

## 5. Action 5: Promote gender equality and foster inclusiveness, taking note of the Ljubljana Declaration

### 1.1. Purpose of the Action and expected outcomes

This action aims at promoting inclusive gender equality in the ERA, while continuing to progress towards the three objectives that have underpinned the gender equality priority in the ERA since the 2012 Communication, i.e., promoting gender equality in careers at all levels, enhancing gender balance in decision-making, and integrating the gender dimension into research content.<sup>1</sup>

The new inclusiveness dimension of gender equality policies in the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024 aims to better tackle intersections between gender and other social categorisations and personal identities (i.e. address intersectionality), as well as to take into account inclusiveness at the geographical and sectorial levels to ensure that all countries are on board, and that the innovation actors and the private sector are also involved, considering in particular the significant under-representation of women in the STEM-oriented innovative entrepreneurship domain.

The accomplishment of these objectives is interrelated in particular with the implementation of **Gender Equality Plans** (GEPs) in Horizon Europe as key drivers of institutional change. Having a GEP has been set as an eligibility criterion for all public bodies, higher education institutions and research organisations from EU Member States and Associated Countries aiming to participate in the Horizon Europe calls with deadlines in 2022 and onward.<sup>2</sup> This shift has been supported by a growing number of Member States that have a GEP requirement in place at national level.<sup>3</sup>

The **Ljubljana Declaration on Gender Equality in Research and Innovation**, a core commitment to mainstream gender equality spearheaded by the Slovenian Presidency and endorsed by 25 Member States and the European Commission, also evidenced the role of GEPs as key policy instruments to achieve long-term and sustainable institutional change in the new ERA.<sup>4</sup>

The approach to gender equality in R&I, as established in the Communication of 30 September 2020 on '**A new ERA for Research and Innovation**'<sup>5</sup> emphasises *inclusive* GEPs as a key priority in the new ERA and acknowledges that 'other characteristics such as racial and ethnic origin, disability, socioeconomic background or sexual orientation interact and can reinforce intersectional and specific forms of discrimination that may limit the impact of measures focused only on one characteristic'.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the Ljubljana Declaration identifies the need to address gender-based violence (GBV) in R&I, and to strengthen monitoring and evaluation of gender equality, including developing appropriate indicators to measure progress.

These EU-level initiatives aim to address some of the persistent inequalities and challenges in relation to gender equality across the R&I ecosystem in Europe, which are evidenced by key EU publications such as the She Figures<sup>7</sup>.

Consequently, Action 5 envisages the following four outcomes:

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<sup>1</sup> [https://era.gv.at/public/documents/4587/05 - Gender\\_equality\\_explanatory\\_document\\_revised.pdf](https://era.gv.at/public/documents/4587/05 - Gender_equality_explanatory_document_revised.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> REGULATION (EU) 2021/695 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R0695&from=EN>. and COUNCIL DECISION (EU) 2021/764 of 10 May 2021 establishing the Specific Programme implementing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, and repealing Decision 2013/743/EU, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021D0764&from=EN>

<sup>3</sup> <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-1202-2021-INIT/en/pdf>; [https://h2020.genderaction.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/741466\\_Guidance-on-GEP-implementation-for-national-authorities-in-MS.pdf](https://h2020.genderaction.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/741466_Guidance-on-GEP-implementation-for-national-authorities-in-MS.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MIZS/Dokumenti/PSEU/Ljubljana-Declaration-on-Gender-Equality-in-Research-and-Innovation-endorsement\\_final.pdf](https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MIZS/Dokumenti/PSEU/Ljubljana-Declaration-on-Gender-Equality-in-Research-and-Innovation-endorsement_final.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [EUR-Lex - 52020DC0628 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/52020DC0628-EN)

<sup>6</sup> European Commission, 'Towards inclusive gender equality in Research and Innovation', Publication Office of the European Union, May 2022, available at: [https://apre.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/KI0122349ENN.en\\_.pdf](https://apre.it/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/KI0122349ENN.en_.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/research-and-innovation/en/knowledge-publications-tools-and-data/interactive-reports/she-figures-2021>

- Develop a policy coordination mechanism to support all aspects of gender equality through inclusive Gender Equality Plans and policies, and a dedicated EU network on their implementation;
- A strategy to counteract gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, in the European R&I system and ensure gender equal and inclusive working environments through institutional change in research funding and performing organisations;
- A policy approach to inclusive gender equality, that addresses gender mainstreaming and opening to intersectionality with other diversity dimensions to advance the new ERA;
- Develop principles for the integration and evaluation of the gender dimension in R&I content in cooperation with national RFOs.<sup>8</sup>

## 1.2. Implementation of the Action

The European Commission, through **Horizon Europe**, has addressed gender equality at three crucial levels, that support Action 5.

