CALIPER
Gender Equality in STEM Research

HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY DESIGN AND DEVELOP AN INCLUSIVE GEP

The UZG - FER Experience

SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU
Fakultet elektrotehnike i računarstva

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EU CONTEXT: EXISTING GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Horizon Europe sets gender equality as a crosscutting principle and aims to eliminate gender inequality and intersecting socioeconomic inequalities throughout research and innovation systems. In particular, European Research Area Priority 4 focuses on gender equality and gender mainstreaming in research and innovation[1]. The objective is to foster scientific excellence and breadth of research approaches by fully utilising gender diversity and equality.

Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) have been recognised as an effective gender mainstreaming tool for Research and Innovation (R&I) and Higher Education (HE) institutions to tackle the objectives of the European Research Area (ERA) via a set of actions implemented along with clear timelines and monitored through specific indicators[2]. This is evident as well, since a GEP is an eligibility criterion for acceding Horizon Europe funding for the R&I Institutions. Lastly, the Ljubljana Declaration[3] adopted in 2021 highlights the importance of GEPs as a tool "to achieve long-term and sustainable advancement towards Gender equality in R&I".

Even though the institutional change strategy implemented through GEPs has had very positive impacts in many research organisations and has been a catalyser at national and EU level, there is still a need for a renewed approach[2] which will enable Institutions to go beyond the minimum requirements for a GEP as defined in Horizon Europe eligibility criteria for effectively addressing the persisting structural barriers in R&I institutions.

For this reason, the recent ERA policies on gender equality in R&I have expanded their scope to cover innovation at large aiming at connecting academic research with society and the economy. This is evident from the European Commission's (EC) most recent policy directions on Gender Equality in R&I and institutional change that seek for 'inclusive' Gender Equality Plans referring to "intersectoriality" as one of the dimensions along with intersectionality and geographic inclusiveness.

The **H2020 CALIPER project** was designed and is now being implemented, (since 2020) addressing these three dimensions and in particular having intersectoriality as its key specific feature embedded in all steps of the institutional change process, from the internal assessment to the GEPs design and implementation phase, as well as in monitoring and evaluation. Therefore, drawing upon the experience of the CALIPER project which aims at addressing gender inequality in STEM in 9 RPOs and RFOs across the EU and which has been built based on the GEAR tool but offering an additional inclusive approach, this policy briefing highlights the main takeaways on the design & development, of an inclusive Gender Equality Plan. This particular policy briefing is the first version of three policy briefings to be developed focusing on the inclusive GEP process.

Elaborating on the different dimensions of inclusiveness addressed by the CALIPER project, this policy brief aims at guiding national stakeholders in Croatia to effectively contribute to tailoring GEPs to specific domestic needs and developing quality assurance for GEPs.

THE CROATIAN CONTEXT: EXISTING GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Regarding the Croatian context, the Report on the Implementation of National Policy for Gender Equality 2011 - 2015[4] shows that most of the measures regarding gender-sensitive education and equal opportunities on the market were implemented. But, for example, there were hardly any measures aiming for results on gender equality in the ICT sector. However, the Report for 2019 of the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality[5], states that the Government of Croatia plans to adopt a new national plan, the Gender Equality Strategy for the period 2021 – 2030. Furthermore, there are no mechanisms in place in Croatia to promote gender equality in Higher Education, but there were some attempts. In Croatia, the Anti-discrimination Act [6] is in force since 2008. In the report of the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality for 2019[5], it is stated that most of the discrimination complaints are related to work, employment, and social security (46%). In the National Act on Maternity and Parental Benefits [7], the rights regarding parental leave, part-time contracts, breastfeeding breaks, and financial support are prescribed. Parental leave is paid, transferable between parents or guardians and there is flexibility in the use of parental leave. Fathers are encouraged to take parental leave by getting two months extra. Concerning the Labour Act [8], it contains articles about the protection of pregnant women, parents, and adoptive parents, their working hours, and leaves.

EVIDENCE ON UZG-FER GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES AND PRACTICES

UZG-FER implements employment protocols to avoid bias in recruitment. The criteria for scientific-teaching advancements are transparent, laid down by law, and the same for all public universities in the Republic of Croatia. The policy of equal pay in public institutions is determined by law. Salary does not depend on gender, which implies equal pay for equal complexity of work. UZG-FER implements fully the National Act on Maternity and Parental Benefits.

There are also informal support mechanisms for female researchers when returning to work after maternity leave. However, the findings of the study suggest that maternity leave may be the cause of stagnation in the careers of female researchers, as they are less likely to publish papers after returning from leave. The Rules of Procedure of the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing define decision-making bodies: the Dean and the Faculty Council. All female employees in scientific and teaching positions are members of the Council. In the decision-making process, the Dean and the Council are advised by committees and commissions of the Faculty. Women actively participate in committees and can thus influence decision-making. The institution has an unofficial commitment to women's inclusion in managerial positions. UZG-FER does not have a gender equality body. Efforts to use gender-neutral language whenever possible are visible on the internet, social media, and other internal documents. The Public Relations Department pays special attention to promoting successful women on social media and in the national media, however there is no digital communication

and information channel designated to gender equality related topics. Currently, there is no guidance, no available literature, no checklists, and no teacher training on the integration of the gender dimension in the curriculum. There are no institutional guidelines for integrating the gender dimension into research. UZG-FER provides a wide range of organised support for students concerning student rights, prevention of discrimination, teaching, learning, psychological counselling, etc. It was noted that the percentage of female students in the total student population of FER is low at all levels of which they comprise around 20%. UZG-FER has an established system for preventing and sanctioning cases of sexual harassment, which is laid down by law.

