regard, especially in terms of the amount of support for equal opportunities in academic fields and research. Unlike in other European countries Italian legislation lacks incentives, quotas and indicators that can help promote gender equality in the field of science (Bozzon et al. 2015). A more general obligation exists for public organizations to equip themselves with bodies that promote equality internally and with positive action plans (PAP), but there are no effective sanctions or consequences when the objectives are not met. Only recently, the CRUI (Conference of Italian University Rectors) asked universities to include gender budgeting in their organizational practices as a means to overcome the existing imbalances.

Another often quoted reason for investing in action fostering gender equality underlines how adopting a gender sensitive perspective (for instance, through fighting harassment and the promotion of work-life balance initiatives), can create better work environments and boost well-being and motivation in scientific organizations, increasing the quality of work and consequently the quality of science (Rice 2011). Other arguments echo some of the key words often used within the neoliberal model: convenience, excellence, and productivity. For example, it is emphasized how in the context of a knowledge-based economy, the



adoption of policies to combat gender bias and inequality may attract and retain female talents, thereby avoiding the loss of those students who are also seen as important resources. Furthermore, it is pointed out that the attention to gender balance in research adheres to the principles outlined in many public funding programs (like RRI guidelines under the Horizon2020 program) and thus allows for the research organizations to more successfully access funds. Or even, that the adoption of gender-sensitive practices can increase the level of the university's excellence, encouraging further competitiveness and innovation (European Commission 2012).

Although the emphasis on these topics can be an effective strategy to overcome resistance and hostility from scientific institutions, it also entails some risk, including the further strengthening of rhetoric that can be harmful in the long run, and not only to those who do not adhere to an exclusive and totalistic vision of scientific work, but to the overall quality of research.

In regards to the experience garnered at the University of Trento, it was especially important to give wide public visibility to the data that highlighted the principle existing imbalances of gender and the distribution of key resources. Furthermore, we tried to build alliances with external public institutions that because of their roles could put pressure for change.

**Gülsün Sağlamer** (Turkey) - Defining gender as a major priority in the organization definitely needs the support of the management / leadership team. One of the possible ways of convincing the leaders of the organization might to introduce gender equality as key action/strategy *to lead the decision makers to reveal and use talents women/men for the success of the entire institution*. Informing all stakeholders (decision makers etc.) about the gender disaggregated for creating awareness; convincing leadership to give priority to achieving gender balance and to take the actions for making the necessary structural changes (i.e. implementing GEP) could be listed as some of the essential steps for developing gender equality as a major priority in the institution. Nevertheless, emphasizing the need of women's empowerment or career advancement may not directly attract the

leaders. Within this regard, the need of a more equal, diverse and inclusive workplace could be the main emphasis. Even using the word of “gender” could result with resistances coming from the key movers. According to Fred C. Lunenburg, resistances to change are caused by uncertainty, concern over personal loss, group resistance, dependence, trust in administration and awareness of the weakness in the proposed change (2010). Such causes which resistances are emerging from could be reduced to a minimum level by highlighting the common good for all members of an organisation.

Liff and Cameron (1997) also suggest that the words “opportunity” and “diversity” have positive meanings connoting dynamism and entrepreneurship (40). Focussing on the idea of opportunities and running a gender sensitive agenda under the project would initiate a certain rhetoric, which would persuade individuals that it is the benefit for all. Dent and Goldberg (1999) also stress the importance of producing convincing arguments for all members in an organization. It is observed that male academics may feel uncomfortable to come across a policy, which is addressed towards women only. Consequently, a workplace with equal opportunities should be introduced as a major priority rather than specifically promoting gender equality. This approach could be a practical way of making a persuasive case where gender is included as a major priority together with other equality and diversity policies.

Accordingly, focusing on “cultural change” and developing strategies for handling with the “unconscious bias” at all decision making levels (recruitment/promotion/research funding/awards etc.) could be added as one another essential step for a gender- inclusive work place. Under the dynamic internal and external forces, HE & R institutions should definitely nurture the culture of change in order to establish a flexible and adaptable institutional structure to cope with emerging needs and problems.