First, it has introduced having a GEP as an eligibility criterion for certain categories of legal entities – core ones for ERA policy – from EU Member States and Associated Countries. This is done through a self-declaration at the proposal stage. Random compliance checks will be conducted annually, and a pilot is ongoing. This will provide key insights on GEP implementation and hence, gender equality and inclusiveness progress in the ERA, and ERA-supporting Horizon Europe projects funded under the ‘Widening participation and Strengthening the European Research Area’ (WIDERA) work programme are also monitoring GEP implementation at the national and institutional levels.<sup>9</sup>

Second, the integration of a gender dimension into research and innovation content is a requirement by default, unless the topic description explicitly specifies otherwise, and is evaluated under the excellence criterion.

Third, the programme has defined gender balance as a core objective. Therefore, it has set a target of 50% women in Horizon Europe related boards, expert groups and evaluation committees, and, furthermore, gender balance among researchers has been set as a ranking criterion for proposals with the same score.

The Horizon Europe WIDERA Work Programme directly supports the implementation of Action 5.<sup>10</sup> Calls addressing inclusive gender equality in the ERA were launched as part of the 2021-2022 work programme. Additionally, further calls explicitly mentioning the objectives of Action 5 of the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024 are included in the 2023-2024 work programme, including the Policy support to facilitate the implementation of a zero-tolerance approach towards gender-based violence in the ERA.

Gender equality across the R&I ecosystem and, particularly, across R&I institutions has been strongly promoted through different EU-funded projects. In this context, project GENDERACTIONplus, funded under the 2021-2022 WIDERA work programme, was launched in June 2022, as a follow-up to project GENDERACTION<sup>11</sup>. This project aims at supporting the coordination of gender equality and inclusiveness objectives of the new ERA through capacity building, mutual learning, and policy coordination. To this end, the project has formed two trans-national Communities of Practice, one of national authorities and one of national Research Funding Organisations.<sup>12</sup>

Action 5 is also building on the Horizon 2020-funded project UniSAFE<sup>13</sup> which focuses on gender-based violence (GBV) in higher education and research, and has generated new research findings into the severity of the issue across the EU, with 62% of the more than 42,000 student and staff respondents declaring having experience at

<sup>8</sup> Gender equality in research and innovation, at [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/democracy-and-rights/gender-equality-research-and-innovation\\_en](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/democracy-and-rights/gender-equality-research-and-innovation_en).

<sup>9</sup> [https://genderaction.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/GENDERACTIONplus\\_D6.1\\_Benchmarking-analysis-of-monitoringevaluation-of-GEPs.pdf](https://genderaction.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/GENDERACTIONplus_D6.1_Benchmarking-analysis-of-monitoringevaluation-of-GEPs.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2023-2024/wp-11-widening-participation-and-strengthening-the-european-research-area\\_horizon-2023-2024\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2023-2024/wp-11-widening-participation-and-strengthening-the-european-research-area_horizon-2023-2024_en.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> <https://genderaction.eu>

<sup>12</sup> <https://genderaction.eu/events/rfos-community-of-practice-meets-second-time>

<sup>13</sup> <https://unisafe-gbv.eu/>

least one form of GBV. The project has developed two White Papers and recommendations for key stakeholders<sup>14</sup> and launched an extensive toolkit for research-performing organisations (RPOs)<sup>15</sup>. The 2023 WIDERA topic on policy support for the implementation of a zero-tolerance approach towards GBV in the ERA will follow up on UniSAFE in supporting even more directly the specific related outcome set for Action 5, i.e., a strategy to counteract GBV, including sexual harassment, in the European R&I system.

The Action 5 work on GBV actually kicked off in November 2022 with the Czech Presidency Conference on Ending GBV in Academia and the resulting Call for Action<sup>16</sup>, to which the Spanish Presidency responded in particular by organising a follow-up presidency conference in October 2023<sup>17</sup>, both conferences showcasing the UniSAFE findings and tools.

