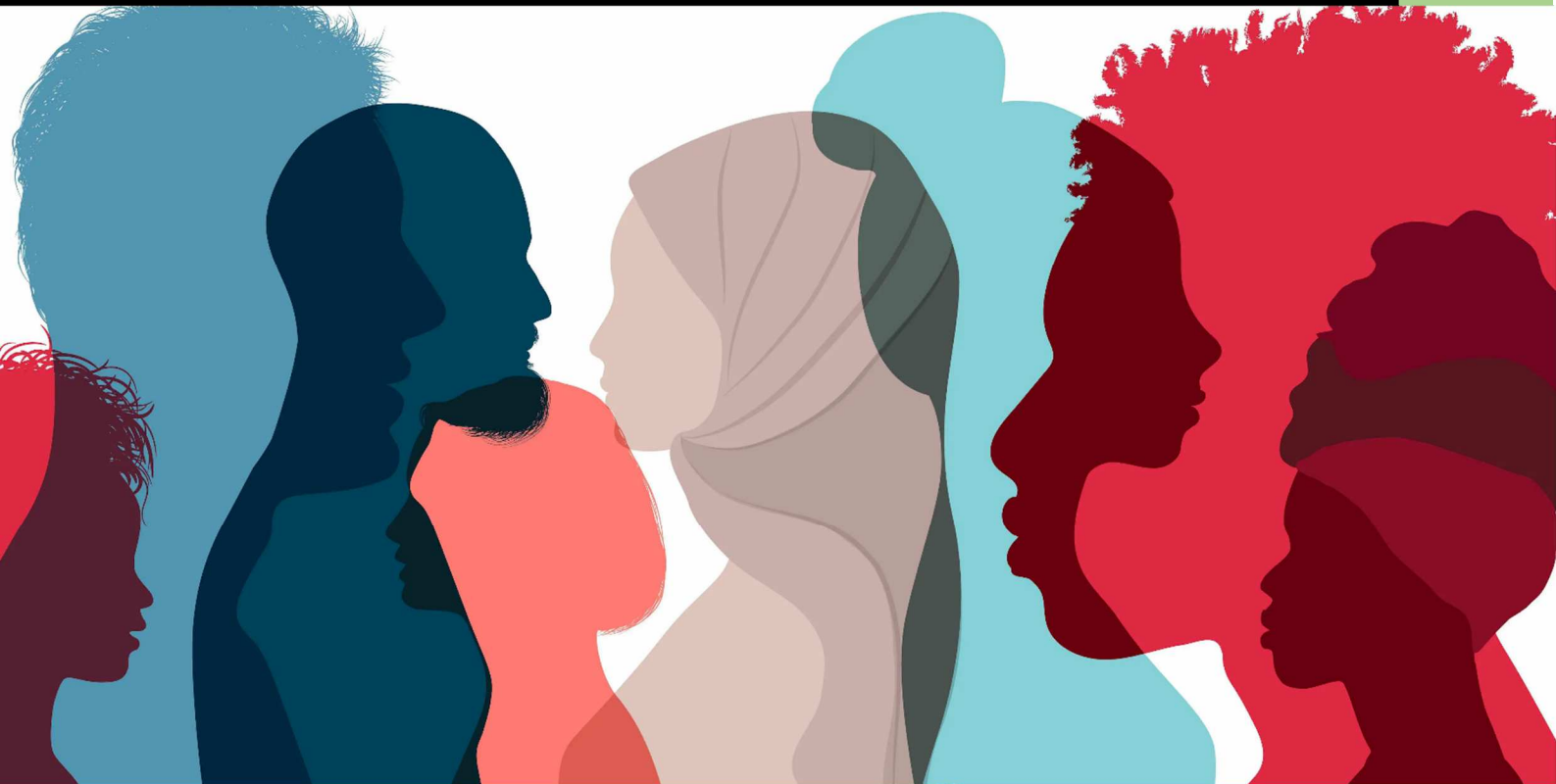


2024

# Gender Equality Plan



01/01/2024

## Introduction

The Gender Equality Plan (GEP) is a fundamental step in promoting gender balance and inclusion in Research, Innovation and Training granted under the Horizon Europe financial programmes of the European Commission.

