



Work Package 1

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Policy Brief 1: Recommendations on evidence-based Gender Equality planning, implementation and monitoring in Higher Education Institutions

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* R = Document, report; DEM = Demonstrator, pilot, prototype; DEC = Websites, patent filings, videos, etc.; ETHICS = Ethics requirement; ORDP = Open Research Data Pilot; DATA = data sets, microdata, etc.; OTHER = Other

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1 Objectives

This policy brief¹ identifies issues associated with the management² of the data needed for the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) in Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), and provides recommendations to policy- and decision-makers at institutional and national level for addressing the identified issues. The evidence supporting the identified issues and recommendations is based on the outcome of the research performed within the framework of the TARGETED-MPI project, and has emerged from the analysis of GE issues in the five partnered Business and Management (B&M) Schools.

2 The Importance of Data in the Gender Equality Planning Lifecycle

Gender Equality (GE) plans in HEIs and decisions taken throughout the GE planning lifecycle, i.e. planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, need to be based on a thorough understanding of the context that HEIs operate and should be data and evidence supported [1]. Understanding the context within which a HEI operates and assessing and measuring surface and deeper gender bias and inequality in HEIs is challenging. It requires the use of data that measure the manifestation of gender imbalances and inequality, as well as data revealing deeper, implicit issues of how inequality is embedded in structures, processes, practices and systems. GE in HEIs is affected by a multitude of factors categorised in three different layers [1]: factors which set the cultural context in which a HEI operates, meso-level organisational factors that reflect how the cultural context affects group structures and practices within HEIs, and factors that reflect how the group structures and practices of the HEIs affect careers and lives of women academics.

Therefore, the availability and accessibility of high quality data is a necessary prerequisite for supporting decisions throughout all phases of the GE planning lifecycle, i.e. planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. According to EIGE [2], gender statistics and indicators “provide evidence for the development of policies, programmes, projects and legislation that respond to the needs of women and men as beneficiaries of an intervention in a specific context” and are “important to promote gender mainstreaming at an organisational level” (p. 4) [2]. The literature also suggests that GE initiatives/plans that are data-driven [3] and evidence-based and evaluated [4] have good chances to overcome resistance within the organisation and become successful.

The importance of data has been also recognised by both International and National organisations. For instance, in the Horizon Europe Research Program of the European Commission [5] the collection and publication of disaggregated data on the sex and/or gender

¹ Within its 4-year duration, TARGETED-MPI will produce three policy briefs. This document constitutes Deliverable 1.3 “Policy Brief 1”, focusing on delivering recommendations on evidence-based Gender Equality planning, implementation and monitoring in Business and Management Schools.

² The term data management is used to describe activities involved in the collection, validation, storage, integration, processing, and presentation of data.

of personnel and the annual reporting based on indicators constitutes a mandatory requirement that should be included in the GEPs of organisations who wish to participate in calls of the Horizon Europe programme, thus making the availability and collection of gender-disaggregated data an eligibility criterion [5]. In UK, the Athena Swan charter also highlights the importance of the collection of quantitative and qualitative GE data as a means to identify and better understand the inequalities within the HEI, recognise barriers to GE, identify information gaps and fully understand the current picture of the HEI and what needs to change [6].

3 Gender Equality Data Management Issues

Although the availability and accessibility of high quality gender equality data is a necessary condition for the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of GE planning decisions, the reality of the GE planning process in the TARGETED-MPI participating (B&M schools) revealed that there are a number of issues that need to be addressed in relation to GE data. The European Statistical System Handbook of Quality and Metadata [7] identifies the following quality principles for statistical data: relevance with user needs, accuracy and reliability, timeliness and punctuality, coherence and comparability, and accessibility and clarity. The identified data issues in the TARGETED-MPI project were grouped into the following three categories: i) data requirements, ii) data definition and specification, iii) data accessibility and visibility. In what follows, the issues associated with each category are presented.

3.1 Data Requirements

Data should be relevant to the user needs [8]. For the case of GE data, the data that HEIs should have available are defined by the needs of the GE planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation process. The guidelines provided by the European Commission [5] identify potential categories of data related, among others, to career progression, pay gap, work-life balance and participation of women in leadership positions. Additional categories of data were identified in the course of the development of the TARGETED-MPI project. According to the TARGETED-MPI model on multi-layered gender inequality factors [1], data that provide evidence on gender inequality factors related to the cultural context the meso/organisational-level structures, practices and processes, and career and life outcomes experienced by women academics should also be collected.

The GE planning process throughout its lifecycle requires data that will [1, 8]: i) describe the context within which different HEIs operate, ii) identify causes of gender inequality in HEIs, and iii) measure HEI gender equality performance. Therefore, HEIs should collect both quantitative and qualitative data to fulfil these needs. A key requirement of these data [5] is that they should be gender disaggregated both for the personnel and the students of HEIs. However, in practice not all these data are available at HEIs. The following issues emerged in TARGETED-MPI partner institutions in relation to data availability requirements.

