



EUROPEAN POLICYBRIEF



RESET - Redesigning Equality and Scientific Excellence Together

This policy brief outlines main results of the RESET project after two and a half years of its implementation. It summarizes issues and challenges that should be addressed at the policy level of RPOs and RFOs to enable efficient gender and diversity mainstreaming and strengthening of the ERA.

29 JUNE 2023

INTRODUCTION

RESET - Redesigning Equality and Scientific Excellence Together - is a Horizon 2020 project that aims to design and implement institutional transformation towards more inclusion, equality and work-life balance. In 2022, four RESET partners endorsed tailor-made and inclusive Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) thus complying with the newly set Horizon Europe criteria. RESET GEPs, however, are also bound to using co-design methodologies to develop and implement innovative solutions, and to an intersectional perspective on gender equality. Beyond compliance, RESET GEPs intend to bring about experiments relevant to all Research Performing Organizations (RPOs) committed to achieving gender equality, diversity and inclusion.

According to the [ERA 2022-2024 policy agenda](#) and to the [Ljubljana Declaration](#) (2021), GEPs are the main policy instruments enabling sustainable and long-term gender and diversity mainstreaming in the academic context. Their adoption signifies mobilization of communities and recognition of gender equality and diversity as important factors for attractiveness of the academic career paths and environment in the European Research Area.

With the implementation of an intersectional focus and co-design approaches, RESET aims to reinforce mainstreaming of gender equality and the gender dimension in the research and teaching contents, and as a result, to impact the very definition and evaluation of scientific excellence. RESET inclusive definition of scientific excellence was elaborated in a “Joint Statement on Equality, Diversity and Scientific Excellence in Research” signed by the top-management of our universities and through the elaboration of potential criteria and indicators that can facilitate related decision-making. Along with the review of institutional policy documents, RESET has provided tools for more inclusive training, procedures for recruitment and advancement, developed a standard for institutional systems tackling

cases of gender-based violence and discrimination, and explored local incentives and initiatives of research performing units towards equality and diversity.

Thus, this policy brief focuses on the main results of the project as well as on the reflexive evaluation of pending needs and potential instruments required for further GEP making.

EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

GEPs in RESET were developed on the analysis carried out during the first year of the project and follow areas determined by the Horizon Europe GEP framework: gender balance in leadership and decision-making, gender equality in recruitment and career progression, work-life balance and organisational culture, integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content and measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment.

Availability of data is the primary condition for the efficient design and implementation of a tailored equality and diversity policy. Having identified a lack of sex-disaggregated data and/or deficiency of the data collection systems currently established (especially with regard to aspects such as research projects' management and the gender dimension in research and curricula), partners have actively tackled identified problems in their GEPs, with the objective to set up robust, fully institutionalized data management systems. Steady progress is to be reported in that area: institutions, HR services and other units have introduced relevant mechanisms. At the same time, the challenge with collecting intersectional data is still present: partners have to adopt various creative approaches in order to obtain and present intersectional data (qualitative methods, usage of digital platforms), while conforming to their respective legal frameworks.

Many measures included in partners' GEPs confirm a difficulty to establish **gender balance in leadership** or increase the number of women or people belonging to minority groups in **decision-making bodies and functions**. In most of cases, the opinions of stakeholders converge claiming that the main reason for that is a self-censorship and fear of administrative burden that may affect women's scientific careers. In a broader perspective, it is the entire paradigm of hierarchy and decision-making role that is being questioned with the mainstreaming of work-life balance measures. In order to tackle this issue, RESET developed a joint roadmap for recruitment and career promotion, which implementation is expected to contribute to RESET partners' engagement for transparency and inclusion. Complementary to that, RESET delivered a series of online events dedicated to supporting women's scientific careers and networking.

The results yielded over more than two years of project's implementation demonstrate a consistent strategy in terms of **gender integration in research**: respective actions are carried out by all partners: tools for Gender Impact Assessment are promoted within the project and supported by the top management at the institutional level. In terms of **gender- and diversity-inclusive training**, RESET universities are actively involved in the process of the sustainable institutional deployment of the RESET training toolbox containing eight modules, and have benefited from pilot capacity-building activities carried out both at partners' and consortium levels by the universities of Łódź (WP4), Bordeaux (WP6), Sciences Po (WP9 and WP2) and OULU (WP7).

