


# Advancing the sex and gender dimension in the research and innovation funding process

Report from the FORGEN CoP workshop  
September 2021




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# Foreword

Inclusion of the sex and gender dimension in research and innovation improves the quality and relevance of funded research and innovation projects. With Horizon Europe, the EU Commission increases its commitment to incorporating the sex and gender dimension in research and innovation, requiring it by default and evaluating it under the excellence criterion unless indicated otherwise.

This report summarises the outputs from a workshop organised by The Funding Organisations for Gender Equality (FORGEN) Community of Practice (CoP) working group on the “Sex and gender dimension in the research and innovation funding process”. The working group aims to map existing practices, identify common challenges and best practice, as well as promote mutual learning among Research & Innovation Funding Organisations (R&IFOs) in the FORGEN CoP network.

Initially, the working group leaders conducted a survey among FORGEN CoP members regarding their implementation of the sex and gender dimensions throughout the research and innovation funding process. The survey was presented and elaborated upon, and a workshop was held in September 2021 with the FORGEN CoP R&IFO members and Professor Londa Schiebinger of Stanford University, a world-renowned expert in this area. The workshop was centred around the FORGEN CoP survey and a global review performed by Gendered Innovations<sup>1</sup> and Wellcome to evaluate policies on sex, gender, and/or diversity analysis in research design.



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<sup>1</sup> <https://genderedinnovations.stanford.edu/>

# Summary

This report shares insights about inclusion of the sex and gender dimension in the research and innovation funding process that emerged from the FORGEN CoP survey and the workshop subsequently held with Professor Londa Schiebinger. Research & Innovation Funding Organisations (R&IFOs) agreed that collaboration is key to success, acknowledging that joining forces under a united goal to further the inclusion of the sex and gender dimension in research will enable the most meaningful impact to be realised. Open collaboration includes the development of a shared framework for implementing the sex and gender dimension in the grant process, sharing current practice, and exchanging ideas for improving upon such practice across the sector.

Good practice examples, which some R&IFOs have already implemented, include:

- Universal, standard definitions for the concepts of sex and gender, and the sex and gender dimension;
- Clearly defined guidelines, checklists and assessment criteria for applicants and reviewers, including mandatory questions for applicants regarding the relevance of the sex and gender dimension in research proposals; and
- An intersectional approach to the sex and gender dimension, as any single category gives an incomplete understanding of inequalities faced by people studied within and/or impacted by the research.

The R&IFOs flagged areas that hinder the implementation and monitoring of the sex and gender dimension:

- External issues, such as the current gender imbalance within STEM worldwide, and conflicting cultural norms across different societies; and
- Lack of resources within R&IFOs resulting in an inability to follow up with grant awardees, thereby impeding progress in creating long-term solutions and assessing the success of current measures.

The members acknowledged that grant applicants face significant barriers, including:

- A lack of clarity in defining the sex and gender dimension, resulting in applicants providing incorrect or missing information in their research proposals;
- Receiving limited support for questions relating to the sex and gender dimension; and
- Mandatory sex and gender dimension requirements in research proposals adding significant time to the application process.

Professor Londa Schiebinger's work recommends further education and the analysis of policy changes, including:

- Sex and gender dimension training in university curricula and throughout the research and innovation funding sector;
- Training for evaluators and reviewers monitoring grant awardees to ensure that sex and gender dimension within applications are being implemented; and
- Evaluating policy implementations – for example, the percentage of grant applicants claiming the sex and gender dimension is not relevant to their research proposal, and whether their justifications are valid.

The workshop enabled the sharing of insights into common practices and evaluations of integrating the sex and gender dimension among R&IFOs. This report captures these findings and consolidates them, providing guidance for other R&IFOs considering the inclusion of the sex and gender dimension in their research and innovation grant funding lifecycle.

# 1. Introduction

# Introduction to the FORGEN CoP and workshop

## About FORGEN CoP

The Funding Organisations for Gender Equality (FORGEN) Community of Practice (CoP) is committed to the goal of monitoring and improving the implementation of gender equality in Research & Innovation Funding Organisations (R&IFOs) throughout the European Research Area. To promote knowledge sharing around this goal, FORGEN CoP brings together gender equality practitioners in Research & Innovation Funding.