Implementing GEPs in an institution is a change process and every change process face resistances in different forms with different causes ([www.resge.eu](http://www.resge.eu)). One of them is lack of resources that are; lack of human resources, time burden and lack of financial resources that are greatly in the realm of the leadership team. “Lack of resources” is the most common excuse widely used by top management. Providing additional funding through research and

implementation projects (such as EC or Nation States' funded projects on developing and implementing GEPs for the improvement of gender balance in HE&R institutions) will be great help to convince the leadership to design and craft strategies for structural changes in their institutions (GEPs). These projects also provide opportunities to train Human Resources on gender equality and institutionalize gender equality across the institution that will sustain the changes. EU has been introducing policies and strategies since the Rome treaty in 1957 and accordingly Nation states have been trying to adjust their rules and legislation for making improvement towards gender equality. In this framework institutions have suitable environment to take the necessary steps toward achieving gender balance. Therefore, EU and Nation States have to continue their support in terms of changing legislation and removing legal barriers, providing additional funding and monitoring the actions and measuring the impact.

To sum up, it should be once again emphasized that leaders of higher education institutions play crucial role in all change processes along with their leadership teams. We need leaders (men and women) who are ready to take the initiative for gender equality to create capacity for change in their institutions. In this change process it is very important to understand the relationship between the forces of change and the resistance that leaders observe in their institutions, to learn from good practices and set suitable strategies for making structural changes to achieve gender equality in their institution, to design integrated but flexible approaches for making structural changes to provide equal opportunities for women and men, to combine top down and bottom up strategies to realise the structural and cultural changes together.

## **2. What strategies would you recommend to overcome resistance to the implementation of GEPs?**

**Brigitte Ratzer** (Austria) - From the Austrian perspective top-down action is the most valuable prerequisite. The introduction of a university law in 2004 that required a GEP at every university and additionally obliged all universities to establish an organizational unit

for “equal opportunities, the promotion of women and gender studies” turned out to be very helpful. But we have learned that all that glitters is not gold. Having a GEP does not necessarily imply that it is implemented in a meaningful way. So once a quite fine GEP is in place how can its implementation be ensured?

Again, top-down commitment is an important condition. There are 21 universities in Austria quite different developments can be observed (Wroblewski et al. 2007, 2014). However having a GEP in place and a rectorate that is interested in making a change will bring advances. For it simply makes a difference if the rector is known as a person who does not give a damn about gender equality or if she or he is taking this topic seriously. Since the implementation of GEPs is about cultural change, it is of utmost importance to involve as many people as possible. Involving the middle management by target agreements is one important top-down measure to distribute responsibility for change to relevant actors.

Establishing seminars and workshops for increasing the awareness of all staff is another important measure. There are people at our universities that are willing to join efforts for equal opportunities but need to know what exactly they can do in their everyday work life. In the case of TU Wien some seminars and workshops are offered on a voluntary basis. Discussions whether compulsory courses would be better to include more people are on-going.

Another suggestion has to do with arguments that do not strengthen but diminish emotional reactions. This is not necessarily the case with facts and figures, just as little as with sound research results. Facing strong resistance while presenting statistics and finding every piece of research scrutinized that one presents is a particular experience that gender researchers and practitioners share. (Ratzer et al. 2014). To avoid illusions: there are some players in the field that will never be convinced and we simply must wait for their retirement. But there are others that can be won on our side, sometimes because they have daughters, emancipated partnerships or the like. Appreciating attempts - however imperfect they may be - can help pave the way. Assuring others (men and women) that gender competence is not a secret knowledge but something you gain step by step tends to relieve

pressure. Humour, allowing laughter over blunder and not making a show trial out of unfortunate wording and the like may at times be helpful too.

