



CALIPER
Gender Equality in STEM Research

HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY DESIGN AND DEVELOP AN INCLUSIVE GEP

The UEFISCDI Experience



Policy Briefing v1 | Romania
March 2023



CALIPER project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme under Grant Agreement No 87313

“ 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 Romania to effectively contribute to tailoring GEPs to specific domestic needs and developing quality assurance for GEPs.

“**THE ROMANIAN CONTEXT: EXISTING GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES AND PRACTICES**”

In Romania, principles of equal rights and non-discrimination are included in the Romanian Constitution. Indeed, in 2006, the CEDAW Committee pointed out that in Romania[4] there is a low representation of women in public life and decision-making, and at the moment there is no functional mechanism at the national level to promote underrepresented gender in Higher Education and/or Scientific Research. Work-life balance is not a priority area for national policymakers, even if related measures and interventions are widely acknowledged as crucial for gender equality and women's empowerment. Romania has provisions for various types of leaves (i.e. maternity, paternity and parental leaves), but a critical gap is the lack of adequate childcare services/facilities. The share of female researchers in STEM in 2015 (46.23%) was above the EU average (33.4%), showing that gender division among researchers is rather equal in Romania, therefore no major policy developments in this respect were observed. Also, no national strategy for empowering women in entrepreneurship is currently in place.

“**EVIDENCE ON UEFISCDI GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES AND PRACTICES**”

There is a clear commitment to gender equality in UEFISCDI, and the participation of women in decision making bodies is encouraged. However, there is no evaluation/monitoring process on gender equality in place as well as the existence of gender-sensitive budgeting.

of gender-sensitive budgeting. It is identified that there are no mentoring programmes at the institutional level. UEFISCDI is quite advanced in the specific area of institutional governance (66% women in middle management level, 80% women in top level leadership position). In relation to work-life balance, parental leaves have been taken mainly by females and currently, there is no data on part time/flexible hours arrangements, teleworking positions, career breaks and drop-outs by gender. With regards to the policies on equal pay, the salaries are legally established, and this does not take gender into consideration. Internal communication can be improved as there are no guidelines or protocols on gender sensitive language and non-biased communication. In the area of research funding, there is no provision about the integration of gender analysis into research or/and in funding programmes.

No cases are reported to UEFISCDI regarding gender/sexual harassment. The institution lacks a specific mechanism to report and tackle the cases as it mainly relies on the Code of Ethics and its sanctioning measures. Finally, when reviewing the intersectional approach, there is a strong need to have incremental and active learning on gender issues to change people's perception of the role of women and men.

Furthermore, in order to advance the work carried out on the gender equality dimension with CALIPER (both within the organisation and outside its boundaries) and towards the whole R&I national ecosystem, UEFISCDI is participating in other connected actions that aim at providing support mechanisms for the GEP implementation. Moreover, these actions foresee capacity building activities both for other RFOs and policy makers.

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 resistances, the maximum opportunities, and a mix of both in the areas mentioned in the gender analysis. For UEFISCDI 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 Romania, on the basis of UEFISCDI's GEP design and development process:

Human Resources: In this focus area, the subsections include recruitment and selection, working conditions and work/life

balance, and career progression. Proposed measures include: **Developing an informative kit with instructions on gender discrimination and stereotypes identification** in recruiting processes. Steps to structure the kit: 1. Internal research for best practices regarding recruitment gender sensitive protocols, 2. Developing a first draft, 3. Gathering feedback from stakeholders, 4. Finalising the kit, 5. Organising training for the recruitment experts and HR department, 6. Informing the staff about updated recruitment protocols, 7. Annually evaluate the impact on the recruitment processes. **Organising “Back to work” training after parental leaves.** Training the middle managers on how to implement this measure and support the returning employees is necessary, as well as raising awareness among other colleagues about the importance of the transition period. **Organising “Soft skills” training.** The process to structure the training includes: Research for best practices and similar training regarding soft skills and time management for the employees returning to work. Developing and organising a training and an informative kit on the topic, evaluating the result of the training. **Increasing the number of employees fit for leadership positions by evaluating leadership qualities and competencies and developing a “shadowing” program** (each participant is partnered with a top management representative and shadows his/her routine for a specific period of time). Development of a personalised coaching & mentoring program for the selected participants. **Organising an internal educational program to help employees acknowledge their latent potential,** and to provide the middle managers, information about other abilities and interests of their employees. The programme can start with the evaluation of the skills and competencies, both by the employees and the middle management, to

to develop a career plan for participants. Evaluation of the program is also necessary.

Institutional Governance: To address the low representation of women in high level positions and decision-making bodies, the measurements include: **The establishment of a Gender Equality Body.** The top management should discuss to identify the needed employees and external advisors, list the candidates and interview them. After the selection, the development of the necessary procedures in order to supervise and implement the GEP can follow.

Institutional Communication: The popular perception of male dominance in the STEM community creates the need for gender neutral language in the internal and external communication content. The proposed activities include: **Developing an informative gender sensitive communication kit** to assure that both internal and external institutional communication are gender sensitive. Training can be organised and an evaluation process.

Research funding: For a more gender equal research funding process the following actions are recommended: **Analysis of women participation in research projects** to understand why women participate less and how the research content is affected, as well as to identify how women researchers can be encouraged to join research areas dominated mainly by men. Firstly, the institution should identify the pool of projects to be analysed, conduct the analysis, draw the conclusion, and finally propose recommendations. **Training for research evaluators regarding the gender dimension** to assure that they are able to recognise the gender components and do not misinterpret them because of ideological

beliefs. An informative kit can be elaborated on how gender dimension should be taken into consideration when evaluating research projects.

Transfer to the market: In this area, proposed actions include: **Implementing quotas/targets when inviting speakers at the events**, having a better representation of women, and addressing gender sensitive topics. The institution can elaborate guidelines on the topic and establish quotas for each event (depending on the subject). Also, an extended list of women (correlated with different topics) that can be invited to the events can be helpful.

Sexual and moral harassment: Measurements to improve the methods of combating sexual harassment include: **Developing an Informative kit regarding sexual and moral harassment** to raise awareness, help identify the type of harassment and clearly explain its concept (definition, limits etc.) The structure process can be seen as follows: Internal research for best practices regarding the kit; Developing the kit; Organising training on the topic and presenting the document; Evaluate the employees' acknowledgement regarding the topic.

CONCLUSION

The present policy briefing describes the European and Romanian 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, UEFISCDI's GEP has been designed and described here for giving the example to other Research Funding and/or Performing Organisations operating in Romania for setting up their inclusive GEP.

“**REFERENCES**

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Learn more about CALIPER project and the Gender Equality Plans:



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