R&IFOs play a critical role in addressing gender inequality in the research and innovation landscape. These organisations can help ensure equal participation of women and men in research funding and promote increased scientific quality and societal relevance through the requirement of sex and gender analyses in the application phase, as well as the integration of the sex and gender dimension in funded projects when relevant. FORGEN CoP consists of 17 member institutions from Europe and South Africa.<sup>2</sup>

## About the survey

The FORGEN CoP Sex and Gender Dimension Working Group sent out a survey to all FORGEN CoP members in September 2020. The aim was to gather information on members' activities on the sex and gender dimension in the research and innovation funding process. The questions in the survey related to the different phases of the research and innovation funding process and focused on implemented activities as well as perceived challenges<sup>3</sup>.

## About the workshop

To discuss contributions public actors can make in advancing the sex and gender dimension in the research and innovation funding process, FORGEN CoP organised a virtual workshop for R&IFOs and experts on September 21, 2021. Thirty-six individuals from 23 organisations participated.

## Sex and Gender definitions

In this report, we use the definitions provided by the European Commission for 'sex' and 'gender', as described below.<sup>4</sup>

### Sex

In this context, 'sex' refers to biological characteristics. With regard to humans, 'sex' refers to the biological attributes that distinguish male, female and intersex. For non-human animals, 'sex' refers to biological attributes that distinguish male, female and hermaphrodite. In relation to engineering and product design research, 'sex' includes anatomical and physiological characteristics that may affect the design of products, systems and processes.

### Gender

'Gender' refers to sociocultural norms, identities and relations that 1) structure societies and organisations and 2) shape behaviours, products, technologies, environments and knowledges. Gender attitudes and behaviours are complex and might change depending on the time and place. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, gender is multidimensional and intersects with other social categories, such as sex, age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation and ethnicity.

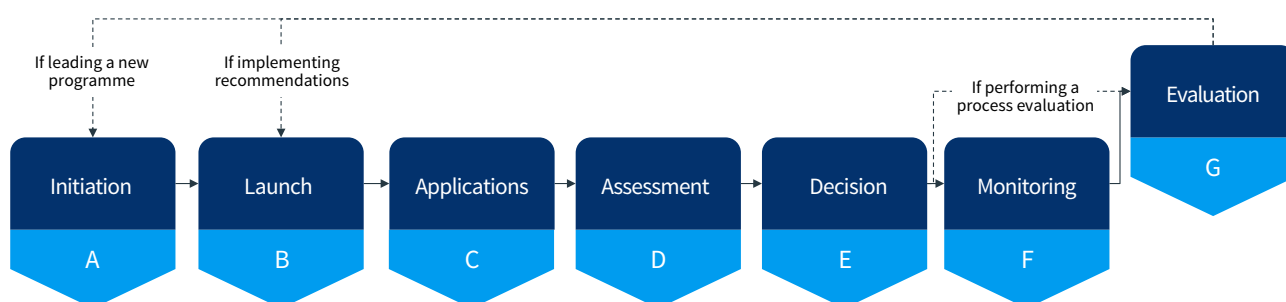
<sup>2</sup> The FORGEN CoP member organisations are Science Foundation Ireland (Ireland), Vinnova (Sweden), Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency (Slovakia), Science Europe (European), Dutch Research Council (Netherlands), National Research Foundation (South Africa), Irish Research Council (Ireland), Innovate UK (United Kingdom), Health Research Board (Ireland), German Environment Agency (Germany), Environmental Protection Agency (Ireland), Enterprise Ireland (Ireland), Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Ireland), Austrian Research Promotion Agency (Austria), Joanneum Research (Austria), and NordForsk (Scandinavia).

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 1 for the FORGEN CoP Sex and Gender Dimension Working Group survey questions.

<sup>4</sup> European Commission (2020) Gendered Innovations 2: How Inclusive Analysis Contributes to Research and Innovation. Policy Review.

## **2. The Sex and Gender Dimension in Research and Innovation Funding**

# How is the sex and gender dimension currently included in grant evaluation processes?



Based upon responses received, there are currently several approaches to incorporating the sex and gender dimension in the grant and evaluation process. Understanding and sharing knowledge on different types of grant evaluation processes and their implementation will help to mitigate bias in this context. The grant evaluation process consists of several steps in which the sex and gender dimension can be included.