- **Data unavailability:** Not all required data related to the above mentioned categories (i)-(iii) are available at HEIs. Noticeably, there is lack of qualitative data measuring perceptions, and gender culture and values of the organisations.
- **Incomplete data:** Even for data categories for which data are collected, the data are incomplete. The incompleteness of data is due to the: i) lack of gender disaggregated data, ii) time-discontinuity of data, i.e., data are not collected in regular time intervals, i.e., there are missing years in a time series, and iii) lack of time-synchronisation and varying data recency, i.e., not all data are collected for the same year, not all data have the same recency in terms of the last year that they were collected, iv) varying levels of data granularity, i.e., different data items are collected at different level of detail, e.g. departmental data, faculty level data, university-wide data.

The unavailability and incompleteness of data may lead to the calculation of inaccurate and unreliable indicators used to measure the GE performance of an organisation. The lack of reliable and accurate indicators hampers GE policy articulation, planning and performance measurement and may have detrimental effects on the efficiency and effectiveness of the GEPs of HEIs.

3.2 Data Definition and Specifications

The documentation of the collected data is not adequate and in certain instances the data collection context is not clear. There is inadequate data definition and specification in terms of their necessity, the characteristics of their collection (unit of measurement, frequency of collection), the data categories to which they pertain (e.g., the GE issues for which they can provide evidence), the context of their use and their association with GE indicators. This is due to the fact that the data is collected by different organisational units of the HEIs and for different purposes, e.g. data are not necessarily collected to reflect gender equality policy articulation and management needs. The fragmentation of the data collection process coupled with the insufficient documentation of the data collection context and intended use might compromise the coherence and comparability of the data. This issue is rather important as it does not allow comparisons over time within the same and across different HEIs, e.g. monitoring and evaluating the performance of HEIs over time, comparing the performance of different academic units and groups within the same HEI, comparing the GE performance among different HEIs.

3.3 Data Accessibility and Visibility

Due to data fragmentation, different data items are collected and managed by different units within HEIs, while at the same time the required data is not readily accessible. It appears that there is no a single-stop shop for accessing and using all the data needed for GE policy articulation and management. As consequence, the efficiency of the entire GE planning lifecycle, i.e., planning-implementation-monitoring-evaluation might be compromised. Furthermore, there are issues associated with the clarity of the decision making process, e.g.

how the data are used to support GE decisions. Another consequence of the data fragmentation is the lack of data visibility and transparency. Data describing the GE performance of HEIs are not readily available to interested stakeholders in the websites of HEIs.

4 Policy Recommendations

The identified data issues and requirements regarding the data used throughout the GE planning lifecycle led to the development of policy recommendations. These policy recommendations build upon the detailed guidance of the European Commission on data collection and monitoring for the development of GEPs [5] which states, among others, that organisations should collect and publish disaggregated data on the sex and/or gender of personnel, the scope of the data collected should reflect the mission of the organisation and its activities, that organisations may wish to consider breaking down the data to further explore differences between men and women, collecting qualitative data and publishing the collected GE data on the organisation's website. The issues associated with the aforementioned guidelines were also identified by the TARGETED-MPI project.

Recommendation #1 (Data Requirements): The collected GE data should support the entire lifecycle of GE planning in the HEI, i.e., planning-implementation-monitoring-evaluation. Besides the data categories included in the guidelines of the EC [5], data related to the planning and implementation of GEPs are also suggested to be collected. For instance data regarding barriers and enablers faced during the implementation of GEPs may provide useful information regarding the context within which a GEP is developed. Furthermore, qualitative data describing the cultural context, meso-level organisational structures, influencing gender inequality, along with data explaining career and life outcomes [1], are suggested to be collected to better support the development of GEPs. The collection of these data can help uncover causes and deep-seated issues of gender inequality in the institution and may guide amendments to the strategic GE planning of the institution. These data can be collected through interviews and focus groups with internal stakeholders.

Recommendation #2.1 (Data Definition and Specification): The data that will be collected by HEIs (see Recommendation #1) should be accompanied by appropriate definitions and specifications. Specifications regarding the data collection frequency of different categories of GE related data should be provided. A data dictionary should be provided along with the data. The data collection context should be described identifying potential shortcomings of the data collection process. To avoid fragmentation, the data should be collected for the same year e and should be coherent, compatible and complete.

Recommendation #2.2 (Data Definition and Specification): At National level, an effort should be made to identify a minimum set of GE indicators and the associated data needed for their calculation in order to allow for the inter-institutional and intra-institutional comparison of GE performance over time. The definition of the minimum set of indicators should consider the character of each HEI and the context within which different HEIs operate. The description of

the contextual characteristics of each HEI should accompany the identified data to ensure meaningful cross-institutional comparisons.

Recommendation #3 (Data Accessibility and Visibility): GE data management activities, including the entire data management and governance process, should be integrated and become available at a single-stop shop, in order to address current data fragmentation within HEIs. The organisational unit that will undertake this role may have the form of a Gender Equality Observatory (GEO). Different accessibility levels should be defined and the relevant ethical and GDPR requirements should be strictly ensured and enforced for all GE quantitative and qualitative data. Commonly agreed indicators describing the GE performance of HEIs along with the appropriate definitions and context specific caveats should be provided along with the indicators. The visibility of data used for GE planning, implementation and monitoring should be increased within the institution. To this end events, e.g. campaigns, informing the academic community about the availability and use of the GE data should be used.

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