The work on equality, undertaken by ERIC and all its Partners, is designed to promote equality and combat discrimination among the Partner's employees, researchers and students, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, national origin, language, religion and beliefs, functional abilities, sexual orientation, gender identity and age.

Although different types of discrimination have some common characteristics, there are many situations where it can be appropriate to separate out gender equality as a priority area and, in fact, the lack of gender balance in top scientific positions is still a key issue.

Equality is not just a matter of gender balance, but also one of equal opportunities and the fair distribution of resources. The achievement of equality between the genders requires having a long-term, genuine desire to bring about change.

Many parties are involved in allocating resources and making appointments, and there are many considerations, which need to be taken into account.

When we are involved in our everyday work, it is easy to quickly lose sight of equality considerations unless targets have been expressed and clearly incorporated and responsibilities have been clearly allocated.

This plan addresses the most important challenges involved in ERIC's gender equality work during the forthcoming years.

Although ERIC is a small research organisation, the overall structure of the GEP has been elaborated with the support of all ERIC's partners and is divided into five key areas:

- Gender in leadership and decision making;
- Gender in recruitment, retention and career progression;
- Gender dimension in curricula and research;
- Gender equality and sex and gender perspective
- Measures against sexual harassment.

The GEP is a flexible tool and contains measures foreseen for the needs of a small research organisation. The measures are addressed to specific beneficiaries, being the main target the "female researchers". The individual measures were specifically foreseen for the years 2022-2024 will be verified through the use of indicators and by peer-reviewers.

Like many other activities, the gender equality measures have been affected by the pandemic, which has caused – among more destructive ones – huge delay in research recruitment and access to laboratories. As ERIC is a small Research Association, the need to focus on the core activities with the limited resources, has delayed the application of these measures, which will be put in place as soon as the overall situation becomes less difficult.

## FACTS & FIGURES

This paragraph will give a picture of the ERIC workforce and will address specifically the three items:

- Dedicated resources: commitment of human resources and gender expertise to implement it.
- Data collection and monitoring: sex/gender disaggregated data on personnel and students and annual reporting based on indicators.
- Training: Awareness raising/trainings on gender equality and unconscious gender biases for staff and decision-makers.

ITEM	F	M	%
Personnel 2023	4	4	50%
Personnel 2024	4	4	50%
Top Management	2	2	50%
Board of Directors	1	6	85%
Dedicated personnel for gender equality implementation	1		100%

As shown in the table above, ERIC has a very limited workforce, which is fully and completely related to the research projects that are carried out in a certain period.

Following a non-discriminative rule, gender pay gap does not exist and salaries are coherent with the research seniority/managerial function, thus we have an equal pay for equal work.