As a part of FORGEN CoP's previous work, the member R&IFOs designed a flow diagram for a common grant evaluation process, outlined below:

- A.** Initiation – Planning, defining programme objectives, defining the target applicant pool
- B.** Launch – Opening the call, advertising and promoting, addressing applicant queries
- C.** Applications – Applicant submission, eligibility checks
- D.** Assessment – Reviewer sourcing, remote assessment, internal triage/shortlisting, panel/interview assessments
- E.** Decision – Ranking proposals, internal decision-making, offering awards/letters of offer
- F.** Monitoring – Monitoring awards, research outputs and final reports
- G.** Evaluation – Programmatic evaluation, measuring effectiveness in relation to programme objectives

The following sections describe the implementation of gender equality measures through each step of the grant evaluation process.

## Initiation, launch and applications

The first phase includes programme initiation and launch as well as the initial management of applications.

Some of FORGEN CoP's members have methods for integrating the sex and gender dimensions in the initiation phase of the grant evaluation process. Methods include, for example, the programme manager providing definitions of the sex and gender dimension in the new programme. This information can be provided to applicants before the launch, such as on a programme call website or in a checklist or call document. Examples of information provided also include:

- A gender relevance check
- An internal tool modelled like an ex-ante gender impact assessment
- A support function for the programme regarding the sex and gender dimension



Some R&IFOs have a research officer for gender mainstreaming available for consultation. The officer provides advice to the funding agency on the sex and gender relevance of programmes before the call is launched as well as training for internal staff, reviewers, applicants and grant recipients on gender impact assessments of research projects. In some cases, the commissioning bodies (for example, the European Union) and/or partner organisations also set priorities for programmes as to whether the sex and gender dimension should be prioritised.

As part of the application phase, almost every agency responding to the survey indicated that they included a mandatory question on the relevance of the sex and/or gender dimension related to the proposed topic. As a result, applicants were required to provide an answer regardless of the relevance they attached to this dimension in their research proposal.

### Assessment and decision

The next phase of the grant evaluation process includes assessment and decision-making. Most of the R&IFOs indicated that they provide training and information for reviewers before assessment takes place. For some R&IFOs, the sex and gender dimension criteria are an integral part of the assessment and decision phase, and as such are integrated with other evaluation criteria and assessed as part of the overall application, generating a final overall score. Some R&IFOs evaluate the sex and gender dimension separately, generating a separate score.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

The final phase of the grant evaluation process consists of monitoring the grants awarded, as well as an evaluation of the programme's performance against its original objectives. R&IFOs may also monitor the percentage of grant recipients who addressed the sex and gender dimension in their programmes of research, and how effectively they addressed this dimension.

To ensure consideration of the sex and gender dimension, some R&IFOs monitor their awards on a regular basis. One agency guided that they use the following questions in the periodic monitoring of funded research projects:

- Are questionnaires, surveys, focus groups, etc. designed to unravel potentially relevant sex and/or gender differences in your data?
- Are the groups involved in the project (e.g., samples, testing groups) gender balanced? Is data analysed according to the sex variable? Are other relevant variables analysed with respect to sex?

To supplement these questions, the same agency indicated that they plan to incorporate monitoring of the number of publications which account for sex and/or gender and to request additional details in project annual reports.

Regular evaluation of programmes is also used to inform iterative developments in the sex and gender dimension as programmes evolve.

### Other activities

R&IFOs also highlighted the importance of related activities without specific reference to the sex and gender dimension in research and innovation.

For example, one agency requires all research reports – not only those that make specific relevance to sex and gender – to be written in gender-inclusive<sup>5</sup> language. To support this, the agency has a gender mainstreaming research officer that offers consultation on gender content and appropriate language use.

Some R&IFOs also monitor the gender distribution within project teams in terms of dedicated time, influential positions and the number of team members. In addition, two R&IFOs indicated that they have gender balanced assessment panels, whilst one guided that they include a gender expert on every review panel.

