RESET

Redesigning Equality and Scientific Excellence Together

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RESET aims to address the challenge of Gender Equality in Research Institutions in a diversity perspective, with the objective to design and implement a user-centered, impact-driven and inclusive vision of scientific excellence.

Consortium partners

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Framework Program for Research and Innovation under Grant Agreement no **101006560**.

RESET

Redesigning Equality and Scientific Excellence Together

Joint statement of top management on their engagement for equality, diversity and excellence in research V2.0

Document Information

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Main Authors

Name	Organization
Marion Paoletti, Ninon Junca, Maryna Radchuk	UBx
Friederike Bergstedt, Viktoria Niebel	RUB
Elena Karachaliou, Lamprini Argyropoulou,	AUTh
Aleksandra Różalska	UL
Mervi Heikkinen	UOULU
Marisa Matias, Sara Magalhães	U.Porto
Maxime Forest	ScPo

Quality Reviewers

Name	Organization
Christelle Bellenger, Eric Macé, Joanne Pagèze, Nathalie Sans **Marie Daviet (2024)**	UBx
Martin Paul, Isolde Karle	RUB
Eleonora Bielawska-Batorowicz	UL
Taina Pihlajaniemi, Essi Kiuru, Heidi Huttunun	UOULU
Pedro Rodrigues	U.Porto

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Abbreviations

AUTh	Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (GR)
ERA	European Research Area
EU	European Union
GEB	Gender Equality Board
GEP	Gender Equality Plan
GIA	Gender Impact Assessment
HRS4R	Human Resources Startegy for Researchers
RESET	Redesigning Equality and Scientific Excellence Together
RUB	Ruhr University Bochum (DE)
ScPo	Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques (FR)
UBx	University of Bordeaux (FR)
UŁ	University of Łódź (PL)
UOULU	University of Oulu
U.Porto	University of Porto
WP	Work Package

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Executive Summary

This joint statement of top management on their engagement for equality, diversity and excellence in research was prepared by the University of Bordeaux as part of **Work Package 6 - Act upon governance and upgrade existing excellence policy towards greater inclusiveness**. The aim of WP6 is to reflect and co-design new institutional processes of governance in collaboration among the seven RESET institutions[1] for a common enlarged and more inclusive definition of scientific excellence. This WP acts upon three levels: constitutional, operational and decision-making. Its purpose is to develop and adopt inclusive institutional practices and frameworks of recruitment, career progression, work-life balance and excellent research schemes.

This statement is an output of both **Task 6.5 - Involving top management of each RESET institution to co-design joint policies and statements on gender equality in excellent research schemes**, and **Task 6.6 - Co-designing and implementing our definition of scientific excellence, and disseminating to ERA.** The document presents four main areas of action to leverage sustainable and efficient cultural and institutional change towards more equality and diversity while moving forward in the production of excellent research and innovation results. It illustrates our joint definition of scientific excellence, its concretization at the institutional level and strives for the elaboration of a more inclusive assessment of excellence.

This deliverable also integrates a short introduction on the context of scientific excellence in academia, the definitions of terms: “gender equality” and “diversity” applied within the RESET project, and a presentation of the strategic plan.

Acknowledgement

The team responsible for the elaboration of this deliverable would like to thank all partners and institutional stakeholders for their contributions. This statement is the result of a collective work.

In December 2024, at the end of the project, an update of this deliverable is published, to illustrate the way RESET institutions implemented the statement's principles, and to present a set of indicators to monitor this implementation.

[1] University of Bordeaux, University of Łódź, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, University of Porto, University of Oulu, Ruhr University Bochum, Sciences Po.