Several RESET partners achieved significant success in the establishment of the **institutional systems tackling gender-based violence and discrimination**: notably, the implementation of an official policy (Universities of Lodz, Bordeaux and Porto), launch of online reporting portals (University of Porto), consistent communication and awareness raising actions (University of Bordeaux, Bochum and Porto). Multiple institutions have also progressed in the adaptation and dissemination of tools for **gender-neutral and diversity-oriented communication** (Ruhr University Bochum, Universities of Bordeaux and Porto), which, however, occasionally provokes a backlash from certain members of academic communities and reflects broader societal debates.

The situation with gender equality and diversity in research performing organizations is multiplex. Most of initiatives favouring equality and diversity come either from laboratories working in the field of social sciences and humanities or from those that experience a severe lack of diversity (e.g., Information Technologies or Mathematics). In some cases, as at the University of Bordeaux, those initiatives and practices result from incentives of the funding agencies or other research bodies, by which these research units are jointly governed (along with universities). The rest of initiatives, which consist in the communication and awareness raising, work life balance or support in the creation of networks, corresponds to the bottom-up approach supported by the management of research units.

Among other objectives of the RESET project, a particular place is given to the promotion of an innovative vision of the evaluation of scientific excellence. RESET supports a methodology stipulated in the [Agreement on Research Assessment](#) and suggests combining a “classic system” of peer review, citations, publications, mobility and awards, with consideration of other - more inclusive criteria and indicators. This system integrates a more holistic approach, as it evaluates not only individual, but also institutional excellence, and aims to provide more chances and opportunities for institutions of a smaller scale. The main challenge here lies in the development of an efficient monitoring system.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Current available outcomes of the project confirm the decisive role of the European policy regulations on the introduction of an institutional change. In order to achieve project’s goals and continue with the started approach, other important conditions have to be met and actions undertaken:

- The European level GEP requirements have proved to be key drivers for producing structural institutional changes towards more equality and diversity: the quick GEP validation by all RESET partners demonstrates the willingness of HEIs to comply with the Horizon Europe funding requirements. Adopting a similar top-down approach for the set-up and support of equality and diversity offices, committees and units tackling gender-based violence and discrimination, could therefore trigger considerable changes.
- The management of Gender Equality Boards as gender mainstreaming structures is facilitated by the local RESET teams. Although these boards vary in terms of composition and mandate, from more consultative bodies to more operational and lobbying structures, their functioning highly depends on the existence of an institutional “steering” team (local RESET teams and Gender Equality Officers). While this is consistent with an initial phase of the change process, RESET is geared towards the sustainable institutionalization of gender equality policies and bodies at each partner, well equipped with needed skills and resources.
- RESET promotes Gender Impact Assessment tools putting the emphasis not only on inclusion and diversity but also on a gender-sensitive and responsive notion of scientific excellence. Relying on the criteria and indicators suggested in the RESET joint statement, funding bodies might reconsider and expand their assessment and selection criteria. HEIs and RPOs should also consider these aspects in their strive for innovation: e.g., while developing solutions of artificial intelligence, responding to economic and environmental challenges, war or pandemic crises, or supporting sustainable development.
- RESET partners “shifted” from the strategy of punctual project-related training activities and have been progressively moving towards institutionalization of equality and diversity-oriented training programs. This approach enables higher acknowledgement and support of an issue by the top and middle managers and contributes to the sustainable use of resources. In this way, RESET fosters the capacity building and encourages institutions to fully apply their training and innovation potential.
- The efficient implementation of gender equality and diversity mainstreaming actions requires the combination of both top-down and bottom-up approaches. Research funding bodies and

other institutions responsible for the governance of science and innovation should consider in their evaluation the presence of more inclusive criteria and indicators in institutional recruitment and promotion procedures, as well as better gender and minority representation in decision making bodies. People responsible for the evaluation, recruitment and distribution of funding should systematically follow the training and awareness raising activities.