5 <https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/guidelines.shtml>

# What is best practice for implementing the sex and gender dimension?

While R&IFOs differ in their approaches, this section highlights a few best practice examples for ensuring the effective implementation of the sex and gender dimension.

Support from within the research organisations and for applicants is vital and can include the following approaches as examples:

- A gender mainstreaming tool ensuring inclusion of the sex and gender dimension in the research;
- Designated “gender officers” or “gender experts” within R&IFOs;
- Compulsory training for applicants to ensure relevant implementation of the sex and gender dimension; and
- Inclusion of a mandatory question in applications regarding potentially relevant sex and gender aspects of the research proposal.

As an example of a gender mainstreaming tool, one agency uses an internal gender relevance check. This is an *ex ante* gender impact assessment tool designed to ensure inclusion of sex and gender aspects from the beginning of a research project if technically appropriate.

Another agency offers support on the sex and gender dimension to all programme calls before their launch. On behalf of its national government, this agency operates in accordance with an action plan regarding gender mainstreaming, with annual follow-up activities.

The inclusion of a mandatory question on the sex and gender aspects of a research programme in application templates is also considered good practice.

With these questions, applicants must provide a yes or no response and justify their answer. Making this question mandatory increases the proportion of positive (‘yes’) answers, since all applicants are compelled to justify their response through solid analysis, rather than giving a negative (‘no’) answer without further justification.<sup>6</sup> Although the quality of responses varies, the mandatory question ensures that applicants must reflect on the requirement, thereby increasing their awareness of the sex and gender dimension in research and innovation.

## Methods for implementing the sex and gender dimension

All methods for implementing the sex and gender dimension can be adapted by project teams to enhance the quality and relevance of their research and innovation outputs. Some methods are more general in nature and thus should be broadly applied. These include:

- Analysing sex
- Analysing gender
- Intersectional approach<sup>7</sup>
- Co-creation and participatory research
- Asking about gender and sex in surveys

Furthermore, there are field-specific methods and applications guided in a report carried out by the Gendered Innovations 2 Expert Group<sup>8</sup>. These may also be useful to consult with.

<sup>6</sup> The Gender Dimension in Research and Innovation <https://www.gu.se/sites/default/files/2021-04/The%20Gender%20Dimension%20in%20Research%20and%20Innovation.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> An intersectional approach makes visible multiple and intersecting forms of social discrimination not only related to sex and gender but also race, sexual orientation, age, disability, and socio-economic backgrounds, etc.

<sup>8</sup> Gendered Innovations 2: How Inclusive Analysis Contributes to Research and Innovation, 2020, European Commission.

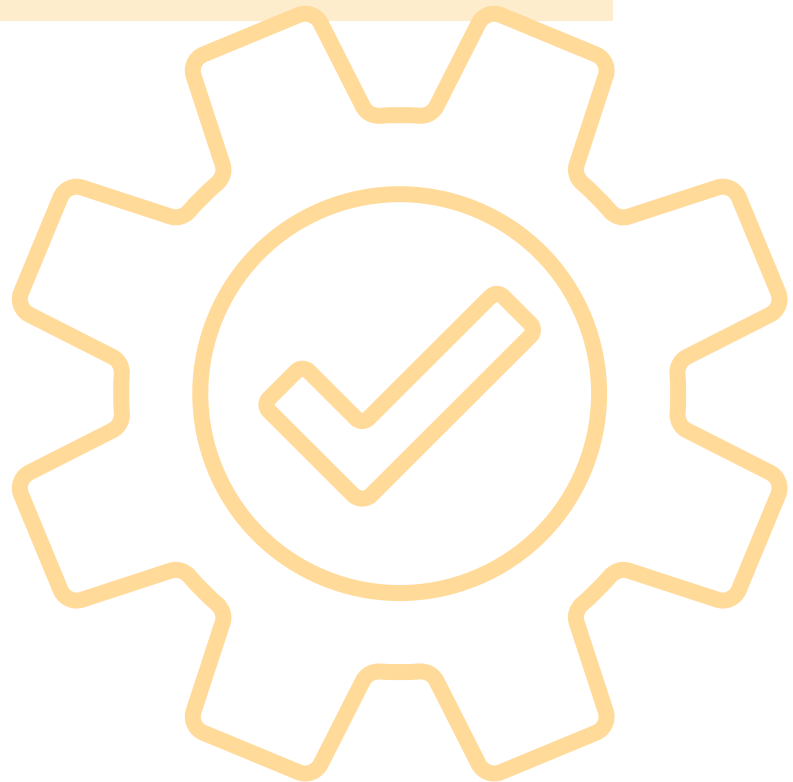
The research project 'Gendered Innovations' has gathered additional tools and methods, some of which are detailed below.<sup>9</sup>