A last consideration is based on the insight that it is men that we need to become active if we want to achieve substantial change at a technical university. For this reason, our current efforts at TU Wien focus on developing a communication strategy that takes into account the situation of men and their viewpoints and challenges in joining equality efforts. This is work in progress and needs to be explored further during the lifetime of the ongoing Horizon2020 project GEECCO<sup>10</sup>.

**Barbara Poggio** (Italy) - Resistance to change is an integral dimension of each change process. This is all the more true when changes challenge established symbolic order and cultural practices as in the case of gender equality strategies in research institutions (Mergaert and Lombardo 2014).

Italian universities, as all public entities, are required to formulate Positive Action Plans (PAPs), which have among their main objectives the lessening of gender imbalances; yet many universities have still not adopted this tool, which is fundamental in producing effective organizational changes. A first strategy should, therefore, be to make norms and regulations more stringent, while attaching penalties or consequences when they are not respected.

Merely developing a GEP (or a Positive Action Plan) is, however, insufficient in stimulating change. A recent analysis of Positive Action Plans in Italian universities revealed that in several cases the plans appear to amount to little more than a formality, rather than serving as an actual tool for intervention and organizational change (Rapetti, Poggio 2017). It is, therefore, important to continue to work until the plans are structured in such a way so as to facilitate their implementation: so that they will no longer be generic wish lists, but operational and realistic tools with clear objectives, specific indicators and temporal development plans. It is also essential that during the development of the plans the

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<sup>10</sup> GEECCO: <http://www.geecco-project.eu/home/>

consensus of decision-makers and management is obtained in primus, while also involving the main internal stakeholders (department directors, people sensitive to the argument in the various areas of the organization, representatives of various organizations, such as unions...). In the experience at the University of Trento this has been a useful condition for limiting subsequent resistance during implementation.

It is also necessary to increase awareness through awareness-raising initiatives, giving broader visibility to gender imbalance data, creating opportunities for public debate, and training (targeted at various actors within the academic or organizational community).

A further strategy entails the construction of internal and external networks. Internal building focuses on networking and promoting coordinated actions between different actors and organizations that deal with equal opportunities, organizational well-being and with fighting discrimination, while it also seeks to identify the key people to whom to refer to in all areas of the organization (for example, the University of Trento created delegates in each department and in each organizational sector). This also allows for the creation of a critical mass of people sensitive to gender equality issues. Furthermore, it is also useful to build relationships with other universities and research organizations, in order to promote the circulation of good practices and increase the pressure on organizations.

Finally, it is critical that people in charge of structural change are regarded as authoritative in their roles of agents and managers of change. This is generally true, perhaps more so in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) disciplines. A common problem with various projects aimed at producing structural change in these contexts is the fact that the actions are often brought and managed by women working in STEM disciplines who are highly motivated, but who do not have specific expertise in the field of research, intervention and organizational change. On the one hand this can weaken their authority in the process of change and on the other it pulls them from their main field of study and work, rendering them paradoxically more vulnerable within their reference communities.

**Gülsün Sağlamer** (Turkey) - Sandy Kristin Piderit argues that resistance to change is a behavior where managers inevitably encounter when they implement a reform (2000). On the other hand, Emanuela Lombardo and Lut Mergaert relates resistance to 'gender' with defining the concept as "a phenomenon that emerges during processes of change - such as when gender equality policies are implemented" (2013).

Since it is inevitable to encounter with resistances while implementing any kind of change including GEPs, one of the possible strategies to minimize these resistances is to integrating bottom-up and top-down policies & communications. When we are able to bring the needs of bottom and top together, then a successful result could be reached. Another strategy that is crucial for leaders is to define the main obstacles and understanding the resistances towards the change. One should first answer the following questions: "Who is resisting" and "Why? Afterwards, the specific tactics to cope with these resistances could be listed by the person/team leading the change.

Moreover, broadening the benefits that the GEP will bring could be one another strategy to employ. The top management should come together with the all the stakeholders in order to have an open communication and negotiation on the implementation of GEP. After announcing the 1<sup>st</sup> draft of the GEP all members of the university should be invited for specific meetings to give their feedback.

