



# CALIPER

Gender Equality in STEM Research

## HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY DESIGN AND DEVELOP AN INCLUSIVE GEP

*The STU BA Experience*

 **STU**

SLOVAK UNIVERSITY OF  
TECHNOLOGY IN BRATISLAVA

Policy Briefing v1 | Slovakia  
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 Slovakia to effectively contribute to tailoring GEPs to specific domestic needs and developing quality assurance for GEPs.

## “ THE SLOVAK CONTEXT: EXISTING GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES AND PRACTICES

In Slovakia the government has adopted the National strategy for gender equality in the Slovak Republic 2014-2019[4]. One of its strategic areas and priorities is number 3 on, “Education, science and research”, whose aim is to improve the application of gender equality in education, science and research. This strategy includes the topics of work/life balance, gender sensitive research and scientific content and gender based violence, among other issues. In addition, the government has introduced the competition, “Employer friendly to the family, gender equality and equal opportunities.” The issues of parental leave and sexual harassment are addressed in the national Labour Code. This national strategy also includes provisions about the integration of gender in the research content and in particular at point n. 3.4, “To deepen knowledge of existing forms of inequality between women and men by strengthening research in this area and gender statistics”. Also, the same strategy sets measures regarding the reduction of gender differences in the participation of women and men in decision-making positions. The main objectives are 1. To increase the representation of women in decision-making positions in political life, including their motivation and opportunities to be a candidate and participate; 2. Promote and support women's entrepreneurship by creating systemic measures, including the work-life balance; and 3. Increase the representation of women in economic decision-making positions. In the Slovak legal framework, several laws refer to discrimination; two of them refer to equal discrimination; two of them refer to equal

rights for men and women specifically. These laws are the Act. No. 311/2001 Coll. Labour Code[5] and the Antidiscrimination Act (Equal Treatment in Certain Areas and on Protection against Discrimination and the Amendment of Certain Laws)[6].

## EVIDENCE ON STU BA GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES AND PRACTICES”

STU BA follows the institutional regulations, but most of them do not include specific policies targeting gender inequality issues. In terms of recruiting and hiring processes, as well as career progression, there are no gender sensitive policies and protocols. Also, no measures have been taken to encourage women to apply for decision making positions and the actions related to work/life balance need improvement. The institution does not collect any data related to gender equality status, and the communication material on the official website and social media accounts present an imbalanced representation of men and women. STU BA had not applied actions to foster gender equality integration in its research activities. The reviewers of any scientific or research papers are not trained to detect and abolish biases, nor are there any evaluation forms/ templates that include a paragraph on gender equality in research teams and gender dimension in research content. However, they use the double-blind review process, to assess the expertise of the authors before publishing an article in a journal. In most of the areas, the institutional policies need updates and refinement to pay more attention to the gender aspect.

# 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, intersectionality, 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.

## Suggested main components of the scenarios:

Situation; Main problems; Objective(s); **Scenario 1: Maximal resistance** (including the possible solutions that would trigger high resistance and potential opportunities); **Scenario 2: Low resistance** (including the possible solutions that would trigger low resistance and potential opportunities); **Scenario 3: Intermediate resistance** (including the possible solutions that would trigger intermediate resistance and potential 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 Slovakia, on the basis of STU BA's GEP design and**

## development process:

**Human Resources:** Here two main focus areas of action to achieve gender equality are recommended: **Recruitment: Detect and prevent employment biases** by creating a **gender-sensitive protocol for recruitment and hiring** to raise awareness about gender equality, to ensure equal hiring conditions and promotion processes at all levels. **Career breaks and job reintegration: Create programs for employee reintegration** after parental leaves, with the final aim to raise the ratio of scientific papers and projects written and led by women.