### Additional Methods

- rethinking research priorities and outcomes
- rethinking concepts and theories
- formulating research questions
- analysing how sex and gender interact
- engineering innovation processes
- design thinking
- rethinking standards and reference models
- rethinking language and visual representations

*Schiebinger, et al, (Eds.) (2011-2021).*

*Gendered Innovations in Science, Health & Medicine, Engineering and Environment.*



<sup>9</sup> <http://genderedinnovations.stanford.edu/methods-sex-and-gender-analysis.html>

# What are the barriers and how are they being addressed?

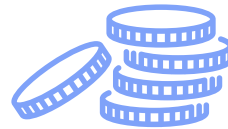
As part of the FORGEN CoP workshop outputs and those arising from the member survey conducted by FORGEN CoP during Spring 2021, participants and CoP members identified the following barriers to the implementation of the sex and gender dimension in research and innovation.



## Lack of awareness and understanding

One of the main barriers identified is a general lack of awareness and understanding of the sex and gender dimension, how they can be implemented in research and innovation, and what impact this implementation can have. A lack of knowledge persists amongst applicants, reviewers, assessment boards and decision-makers. For example, there is a common misunderstanding that the terms *sex and gender dimensions* and *gender balance in teams* mean the same. It is therefore essential to raise awareness that the sex and gender dimension and gender balance in research teams (as in the binary count of individuals on the project team) are unrelated and must be considered separately. To this end, some R&FOs specifically discourage narrative relating to the gender balance of research teams in this section.

Among researchers and decision-makers, there is also a lack of clarity regarding the importance and societal benefits of integrating the sex and gender dimension in research and innovation. These dimensions are generally regarded as ‘nice to have’ rather than ‘need to have’. As such, a more unified approach amongst government policy makers and agencies would be critical in raising awareness of the importance on their integration.



## Lack of resources

R&FOs have limited resources, both capital and human, to train reviewers and applicants in the integration of the sex and gender dimension. When analysing project proposals, R&FOs often use ad hoc funding panels without sufficient training in this specific area.

R&FOs also have limited resources for monitoring the integration of the sex and gender dimension in funded projects actively underway. Prioritisation of the sex and gender dimension by agency management is therefore essential to secure necessary resources to undertake these actions. Prioritisation for including these dimensions needs to occur at the highest levels of the organisation and senior leaders should be encouraged to understand and raise awareness of the importance of these dimensions to the research endeavour.



## Lack of support

Access to support for integrating the sex and gender dimension in research is generally limited. Definitions and instructions for applicants can be vague, and it is often unclear what support, if any, is available.

Based on the survey outputs, it was reported that some applicants did not respond to the questions on the sex and gender dimension in the application process. Addressing these questions can be

particularly challenging for applicants outside of academia, many of whom lack a clear understanding of this field of research. More support for applicants on how to answer questions on the sex and gender dimensions is clearly needed.

Moreover, there is a need for unambiguous definitions that can be understood and applied in particular contexts. Increased support for including the dimensions in different disciplines is also required, as one school of thought on guidelines will not apply in all contexts.



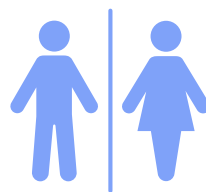
### Lengthy applications

Incorporating the sex and gender dimension into R&IFOs' grant application processes can increase the length of applications and thereby cause applicants to exclude these dimensions. There is a risk that applicants may either spend too little time on effectively integrating the dimensions in their application or simply choose not to apply to R&IFOs that require inclusion of these dimensions.



### Cultural norms

Cultural norms can affect the inclusion of the sex and gender dimension in research and innovation in multiple ways. In some countries, political pressures or leadership resistance regarding these dimensions complicates the perception of their relevance to the research and innovation question.