During my rectorship period at Istanbul Technical University (ITU) between 1996-2004 for two terms ITU realised extensive reforms in its research-education and innovation activities and made tremendous investments for R&D and teaching in its campuses. Parallel to these developments there had been remarkable improvement in terms of women participation at all levels of the academia. These reforms were only possible by employing an integrated approach in which gender equality policies had been used as a cross cutting strategy in all the change processes. In this regard, some of the implemented strategies for the improvement of gender equality in ITU are summarized as follows: setting a role model, appointing more women in recruitment and promotion committees, encouraging women academics for promotions, inviting more women advisors to the rector and increasing the visibility of women academic staff, appointing 3 women vice rectors in 8

years, appointing more women deans and directors for graduate schools, providing fund for mobility, providing equal opportunities for research, academic promotion and scholarship programmes, arranging flexible working hours, organizing and tailoring equal teaching load according to the needs of academic staff, achieving transparency in recruitment and promotion processes and improving work-life balance for all by establishing housing, nursery-primary and high schools in the campus etc.

Consequently, as a Technical University ITU has established continuous improvement strategies in its processes and procedures including actions for gender equality. Such a unified methodology during this change management process at ITU was aiming to enhance the capacity of the university in all areas and this was a key strategy which helped us to minimize the resistances while introducing and implementing gender equality policies and actions.

ITU also took part in the project “FESTA” (Female Empowerment in Science and Technology Academia) which was an implementation project financed by FP7 between 2012-2017 with the aim of making a change in the working environments of academics. Accordingly, one of the work packages of the project was to give a deeper understanding of resistance against structural change towards gender equality in academic institutions. For the purposes of this focus, all resistance incidents encountered by partner institutions have been recorded and analysed. As the outcome of this work package “RESGE Handbook” is prepared with the aim of presenting what barriers have been encountered along the way of changes towards gender equality in member institutions of FESTA. The handbook exemplifies analyses of several resistance cases recorded by FESTA consortium with listing the common causes and signs of resistance against gender sensitive implementations.

In the RESGE Handbook, it is mentioned that “change is a challenging process, which involves the interplay of many agents. Moreover, academic working environments have their own organizational cultures and structures which differ extensively even within themselves.” (Saglamer et al. 2016) Therefore, it should be mentioned that “It was not possible either to find the miracle formula” which could help to overcome any type of



resistance. In fact, the complex nature of resistance should also be reflected in the multiplicity of the recommendations it necessitated” (Ibid). Briefly, contextual differences could be important criteria while formulating the strategies.

RESGE Handbook is also listing a variety of recommendations for overcoming resistances in order to help researchers engaging with gender equality projects and classified them in the following titles:

- *The institutionalization, diversity and inclusivity to facilitate change towards gender equality and help sustainability*
- *Effective communication and dissemination of the intended changes in and outside of institutions*
- *Networking and collaboration in order to strengthen the position of the change project as well as empower those who are committed to change*
- *Enhancing the capacity for change in terms of human resources, financial resources and time burden*
- *Improving teamwork and methodology.*

*These recommendation were “formulated with the intention to involve the structural, cultural and personal factors by combining the ideas drawn from the literature with those of the partners inspired by the resistance they faced during the FESTA procedures”. (Ibid).*

### **3. In many European institutions, current efforts around structural change for gender equality are initiated via external (often European Commission) project-based funding. How can those involved best embed/institutionalise actions so that progress continues even after the project funding has ended?**

**Brigitte Ratzer** (Austria) - Again, the Austrian situation with a strong legal framework and more than a decade of established structures at universities serves as the background for the following considerations. Institutionalising offices for equal opportunities is an important first step. Therefore, if at all possible the runtime of structural change projects should

include efforts to establish an institutional focal point that outlasts the lifetime of the project. Having people in place that allow for continuity, e.g. continuously providing and developing training programs and staying in dialogue with (top) management, is of high importance. Building up gender expertise as well as profound knowledge about the respective organisation is important to understand how to design measures to make them successful. It is good to be aware, however, that establishing an equal opportunity office or similar does not necessarily imply progress within the institution/organisation. It may turn out that having such an office leads to a situation where everybody (including the top management) believes that “the gender problem” is now solved and that the equal opportunity officer will somehow fix it (all by themselves) and nobody else within the institution will feel responsible for taking action.