At the EU policy level, there are initiatives such as the **EU strategy for universities**, in which the European Commission is committed to strengthening women's and girls' participation in STEM studies and careers through a roadmap of activities that have synergies with Action 5, just as Action 5 has synergies with other ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024 actions, in particular Actions 3, 4 and 13.

Furthermore, in 2022, through the Horizon Europe WIDERA work programme, the European Commission established the **EU Award for Gender Equality Champions**, a new prize recognising academic and research organisations driving the change towards gender equality in research and innovation through (inclusive) GEPs<sup>18</sup> and which is meant as a complement to the GEP eligibility criterion introduced in Horizon Europe as well as an incentive for achieving the ERA Action 5 objectives.

Importantly, based on the impactful work developed by the ERAC Standing Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation,<sup>19</sup> the **ERA Forum** has set up a subgroup on **Inclusive Gender Equality in the European Research Area** to support the implementation of ERA Action 5. The subgroup kicked-off its activities in March 2023, is co-chaired by the Czech Republic, and gathers nominated representatives from 22 Member States, 3 Associated Countries, and 14 stakeholder organisations<sup>20</sup>. Furthermore, a Task Force on GBV was created withing the ERA Action 5 in October 2023.

As highlighted earlier, Action 5 not only focuses on advancing gender equality but also on **fostering inclusiveness**, in particular through intersectionality. As defined by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE),<sup>21</sup> intersectionality is the '*analytical tool for studying, understanding and responding to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics/identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination*'. However, to help better frame intersectionality and inclusiveness in the context of R&I, a policy-support project is funded under the 2021 WIDERA work programme, project INSPIRE, with the ambition of creating a European Centre of Excellence on inclusive gender equality in R&I<sup>22</sup>.

### National policy examples

Several national policies and initiatives have been developed in the past years to better support the inclusion of marginalised groups. The DG Research and Innovation pilot report on *Approaches to inclusive gender equality in research and innovation (R&I)*<sup>23</sup> published in September 2022 compiles a review of emerging practices for inclusive gender equality in national R&I systems across Europe. For example, the **Netherlands** developed in

<sup>14</sup> <https://zenodo.org/communities/unisafe/?page=1&size=20>

<sup>15</sup> <https://unisafe-toolkit.eu/>

<sup>16</sup> <http://gbv2022.soc.cas.cz/index.html>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.conferencegenderacademia.com/>

<sup>18</sup> [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/prizes/eu-award-gender-equality-champions\\_en](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/prizes/eu-award-gender-equality-champions_en)

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/preparatory-bodies/european-research-area-and-innovation-committee-erac>

<sup>20</sup> The ERA Action 5 subgroup gathers 22 Member States (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK), 3 Associated Countries (GE, NO, IL) and 14 Stakeholder umbrella organisations from 5 categories: Category 1 - Higher education institutions (AURORA, CESAER, Coimbra Group, EUA, EuroTech, The Guild, YERUN); Category 2 - Research performing organisations (EARTO, EASSH, EU-LIFE, G6); Category 4 - Individual Researchers & Innovators (Eurodoc); Category 6 - Academies of Science (ALLEA); Category 7 - Research funding organisations (Science Europe).

<sup>21</sup> EIGE. Glossary and thesaurus. <https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1050>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.inspirequality.eu/>

<sup>23</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Approaches to inclusive gender equality in research and innovation (R&I)* – , Publications Office of the European Union, 2022, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/004694>

2020 an integrated 'National action plan for more diversity and inclusion in higher education and research' that includes other grounds of discrimination besides gender.<sup>24</sup>

Another example is in **Austria**, where the *National strategy on the social dimension of higher education - Towards more inclusive access and wider participation* incorporates the intersectional perspective to gender equality<sup>25</sup>. This strategy considers the interaction of 'diversity markers', which can be gender, ethnic/migrant origin, disability and/or chronic illness, a lower socio-economic background, care responsibilities, or early school leavers. In defining actions to enhance the access to higher education for underrepresented groups. Similarly, in **Norway**, the Committee for Gender Balance and Diversity in Research (KIF) considers how gender and ethnicity interact and foster inequalities in higher education institutions and research institutes<sup>26</sup>.

