

GUIDELINES ON CRITERIA OF GOOD PRACTICE FOR STRENGTHENING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ERA PRIORITY 4

One of the aims of the GENDERACTION project is to support the implementation of the national ERA Roadmaps. This includes the development of new policies as well as advancement of existing gender equality policies in R&I. To support this, GENDERACTION developed specific “criteria of good practice” which can be used to assess national ERA Roadmaps and individual gender equality policies. The criteria of good practice introduced in this policy brief serve as a starting point for reflection on national gender equality policies and measures. They also support efforts at national level to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of existing gender equality policies. The application of the criteria of good practice will be illustrated through the reference to an Austrian example.

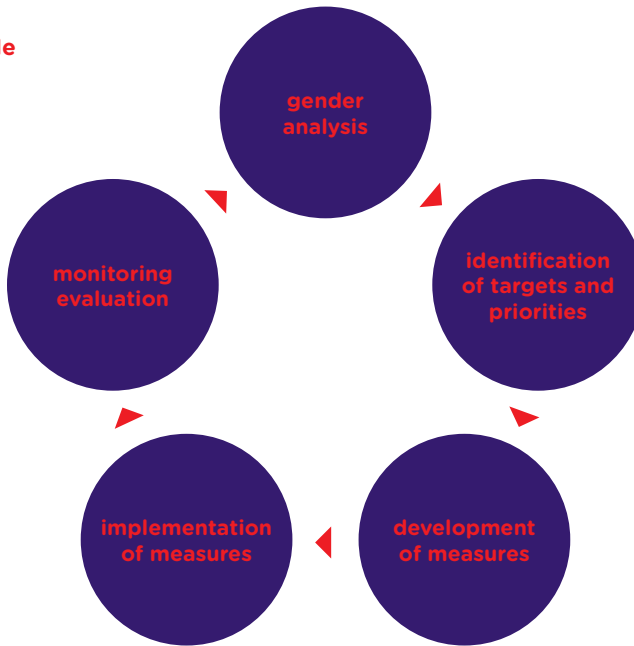
Gender Equality in Science and Research

Through the **ERA Roadmaps**, the EU Member States are required to formulate and implement measures for the attainment of a common European Research Area. Within the framework of Priority 4 of the ERA Roadmap, measures should be implemented to promote gender equality or implement gender mainstreaming in science and research. The ERA Roadmap formulates **three central gender equality objectives**: (1) equal access for women and

men to all areas and hierarchical levels in science and research, (2) the removal of structural barriers to the careers of women and an increase in the percentage of women in decision making and (3) the integration of the gender dimension in research content and teaching.

ERA countries have implemented approximately 100 policies and measures within the framework of the NAPs. They cover a variety of different approaches, pursue different goals and address various target groups. Even though gender equality policies are in place in a number of

Complete policy cycle



countries, progress towards gender equality remains slow, which indicates a need for further development of initiatives. To assess policies as well as potential needs for further development, criteria of good practice have been developed by GENDERACTION.

In the following, criteria of good practice policies or measures are presented. This is followed by examples of how to apply the criteria referring to concrete examples.

Criteria of Good Practice

The development and implementation of equality measures in science and research should be included in a complete **policy cycle** (May, Wildavsky 1978; Bergmann, Pimminger 2004). Austria followed this approach and formulated gender equality policy objectives and priorities based on

an analysis of the status quo with regard to gender equality (gender analysis). The next steps were to design measures for achieving the desired objectives and implementing them. The implementation of these measures was constantly monitored. Ideally, along with the monitoring, there should be an evaluation of the measures – either during, to identify starting points for further development of the measures, or ex-post to measure their effectiveness.

Specifically, in GENDERACTION, the following **criteria of good practice** were identified as gender equality measures. In line with these criteria, measures must:

- be based on an empirical problem analysis (**Gender Analysis**)
- address at least one of the three equality policy **objectives explicitly**
- formulate **precise targets and target groups**

- be based on an explicit **program theory** (i.e. a set of assumptions as to why and how a measure should reach its target and target group)
- **involve relevant groups of participants** in the development and implementation of the measures
- receive sufficient personnel and financial **resources**
- lead to **significant and sustainable results**
- contain a **dissemination and communication strategy** (i.e. feedback is given on activities, results and challenges within, and outside of, the organization)
- be subject to **monitoring**, based on which feedback on the implementation of the measures is given at regular intervals and
- be **evaluated**

These criteria of good practice can be used by all those involved in the conceptualisation and implementation of measures to reflect upon existing measures, and to identify possible starting points for their further development.

Application of criteria of good practice referring to a concrete example – Performance Agreement

This section outlines the possibilities for the application of these criteria using the example of the Austrian performance agreement 2019-2021 with public universities. A reflection of the policy referring to the criteria (the “criteria check”) points out where improvement is needed. The result of this reflexive process will be used to define further steps which the Federal Ministry, together with the universities, intends to take to strengthen the effectiveness of the gender equality policy and measures.

The Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research negotiates

performance agreements for a period of three years with all the 22 public universities. These agreements record relevant targets and initiatives (in this case regarding gender equality) for each organization. For content-related orientation, the Federal Ministry provides an example performance agreement (working tool) to the universities in advance, based on the Austrian National Development Plan for public universities (2019-2024). In this example, the subject areas to be covered, including social goals, are established.

Throughout the entire course of the performance agreement negotiation process, it is essential to ensure that the criteria of good practice are followed. Below you find the Federal Ministry’s reflection on the instrument “performance agreement” based on the criteria of good practice, which is used to identify where further development is needed.

Positive aspects of reflection: criteria of “good practice” already met

- Ministry specifications are evidence based, for example, for the first time, targets with regard to increasing the percentage of women in professorships and on tenure track (cascade model) were specified according to the share of women in scientific positions (potential), and include coordinated measures
- Objectives and targets address at least one of the three main objectives of the gender equality targets (representation, structure/processes, content in research and teaching)
- University stakeholders are involved in the negotiations (coordination between the Federal Ministry and universities): A communication process between the Federal Ministry and the universities has been established in the form of guided conversations (4-5 sessions per period)

- Target attainment undergoes monitoring through an annual university intellectual capacity report, which also contains gender equality indicators and explanations, for example the indicators for gender representation in appointment procedures for full professors.

Identified needs for further improvement: criteria not yet well-enough established

When reflecting on the instrument of performance contracts, several problematic aspects emerged which represent need for further development.

- The Federal Ministry knows too little about the design and quality of university gender equality measures (for example, on which gender equality concepts are measures based) to assess the underlying program theory.
- The Federal Ministry knows too little about the use of resources when it comes to implementing measures because of the highly aggregated budgeting. Therefore, it is not possible to assess the financial and personnel resources provided for the implementation of gender equality policies.
- The Federal Ministry knows too little about the effects and sustainability of gender equality interventions, as evaluation of gender equality policies at the university level is not yet a standard procedure. Only some universities carry out evaluations in order to continue to develop the measures in the following period.

These evaluation deficits hinder the Federal Ministry in discussing the effectiveness of measures/programmes and stimulating further development to improve performance with individual universities. Such deficits also make it harder to identify “flagship projects”, which should be



Use criteria of good practice for reflection and (further) development of gender equality policies

presented to the wider public and other higher education institutions as examples.

In 2018, the Federal Ministry first compiled a brochure with a comparative presentation of the status quo of gender equality at universities, and highlighted examples of good practice at these universities. Feedback shows that universities can be motivated by the visualization of their performance.

Conclusions and recommendations

To strengthen the effectiveness of gender equality measures in performance agreements and to support a process of reflection on existing and planned gender equality measures, the Federal Ministry pursues the following strategies:

- **Dissemination** – distribution, discussion and identification of fields of application for the “criteria of good practice” at higher education and research institutions (for example, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research used the criteria for an internal reflection of gender equality policies and introduced them in a broader political context through network meetings with universities, the Austrian Academy

of Sciences and the Institute of Science and Technology, Austria).

- **Reflection** – institutions should reflect on existing gender equality measures based on explicit criteria in order to pinpoint how these can be best developed further, in order to achieve a higher effectiveness.
- **Interaction** – organisation of an exchange of experience across higher education institutions (building a community of practice), for example through moderated workshops (“No need to reinvent the wheel”).
- **Identifying “flagship projects” and making them visible** – an appropriate knowledge resource is a toolbox filled with best practice examples created by GENDERPLATTFORM.¹

References

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¹ | The GENDERPLATTFORM is an association of organisations which, according to the University Act, are entrusted at Austrian universities with the coordination of equality, the promotion of women, as well as gender research and its teaching. The GENDERPLATTFORM Toolbox presents a variety of strategies, programmes, initiatives and projects which have been developed and implemented at Austrian universities in the field of equality. The Toolbox is available online at www.genderplattform.at. Currently, the Toolbox is only available in German. An English version will be available in the near future.

European Commission (2019) *European Research Area. Progress Report 2018*, Brussels.

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Annex: Background information on the Austrian NAP context

In Austria, the past few years have seen the development of a wide range of different gender equality policies. Specifically, instruments combining legally formulated gender equality targets with decentralised implementation have been implemented. These instruments include performance agreements, with which specific gender equality targets and measures are agreed upon between the BMBWF, universities and research institutions.

Within the framework of the ERA Roadmap, Austria has pooled the existing gender equality policy activities and institutionalised the collaboration between different departments within the areas of science and research (for example through the ERA Roundtables). When comparing the ERA Roadmaps, Austria is one of the countries which has formulated a comprehensive set of gender equality measures addressing all three ERA equality objectives, and has provided specific steps for their implementation (see GENDERACTION 2018). However, despite the existence of a comprehensive policy mix, gender inequalities are very slow to change (EC 2019). The current ERA progress report ranks Austria in the group of countries with below average progress in the area of gender equality. Therefore, there is a need for further development and strengthening of the implementation of current measures.

NOTES

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