



Gender equality and the concept of excellence: The perspective of higher education institution communicators



Background

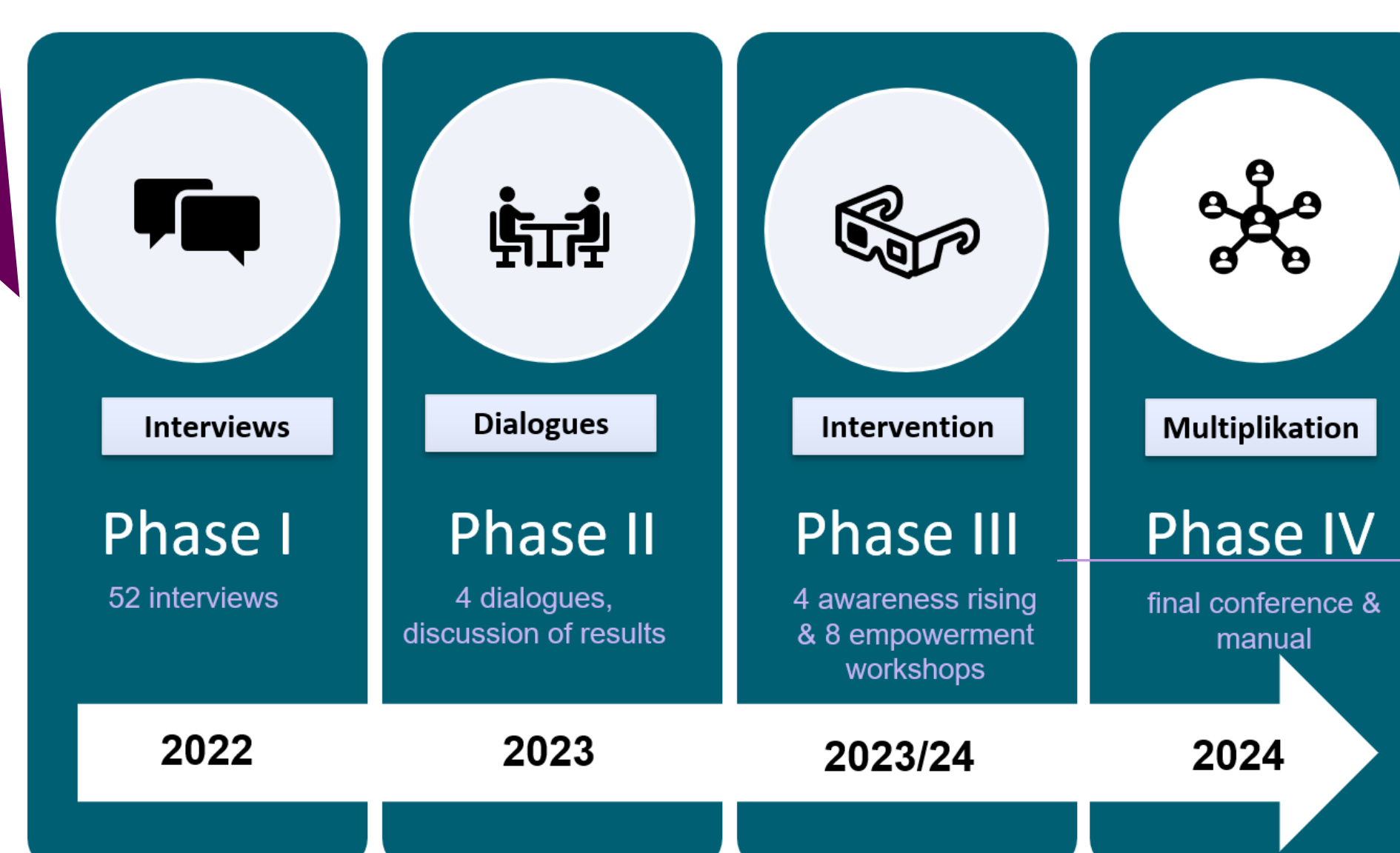
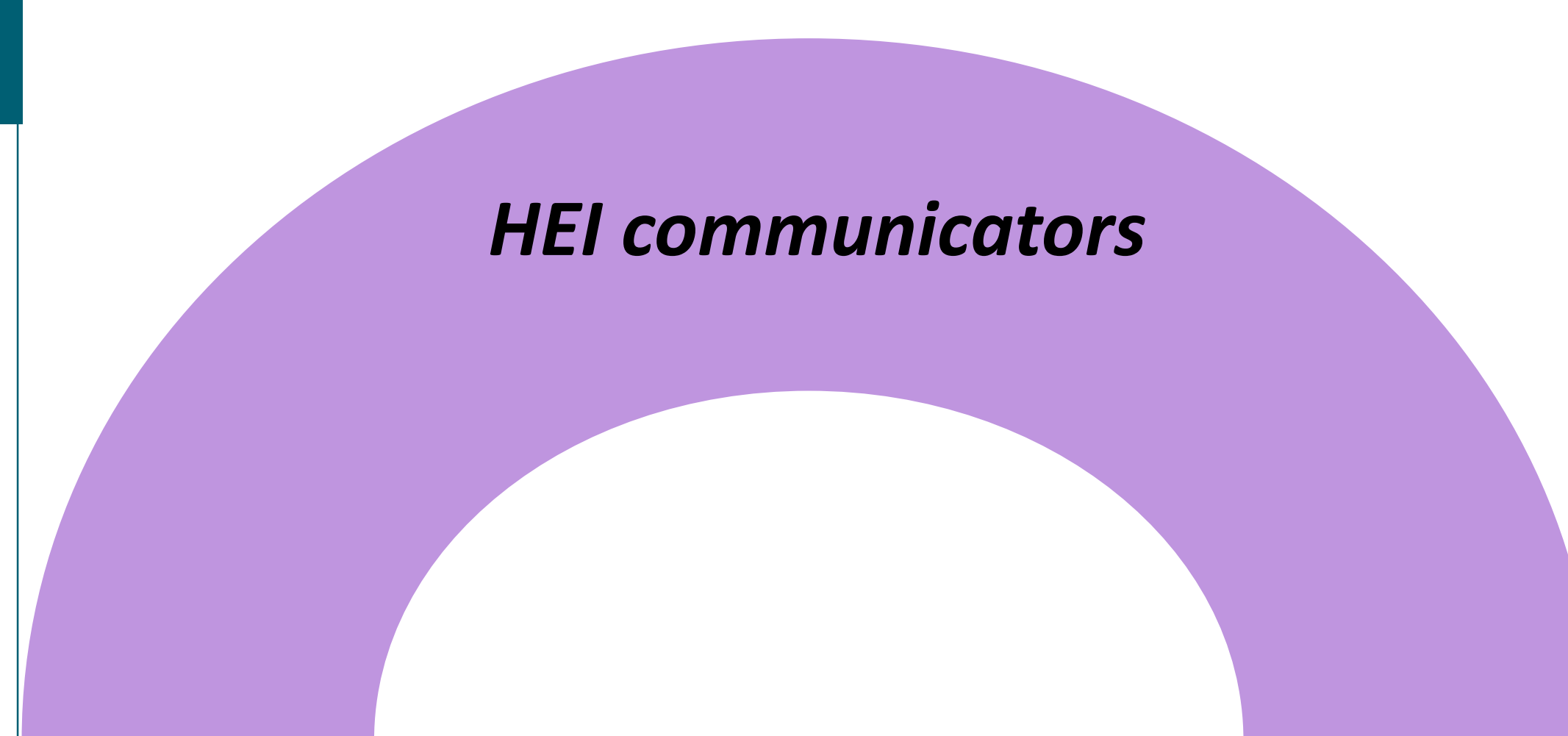
- Science communication aims to serve as a bridge between academia and the public. Those who cross the bridge and become publicly visible could increase their recognition in academia.
- Higher education institution (HEI) communicators contribute to how academia and its protagonists are perceived: Who is represented in the production of knowledge, and who can serve as a role model within and outside the scientific community? Their choices correlate with attributions of scientific "excellence".
- How academia and its protagonists are presented in press releases, on institutional websites, and in (social) media coverage is often gendered.
- Studies show that media visibility is unevenly distributed between the genders with women researchers being less visible.
- Excellence is a controversial concept in academia.

