



## Work Package 1

### Deliverable 1.4

# Policy Brief 2: Recommendations for Business and Management schools on the implementation and monitoring of Gender Equality Plans

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

### History of changes

Date	Version number	Description	Persons involved
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24/02/2023	v2.0	Final version for submission to the EC	Eleni Apospori



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## 1 Introduction

Gender Equality (GE) in academic organisations is influenced by legislation, political governmental priorities and is deeply rooted in the national culture and the culture of each academic institution [1]. While national legislation and political priorities are necessary for introducing GE policies in academic organisations, they are not sufficient to ensure the operationalisation and implementation of the GE policies at each academic institution [1]. The development and implementation of Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) bridges the gap between GE policy articulation at national level and implementation at institutional level taking into account the culture, the strategy, and the organisational structure of each academic institution. As such, GEPs constitute essential instruments that enable organisations to transform their GE strategic priorities into concrete, time-bound actions with measurable outputs and impact. GEPs identify GE issues in the organisation, systematically analyse and define the priorities of an organisation, describe specific GE objectives and translate these objectives into concrete actions, responsibilities, along with the resources and time plan for their implementation. One of the issues that merits attention is how the GEPs are implemented and monitored by the academic organisations.

The objective of this policy brief<sup>1</sup> is to identify issues associated with the implementation and monitoring of GEPs in Business & Management Schools and to provide recommendations to address these issues at institutional level. The evidence supporting the identified issues and subsequent recommendations is based on the outcome of the research performed within the framework of the TARGETED-MPI project since September 2020 in five partner institutions, namely: The Athens University of Economics and Business, Lancaster University Management School, Stockholm School of Economics, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, and American University of Beirut.

## 2 Issues related to the implementation and monitoring of GEPs

TARGETED-MPI employs a two-phase approach in the planning, development, implementation and monitoring of the partners' GEPs. Based on this approach, the evaluation of the first-phase implementation and monitoring of the GEPs provides feedback to partners for revising and improving their GEPs, leading to the development and implementation of their second-phase GEPs. During the first phase of implementation and monitoring of their GEPs, all five partnered B&M schools identified barriers that hampered the implementation and monitoring of their GEPs but also enablers that facilitated the GEP implementation and helped them to overcome the barriers [2, 3, 4, 5, 6]. The identified barriers and enablers are contingent upon the organisational structure and level of GE maturity of each institution and the specific issues that each institution encountered during the first-phase GEP implementation. Thus, not all institutions identified the same barriers and enablers.

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<sup>1</sup> Within its 4-year duration, TARGETED-MPI will produce three policy briefs. This document constitutes Deliverable 1.4 "Policy Brief 2", focusing on delivering recommendations for Business and Management schools on the implementation and monitoring of GEPs.

The identified barriers include:

1. **Low awareness and inadequate understanding of Gender Equality (GE) issues**, due to dominant hyper masculine organisational cultures. This low GE awareness is also reflected in the limited presence of GE concerns in most elements of the strategic vision of institutions, and in the priority given to GE policy at different institutions. A further misunderstanding is around the issue of merit, especially by men who feel disenfranchised by policies which support women and women's careers at work.
2. **Gaps between Gender Equality policy and practice**, due to inadequate communication of policies between different organisational units, and management levels. Gaps can also be due to an institutional focus on formal policy development rather than policy implementation, and lack of institutional resource allocated to policy implementation.
3. **Resistance to collaborate**. Collaboration entails working with individuals and is essential to bring about and sustain change. However, these individuals have their own agendas, vision, intentions, priorities, and timelines. Furthermore, gender and diversity are ideas loaded with value and meaning and therefore may require more effort and time to align personal conflicting values.
4. **Existence of parallel initiatives dealing with Gender Equality issues**. This fragmentation might require more communication and coordination among organisational units providing the relevant services.
5. **Resistance to change**, for example by gatekeeping or making it difficult to collaborate in the GEP implementation, and in introducing GE related structural changes.
6. **Bureaucratic organisational processes** within the institution and rigid frameworks that determine the operation of institutions (e.g. national legal framework) that slows down the implementation of the GEP actions.
7. **Issues related to data availability, specifications and accessibility for Gender Equality planning, implementation and monitoring**, including:
  - Unavailability of data or incomplete data.
  - 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, the context of their use and their association with GE indicators.
  - Lack of a single-stop shop for accessing and using all the data needed for GE policy development and implementation [7].

The lack of complete and well specified, and readily available data has a detrimental effect on the implementation of GEPs since decision makers do not have available the information needed to identify GE imbalances, to introduce and monitor the effect of GE actions.

8. **Limited training available to academic and administrative staff** in policy implementation and important GE issues such as unconscious bias and gender awareness.
9. **Understaffing and severe work overload**. Work overload is detrimental to the GEP implementation, as the busy schedules and excessive responsibilities of the academic and

administrative staff involved in the GEP implementation do not allow them to commit time and resources in the GEP implementation.