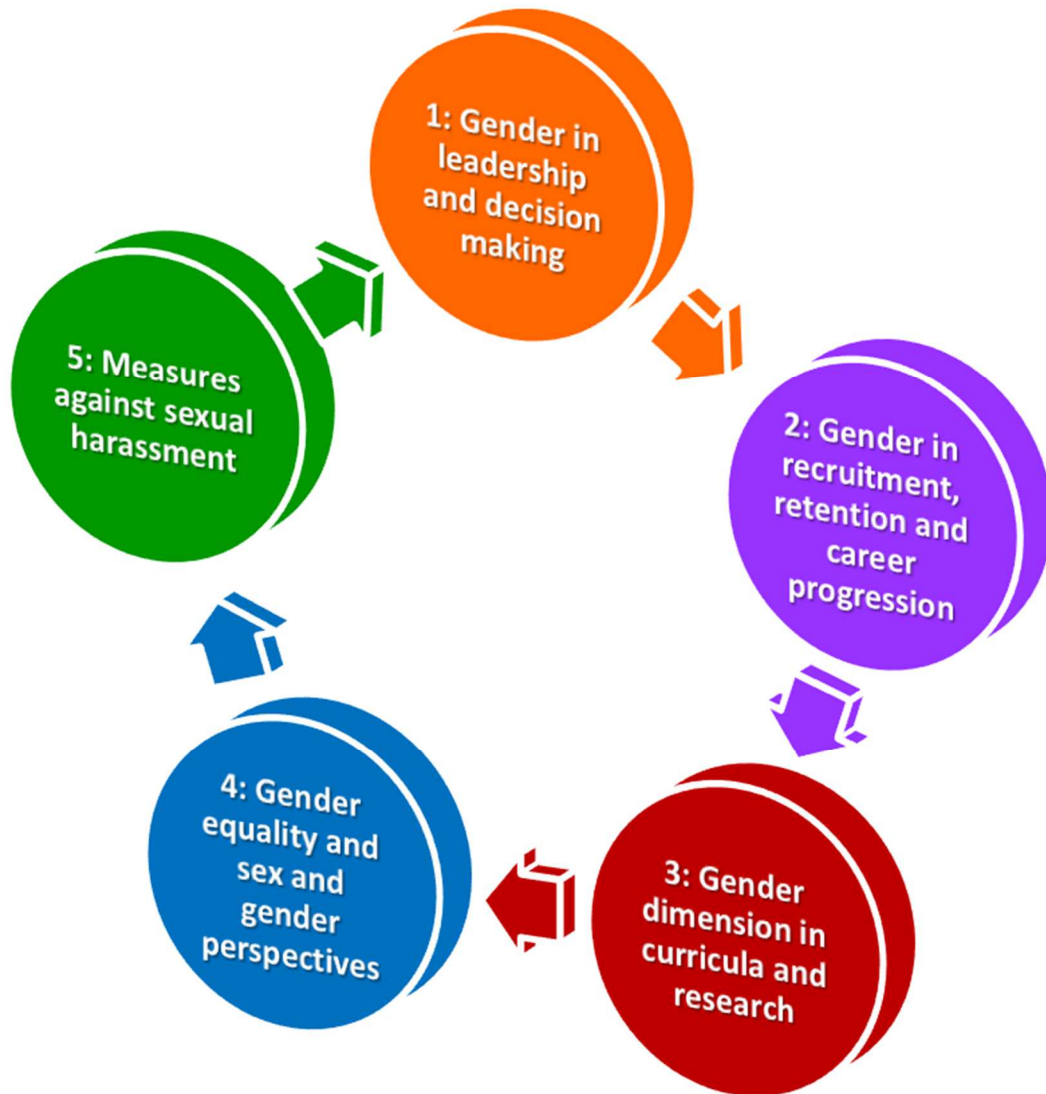
The gender balance has been adjusted and in these past two years, ERIC managed to pass from a 70% female presence in research personnel, to a 50% in year 2023 and 2024.

The Top Management is formed by the President, the Chief Executive Officer, the Chief of the Research Team and the Administrative Manager and, here as well, the gender balance score a 50%.

As usual, a dedicated meeting was organized via the Teams platform, the last December, among the top management, to implement the initiatives to be carried out to raise awareness in gender equality.

The responsibilities related to this task have been assigned to Anna Maria Casella, the Administrative Manager.

## KEY PRIORITY AREAS



## 1. Gender in leadership and decision making

Women play a role in ERIC leadership, nevertheless senior leadership positions (particularly those of the Board of Directors) have been traditionally male dominated. The composition of the Board has never been gender balanced. Although gender equality is generally supported by the leadership and administration, there is a lack of gender mainstreaming in decision-making processes.

The Statute of the Association states that the BoD is elected for an indefinite term but is subject, every 5 years, to the validation of the General Assembly, In the next meeting of the GA, the problem of the imbalance of the female presence in the Board, will be highlighted.

On the other hand, the day-to-day management is carried out by a team which is well balanced and, of the 4 people involved in various activities the balance is 2 females and 2 males.