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1. Context for the development of the statement

1.1 Scientific Excellence – a contested notion

Excellence can be defined as "*exhibiting characteristics that are exceptional*" (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education AISBL, 2014). The notion of excellence is ubiquitous within the standards of international higher education institutions. It empowers universities to achieve international recognition and encourages their efforts for innovative, performant and impactful research. From this point of view, excellence is a positive concept, since it impulses emulation of powerful ideas and scientific productivity. However, the common understanding of scientific excellence and the way it is pursued in the contemporary research and innovation institutions can be linked to social inequalities. Scientific excellence is often assessed via some recurring criteria that are supposed to be neutral, but presume gender-blindness: productivity (calculated with the help of bibliometrics), peer-reviewing (influenced by informal networks and gatekeepers), number of quotations and international recognition of researchers (reputation, awards and mobility) (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012). For this reason, a reform of research assessment is seen as a condition to ensure the consideration of societal impact and improvement of quality of research outputs (European Commission, 2021).

Excellence can be a ladder for some academics that strive for access to prestigious networks and recognition by peers. However, if a researcher or an institution do not have the same initial access conditions or spend their resources on other activities that are beneficial to society but not recognized with awards and funding schemes, they may struggle to achieve high selection criteria, and, thus, their career, reputation or international value will be threatened (GARCIA, 2016).

Within such a scenario, women seem to be the first to suffer from inequalities in the access and recognition of scientific excellence.

An excellent researcher is sometimes perceived as someone completely dedicated to their work and who has no other interest in life (Bleijenbergh & Van Engen, 2015). In reality, in addition to working duties, women-academics are also the main carriers of care burden (domestic responsibilities). The lack of information and support in terms of work-life balance is seen as an additional brake in career development. It then results in a double burden (Položki Vokić, Obadić & Sinčić Ćorić, 2019), and explains another part of occupational inequalities and gender segregation at work (Sparreboom, 2014). While excellence is seen as a benchmark for academic performance (Lamont, 2009), and researchers have to deal with high expectations and pressure to achieve it, their personal lives and interests have to be left aside or paused. Consequently, if individuals decide to interrupt their careers for personal reasons (often - caring responsibilities), it will affect their promotion, advancement and achievement of "excellent" status or results.

Another inequality is gender biases and stereotypical roles produced and reproduced by men and women. Gender stereotypes are developed via associations between sex and a set of distinct individual characteristics (Ashmore, 1990; Williams & Best, 1990). Stereotypes are at the origin of gendered division of tasks, as administration tasks are

assigned mostly to women as they require more sensitivity and engagement with others from the community. According to common perception, women are also seen as more friendly, sincere, diplomatic, kind, helpful, conscientious (Bem, 1974; Heilman, 2001). At the same time, women tend to dedicate a lot of time to pedagogical duties. These responsibilities are very time-consuming and not always valued in performance assessment or well-paid (Molinier, 2006). In their turn, men are considered as more competitive, ambitious, assertive, individualistic (Bem, 1974; Heilman, 2001), and are assigned with more individual tasks, like research. Those gender stereotypes are very influential in peer reviewing and access to grants and put women at a disadvantage (Sato, Gygax, Randall & Schmid Mast, 2021).

Additionally, women may face difficulties in the access to specific professional networks - mainly composed of men (Delvaux, 2019). This may be explained through the phenomenon of homosociality (Hammarén & Johansson, 2014) and the omnipresence of males among the category of gatekeepers. Van den Brink and Benschop (2012) describe it as a vicious circle, in which persons at gatekeeping positions gain power through professional networks and invite those who resemble them more. As a result, men at gatekeeping positions tend to choose and advantage their male fellows.

Finally, most European institutions define scientific excellence relying on Western elitist standards associated with meritocracy (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012). Selectivity is seen as a pledge of excellence and the status of an institution within international rankings may affect the attribution of funding.

Inequalities in recognition of contribution to scientific excellence are also observed through other factors of discrimination (sexual orientation, disability, race, or age). Stereotypes can be brakes to recognition and access to scientific excellence. Beyond the notion of gender equality, diversity is another big stake of this statement.

