

## **GENDER EQUALITY IN HORIZON EUROPE: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM GENDERACTION PROJECT**

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Dear Members of the European Parliament, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great honour to participate today at this very important event, jointly organized by Members of the European Parliament Soledad Cabezon Ruiz and Dan Nica. Horizon Europe negotiations are in full swing, and there is a pressing need to give our full consideration to the integration of gender equality issues in the next Framework Programme.

I am here today representing a Horizon 2020 project, GENDERACTION, in which we have been publishing Horizon Europe Policy Brief Series, to bring gender equality issues to the on-going negotiations. I will present a summary of what we are recommending, but first I would like to take this opportunity to thank heartily my colleague Ana Puy, the Director of the Spanish Women and Science Unit, whose leadership and dedication to this task has been unparalleled.

Few words to introduce GENDERACTION: GENDERACTION brings together representatives appointed by national authorities in Member States and Associated Countries. Most of us are former members of the Commission's Helsinki Group on Gender in Research and Innovation and current members of the SWG GRI. Our objective is to advance the implementation of gender equality in the European Research Area and we are doing this by fostering policy coordination, best practice exchange and mutual learning.

We focus on several types of activities:

1. We analyse Members States' progress towards implementation of gender equality in R&I through the ERA national action plans and strategies.
2. We deliver trainings to national representatives and Horizon 2020 National Contact Points,
3. We use mutual learning as an instrument to maximize existing experience among policy makers and other stakeholders

4. We provide policy advice on various topics, with Horizon Europe being the focal point of our activities in this period.
5. And lastly, we aim to advance gender equality in international cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation.

Gender equality is a central European value. It is a value which underlies our democracies, responsibility to the world and the environment. It is also a value that contributes to Innovation.

The innovative capacity of European states increases with incremental increases in gender equality. There is a correlation between the EU Innovation Scoreboard and the Gender Equality Index. The Gender Equality Index has a high degree of correlation expressed by Pearson correlation coefficient at the level of 0.87. And there is also a correlation between the dynamic of the growth of women's proportion among researchers and innovators and the country's innovative capacity.

Shortly, innovation and gender equality go hand in hand.

Important steps have been made in several EU countries and their national Research Funding Organizations as well as at the EU level. But analyses of the National Action Plans and Strategies carried out in GENDERACTION and other analyses of policy implementation show that the gap increases between higher and lower innovators.

Innovation leaders and strong innovators have more policies in place, have more concrete measures in place, have dedicated funding in place, and are more likely to have targets and quotas for decision-making positions.

If we are to achieve the ambitious goals ahead of us, we need to step up gender equality actions. We need to do more at Member State's level but, equally, Horizon Europe must **reinforce and scale up Horizon 2020 provisions**.

And we should use, actively use, Sharing Excellence in the Strengthening the ERA part of programme **to bridge these differences in gender equality implementation if we want this part of the programme to bridge differences in the Research and Innovation capacity**.

How to do this?

There are several areas of action where the programme implementation can be reinforced.

The implementation should continue to ensure gender balance among experts and evaluators but more effort should be made to ensure higher participation of women among Scientific Coordinators and ERC applicants. Temporary special measures, especially in decision-making, should be considered.

Applicants should be required to guarantee equal pay; have proper work life balance provisions in place, including evaluation systems that consider career breaks for childcare. Institutions should also commit to addressing gender biases in evaluation, and equally the Commission should train its evaluators. Applicants should be required to have policies and procedures in place to protect against sexual harassment and violence. We know that research environment is not immune to this and with the high degrees of mobility, we need to ensure safe experience, particularly in early career stages.

These requirements should be incorporated in the Rules for Participation, including improved monitoring, with a particular focus on Strengthening the ERA and Sharing Excellence part of the programme.

It is becoming increasingly evident that we cannot have robust research and innovation solutions to the pressing issues and problems facing our societies without addressing the gender aspect: health, migration, security and safety, digitalization, Artificial Intelligence. The list continues.

Horizon Europe seeks to implement Sustainable Development Goals, one of which is SDG Number 5 Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. To do this properly, gender equality must have its specific Area of Intervention in Pillar II, Cluster 2 Inclusive and Secure Societies. There are no inclusive and secure societies without attention to gender.

But gender must be addressed as a cross-cutting issue in all Clusters and Areas of Intervention and be included as an evaluation criterion. We cannot go back down on Horizon 2020.

Moreover, gender equality should have its specific Mission. We need strong R&I effort to combat gender stereotypes, end gender-based violence or address the future of labour in an era of digitalization and aging societies with care industries. If we thought getting people to the Moon was difficult, then we should think about these issues.

These measures should be implemented across the entire Horizon Europe.

- In Missions, gender must be mainstreamed from the start of the negotiation and design, through implementation and evaluation of the

mission impact

- Clusters and the Areas of intervention must incorporate gender as cross cutting issues
- Gender concerns need to be properly reflected in Open Science and Open Innovation
- Rules for Participation are a clear avenue to address the issues.
- I have already indicated that Strengthening the ERA should pay utmost attention to gender equality if the gap between the countries in research performance and innovation potential is to close.
- Gender concerns should be also addressed as part of Europe's international cooperation in STI.

And clearly, appropriate budget must be allocated for Gender Mission, Gender Area of Intervention, Trainings, Gender Equality Plans, policy analysis, monitoring

This is an important time, and we must **act to secure gender equality for the future**. In some countries, academic freedom is coming under attack, gender research is labelled as ideological and scientific facts are discounted and even ridiculed. The research community must stand with policy makers to defend the core values of research. This must include fairness, justice and openness, all aspects that contribute to gender equality in research.

I wish to invite you to engage with the GENDERACTION Policy Brief Series on Horizon Europe, use them in relevant discussions and distribute them among your colleagues.

We in GENDERACTION can also provide feedback or consultation.

You can also engage with other gender experts and scholars, including civil society organizations such as the European Platform of Women Scientists, the European Women's Lobby and the ERA Stakeholders.

And there are of course the bodies that the Council, the EP and the EC can work with. The SWG GRI for the Council, the Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) Committee here in the Parliament and the Gender Sector in the DG Research and Innovation. The resources are there.

**We need to safeguard what we have achieved in order for us to move forward together. This legislative proposal needs our full attention.** Thank you!