Objective	Actions	Timeline		
		2023	2024	2025
<b>Achieve gender balance in ERIC leadership</b>	→ Achieve gender balance in the Board of Directors			X
	→ Achieve senior the gender balance in the Top management of the Association	X	X	X
	→ Develop and support leadership capacity for women.	X	X	X
Mainstream gender in decision-making processes		X	X	X

As usual, a dedicated meeting was organized via the Teams platform, the last December, among the top management, to implement the initiatives to be carried out to raise awareness in gender equality.

The Administrative Manager, Anna Maria Casella, was appointed and, as the first measure, it was decided to print a leaflet to be distributed to all ERIC Personnel to highlight the issues of gender equality and the procedures to report any sexual harassment.

## 2. Gender in recruitment, retention and career progression

This action is a very wide one as it involves not only the challenges related to gender equality in recruitment, retention and career progression but also diversity and work-family balance: since careers in research are associated with high workload and the culture of long working hours on the one hand and insecure working conditions (temporary contracts) on the other hand, men and women who have children or would like to have children tend to be disadvantaged.

In the research sector, there was a gender imbalance (70% were female researchers) but, in the past two years, ERIC managed to balance this gap and, since 2021 the number of female and male researchers is equal. As mentioned earlier, there are no imbalances in gender pay and salaries are coherent with the research seniority or managerial duties, thus we have an equal pay for equal work.

In the management sector, the gender equality has been consistent in the past 5 years, as 50% of people with managerial duties are females.

Objective	Actions	Timeline		
		2023	2024	2025
<b>Improve the situation of the (mostly feminized) research sector</b>	→ Identify and put in place measures to improve gender balance across research ranks	X	X	X
	→ Define transparent, meaningful research ranks with correspondent salary scales	X	X	X
<b>Make all phases of recruitment gender sensitive</b>	→ Collect and monitor the gender of applicants for jobs in a digitalized, anonymous manner	X	X	X
	→ Improve the gender balance of shortlisted candidates	X	X	X
	→ Develop and adopt gender-sensitive recruitment guidelines	X	X	X
	→ Provide training on gender-sensitive recruitment procedures.		X	X
<b>Recognize and accommodate employees with care-related responsibilities</b>	→ Provision of services for work and personal life integration	X	X	X
<b>Improve communication of ERIC's commitment to be family-friendly work place.</b>	→ Make ERIC's commitment more explicit in recruitment processes.	X	X	X
By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value				

### 3. Gender dimension in curricula and research

Gender equality and gender mainstreaming in research is one of the six European Research Area (ERA) priorities. Integrating the gender dimension in research content and teaching is one of its three objectives. Training activities in ERIC are mostly related to research project under a Framework programme, thus, it is probable that a great pool of students might never encounter a gender topic while following these seminars.

As mentioned earlier, the last 20<sup>th</sup> of December, a dedicated meeting, carried out via the Teams platform, was held to decide who would be the person responsible for the implementation of the initiatives to be carried out to raise awareness in gender equality and which kind of initiatives should be put in place.

The Administrative Manager, Anna Maria Casella, was appointed and, as the first measure, it was decided to print a leaflet to be distributed to all ERIC Personnel to highlight the issues of gender equality and the procedures to report any sexual harassment.

Objective	Actions	Timeline		
		2023	2024	2025
<b>Promoting the integration of a sex and gender perspective in teaching curricula</b>	→ Availability of Guides and/or Workshops on the integration of gender equality and diversity issues in curriculum design, learning activities and/or program of study, as support for teaching staff		X	X
	→ Organise Training seminars or prepare guidelines on integrating sex/gender in teaching curricula		X	X
	→ Collect and monitor the gender of applicants for jobs in a digitalized, anonymous manner	X	X	X
	→ Improve the gender balance of shortlisted candidates	X	X	X
	→ Develop and adopt gender-sensitive recruitment guidelines		X	X
	→ Provide training on gender-sensitive recruitment procedures.			X
	→ Provision of services for work and personal life integration	X	X	X
	→ Make ERIC's commitment more explicit in recruitment processes.	X	X	X
By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value				

## 4. Gender equality and sex and gender perspective

Although gender equality is part of ERIC's mission in implicit ways through the idea of open society, diversity, tolerance or equal opportunities, but not explicitly. Institutional data is not analysed systematically from a gender perspective, and there is no strategic planning concerning the promotion of gender equality.