### Research and innovation is not gender balanced

Although the STEM sector (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) is amongst the largest in research and innovation, it is generally not 'gender balanced'<sup>10</sup>. From early education, women are commonly underrepresented in STEM subjects, which is reflected in the STEM research field. This renders the inclusion of the sex and gender dimension more important than ever, while also creating additional challenges, as the gender imbalance can lead to a lack of priority for the consideration of these dimensions.



### Lack of follow-up

R&IFOs conduct limited follow-up regarding the inclusion of the sex and gender dimension in funded research and innovation projects, with inconsistent monitoring and evaluation. As a result, the sex and gender dimension may not end up being included to the extent described in the application process.

Moreover, there is a lack of knowledge and expertise within R&IFOs regarding the quality and extent of integration of the sex and gender dimension in funded programmes of research. Follow-up is often done through a 'tick-box exercise' and rarely comprises an in-depth analysis of its inclusion nor of the impact of its inclusion.

<sup>10</sup> European Commission, 'She Figures 2021' <https://op.europa.eu/en/web/eu-law-and-publications/publication-detail/-/publication/67d5a207-4da1-11ec-91ac-01aa75ed71a1>

Workshop participants expressed the need to build upon requirements for including the sex and gender dimension in applications by requiring additional follow-up to assess its inclusion in funded programmes of research.

The inclusion of assessment of the sex and gender dimension as a requirement, while perhaps increasing the burden to both applicants and evaluators, will likely contribute to a heightened awareness of importance of including this dimension in the research programme.



### Difficult to achieve impact

R&IFOs are required to ensure that the research they support is impactful and relevant to both sexes/all genders, where relevant. Integrating the sex and gender dimension into publicly funded research presents challenges. The focus must not only be on creating impact, but on measuring this impact and demonstrating a causal connection to the activities conducted. Framing the issue is key to ensuring that R&IFOs are understood and committed to achieving a common goal. Some members noted the benefit of joining forces with other relevant communities but flagged a challenge, at times, in identifying and approaching those with whom collaboration could be beneficial.

### How are the barriers currently addressed?

As described in previous sections, FORGEN CoP members are engaged in various initiatives to overcome these barriers. By providing information, simplifying application processes, and offering training and support to reviewers, applicants and administrators, each of these actions can collectively ensure research outputs are more relevant and impact assured.

The following section addresses strategies for advancing the implementation of the sex and gender dimension in research and innovation policy.



# 3. Going Forward

# How can we advance the dimension into research and innovation processes?

Despite progress, continued efforts are necessary to further advance the implementation of the sex and gender dimension in the research and innovation process.

During the FORGEN CoP workshop, Dr Lilian Hunt (Wellcome, UK) and Prof Londa Schiebinger (Stanford University, Gendered Innovations) presented the report entitled, “The Global Review of Sex, Gender and Diversity Analysis in Research Policies of Public Funding Agencies”. The report introduces a five-part framework for integrating the sex, gender and diversity analysis in research policies, and is summarised in the table below.

## Definition of terms

Most of the R&IFOs analysed in the report arising from the review had clear definitions of relevant terms regarding the sex and gender dimension.

Nonetheless, workshop participants expressed a need for more standardised terms in an international context. Participants also emphasised the importance of applicants’ understanding of the way in which R&IFOs interpret the definitions and how they are applied to a specific research area. Clear, standardised definitions are therefore needed.

## Proposal guidelines for applicants

Most R&IFOs encourage applicants to integrate the sex and gender dimension in their proposed programmes of research (applications for funding). Some R&IFOs also identify certain research areas where this is expected. However, very few R&IFOs require the integration of these dimensions.

For example, some R&IFOs encourage applicants to integrate the dimensions but require that evaluators score this aspect of the research proposal separately.

The following sections describe how the framework could be adopted, with input from workshop participants.

### 1. Definition of Terms

Clear and quality definitions that are readily available.

### 2. Proposal Guidelines for Applicants

Instructions to applicants to include the gender and diversity dimensions. Define if applicants are encouraged or required to integrate these dimensions. Give examples. Specify how these dimensions are included at each stage of the research cycle – details for ‘yes’ and justify for ‘no’ responses.