During the first-phase GEP implementation and monitoring, TARGETED-MPI also identified factors that facilitated GEP implementation in the form of enablers that helped them to overcome the barriers [2, 3, 4, 5, 6]. The enablers identified by the five partnered B&M schools include:

1. **Support and commitment of top management** in assigning high priority to GE in the institution's strategy and in facilitating the GEP implementation can overcome resistance to change from the lower management echelons.
2. **Involvement of senior-level academics** with expertise in GE issues and knowledge in the operation of the institution can facilitate communication, collaboration, and provides the required knowledge and experience for the effective GEP implementation.
3. **Effective communication of gender equality policies**, such as the public availability of GEPs, the establishment of departmental and school level Gender Equality and Diversity representatives, and the organisation of GEP dissemination and awareness raising events, contribute to closing the gap between GE policy and practice.
4. **Involvement of internal stakeholders throughout** the GEP planning, implementation and monitoring process facilitates collaboration, creates a sense of **ownership** of the GEP actions, and a sense of **responsibility** towards their successful implementation.
5. **Improved GE coordination**. The introduction of a body aiming to oversee the monitoring and implementation of GEPs such as the TARGETED-MPI Gender Equality Observatories (GEOs) help to overcome the fragmentation of the implementation of GE actions and facilitate coordination among organisational units supporting GE.
6. **Awareness raising events with the participation of all internal stakeholders**, such as the inaugural event organised by AUEB for raising the awareness of the AUEB academic community on GE, in which internal stakeholders of AUEB including students, teaching staff and administrative staff participated, facilitate the collaboration among all stakeholders and pave the way to GEP implementation.
7. **Pressure** to implement GEPs that comes from external organisations, such as the mandate of having in place and implementing a GEP as a prerequisite for the participation in 'Horizon Europe' research programs, the GE requirements of accreditation organisations, and the introduction of Gender Equality Committees in the Greek Universities. The Athena SWAN programme in UK Universities to name a few, can help to overcome organisational resistance and accelerate the implementation of GEPs.
8. The **availability of resources** for GEP implementation from national and international sources that support GE, such as the Horizon 2020 programme of the European Commission, provides the much-needed additional resources for the implementation of GEPs.
9. The **networking and collaboration across** universities of organisational units dealing with GE (e.g., the network of Gender Equality Committees of Greek Universities) and the development of **synergies** between the network members in the GEP implementation and monitoring further supports the implementation of GEPs through the exchange of knowledge and experience.

### 3 Recommendations

The experience that the five partnered B&M schools gained from the implementation of their first-phase GEPs led to the development of the following recommendations addressed to decision-makers at institutional level. It is important to note that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to the applicability of the proposed recommendations; the applicability of the recommendations depends on the level of GE maturity of the institution and the context in which the institution plans, develops and implements the GEP.

1. **Establish a body to coordinate Gender Equality planning, implementation and monitoring across the organisation.** This body will facilitate collaboration and communication among all internal stakeholders, will identify GEP implementation risks and will introduce appropriate risk mitigation actions. This body may have the form of a Gender Equality Observatory (GEO).
2. **Introduce Gender Equality awareness raising activities** early in the GEP implementation process in order to increase the involvement and acceptance of all stakeholders and reduce resistance to collaborate and organisational change.
3. **Introduce a Gender Equality communication program** at the very early stages of GEP implementation to inform all relevant stakeholders about the University's GE policies and their impact on all stakeholders, to increase collaboration and support for GEP implementation.
4. **Increase the capacity** of academic and administrative staff on important GE issues and on the implementation of GE policies. This can be achieved through training activities (seminars, workshops) on GE issues such as gender awareness, unconscious bias and incorporation of GE in research and teaching, as well as training on the GEP implementation.
5. **Commit adequate resources for GEP implementation** to avoid understaffing and heavy workloads that might lead to implementation stagnation and delays. Commitment of adequate resources will lead to more acceptance of staff promoting these policies and less push back and 'rejection' due to time and resource constraints (an excuse frequently given when it comes to dealing with GE and EDI issues).
6. **Involve all internal stakeholders throughout** the GEP planning, development, implementation, and monitoring process, to ensure GEP acceptance and ownership by all stakeholders.
7. Introduce **small, step-wise changes** at the early stages of the GEP implementation, to safeguard the acceptability of the internal stakeholders and their collaboration throughout the GEP implementation process.
8. **Develop and implement GE data management systems and processes** to support evidence-based, data-driven GEP planning, development, implementation, and monitoring. Use commonly agreed indicators to communicate the GE performance of your organisation to all stakeholders to ensure transparency and demonstrate GEP impact to all stakeholders.
9. **Participate in national and international Gender Equality networks and initiatives** to exchange knowledge and experience that will enhance the GE capabilities of your organisation.

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