A necessary second step is to “mainstream” activities in terms of involving more people. In cases where acceptance for gender issues is high this would mean involving other departments. Therefore, instead of providing women-only empowerment seminars on behalf of the equal opportunity office, the central human resources department should offer various trainings, including women-only formats. Reconciliation measures such as installing a kindergarten and providing other childcare facilities would then be part of the central administration because children have parents in various gender-relevant constellations. And gender aspects in didactics could easily be part of the department that is generally responsible for didactics and teaching support. In such a constellation, the role of the equal opportunities officer is that of an expert who advises specialist departments about gender aspects of their special subject.

If institutional commitment is fairly low it may not be possible to involve other departments or important players. It may however be possible to involve individual actors who for whatever reason are open for gender concerns and are willing to act bottom-up. TU Wien is coordinating GEECCO, one of the current Horizon2020 structural change projects. We will use the run time of GEECCO to establish structures for a better “integration of a

gender dimension into the design, evaluation and implementation of research”<sup>11</sup>. Concerning the targets “removing barriers for female researchers” and “addressing gender imbalances in decision making processes” (ibid) structures are already in place and many of the former activities of the “Office for Gender Competence” - as we have named the responsible department - have been mainstreamed. However, we have partner universities within our project that are struggling with missing structures and strong resistance. It is too early to say how we will be able to support the process of institutionalisation at our partner universities once the project approaches its end. We have started our efforts with communication from the TU Wien rectorate to the rectorates of all partner universities thanking them for their commitment to and support for GEECCO and expressing our belief in the new valuable insight that all universities will gain through the project. Another activity are on-site visits of our project facilitators to explain to the top management the benefits of building up gender expertise – highlighting better chances to attract funding for research projects at EU level.

**Barbara Poggio** (Italy) - Italy is among the countries, which, during the past years, has obtained more European funding for projects regarding structural change than towards gender equality. Gender asymmetry continues to be an issue, however. An area of particular concern regards the sustainability of the actions undertaken during a project and whether they can continue when no longer funded. In the midst of a general funding shortage, universities and research bodies often tend to participate in calls for projects with funding, without too much concern about the policy implications. Funding for experimentation activities about gender equality are, therefore, welcome, as any other source of finance, but this does not necessarily mean that there is an actual commitment to the stated objectives. This can significantly limit the effective rooting of the initiatives in the processes of change that the projects seek to instil. The solution is not simple since on the one hand it is

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<sup>11</sup> ERA Communication (2012), [http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/pdf/era-communication/era-communication\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/pdf/era-communication/era-communication_en.pdf)

important to ensure that organizations that are less sensitive to these issues have the opportunity to initiate change, while on the other hand it is important to ask them for greater commitment to the continuity and sustainability of their actions and interventions, which will be monitored over time.

The institutionalization of dedicated bodies (such as Equal Opportunities or Equality and Diversity Offices) is an important precondition for sustainability but is not in and of itself sufficient to guarantee it. It is important that these offices not be the only responsible for the issue, but that they work within a mainstream perspective, trying to render the entire organization sensitive to these issues and playing a networking and coordination role. Cultural level interventions - regarding the use of a gender-sensitive language, awareness raising and training, adopting gender-sensitive perspectives in teaching - can be useful in anchoring awareness about the importance of this matter and the need for further action.

Building an internal network to support change is another factor that can create the necessary conditions for its entrenchment and institutionalization. Additionally, the effort to give visibility to the policies and initiatives underway, not only to generate consensus but to put pressure on the members of the organization, is key. This can be accomplished by maintaining a website, disseminating information via email, newsletters and other communication tools.

