

Monitoring and Evaluating Gender Equality Plans

This policy brief provides a brief overview of the relevance of process monitoring and impact evaluation of GEP implementation in science and research organisations. It has been compiled on the basis of practical experience and lessons learned from the Horizon 2020 project CHANGE, which was funded by the European Commission from 2018 to 2022. Further information on the project approaches and results was summarised by the project partners in a handbook, which is available online (Dahmen-Adkins & Thaler 2022).

Since 2022, a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) has been an eligibility criterion for public institutions, research organisations (RPOs) and higher education institutions (HEIs) applying for funding within the European Commission's Horizon Europe framework programme.

Monitoring the progress of implementing gender equality actions and evaluating their outcomes is one of four requirements that the European Commission has defined as mandatory building blocks¹ for GEPs (European Commission 2021, p. 25). This underpins the importance of accompanying an organisational change process, in order to tackle identified key sites of existing inequalities at organisations. Monitoring offers the chance to improve gender equality work during the implementation by responding quickly to changes related to organisational circumstances with corrective actions and moreover it supports the reflection on institutional processes.

Monitoring and evaluation must be considered an integrated part of the GEP, parallel to planning and designing adequate GEP measures, and must therefore be backed by sufficient resources to ensure a successful implementation. Institutional gender equality interventions require evidence-based development, so that appropriate monitoring and evaluation tools can be set up by developing corresponding indicators.

¹ The other building blocks stipulate that it must be a formally signed and public document, that dedicated financial and human resources must be made available by the organisation for gender equality policy work, and that gender competence and awareness raising within the various status groups must be promoted through appropriate training and capacity building.



A basic and easily understandable distinction is the differentiation between so-called **process** and **impact indicators**:

Process indicators are used for process monitoring, they measure the achievement during implementation in order to track progress towards the intended results. These indicators are used to measure gender equality change management efficiency involving operational aspects of implementation, such as

- management mechanisms,
- institutional actors involved,
- activities,
- resources etc.

Pre-defined process indicators ensure that the implementation of each action stays on track, further they are particularly effective in identifying challenges and resistance, which hinder GEPs from realising their full potential.

Applying also qualitative monitoring tools contributes to getting a better understanding of the underlying processes on different organisational levels of the RPOs, as they support the individual and institutional reflection of actors and especially of those persons actively involved in change agency, the macro and micro change agents (Dahmen-Adkins & Peterson 2021). The monitoring data collected can help facilitate knowledge sharing between change agents and intra-institutional actors.

Impact indicators measure the extent to which each GEP activity has reached the previously intended effects. They relate directly to the outlined long-term objectives of the GEP regarding the institutional change.

For newcomers in the field of institutionalised gender equality work, the first step towards implementing a monitoring and evaluation system is the use of **quantitative indicators**. In relation to process monitoring, this can be, for example, the number of activities carried out and the people reached as a result. For an impact evaluation based exclusively on quantitative data collection, it makes sense to use existing controlling instruments of the RPO and to integrate a gender dimension.



The results of the GEP monitoring and evaluation should be regularly disseminated within the organisation to report on the progress and success of gender equality efforts and to raise awareness of resistance and setbacks. To ensure that the organisation's leadership takes ownership of the change process, GEP monitoring should be communicated through them, among others. However, it must be avoided that only the managers pass on the successes of the institutional gender equality work while, for example, the gender equality officers have to communicate the deficits.

Furthermore, results on the progress and achievements of the GEP should not only be distributed within meetings of organisational decision-makers, but a targeted communication strategy must ensure that all members of the organisation are informed about the change process on a regular basis. Appropriate means are staff meetings, newsletters and other events. If designated annual gender reports are not yet established within the institution, it can again be helpful to integrate the written reporting on the progress of gender equality efforts into already existing annual organisational reports.

GEPs are not just documents signed by the leadership of RPOs and RFOs, but they provide indicators of change processes that can be assessed and evaluated through appropriate monitoring. Continuous and systematic monitoring of the GEP implementation process further allows tracking the progress of the individual and organisational capacity building of different actors within the organisation, which is essential for a successful cultural shift towards an inclusive work environment.

Resources

Practical information on the concrete development and application of monitoring and evaluation tools can be found online in the **GEAR (Gender Equality in Academia and Research) tool**, which offers a detailed overview of all stages of institutional change through GEPs.

Another useful resource is a **toolbox** developed in the frame of the H2020 EFFORTI EU project, which is based on a profound theoretical foundation and enables the user to properly assess how gender equality interventions contribute to achieving related objectives.



Further reading

Equality Challenge Unit (2014). [Measuring Progress on Equality: Qualitative Evidence](#).

Peterson, Helen & Dahmen, Jennifer (2018). Monitoring Handbook. Methods and Tools for Monitoring Developed in the GenderTime Project. Gothenburg: Gothenburg University. Gothenburg Studies in Work Science 1.

Wroblewski, Angela & Leitner, Andrea (2022). Relevance of Monitoring for a Reflexive Gender Equality Policy. In: Wroblewski, A. & Palmén, R. (eds.): Overcoming the Challenge of Structural Change in Research Organisations – A Reflexive Approach to Gender Equality. Emerald Press, pp. 33-52.

Bibliography

Dahmen-Adkins, Jennifer & Thaler, Anita (eds., 2022). Customised CHANGE. Co-Producing Gender Equality Knowledge in Science and Research. Download: <https://www.change-h2020.eu/publications.php>

Dahmen-Adkins, Jennifer & Peterson, Helen (2021). Micro Change Agents for Gender Equality: Transforming European Research Performing Organizations. *Front. Sociol.* 6:741886. doi: 10.3389/fsoc.2021.741886

European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (2021). Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans, Publications Office of the European Union, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/876509>



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