1.2 Definitions

In the framework of the RESET project, the concept of **gender equality** is used while referring to the achievement of equal opportunities between women and men, in order to enable "*the absence of barriers to economic, political and social participation*" (EIGE, Concepts and definitions). Defined as a social construction of attributes and opportunities associated with being female or male, gender can be different from the biological sex: it is context- and time-specific, and can be changeable (EIGE, Glossary & Thesaurus). Gender Equality is closely related to the concept of **intersectionality** (Crenshaw, 1989), a transdisciplinary theory, the objective of which is to highlight the complexity of social relationships and inequalities through an integrated approach (Bilge, 2009), by taking into consideration the multiplication of several discriminations. To think on the intersectional perspective is to assume that all social categories of differentiation (sex, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability, age, social background, religion) can influence social inequalities and that it is important to keep track of their interactions to understand how the systems of social domination work (Crenshaw, 1989; Brah, Phoenix, 2004).

According to the definition of the European Commission (1998), **diversity** stands for "*differences in the values, attitudes, cultural perspective, beliefs, ethnic background, sexual orientation, gender identity, skills, knowledge and life experiences of each individual in any group of people*". This concept is directly linked with intersectionality. To establish an environment that is representative in terms of diversity, all individuals have to be and feel represented. Understanding of challenges with which individuals can be confronted shows the way to tackle societal issues (European Commission, 2004). Implementing practices in favour of diversity and gender equality in a professional and studying context enables well-being and productivity of employees (Scheibl, Dex, 1998).

In the last few decades, the European Union has been supporting the development of measures and frameworks related to the promotion of inclusive and egalitarian institutions. In 2000, the European Union adopted the Charter of the Fundamental Rights with a chapter dedicated to equality. It includes articles on discrimination, diversity, disability, gender equality. In 2014, the EU's research and innovation funding programme – Horizon 2020 was launched. One of its axes was the promotion of equality between men and women and the integration of the gender dimension in the content of research and innovation. In 2021, the EU's commitment for gender equality has been reinforced by the following measures within the Horizon Europe framework, namely:

- Implementation of a Gender Equality Plan as an eligibility criterion for EU funding;
- Mandatory integration of the gender and sex dimensions into research and innovation project proposals;
- Gender balance among research teams as a ranking criterion.

To accomplish and reinforce the ambitions of Horizon Europe and the HRS4R, RESET aims to set up more inclusive academic institutions. One of its main goals is to

disseminate responsible research and innovation practices and results that would include dimensions of societal relevance, inclusion and impact.

1.3 Results of RESET's audit

The abovementioned reasons, along with analysis conducted by the RESET project, drive us to enrich the concept of excellence and its criteria. The perception of scientific excellence was explored with the help of the focus groups sessions with the members of top management, researchers, teachers and staff and via a survey disseminated to all personnel of the RESET universities. It has also been a subject of one of the meetings of Gender Equality Boards at UBx, RUB and U.Porto. In addition to that, the UBx RESET team conducted a set of individual interviews with different institutional stakeholders related to the excellence funding schemes.

According to the results of **focus groups**, members of all four GEP implementing institutions have difficulty defining excellence. Nevertheless, for the majority of interviewees, scientific excellence is a concept that should and could be positive, as it carries significant values: more recognition at the international level, more attractivity for students and researchers, more funding and enhancement of the quality of research and innovation. However, it is also a synonym of pressure and work overload. Another element that was highlighted is a lack of recognition of the participation of administrative staff and research support services. Excellence and the recognition usually go in line, and are often assigned to one person – the principal investigator. Collective dimension of the accomplishment is not always visible.

Participants of focus groups have also highlighted a difficulty to balance personal and professional lives and environments while working to achieve excellence. According to them, excellence can be determined as a constant effort for improvement, not only at a professional and scientific level, but also from an individual point of view (AUTh). They stressed that as a consequence of this constant "pursuit of excellence", the concept has lost its meaning: something "excellent" lost its "supra" part and turned into a "normal" and sometimes - "senseless" element (U.Porto, UBx). Moreover, the pressure related to the number of publications is seen by researchers as a threat for the quality of their research outputs (UL).