In our university we tried to work at all these levels, and this has undoubtedly been one of the main factors that has helped ensure the continuity of the initiatives.

**Gülsün Sağlamer** (Turkey) - EC funded projects have been very helpful in collecting and sustaining gender disaggregated data across Europe thus creating awareness at all levels of academia. EC funded research and implementation projects have also generated considerable human resources to make contributions to implement effective and efficient strategies in their institutions to sustain the actions towards more gender-equal European HE&R Area. On the other hand, not all the projects have been successful in terms of sustainability of feedback mechanism for further improvements. Jeff Hearn indicates this contradiction in the following words: “Though the EU has strong policies promoting

gender equality and in many European countries there is legislation barring discrimination on grounds of gender, gender inequality persists. We still live and work in various (kinds of) patriarchies.” (2004, p. 13).

In order to provide a continuous progress on gender equality, these efforts and initiatives via external (often European Commission) project-based funding should be embedded into the culture of the organization so that it does not get affected when people change or when a project is finished. The aim to transform gendered culture of academia should be correctly communicated to the academics regardless of their gender in order to open up a space for a process of persuasion, which would be followed by a gender equality program to be implemented. Strategies such as Gender auditing and/or Establishing a gender unit or a gender committee could also help to reduce patriarchies and to create a cultural change for achieving a sustainable gender equality.

#### **4. How important is Unconscious Bias awareness training in driving Gender Equality Actions? Are there other types of training you have also found effective?**

**Brigitte Ratzer** (Austria) - I fully agree that Unconscious Bias awareness trainings are the perfect trainings for all decision makers, board-members and stakeholders, be they male or female. Understanding the crucial mechanisms of unconscious bias is central for evaluating applicants on basis of their performance rather than implicitly judging their diversity markers such as sex, ethnicity and the like. It also de-emotionalizes the debates about discrimination of women because showing unconscious preference for a small group of people is different from the deliberate discrimination of women. Understanding how we all are biased in favour of the “ideal scientist” – white, disembodied, heterosexual, upper (middle) class, thoroughly dedicated, excellent, male (Benschop/Brouns 2003, Fotaki 2008) – challenges the notion that discrimination is something deliberate.

There are yet two other types of trainings that I would argue for. One concerns empowering women, which is especially necessary in the STEM field. And the other is about training supervisors in ways to equally support male and female young academics.

As for the empowerment of women: encouraging women who strive for a scientific career despite the obstacles and discriminations they are experiencing is of great importance. Women-only formats where the token situation that women generally experience in STEM field can be reflected, where coping strategies can be exchanged and networks be tied are crucial at least for some women. Even women who were hesitant to participate in women-only formats gave feedback on how important this experience was and how much motivation and empowerment arose from that. If we want decision-making bodies to be able to choose between qualified men and women we need to convince enough women that it is worth competing for top positions. To make it clear: I would not argue for restricting trainings to women-only formats since it is not women who are the problem but rather the predominant scientific culture that needs to be changed. Still, I would argue for keeping some of the trainings that focus on exchange of experiences and development of individual career strategies as women only formats.

Training supervisors is yet another important task we should not miss. Throughout the European countries – and beyond – the largest decline of women can be observed after the doctorate. While losses at the first stages of academia – BA, MA and PhD – are comparatively low there is a massive drop in numbers of women in the post-doctoral phase<sup>12</sup>. And there are several hints that this is caused by a lack of support. Every person that wants to succeed in academia needs support, this is about being included in the right networks, being encouraged to publish or to give a talk at a conference and so on. What Liisa Husu has named “non-events” (Al Gazali et al. 2013) is something that happens to women more frequently and discourages them as much as the daily grind that complicates everyday work and leads to resignation at some stage. It is therefore of high importance to train supervisors to enable them to be real mentors or sponsors of their female students.