**Institutional Governance:** To address the lack of gender dedicated institutional policies it is necessary to: **Develop the Extra Action Plan.** The action steps may contain points that have the task of formally anchoring gender equality issues in the official documents of the Institution. **Set up a network of trained delegates.** Appoint a main coordinator that can be a gender equality expert. Additionally, appoint delegates in certain departments. These delegates should oversee the observance of gender equality principles in the workplace, provide counselling for staff members, raise awareness of gender equality, organise events, and coordinate activities arising from the Extra Action Plan. The delegates can be responsible, among others, for revising documents in terms of gender-sensitive language. **Develop and publish a methodological handbook** focused on the problematic situations related to gender equality that employees and students experience at the institution and identify a list of problematic situations that require support actions. This can be started by the development of a relevant questionnaire.

Meeting with gender equality experts and interviews with staff of other universities with experience on this matter is recommended.

**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: The development of a **communication strategy** focusing on the development and implementation of promotional activities on equal chances and opportunities. The activities may be online or offline such as workshops, etc. Overall, the strategy should focus on raising awareness on gender bias among the employees and the students.

**Research:** The lack of gender sensitive research content and methods can be addressed through **the integration of gender dimension in final theses (bachelor's degrees, diploma, dissertations)** to promote the importance of the matter during the research process, and gradually incorporate this dimension in all final theses. resulting to a higher engagement of supervisors and students on this issue; and **in research projects (as well as scientific publications),** in order to produce gender sensitive scientific material and incorporate the gender perspective in all publications.

**Teaching:** There is a need to create gender sensitive content and dedicated lectures, with the final goal of integrating the gender perspective in the curricula: **Selected subjects can adopt the gender perspective** and develop material, teaching methods and lectures. As a result, there can be a higher level of awareness among students,

academics and the rest of the staff.

**Transfer to market:** Women are underrepresented in patent owning. To solve this issue the institutions should support all employees, and especially women, in technology transfer. Some measures to achieve this include: **The creation of a website** to inform all interested parties about the **business activities of the institution. Meetings among employees** to promote mutual cooperation and experience sharing and exchange among the relevant stakeholders.

**Sexual Harassment:** The cases of sexual harassment cases should be reported and monitored by an organised institutional mechanism. Measurements to achieve this include: **A transparent complaint system** to monitor the reported cases through a sustainable control mechanism; and **a sustainable communication plan** and a raising awareness campaign with a twofold aim: 1) To inform about the reporting system, 2) To tackle the issue itself.

## “CONCLUSION

The present policy briefing describes the European and Slovak 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, STU BA's GEP has been designed and described here for giving the example to other Research Performing Organisations operating in Slovakia for setting up their inclusive GEP.

## “**REFERENCES**

[1] European Commission (2020) *European research area (ERA)*. Available at: [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/our-digital-future/european-research-area\\_en](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/our-digital-future/european-research-area_en)

[2] European Commission (2022) *Widening participation and strengthening the European Research Area, Work Programme 2021-2022*. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2021-2022/wp-11-widening-participation-and-strengthening-the-european-research-area\\_horizon-2021-2022\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2021-2022/wp-11-widening-participation-and-strengthening-the-european-research-area_horizon-2021-2022_en.pdf)

[3] Council of the European Union (2021) *Virtual Conference "Deepening the ERA Through Gender Equality" (8-9 July 2021) and Ljubljana Declaration on Gender Equality in Research and Innovation - Information from the Presidency*. Available at: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-12044-2021-INIT/en/pdf>

[4] Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (2014) *National Strategy For Gender Equality in the Slovak Republic*. Available at: [https://www.gender.gov.sk/en/files/2015/06/Strategy\\_EN.pdf](https://www.gender.gov.sk/en/files/2015/06/Strategy_EN.pdf)

[5] National Council of the Slovak Republic (2022) *Act. No. 311/2001 Coll. Labour Code*. Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/act-no-3112001-coll-labour-code\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/act-no-3112001-coll-labour-code_en)

[6] National Council of the Slovak Republic (2014) *Anti-discrimination Act*. Available at: <https://www.slovlex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2004/365/20160102>

---

Learn more about CALIPER project and the Gender Equality Plans:



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

**Disclaimer:** The views and opinions expressed in this document are solely those of the project, not those of the European Commission. The European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.