The **institutional stakeholders interviewed** at UBx highlighted the importance of valuing the efforts of teams to achieve excellence, taking pedagogical duties into consideration and encouraging diversity and equality in research teams. Multidisciplinarity and sharing of experiences and knowledge among people with different social and cultural backgrounds empower effective and impact-driven innovation.

The discussions run **with Gender Equality Boards** went in the same direction. GEB members of U.Porto stressed that it is important to take into account specificities of scientific areas. Some criteria seem to be disadvantageous for women due to the difficulty to find a balance between professional life and family duties. These elements were also supported at the sessions of GEBs in RUB and UBx. At the University of Bordeaux, members of the GEB also emphasised the importance and will to focus not only on scientific excellence, but also on academic one: the working and studying

environment, quality of teaching and research content, promotion of equality, diversity and societal responsibility. They should be central in the evaluation of local excellence. However, according to them, it is neither possible nor desirable to renounce the position of the institution within international rankings and in international excellence schemes. During their meeting, GEB members of RUB developed some ideas on how to improve excellence towards equality and diversity in recruitment and advancement procedures, such as enabling more transparency and communication for candidates.

To sum up, the concept of scientific excellence itself cannot be undermined and will always be relevant for academic communities, as it drives change and innovation. It is, thus, the responsibility of higher education institutions to adjust their cursor and question their criteria, in order to adapt them to societal challenges. As a consortium of partner universities, we aim at aligning with European standards of equality and diversity, while safeguarding our ranking position in international competition of excellence. Our will is to be excellent at academic and scientific levels, in the way we organise our governance, how we act for occupational equality, how we take gender and impact dimensions into consideration in research content and dissemination, and how we tackle gender-based violence and discrimination. As the former president of the European Research Council – Jean-Pierre Bourguignon – declared: "*In excellence, the key element is people*" (Moran, 2019). This idea joins the vision of the Global Young Academy, according to which scientific excellence "*not only includes excellence in scientific research, but also excellence in connecting science to society, in teaching and mentoring scientists, in science management, and in science advice to policy makers*" (Global Young Academy website). With this statement, we aim at disseminating the vision of societally relevant scientific and academic excellence.

2. Strategic plan and objectives

The following document is a result of a collective work that was conducted in three steps: qualitative data collection and literature review; collective reflection and capacity building sessions necessary to define shared vision of scientific excellence and a decision-making session. The last stage involves participation of university top management: Presidents, Rectors and Vice-Rectors of seven partner universities of the RESET project.

Through this joint statement, we aim to share our vision of scientific excellence and contribute to the progressive change of its criteria: to make it more inclusive and diverse, in accordance with societal and industrial tendencies, as well as with the people who produce it. With the analysis of scientific excellence, RESET's consortium members identified six main criteria important for our common vision of this concept: **recognition, multidisciplinarity, open access, intersectionality, responsible research & innovation and societal impact**.

This statement represents an outcome of a series of discussions and reflections on the meaning of scientific excellence. The legal compatibility of the document with the institutional frameworks was reviewed by the corresponding institutional services. By signing the statement, representatives of top management of our seven institutions endorsed the engagement of their communities to move towards a progressive change in practices, aiming at greater equality and diversity.

The RESET joint statement states top management's will to implement a sustainable cultural change by mobilising resources needed to achieve this ambition.

This document has been redesigned at M28 (within the deliverable "RESET academic charters revised, including engagement for scientific excellence, gender equality and diversity") and M48 (version 2.0, 2024) of the RESET project. As long as the project progressed and integrated new results, this definition of scientific excellence evolved, and the content of the statement was enriched. The main purpose of this document is to present a new vision of scientific excellence to the ERA. It is entitled to be shared with European decision- and policy-makers and Higher Education Institutions. We started by the progressive dissemination of the statement at the institutional level, and continued by promoting this document as a token of engagement and an illustration of our commitment for our international partners.