### 3. Instructions for Evaluators

Instructions for Reviewers to include these dimensions in their evaluations. Assessment at each stage of research cycle. Monitoring.

### 4. Trainings for Applicants, Evaluators and Staff

Training, resources and support available for applicants, proposal evaluators, and agency staff. Mandatory training through certification. Development of open access resources – courses and high-quality materials.

### 5. Evaluation of Policy Implementation

How often are these dimensions not included and where are valid justifications provided? How many proposals include quality inclusion of these dimensions? How many were funded? Is training effective? How many have participated in training?



According to the European Commission Horizon Europe Strategic Plan 2021-2024, integration of the sex and gender dimension in research and innovation content will be a requirement by default, unless it is specified as not being relevant to the topic by the Commission. An additional suggestion from the workshop was to use the incorporation of the sex and gender dimension as tie-break, where two projects otherwise receive the same final score and there is insufficient budget to fund both.

### Instructions for evaluators

Subject matter expert evaluators are crucial to the successful implementation of policies and ensure that only the highest quality proposals are funded. To be successful, R&IFOs must instruct evaluators to consider the sex and gender dimension in each phase of the research proposal evaluation process. Consistent instructions must be given to applicants and evaluators, and evaluators should go beyond a ‘tick box exercise,’ analysing quality when examining integration of each dimension where relevant. R&IFOs or sector heads must also monitor the overall quality of evaluations for consistency and fairness.

### Training for applicants, evaluators and staff

The inclusion of sex and gender analysis in university curricula is inconsistent, especially in STEM-oriented departments. The workshop discussions highlighted the importance of initiating discussions with universities on how better to implement such analysis in academic curricula.

To complement this, R&IFOs can implement measures, such as training, to raise awareness and improve the capacity of evaluators, agency staff and grant applicants to properly evaluate this aspect of a research proposal. Training should be consistent for applicants, evaluators, and agency staff.

For large R&IFOs, training should be tailored to their specific research sector and could be conducted through online courses, in-person or virtual workshops with experts, or by dedicated websites, booklets, videos and other learning tools.

### Evaluation of policy implementation

To facilitate appropriate quantitative and qualitative evaluation, R&IFOs should develop evaluation plans that correlate with existing policies and guidelines.

Increasing the number of funded projects that include the sex and gender dimension, as well as the quality of the sex and gender dimension in research proposals and funded programmes of research, should also form part of the development and improvement of policy plans. This might benefit from improvements in the quality of comments and in turn, appropriateness of scoring, by evaluators regarding integration of the sex and gender dimension in research and innovation.

Finally, R&IFOs should aim to increase the number and proportion of peer-reviewed publications or other recognised modes of dissemination that arise from grants incorporating the sex and gender dimensions.

### Other areas going forward

Other aspects regarding the incorporation of the sex and gender dimension also emerged during workshop discussions and include:

- Integrating the dimension from the initiation phase of a new programme call.
- Increasing awareness across the research endeavour. The lack of implementation of the sex and gender dimension in research is also guided by the application processes and requirements of scientific journals. Changing these requirements will improve the inclusion of these dimensions in research and innovation.
- Following a suggestion made by Horizon Europe,<sup>11</sup> launching specific funding programmes dedicated to the sex and gender dimension in research and innovation to accelerate progress, was also considered.
- Joining forces is key to creating more impact. Collaboration and knowledge-sharing with other funding R&IFOs and their respective programmes are key in moving forward cohesively.
- Communicating best practice: Collate and disseminate existing knowledge to provide relevant best practice case studies as guidance to prospective applicants.

<sup>11</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/democracy-and-rights/gender-equality-research-and-innovation\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/democracy-and-rights/gender-equality-research-and-innovation_en)

# How do we define intersectionality, diversity and inclusion?

During the workshop, participants discussed the definitions of intersectionality, diversity and inclusion and when or where it might be relevant to implement these considerations in the funding lifecycle.

Many stakeholders have emphasised the importance of an intersectional perspective in the context of the sex and gender dimension. It is important to examine how this concept is understood and defined, and to investigate all dimensions which often occur simultaneously, in particular diversity and inclusion. Researchers should not consider gender in isolation, since gender identities, norms and relations both shape and are shaped by other social attributes.

