



EU Insight – 8 March 2016

Creating Gender Equality in Science & Research in the EU

On 8 March 2016, International Women's Day is being celebrated around the world. Gender equality is a cornerstone of the European Union and applies to all European policies including research and innovation. The [Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019](#) was published in December 2015, and is a follow-up and prolongation of the Commission Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015. It sets the framework for the Commission's future work towards improving gender equality. The Strategic engagement sets out objectives in five priority areas and identifies more than 30 concrete actions while reaffirming the Commission's commitment to integrating a gender equality perspective into all EU policies as well as into EU funding programmes.

Gender equality in the European Research Area (ERA)

To create the very best conditions for researchers and scientists, the 28 member states of the European Union (EU) are working towards the creation of single [European Research Area \(ERA\)](#). Their common goal is to establish a unified research area which is open to the world, and in which researchers and knowledge circulate freely. Gender equality has been one of the priorities of a "[Reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth](#)" (ERA) since 2012. To this end, Member States are invited to remove barriers to the recruitment, retention and career progression of female researchers, address gender balance in decision making and strengthen the gender dimension in research programmes. Member States are encouraged to create the appropriate legal and policy environment to incentivise institutional changes in research organisations and correct the remaining gender biases.

In 2013 and 2014 the Commission published an [ERA Progress Report](#), which highlighted the progress made towards the completion of the ERA. The new report will be published towards the end of 2016.

[Gender-NET](#) is the first European Research Area Network (ERA-NET) to be dedicated to the promotion of gender equality through structural change in research institutions, as well as to the integration of sex and gender analysis in research. GENDER-NET brings together a balanced partnership of 14 national programme owners from across Europe and North America – i.e. ministries, national research funding agencies and national organisations – that share a commitment to gender equality and expertise in gender and science issues.



Scientists can contribute to change practices themselves. Networking among practitioners and professional associations, platforms of women scientists and other networks play a key role in this context.

The European Commission funds two important initiatives which aim to support networking:

- The COST Action, [GenderSTE](#), which organises awareness-raising events across Europe.
- [GenPORT](#), an online community of practitioners, which is served by an internet portal in which organisations and individuals can participate and exchange knowledge and experience from across the world on gender equality and excellence in science, technology or innovation.

Gender Equality in Horizon 2020

In Horizon 2020 Gender is a cross-cutting issue and is mainstreamed in each of the different parts of the Work Programme, ensuring a more integrated approach to research and innovation.

Three objectives underpin the strategy on gender equality in Horizon 2020:

- Fostering gender balance in research teams, in order to close the gaps in the participation of women.
- Ensuring gender balance in decision-making, in order to reach the target of 40% of the under-represented sex in panels and groups and of 50% in advisory groups.
- Integrating the gender dimension in research and innovation (R&I) content, helps improve the scientific quality and societal relevance of the produced knowledge, technology and/or innovation.

In many topics across the work programme, it is explicitly requested that applicants take into account women as well as men's needs and behaviours. In addition grant beneficiaries commit to promoting equal opportunities and a balanced participation of women and men at all levels in research and innovation teams and in management structures.

The '**Science with and for Society**' [Work Programme](#) funds specific initiatives in support of the gender equality strategy. Support is given to Research Performing Organisations (RPO) and Research Funding Organisations (RFO) in order to:

- remove barriers that generate discrimination against women in scientific careers and decision-making (supporting research organisations to implement gender equality plans), and
- integrate a gender dimension in research content.

Funding is also provided to the development of a common framework to evaluate national initiatives promoting gender equality in research policy. A dedicated



campaign aims at encouraging girls to study science and female students to further embrace a career in research. Research will be funded to analyse the impact of gender diversity in research teams on research and innovation performance.

These activities are targeted to researchers and innovators, research organisations, primary, secondary and higher education establishments, science museums, citizens and their associations or groupings, media, policy makers at national, regional and local levels, etc.

Facts and figures: *She Figures*

The She Figures Report is the main source of pan-European, comparable statistics on the state of gender equality in research and innovation. It covers a wide range of themes, including the proportions of women and men amongst top-level graduates, academic staff and research/advisory boards, the working conditions for women and men researchers, the integration of the gender dimension in the content of peer-reviewed scientific articles, and various indicators measuring gender gaps in scientific and innovation outputs. Released every three years since 2003, the report provides a key evidence base for policies in this area.

The She Figures 2015 show that despite progress, gender inequalities in science tend to persist. The publication provides an overview of the scientific fields where women are better or less represented, and compares the research workforce in different economic sectors (e.g. higher education, government, and business sectors).

Sources and further information:

[European Research Area - homepage](#)

[Horizon 2020 - Promoting Gender Equality in Research and Innovation](#)

European Commission's [Strategy for equality between women and men \(2010-2015\)](#)

[She Figures 2015](#)

[European Parliament Research Service Blog](#)