



Social and Civil Affairs & Higher Education and Research

Gender Equality Plans in Higher Education Institutions

Workshop, 12 December 2023
10:00 – 13:00 CET - Online

Concept Note and Draft Agenda

Background

In a collective endeavour to foster gender equality within universities across the Mediterranean region, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is proud to join hands with esteemed partners: the Mediterranean Network of Engineering and Management Schools (RMEIM), the Mediterranean Universities Union (UNIMED), and the Consortium of Euro-Mediterranean Universities Téthys, to deliver an introductory online workshop to highlight the significance of Gender Equality Plans and their transformative role in academic institutions.

Gender Equality Plans have emerged as essential tools in promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities within academic institutions. As a demonstration of their commitment to gender equality, European Union (EU) universities are now mandated to implement these plans in order to qualify for grants. The importance of elaborating Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) in universities, in general, and in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean countries, in particular, stems from a multitude of compelling reasons, rooted in social, economic, and academic imperatives.

In fact, GEPs help **address gender disparities** existing within the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean region. These have been historically witnessed in various aspects of society, not least in education. GEPs provide a structured approach to identify, acknowledge, and rectify these disparities within the academic sphere, fostering a more equitable environment. In this sense, GEPs can focus on **empowering women within the academic environment** by promoting equal access to education, leadership opportunities, research funding, and career progression. By ensuring equal educational opportunities and access to resources, GEPs contribute to empowering a significant portion of society, thus **fostering economic growth** and prosperity.

Encouraging gender diversity and inclusion strengthens the talent pool and enhances innovation and creativity. At the same time, this can **enhance educational quality**. In fact, a balanced representation of genders among faculty and leadership posts, positively impacts the quality of education. Diverse



Social and Civil Affairs & Higher Education and Research

perspectives lead to enriched teaching methods, research approaches, and a broader understanding of societal issues, ultimately enhancing the overall educational experience for all.

Many international organizations and agreements advocate for gender equality in education. Implementing GEPs helps in aligning universities in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean with global standards, enhancing their reputation, fostering international collaborations, and attracting partnerships and funding opportunities. Moreover, in line with the European Union's practices, various funding opportunities now require universities to have GEPs in place. Adhering to such requirements facilitates access to grants, while aiming to mitigate gender-based discrimination and biases prevalent in academia. Through awareness, education, and policy frameworks, universities can actively combat stereotypes, prejudices, and unequal treatment based on gender.

For the main EU Research Programme - Horizon Europe - having a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) is an eligibility criterion for all public bodies, higher education institutions and research organisations hailing from EU Member States and associated countries, wishing to participate in the programme.

A GEP shall cover the following 5 thematic areas:

- work-life balance and organisational culture
- gender balance in leadership and decision-making
- gender equality in recruitment and career progression
- integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content
- measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

Beyond academia, GEPs can indeed have a ripple effect on society by breaking down traditional gender roles and norms. As students and faculty experience a more balanced and inclusive educational environment, they become agents of change, propagating these values within their communities.

In summary, the implementation of Gender Equality Plans is crucial for Southern and Eastern Mediterranean universities as it not only aligns with international standards and funding requirements but also drives social, economic, and academic progress by empowering individuals and fostering a more inclusive, equitable, and vibrant academic community. Nevertheless, despite all the positive impacts of implementing GEPs in universities, many of them still face difficulties in drafting such plans and only a few Southern and Eastern Mediterranean universities have implemented good practices in this sense.



Social and Civil Affairs & Higher Education and Research

Objectives of the Workshop

The primary aim of this workshop is to thoroughly explore the technical intricacies involved in drafting a Gender Equality Plan. To achieve this objective, representatives from EU universities who have successfully designed such plans, and notably, Southern and Eastern Mediterranean universities that have set commendable examples, will showcase their respective cases. These presentations are intended to provide valuable inspiration to numerous other universities looking to embark on a similar journey towards gender equality.

In particular, the workshop aims:

- To elucidate the importance of Gender Equality Plans in universities, showcasing their pivotal role in receiving funding and fostering inclusivity.
- To facilitate a dialogue on the challenges and good practices in developing effective Gender Equality Plans, particularly tailoring them to the Mediterranean context.
- To encourage the exchange of insights and experiences among relevant stakeholders, promoting collaboration on, and the advancement of, gender equality in academia, focusing specifically on STEM topics.

Simultaneous translation in Arabic, English and French will be provided throughout the meeting.



Social and Civil Affairs & Higher Education and Research

Agenda

12 December 2023, 10:00 - 13:00 CET

Time	
10:00 – 10:15	<p>Opening remarks</p> <p>Moderator: Anna Dorangricchia, Project Manager Gender Equality, Social and Civil Affairs Division, Union for the Mediterranean</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Itaf Ben Abdallah, Senior Advisor, Higher Education and Research Division, Union for the Mediterranean • Muna Erlafood, Gender Expert, Minister of Social Development, Jordan • Germán Bernal-Ríos, Policy Officer International Cooperation, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport, and Culture (DG EAC), European Commission
10:15 – 11:15	<p>Gender Equality Plans in Higher Education Institutions How to draft them? What are the challenges and solutions?</p> <p>Moderator: João Lobo, Project Analyst, Higher Education and Research Division, Union for the Mediterranean</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anne Pepin, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD), European Commission • Isabelle Regner, Vice-President in charge of Gender Equality and Fight against Discriminations, Aix-Marseille University <p>Q&A session</p>
11:15 – 12:45	<p>Roundtable Focus on Women in STEM</p> <p>Moderator: Anna Dorangricchia, Project Manager Gender Equality, Social and Civil Affairs Division, Union for the Mediterranean</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Potential for development</i> : Anastasia Zabaniotou, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, President of the Network of Mediterranean Engineering and Management Schools (RMEI)



Social and Civil Affairs & Higher Education and Research

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Women in Science and Technology</i> : Núria Castell, Former Dean of the Barcelona School of Informatics (FIB) at UPC (Technical University of Catalonia), Vice-Dean for Equality and Ethics of the Official Professional College of Informatics Engineering of Catalonia (COEINF) • <i>Women and AI</i>: Maha Gmira, Professor, Euromed University of Fez (UEMF), School of Digital Engineering and Artificial Intelligence (EIDIA) (tbc) • <i>STEM for women financial inclusion</i>: Amira Khaddour, Professor at ENSTAB - Ecole Nationale des Sciences et Technologies Avancées, Borj Cédria, Tunisia and Member of the executive board of the African women in FinTech • <i>Women entrepreneurs in Tech</i> : Hend Aouini, Founder, ALGAPLAST (tbc)
12:45 – 13:00	Closing remarks