CALIPER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF AN INCLUSIVE GEP

Setting up the scene for the GEP design and development: Perform an analysis of external and internal conditions for the GEP development and acceptance. Identify potential gender biases and inequalities along with scenarios towards change using the proposed actions below:

Set up a GEP Working Group:
Suggested members of the GEP working group include staff members at different managerial levels including stakeholders from middle and high management.

Perform a qualitative and quantitative gender analysis:
Suggested areas for data collection include human resources, institutional governance, research, teaching, student services, transfer to the market, institutional communication, and sexual harassment.

Tools: Set up intersectional indicators and targets to be achieved and collect sex-disaggregated data via desk research and interviews.

Set up Research & Innovation (R&I) Hub: Adopting the quadruple helix approach, gather information through desk research, network analysis and interviews with key stakeholders from academia and universities, industry, ministries/government, public sector, civil society organisations and identify the regional/national innovation ecosystems in which they operate and engage them in the GEP design and development process.

Suggested members of the R&I Hub: Stakeholders from academia and universities, industry, ministries/government, public sector, civil society organisations.

Develop strategic change scenarios to better understand and reflect key factors, the potential measures, and the strategic collaborations with internal and external stakeholders that need to be leveraged with regards to the implementation of the GEP.

Suggested methodology: develop three scenarios focusing on the identification of the maximum opportunities, and a mix of both in the areas mentioned in the gender analysis. For UZG-FER the most realistic was the third scenario, which was the only one developed.

Suggested main components of the scenarios: Situation; Main problems; Objective(s); Possible solutions; Resistances (including strategies to overcome them) and Opportunities.

Organise Multi Stakeholder dialogues involving the R&I Hubs assess the above-mentioned scenarios and investigate opportunities and barriers for collaboration with the regional and national stakeholders.

GEP design and development: Develop an inclusive GEP based on the knowledge and experience gained and the targets set.

Recommended areas to focus when designing and developing a GEP in Croatia, on the basis of UZG FER's GEP design and development process:

Human Resources: In terms of Human Resources, three main categories of actions were identified in order to strengthen existing measures and services for employees and to attract and retain female researchers. The actions included: **Ensuring continued equality for all employees** in the selection, employment, work, and professional development. **Supporting employees in balancing their professional and personal lives. Supporting researchers after parental leave,** by providing equal opportunities for career advancement to increase productivity.

Institutional Governance: To address the low representation of women in high level positions and decision making bodies, the actions include: **Establishing a Gender Equality Body (GEB).** The suggested tasks of this body include monitoring the status of gender equality in the institution. **Reporting on the state of gender equality.** To have a clear view of the state of gender equality it is important to collect data and analyse them and publish relevant annual reports. This procedure will facilitate the tasks of the GEB. **Develop a pilot program for the empowerment of female researchers.**

The pilot programme can target mainly young women researchers to remove obstacles and barriers in their academic and professional careers.

Institutional Communication: There is a popular perception in the STEM community that polytechnic schools educate students for "male occupations". The actions below are suggested to tackle this issue: **A digital communication channel to enhance visibility and promote the commitment of the Institution to gender equality** and a bias free environment. The channel's impact can be monitored and assessed. The ultimate goal is to attract more women to the so-called "male occupations". **Achieve gender neutral language** in all the institutional legal documents by reviewing the relevant documents.

Teaching and Research: The lack of gender sensitive teaching practices can be addressed through: **Integrating gender dimension in teaching** to raise awareness and capacity to integrate gender in R&I. A trial period to test the integration methodologies is suggested. **Establishing a promotional campaign on gender integration** of the gender dimension in the R&I. The campaign can raise awareness and facilitate the trial period. **Promoting the principles of gender equality in technology transfer** by increasing visibility for women. The final goal is to expand the R&I ecosystem of the Institution and achieve further integration of Gender Equality principles into technology transfer practices.

Student Services: To adopt a gender perspective to the offered student services. Proposed policies include: **Assess and revise the existing services for students** to ensure equal access to information and support and

strengthen the mechanism. **Create targeted communication and information campaigns** to abolish gender related stereotypes about STEM occupations and attract new female students. **Organise dedicated events** and invite female role models to participate.

Sexism and Sexual Harassment: The Institution should build trust among the students, the academic and administrative staff to prevent and tackle potential sexual harassment incidents. Some examples include: **Strengthening the existing system** by revising the effectiveness of the existing regulations and protocols. **Empowering academic and administrative staff as well as students** by informing them about existing protocols and services.

CONCLUSION

The present policy briefing describes the European and Croatian national context as well as the institutional context regarding gender equality policies and practices as they have been depicted in the extensive external and internal analysis conducted within the context of the CALIPER project. Based on the abovementioned context, UZG FER's GEP has been designed and described here for giving the example to other Research Performing Organisations operating in Croatia for setting up their inclusive GEP.

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Learn more about CALIPER project and the Gender Equality Plans:

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