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<sup>12</sup> SHE Figures 2012: [http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document\\_library/pdf\\_06/she-figures-2012\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document_library/pdf_06/she-figures-2012_en.pdf)

Supporting mentors in their role could make a difference and some formats have been developed that effectively support this concern (see de Vries 2011).

**Barbara Poggio** (Italy) - Much literature attests to the importance of unconscious bias in the production and reproduction of gender asymmetries within the scientific world, both within organizations (in its processes like recruitment) and in the more transversal processes (such as peer review and evaluation) (Addis 2010, Moss-Racusin et al. 2012). It is, therefore, necessary in the context of gender equality initiatives to create awareness about this unconscious bias. Informing, training and raising awareness among decision makers, members of selection committees, supervisors and figures with more general roles of responsibility is certainly helpful in countering stereotypes and gender bias, though this is not always easy, especially in contexts where there is more persistent resistance.

In the European project GARCIA, coordinated by the University of Trento, an analysis of the recruitment processes of early career researchers was conducted at the various universities and research centres involved. The analysis highlighted the relevance of these phenomena in selection and evaluation practices (Herschberg, Benschop and van den Brink 2015, 2016). Following the findings, training and awareness-raising actions were identified and implemented for members of the recruitment committees (accounting for the specificities of the different contexts, of course). These actions met considerable resistance, however, and we noticed the difficulty of intervening with formal actions in processes which, in many cases are purposely discretionary and not transparent (Dennissen et al. 2017a, 2017b).

Moreover, training activities were also carried out by those who work on project design, which showed how attention to gender equity can be triggered in different phases and areas of project activity: from design to implementation and evaluation.

Besides these initiatives, other types of training have been implemented in our university, in order to promote gender equality: some of them were aimed at encouraging the use of a gender-sensitive language, raising awareness about bullying and harassment, integrating a gender perspective in research. Some specific training activities were targeted

to early career researchers, particularly women, in order to give them lenses and tools to counter the leaky pipeline phenomenon.

**Gülsün Sağlamer** (Turkey) - Unconscious Bias plays an important role especially in recruitment-promotion-retention of academic staff in HE&R institutions. It is also an important barrier in the allocation of research funding and defining awardees in especially STEM areas. As unconscious bias is a cultural barrier, it is not easy to make improvements in any evaluation process to give equal opportunities to all women and men if they have equal merits. Besides “Unconscious Bias Training” is the most effective approach for providing transparency in all recruitment-promotion-retention of academic staff in HE&R institution.

“Gender biases affect not only how we view and treat others but also how we view ourselves and what actions we take as a result” (Corbett and Hill 2015). Unconscious gender biases are one of the most common types of implicit resistance towards Gender Equality Actions. “Explicit resistance is easy to recognize mainly because the resisting person shows an apparent and open kind of opposition while implicit resistance is often harder to recognize. The resisting person in such cases may not be comfortable with the resistance he/she is performing and chooses an obscure method of employing it.” (Sağlamer et al. 2016) On the one hand, explicit forms of resistance is much more easy to recognize and this also allows people to find strategies more easily while dealing with these kind of resistances. On the other hand, implicit resistances such as “unconscious gender bias” necessitates a much more careful work to be able to minimize resistances. Therefore, carrying out an “Unconscious Bias training” is an important way of recognizing the resistance and thus minimizing it as much as possible. Furthermore, such biases could be a consequent of various and interacting social and cultural norms embedded in our minds. The level of complexity should be carefully tackled by the trainer in order to create a gender sensitization among the trainees.



From the perspectives of Corbett, C., and C. Hill, “We all hold gender biases, shaped by cultural stereotypes in the wider culture, that affect how we evaluate and treat one another. While explicit gender bias — that is, self-reported bias — is declining, implicit or unconscious gender bias remains widespread” (2015, 2) “Unconscious Bias training” can help people to understand and eliminate the hidden signs of the gender hostility in their minds. In other words, such a training is useful to make gendered statements/perceptions come to be visible and once these biases are noticeable, fading them away will be much easier.