SUSTAINABILITY AND LEGACY

RESET partners will continue to promote and disseminate the following project's results:

- Four inclusive evidence-based Gender Equality Plans targeting issues related to gender equality from an intersectional perspective.
- Joint statement of the top management on their engagement for equality, diversity and excellence in research – available in two versions: one main version introducing areas of application and a suggestion for update with a list of criteria and indicators for more inclusive scientific excellence.
- Joint roadmap on establishing institutional standards and frameworks for recruitment and career promotion towards equality, diversity and scientific excellence – an instrument that reviews institutional practices and suggests measures for their alignment with the ERA objectives and HRS4R principles.
- RESET Gender Equality Awareness Platform enabling user-friendly mechanisms for the collection, visualization, presentation and exploration of open-source and institutional (RESET) sex-disaggregated and dynamic data exported from the forum. It is accessible via project's website and has a double objective: support in GEP design and monitoring and constitution of academic communities of practitioners around the access and use of critical and GEP-relevant data.
- Comprehensive gender equality/gender mainstreaming training toolbox useful for different trainee groups, adaptable to various institutional, national and socio-cultural contexts and to the diversified needs of the RESET partners.
- Update of a toolbox for gender-neutral, diversity-oriented institutional communication: with these tools, universities may carry out a self-analysis that reveals gaps or problems in communication strategies and find methods necessary to increase their diverse reflection of the institutional environments.
- GIA checklist for research proposals – online tool for an evaluation of integration of sex, gender and intersectional dimensions in different stages of research projects.
- As the implementation of the RESET capacity-building program developed around 14 thematic modules (of which 8 will be pilot-tested over project's duration) started in June 2023, the project community will also be bound to disseminating open-access training contents and methods towards other RPOs and research funding agencies.

RESEARCH PARAMETERS

During the described period of activity, the project has relied on the literature review, interviews with partners and relevant stakeholders, as well as different participative methods, including co-design. The participative activities concern management of Gender Equality Boards and co-design sessions related to some particular tasks (leadership, upscaling of institutional systems tackling gender-based violence, inclusive scientific excellence, mobilization of stakeholders).

A comprehensive, continuous assessment of the project and GEPs' implementation is carried out by

the project's evaluator Sciences Po. The results include the assessment of deliverables and other activities, as well as the outcomes of the onsite visits: they were published in a specific mid-term monitoring report.

PROJECT IDENTITY

PROJECT NAME	RESET (Redesigning Equality and Scientific Excellence Together)
COORDINATOR	University of Bordeaux, Bordeaux, FRANCE reset@u-bordeaux.fr
CONSORTIUM	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki – AUTH – Thessaloniki, Greece Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques – ScPo – Paris, France Ruhr University Bochum – RUB – Bochum, Germany University of Bordeaux – UBx – Bordeaux, France University of Łódź – UL – Lodz, Poland University of Oulu – UOulu – Oulu, Finland University of Porto – U.Porto – Porto, Portugal
FUNDING SCHEME	Horizon 2020, H2020-SwafS-2018-2020 (Science with and for Society), SwafS-09-2018-2019-2020
DURATION	January 2021 – December 2024 (48 months)
BUDGET	EU contribution: 2 998 297,50
WEBSITE	https://wereset.eu/
FOR MORE INFORMATION	Contact Marion Paoletti and/or Maryna Radchuk via reset@u-bordeaux.fr
FURTHER READING	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. RESET Joint Statement of top management on their engagement for equality, diversity and excellence in research2. Heikkinen, Mervi, Iivari, Netta & Lämsä, Tuija (2022). Sukupuolten tasa-arvo ja tieteellinen huippuosaaminen uudelleen määriteltävänä RESET-hankkeessa. Sukupuolentutkimus-Genusforskning, 35(3-4), 54-60.3. Durall, Eva, Iivari, Netta, Heikkinen, Mervi, Pihkala, Suvi & Kinnula, Marianne (2023). Anticipating the futures of the gender dimension in research: Storying entangled practices and bodies. Nordes2023.4. Iivari, Netta, Tervo, Erkki, Käsmä, Marjukka & Heikkinen, Mervi (2023). Participatory Design meets Gender Equality at European Higher Education Institutions. CoDesign.



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101006560

This policy brief reflects only the author's view and the European Commission/REA is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.