3. Joint statement of top management on their engagement for equality, diversity and excellence in research

We, the consortium of the partner universities involved in the European project RESET - Redesigning Equality and Scientific Excellence Together, are committed to promote and sustain gender equality, diversity and scientific excellence within our institutional environments.

In higher education and research, recent decades have been characterized by the dissemination of a narrow imperative focusing on scientific excellence alone. This has resulted in a growing debate on "excellence," and how it often overlaps with the notion of elitism. In this context, academics have often been seen solely as competitors and "scientific entrepreneurs," while other criteria such as the diversity of career pathways, working conditions and contextual challenges that academics face have been ignored. Scientific excellence does not depend on a set of quantitative criteria and requirements, but must also include qualitative, cultural and social dimensions.

The pressure related to the competition of institutions based on the primacy of quantitative criteria has provoked a general fatigue of university communities that must be healed. In this aspect, the collective contribution of university communities to the excellent results must be included in the evaluation of academic standing.

The objective of this declaration is to ensure that all research stakeholders can participate in the competition for excellence, regardless of their social characteristics. At the same time, it intends to widen the definition and the collective dimension of excellence at the institutional level, by valuing contribution of all members of the community, thereby widening the definition of excellence. This statement takes its roots in the principles of gender equality and diversity, according to which all individuals should have the same opportunities, regardless of their sex, gender, sexual orientation, nationality and ethnicity, the fact of having disability, their religion, social background or even culture.

With the help of an intersectional and co-designing perspective, we will focus on the evolution of career paths including elements related to work-life balance and access to

decision-making. In conformity with Horizon Europe and national requirements, we will devote our efforts to the integration of gender dimension in research, and to the prevention of gender bias, stereotypes, discrimination and sexist and racist violence. As higher education institutions, we have a role to play not only in knowledge production, but also in its transfer at both administrative and scientific levels. We also aim at framing and implementing sustainable societal, gender- and diversity-responsible practices within our institutional environments, spreading values via networks, alliances, clusters and other types of partnerships. Hence, asserting equality and diversity in the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge is the major key to produce innovative, reflexive, impact-driven, societally relevant and inclusive content.

As primary channels in the production and dissemination of knowledge, we highlight our responsibility and engagement for equality and diversity through four key areas: Governance, Institutional Culture, Occupational Equality and Knowledge Production & Transfer.

GOVERNANCE

- Strengthening our commitment to equality and diversity principles by reviewing our core texts and official guidelines. We aim to highlight our institutional documents to reflect our common ambition for developing excellent research and innovation schemes. We aspire our institutions to be representatives of diversity, involvement, and quality of our communities.
- Enhancing co-design and collaboration in the creation, development and monitoring of ideas and actions in favour of equality and diversity. Our ambition is to include all relevant local stakeholders in the co-design of policies and innovative solutions, namely, into the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of local inclusive Gender Equality Plans (GEP). Our will is also to encourage European alliances, international mobility networks and territorial innovation centres to participate in the promotion of an inclusive excellence culture.
- Fostering diversity and equal representation in decision-making bodies and processes. This engagement will be adapted to our contexts and requires long-

term efforts: namely, regulation on the composition of boards and committees, training and communication activities tackling the issue of underrepresentation of women and other representatives of marginalized groups in decision-making bodies.

The political and institutional support at the governance level is an essential condition for legitimating and highlighting significance of inclusion, societal impact and collective efforts within excellence.

INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

- Promoting sustainable cultural change by establishing a gender and diversity-friendly environment. As employers and service providers, we have a responsibility to ensure that both employees and users have a chance to work and/or study in an atmosphere of mutual respect, benevolence and sharing of common civic values. The way we communicate and act, along with our regulations must echo our engagement to build together inclusive excellent universities.
- Using a way of communication that reflects the diversity of our environments. Visual, oral and written communication is a powerful tool to share ideas and spread messages. It might affect the perception of legitimacy and the position of a person in society. Therefore, we aspire to be as transparent as possible, and promote diversity and non-discrimination practices via our communication channels.
- Integrating gender mainstreaming in our policies: in order to promote equality at all levels, our past, current and future policies should be analysed, monitored and updated taking into consideration their impact on gender equality.
- Combating all forms of discrimination or gender-based violence within our institutions. We engage ourselves to draw awareness to the issue, and to address and sanction any cases of discrimination or violence that could occur at our universities. Our position includes promotion of safety and equality in our living, working and virtual spaces.

The promotion of equality and diversity within institutional culture is one of the first steps to ensure the efficiency of our actions. It will enable their endorsement and

encourage structural change in accordance with sustainable models of development and innovation.

OCCUPATIONAL EQUALITY

- Ensuring equality of opportunities by refining recruitment, retention and decision-making processes. Building a professional career, progressing and finding a balance with one's personal life are the main domains in which inequalities are observable. Occupational equality is thus a lever for the development of a more inclusive society, in which individuals may emancipate and achieve excellent results despite their divergent social backgrounds or personal situations. Within the framework of RESET, we will encourage the creation and dissemination of tools for transparent and non-discriminatory processes and procedures of recruitment and career advancement.
- Reflecting on the impact of parenthood on careers and solutions to enable a work-life balance. Leaves linked with parenthood, a part-time job or a lack of time for research and personal life activities may be serious challenges to embrace while making a career. Along with promoting modern forms of parenting, the main ambition here is to ensure that having children does not present a barrier for the professional realization and achievement of excellent results. Higher Education Institutions, as employers, have to align with European and local legislation and provide necessary facilities.
- Enhancing and valuing contribution of administrative and academic communities within European responsible research & innovation. Research support positions often remain invisible and yet are essential to the development and outreach of scientific excellence. It is thus important to recognize the work and outputs of all communities involved in excellence making, as they contribute to the enrichment, blooming and development of our institutions at (inter-)national level and promote European research and innovation.

Professional realization is still one of the fields in which gender inequalities remain the most visible in European countries. The process of providing employees and students with all elements necessary for fulfillment, dedication and growth should be carried out

with respect to the balance between professional and personal life, since excellent results require excellent environments.

PRODUCTION & TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE

- Developing training programs and pedagogical content that draw awareness to equality and diversity issues. The transversal notions of equality and diversity have to be included in the teaching and research content along with acknowledgement on bias, stereotypes and prejudices in professional practices. In this way, students and employees will be equipped with concrete tools. It is also a manner to highlight everyone's responsibility for the construction of a more inclusive society.
- Promoting integration of gender dimension in research through the implementation of the Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) tool of RESET. The requirements of the Horizon Europe programme on integrating gender dimension in research highlight the need for alignment between science development and contemporary societal challenges. The respect of GIA, research integrity and multidisciplinarity is a conceptual and operational basis for responsible research and innovation and excellent research outputs.
- Developing societal dimensions of research & innovation. We intend to promote accessible science and produce sustainable innovation, challenge established knowledge, and reach out to a large number of users. This objective is set in the context of the progressive opening of data and scientific results. In the aim of developing responsible research & innovation – and in accordance with the European strategy for inclusive and sustainable growth, we will promote open access, gender equality and respect of ethics and research integrity.

In order to keep scientific excellence societally relevant and impact-driven, it is paramount to take into consideration social inequalities that rule over human relationships and influence knowledge. Science is a solution to reduce inequalities, and to do so, it must be enriched by considering diversity in all disciplines, methodologies and contributions. Scientific and academic excellence should be taken as the results of collective efforts, valuing the participation of all stakeholders. The transformations to be carried out within the framework of RESET and seven partner universities aim to be

facilitated by the broadening of the criteria of scientific excellence, emphasising intersectionality, performance and research integrity in an inclusive and rewarding perspective.

