

## 1. What are Gender Equality Plans and why are they important?

Gender equality is a core value for the European Union and a United Nations sustainable development goal. It plays a crucial role in research and innovation (R&I) by making it more inclusive, reflective of society, and beneficial in various ways. However, despite some progress through EU and national policies, there are persistent gender inequalities in R&I, such as underrepresentation of women in research, academic positions, and leadership roles. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive efforts across the entire R&I system and collaboration with various stakeholders, including the European Commission.

The introduction of the **Gender Equality Plan (GEP)** eligibility criterion is rooted in Horizon Europe's legal basis, which emphasizes gender equality as a key priority. This approach aligns with the European Commission's European Strategy for Gender Equality 2020-2025, which seeks to implement a **GEP requirement for participating organizations**. Additionally, the Council of the European Union, in its conclusions on the New European Research Area (ERA) in December 2020, urged the Commission and Member States to prioritize gender equality and mainstream it through GEPs and integrating the gender dimension into Research and Innovation (R&I).

To be eligible, legal entities from Member States and Associated Countries that are public bodies, research organisations or higher education establishments (including private research organisations and higher education establishments) must have a gender equality plan, covering the mandatory process-related requirements described below.

## 2. The mandatory process-related GEP building blocks

<b>To comply with the Horizon Europe GEP eligibility criterion, a GEP must meet four mandatory process-related requirements:</b>	<b>How ØUC's GEP meets the mandatory requirements</b>
<b>Public document:</b> The GEP must be a formal document published on the institution's website, signed by the top management and actively communicated within the institution. It should demonstrate a commitment to gender equality, set clear goals and detailed actions and measures to achieve them.	The <b>Action plan for gender equality and diversity</b> is a formal document published in the institution's website and signed by the rector. It includes specific objectives, actions and responsibilities dedicated to improving gender equality within the organization and its activities. Review of the plan is expected at least once a year as a part of annual organization's report. With this plan, the Østfold University College clearly states its commitment to integrating gender considerations in all activities.  As mandated by the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act and the Universities and University Colleges Act, the college's policy commits to active and intentional efforts towards gender equality. All leaders and employment teams are particularly tasked with ensuring these gender equality objectives are achieved.

<p><b>Dedicated resources:</b> a GEP must have dedicated resources and expertise in gender equality to implement the plan. Organisations should consider what type and volume of resources are required to support an ongoing process of sustainable organisational change.</p>	<p><b>The Working Environment Committee (AMU)</b> at Østfold University College is responsible for following up gender equality and diversity work at the university college. AMU plans to intensify its efforts in 2023, with a particular focus on diversity and inclusion. This will involve launching a network with representatives from various units to enhance awareness and boost efforts through the systematic implementation of new measures. Furthermore, AMU is in the process of recruiting a dedicated position that will be responsible for advancing ØUC's gender and diversity efforts. Adequate time and resources have been dedicated to ensure the effective execution of the working group's responsibilities.</p>
<p><b>Data collection and monitoring:</b> organisations must collect sex/ gender disaggregated data on personnel (and students, for the establishments concerned) with annual reporting based on indicators. Organisations should consider how to select the most relevant indicators, how to collect and analyse the data, including resources to do so, and should ensure that data is published and monitored on an annual basis. This data should inform the GEP's objectives and targets, indicators, and ongoing evaluation of progress</p>	<p><b>Reporting</b> on gender equality, inclusion and diversity is part (appendix) of the annual report including monitoring of indicators and data in relation to key staffing issues such as: gender comparison covering ØUC's part-time staff at institutional, faculty and administration levels, the proportion of women in teaching and research positions, salaries, temporary staff, part-time employees, sick leave, childcare, leadership, governance etc. Furthermore, risk assessments have been carried out across all organizational levels to enhance the identification of potential risks concerning gender equality, diversity, and inclusion. These assessments serve as the groundwork for more systematic initiatives moving forward. The report is available at ØUCs website.</p>
<p><b>Training:</b> The GEP must also include awareness-raising and training actions on gender equality. These activities should engage the whole organisation and be an evidence-based, ongoing and long-term process. Activities should cover unconscious gender biases training aimed at staff and decision-makers and can also include communication activities and gender equality training that focuses on specific topics or addresses specific groups.</p>	<p>Østfold University College is introducing students and future students to the range of activities underway at the University to combat all forms of discrimination, including relating to sexual orientation. This includes also a function "Si ifra" on the ØUC's website where they can provide feedback on various matters including all types of harassment and discrimination.</p> <p>Diversity and gender equality will be integrated into management training and recruitment. The courses addressed the senior management of the entire university (Management Board, Heads of Department, Heads of Administrative Office) and of selected departments. The courses</p>

	<p>focused in particular on gender stereotypes in evaluation, career progression and decision-making.</p> <p>Furthermore, the courses provided by Research Administration at ØUC will incorporate elements of gender dissemination in research projects.</p>
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### 3. Recommended focus areas

In addition to the four mandatory requirements for Gender Equality Plans (GEPs), there are five recommended thematic areas that organizations may consider when developing their GEPs. Østfold University College incorporated all five of them.

1. **Work-life balance and organizational culture:** Creating a respectful, open, and inclusive organizational culture involves valuing all staff and recognizing diverse gender identities. It is important to consider the impact of work-life balance and organizational culture on gender equality. Østfold University College will map and follow up the important work-balance goals for example that female and male employees are treated equally in the distribution of work tasks within research and teaching and equal division of labor between genders. Furthermore, it is important to ensure equal gender distribution among academic staff, including researchers with an immigrant background and descendants of immigrants.
2. **Gender balance in leadership and decision-making:** Promoting greater gender diversity in leadership and decision-making positions is one of key components of Gender Equality Programs (GEPs). Østfold University College is committed to achieving gender balance at every level within the organization. To accomplish this goal, a range of strategies will be implemented, encompassing all councils, committees, and working groups, both at the institutional and departmental levels, as well as within research groups.
3. **Gender equality in recruitment and career progression:** Recruitment, selection, and career advancement initiatives are designed to promote equal opportunities for both women and men in their professional growth and career progression. At ØUC, we assess the quality of our practices through several key strategies, including: establishing a network of representatives from various units to facilitate the exchange of experiences and ideas; giving explicit consideration to gender during the recruitment process, with a focus on attracting candidates from underrepresented genders; providing support for career development among ØUC employees.
4. **Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching:** Integrating the gender dimension is relevant in various research and innovation (R&I) domains. Exploring potential sex and gender differences, as well as addressing gender equality issues, contributes significantly to research excellence. At ØUC's Research Administration, the advisors offer valuable examples, creative ideas, and practical guidelines to support researchers who seek to delve into gender perspectives. These insights are valuable even in fields where gender considerations may not initially appear evident. Researchers and administration can enhance their own expertise by engaging in courses and participating in the national network, thereby fostering a comprehensive approach to research and innovation.

5. **Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment:** Østfold University College is obliged to implement systematic measures for countering harassment due to the increased activity and reporting responsibilities outlined in the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act, the Act governing Universities and University Colleges, and the Ministry of Education and Research's allocation letter. This includes control and monitoring of incidents as well as information to staff and students about procedures in case of sexual harassment.