Current situation:

- gender bias in science communication
- gendered depiction of scientific excellence
- underrepresentation of female academics in higher research positions
- lack of visibility of female researchers

Goals:

- inclusive and gender-equitable representation in science communication
- critical reflection of the concept and measurement of scientific excellence
- increased visibility of female researchers and their scientific contributions



EXENKO project:

Discovering and Communicating Excellence. Raising awareness and developing competence on the topic of excellence and gender for postdocs and actors in university communication. 2021-2024
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Visibility
Appointments

Science
Pitches



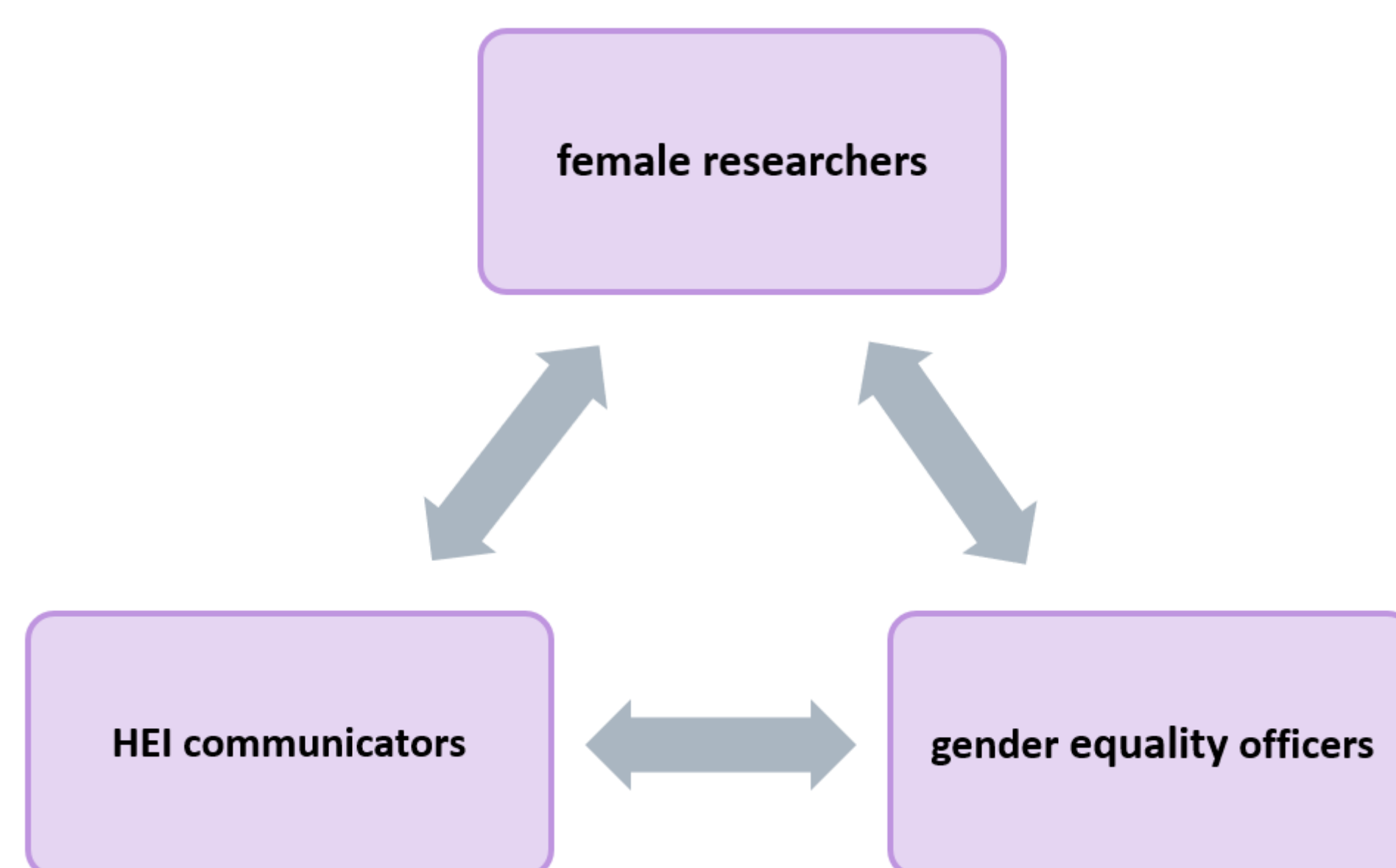
Results from research, dialogues and workshops



- HEI communicators have scope for action concerning gender-equitable science communication. The awareness of their role is rising.
- Early career researchers see science communication as desirable and important. Still, they have to prioritize making themselves visible in the scientific community through highly ranked articles and conference papers.
- Female researchers have an ambivalent stance of being more visible (e.g. tokenism) and face a gender-specific set of challenges (e.g. anti-genderism).
- Researchers, HEI communicators, and equality officers should engage in more regular dialogue and exchange views on their respective working methods, objectives, and expectations of each other concerning bias-free communication of academic knowledge and its protagonists.
- Training, (online) manuals are helpful, institutionalized low-threshold opportunities for a regular exchange between HEI communicators and researchers could help to break down barriers and insecurities.

What can be done?

- **Initiate** regular communication opportunities between female researchers and HEI communicators
- **Integrate** the expertise of gender equality officers into HEI communication processes
- **Use** empowerment and awareness rising workshops to strengthen the visibility of female researchers **and further develop** formats



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Further information and manual (forthcoming): <https://www.exzellenz-entdecken.de/en/home/>