This was a starting point for a broader discussion on intersectionality, diversity and inclusion and how these relate to the sex and gender dimension. Below we offer a brief overview of definitions and insights which may be of use.

## Intersectionality as a tool

Intersectionality describes overlapping or intersecting categories, such as gender, sex, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation and geographical location, that combine to form individuals' identities, experiences and access to power and influence.<sup>12</sup>

Intersectionality and intersectional analysis are particularly relevant in the initiation of a programme of research, e.g., when addressing a research question and analysing a problem. The way the research problem is formulated will determine which intersecting variables are required for analysis. Before beginning a study, researchers should identify factors of potential relevance. These factors could be biological, socio-cultural, or psychological characteristics of end-users or customers.<sup>13</sup>

## Diversity

Diversity can be viewed as a value-neutral term, describing only factual conditions. Biological diversity, or biodiversity, signifies the variety of life on Earth. Diversity, in turn, could be understood merely as a variety of empirical data, theoretical perspectives, and methodological approaches. However, as a policy concept, it is often used as a normative term for respecting and appreciating individual differences in terms of age, ethnicity, gender, ability, sexual orientation, etc.

The workshop discussions raised diversity as a particularly relevant perspective in the application phase, when putting together a representative project team. Participants pointed to the importance of diversity in terms of gender, age, religion etc., but also in including diverse theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches. However, it is not always legally possible to do this, as many R&IFOs have a limited ability to gather data on individuals' ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc. Deciding on project teams based on the level of diversity between the individuals could also conflict with relevant discrimination laws.

## Inclusion

Inclusion is the practice of providing everyone with equal access to opportunities and resources, for example in research and innovation. Societal inclusion efforts aim to make traditionally marginalised groups, based on for example gender, race or physical or mental disabilities, feel more equal in society.<sup>14</sup>

The inclusion of diverse target groups and end-users is particularly important during the development of solutions, and is a key tenet of responsible research and innovation<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Crenshaw, Kimberle, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," University of Chicago Legal Forum: Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8. Available at: <http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>

<sup>13</sup> <http://genderedinnovations.stanford.edu/methods/intersect.html>

<sup>14</sup> <https://builtin.com/diversity-inclusion>

<sup>15</sup> European Commission, Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI), Science and Technology <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ee9bacdf-fdad-46eb-8cd8-32879e310191/language-en>

# Looking forward

In the upcoming GENDERACTION+, a Horizon Europe project aimed at supporting gender equality policy coordination and integration in the European Research Area, an intersectional approach is described as one of the key thematic areas. Intersectionality will be further explored together with other thematic areas including the sex and gender dimension in research and innovation funding. The result from this report will form an important basis for further developments in these areas which are requisite to ensuring the strength and relevance of research outputs and in ensuring that maximum impact can be realised.



# Appendix 1: Survey questions

- 1. Initiation and launching phase** – please provide information on how your organisation works with the sex and gender dimension in the initiation and launching phase. We would also like you to report challenges you have met.
- 2. Application phase** – please provide information on how your organisation works with the sex and gender dimension in the application phase. If you ask applications a specific question, please provide an example of that question. We would also like you to report challenges you have met.
- 3. Assessment and decision phase** – please provide information on how your organisation works with the sex and gender dimension in the assessment and decision phase. We would also like you to report challenges you have met.
- 4. Monitoring and evaluation phase** – please provide information on how your organisation works with the sex and gender dimension in the monitoring and evaluation phase. We would also like you to report challenges you have met.





In the recently launched **GENDERACTION+**, a Horizon Europe project aimed at supporting gender equality policy coordination and integration in the European Research Area, an intersectional approach is described as one of the key thematic areas. Intersectionality will be further explored together with other thematic areas including the sex and gender dimension in research and innovation funding. The result from this report will form an important basis for further developments in these areas which are requisite to ensuring the strength and relevance of research outputs and in ensuring that maximum impact can be realised.

Read about and follow the activities  
of **GENDERACTION+**:

<https://genderaction.eu/>

[https://twitter.com/GENDERACTION\\_EU](https://twitter.com/GENDERACTION_EU)