4. Implementation of the Joint Statement's principles: RESET network engagement for institutional change

Throughout the project's lifespan, RESET-related activities enabled the actual implementation of the Statement's principles, driving institutional change. RESET partners relied on both collective incentives within the consortium and institutional actions.

4.1 RESET network actions for collective engagement towards equality, diversity, and scientific excellence

This Joint Statement resulted from collective efforts to redefine scientific excellence. Its implementation, as well as the evolution of the RESET network's definition of excellence, evolved throughout the project's lifespan, largely due to collective meetings.

4.1.1 Building capacities and enriching a collective definition of scientific excellence

One of RESET's strengths has been the strong engagement of all partners and the willingness to collaborate and learn from one another. For example, in M11, a capacity-building session marked the starting point of the RESET joint definition of scientific excellence. This session achieved three main objectives:

- Strengthening partners' knowledge of scientific excellence through insightful interventions from a member of the RESET Advisory Board, Pat'O'Connor, an expert in the field, and from the project evaluator, Maxime Forest (ScPo);
- Sharing stakeholders' views on excellence and discussing local specificities;
- Co-designing ideas for a redefinition of scientific excellence.

After this session, partners co-designed the scope of the statement, while simultaneously engaging their respective top leaderships to ensure their participation and commitment. A meeting of directors, rectors, and vice-rectors was organized in M15 to finalize the version of the statement. It was crucial for the top management of RESET institutions to participate in the reflection on scientific excellence and sign the statement to ensure its institutionalization.

A diversity policy only becomes part of change management when it is integrated into a strategic, systemic, cross-functional, and sustainable approach (Bruna, 2013). For this to happen, it needs to be adopted at the institutional level by decision-makers who represent the university's culture. By joining the RESET project, the top management of the seven institutions had already demonstrated their commitment to equality and

diversity, and the signature of the statement marked a significant step in solidifying their engagement.

At the intersection of research and human resources, top management members are well-acquainted with their institutions and how to enshrine the principles of equality and diversity over the long term within their definition of scientific excellence. To ensure institutional support, the statement had to be signed at the highest political level, with variations depending on the local organization: president, director, rector, and/or vice-rector.

Even after the validation of the statement, partners continued their collective reflection on this complex concept through informative presentations and discussions. One example was the intervention of RESET's Ethics Advisor, Anne-Sophie Godfroy, at the 4th Consortium Meeting in Oulu: “Excellence, Gender, and Ethics: A Philosophical Perspective."

RESET members are convinced of the power of collective work, and knew they could learn much from other European projects. This is why the projects EXENKO and GENDER VOICES were associated in the RESET Capacity Building session “More inclusive criteria for scientififc excellence" (M26). A deep work has been done on indicators, since monitoring and evaluation is crucial to ensure the effective implementation of the statement's principles. Indeed, advancing gender equality and diversity in universities is a political process that requires to build capacities, create bottom-up support through co-design, but also to generate accountability and commitment for and from top leadership.This will be developed in next part.