As mentioned in the section "Facts & Figures", ERIC personnel is solely hired in relation to European research projects to be carried out and, thus, the planning can be done only once the project is invited to the Negotiation phase by the European Commission. This leaves a very limited time for the recruitment phase.

This short term perspective and being a small Research Association, the limited number of available position lead, sometimes, to a gender imbalance but, in ERIC case the imbalance was in favour of female researchers (the gender balance has been adjusted in 2021) and the management reached a good 50% in gender balance. The overall pandemic situation has, in some way, limited the activities and many Universities have blocked the recruitment procedures and this has slowed down the creation of a common gender balance policy in recruitment.

As mentioned earlier, although salaries are only referred to the position, i.e. equal pay for equal work, and no reported gender discrimination, there has been a lack of communication campaigns targeting gender equality in research.

In spite of recent efforts, there is a low awareness at the ERIC community about equal opportunity-related policies, but this item will be present in the next Board of Directors meeting in 2022.

Objective	Actions	Timeline		
		2023	2024	2025
<b>Promoting a gender and sex perspective in Research processes</b>	→ Institutional recognition within the Partnership of those dissertations that have taken the gender dimension into account. (e.g prizes for MA/Phd Thesis)	X	X	X
	→ Promotion of networking of multidisciplinary research groups interested in gender issues and diversity management		X	X
Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard		X	X	X



## 5. Measures against sexual harassment

Although ERIC did not report incidents of sexual harassment since its creation in 2008, it does not mean that this topic should not been addressed.

It is necessary to organise trainings on the topic to prevent victims from hiding their complaints as the fear of retaliation and mistrust in the institutional response were common reasons given by harassed people for not reporting these cases.

Like many other activities, the pandemic has delayed the organization of physical meetings and workshops and the overall application of measures against sexual harassment has been hugely affected but, in 2022, a leaflet on the Gender Equality policy and the procedures to be followed to report sexual harassment has been prepared and will be distributed in the first quarter of the year.

Objective	Actions	Timeline		
		2023	2024	2025
<b>Prevention and zero tolerance of sexual harassment</b>	→ Develop a new institutional system with an additional informal complaint procedure to complement the formal one in place	X	X	X
	→ Set up a centralized digital recording system for both formal and informal complaints		X	X
→ Measures for information and reporting → Run communication campaigns on sexual harassment		X	X	X

## 6. Integrating the gender dimension in the content of new research projects

When applying for a grant under Horizon 2020, you are invited to explore whether and how the gender dimension is relevant to your research, in the proposal you are asked to “, describe, where relevant, how sex and/or gender analysis is taken into account in the project's content”. In this respect, ERIC’s Administrative Manager, Anna Maria Casella, has the task to prepare a comprehensive section in every proposal that in which ERIC is participating, having in mind that the way sex and/or gender analysis is taken into account in the proposal will be assessed by the evaluators alongside the other relevant aspects of the proposal.

Integrating the gender dimension in a research project proposal is an added value in terms of excellence, creativity, and business opportunities. It helps researchers question gender norms and stereotypes, to rethink standards and reference models. It leads to an in-depth understanding of both genders’ needs, behaviours and attitudes. It enhances the societal relevance of the knowledge, technologies and innovations produced. It also contributes to the production of goods and services better suited to potential markets.

Furthermore, “gender” is a key analytical and explanatory variable in research. It refers to cultural values and social attitudes that together shape and sanction "feminine" and "masculine" behaviours, and also affect products, technologies, environments, and knowledge. Gender assumptions often go unquestioned and can unconsciously influence scientific priorities, research questions, and choice of methods.

In this respect ERIC is committed to consider these aspects, when submitting a research proposal.

Gabriele CENTI

President

Stefano VANNUZZI

C.E.O.