For further assessing the impact of its policies and the relation between gender equality and intersectionality, DG Research and Innovation also commissioned a *study to examine the impacts that EU and national policies and programmes supporting or imposing Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) in research organisations have actually had on gender equality across the ERA*. This study focused not only on GEPs but also on inclusive GEPs. The key research findings, good practice examples, and policy recommendations from the study were discussed in an event conducted in March 2023<sup>27</sup>, and the study will soon be available.

In addition, the GENDERACTIONplus project has recently carried out a benchmarking on intersectionality and inclusiveness in R&I, which underscores that while intersectionality and inclusiveness are increasingly supported as a general approach, this principle has until now very rarely been operationalised in concrete policies and actions.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, the 2023 OECD STIP Survey provides key information on policies and initiatives both at the EU level but also national on trends in science, technology and innovation policy. Regarding policies related to Action 5, the **budget distribution** presented in Figure 18 illustrates that the funds allocated to policies promoting ERA Action 5 tend to fall under the smallest budget ranges (less than EUR 1M, between EUR 1 and 5M and between EUR 5 and 20M), partially as a result of the prominence of governance as the policy instrument most used within this action.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.government.nl/documents/reports/2020/09/01/national-action-plan-for-greater-diversity-and-inclusion-in-higher-education-and-research>

<sup>25</sup> Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, n.d., 'Universities', available from: [https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/en/Topics/Higher-education---universities/Higher-education-system/Universities.html#:~:text=The%20Universities%20Act%20\(%20UG%20\)%20entered,financed%20by%20the%20public%20purse](https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/en/Topics/Higher-education---universities/Higher-education-system/Universities.html#:~:text=The%20Universities%20Act%20(%20UG%20)%20entered,financed%20by%20the%20public%20purse)

<sup>26</sup> Kifinfo, n.d., 'KIF Committee's recommendations for gender balance', available at: <https://kifinfo.no/en/kif-committees-recommendations-gender-balance>

<sup>27</sup> <https://research-innovation-community.ec.europa.eu/events/3Qjx4x09PWZni0QK9RRReB/overview>

<sup>28</sup> [https://genderaction.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/GENDERACTIONplus\\_D2.1\\_Benchmarking-report-on-terminology-and-policy-on-intersectionality.pdf](https://genderaction.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/GENDERACTIONplus_D2.1_Benchmarking-report-on-terminology-and-policy-on-intersectionality.pdf)

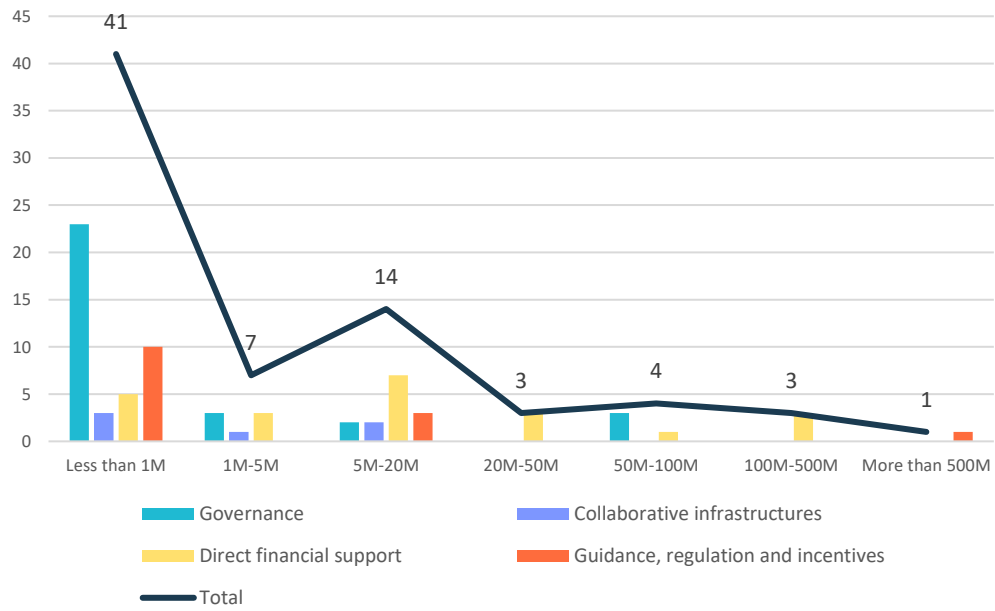


Figure 1: Action 5: Distribution of budget per policy instrument