*The list of other trainings that could be offered:*

- *Effective/innovative change management skills*
- *Good Practices in Gender Mainstreaming*
- *Understanding Gendered & Discriminatory Practices in Academia*
- *The role of Organizational Culture and How to change it?*
- *Re-thinking the Forms of Resistances: Explicit Bias & Implicit Bias*

## **Conclusioni**

All contributions manifested a strong convergence on the essential elements for successful implementation of Gender Equality Plans (GEPs). In three of the four universities, the significant impact of being involved in a EU FP7/H2020 project was highlighted: GARCIA, FESTA, INTEGER, GEECCO, SAGE<sup>13</sup>. In part, EU support in countering the lack of resources (e.g. a dedicated gender budget) for gender equality (time, HR and money) was stressed. Lack of such resources was seen a mechanism for blocking actions. In the case of Austria, the influence of the state in implementing legislation requiring Austria Universities to produce and implement GEPs was a critical impetus.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://garciaproject.eu/>; <http://www.festa-europa.eu/>; <http://www.integer-tools-for-action.eu/en/>; <http://www.geecco-project.eu/home/>; <http://www.sage-growingequality.eu/>

Facing resistance is an acknowledged ‘norm’ and institutions dealt with this in different ways (e.g. FESTA collection of incidents into a RESGE Handbook<sup>14</sup>). INTEGER experience of resistance was used in the SAGE Change Management Model<sup>15</sup> that identifies different types of resistance and how, using awareness of for example a coping cycle, it is possible to face down and overcome resistance in its complex manifest forms. To ensure success, one author advocated the possible need to disguise gender equality into diversity. Others advocated (TCD had already set up) a dedicated body for GE that would exist after the life span of a FP7/H2020 project in order to hold onto and build upon the gains achieved.

Top down AND bottom up support for GEPs in all four institutions was stressed, as was arriving at a consensus as to ‘what could/should be done’. Flowing from this was the perceived need to institutionalise gains and develop a communications strategy (using gender sensitive language) to convey the message of gender equality needs/successes to all stakeholders. To this end, GEPs need to be ambitious and realistic/achievable and may necessitate targets (INTEGER) and/or the threat of penalties (Trento/HEA Ireland) if these are not met.

Gender disaggregated data underpinned all contributions – these are needed to present the case for intervention (gender imbalances/under-resourcing of gender related activities), to address resistance and formulate GEPS. Getting senior management support was seen as vital and could come in various diverse forms (TCD P/VP video<sup>16</sup>).

Unconscious Bias Awareness was also deemed essential and sessions/training had been provided in all four institutions to counter stereotypes and gender bias. However, whilst Unconscious Bias Awareness training needs to be targeted at all key groups (including senior management) there was also a strong argument for women-only training/empowerment interventions towards their career development and Unconscious Bias Awareness directed towards Principal Investigators/research supervisors.

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.resge.eu/?Page=Analysis>

<sup>15</sup> SAGE growing equality: <http://www.sage-growingequality.eu/>

<sup>16</sup> Gender Equality contributing to Research Excellence TCD video: [https://www.tcd.ie/news\\_events/articles/trinity-drives-excellence-through-gender-equality/5459](https://www.tcd.ie/news_events/articles/trinity-drives-excellence-through-gender-equality/5459)

Overall the contributions point to there being no ‘silver bullet’ or ‘quick fix’. Rather that there needs to be a ‘patchwork’ of interventions/evaluations/learning/dissemination sought that highlights the common good and how gender equality can contribute to excellence and diversity, particularly through a ‘business case’. For example, the INTEGER/SAGE Wheels<sup>17</sup> advocate GEPs to inform institutions about the range of interventions available – that have been ‘tried and tested’ and that highlight the opportunity to establish to quality and more inclusive workplace.

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<sup>17</sup> INTEGER Tools for Action – Wheel: <http://www.integer-tools-for-action.eu/en/resources>; SAGE Growing Equality Wheel: <http://www.sage-growingequality.eu/site/explore>

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