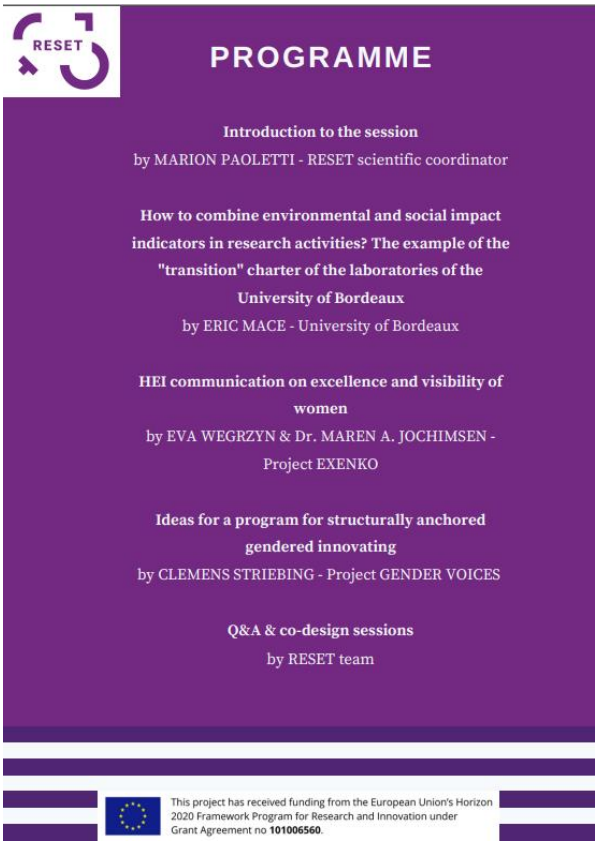

Figure 1 Programme of the RESET Capacity Building session on indicators for scientfiic excellence (27 February 2023)

The RESET Joint Statement is aimed at European policy-makers and European HEIs. For this purpose, the RESET network disseminated their definition of scientific excellence with various stakeholders. For instance, the scientific coordinator presented our definition of excellence at a conference in Liège in December 2022: "Pluralizing the criteria for scientific excellence, integrating issues of inequality and merit: the experience of the RESET project".

The RESET Summer School was another occasion to present the main RESET outputs that are all linked with scientific excellence, especially through the dedicated session "Scientific excellence and gender inequality: levers to overcome the discrepancy". This collective work on excellence will also be highlighted in 2025 with the publication of the RESET book *Scientific excellence and equality at university: overcoming the contradiction*, with Routledge.

RESET collective reflections on scientific excellence were shared with policy-makers and European stakeholders during the project's Final conference in Porto (M46). This event was an occasion to wrap up all the discussions, research contents and outputs that were developed by the network of partners during the project. A specific session of the final conference gave a general viewpoint on partners' definition of scientific

excellence and the challenges linked to it: the roundtable session "Redesigning Scientific Excellence with Gender Equality." Marion Paoletti, Mervi Heikkinnen, and Pat O'Connor – experts in the question of scientific excellence and advisory board member were the speakers of this session. The following image is the result of the live illustration made during the discussion.

Figure 2 Result of the live illustration of the roundtable session "Redesigning Scientific Excellence with Gender Equality", RESET final Conference, Porto, October 2024

The RESET final conference was also marked by the intervention of Yvonne Benschop (Radboud University): "Sustaining change towards intersectional equality", where she could share her vision on the need to redefine criteria of scientific excellence.

Additionally, UBx and UOULU representatives participated in the European Research Cultures Observatory Conference organised by the British Council in M47, in Amsterdam. They presented the challenges of redesigning scientifc excellence, namely through the Joint Statement and the development of GIA principles.

In the aim of disseminating RESET definition of scientific excellence to the ERA, and perpetrating RESET outputs, there is a project from the coordination team to meet European decision-makers in Bruxelles at the beginning of 2025, after the project ends.

The RESET Media Campaign's first exhibition, *Faces of Campus*, is another concrete illustration of RESET's vision of scientific excellence. It aims to highlight the collective dimension of excellence and promote the role of women in research support activities. All RESET partners participated in this innovative and committed project that can be disseminated at a European scale.

Figure 3 Some portraits of the exhibition "Faces of Campus", RESET Media Campaign, 2022

In M48, an online event was organised by RESET partners: "Advancing Inclusive Scientific Excellence and HEIs Transformation in the ERA". This webinar drew from the RESET experience to explore the potential for fostering a new vision of inclusive scientific excellence within the ERA. Panel discussions and presentations from RESET representatives were completed with insightful discussions with the audience. Policy-makers from RESET institutions, national stakeholders and decision-makers from the European Union were present.

In addition to these examples of collective dissemination of RESET definition of scientific excellence, partners developed local activities that proved their concrete engagement towards principles of this core document.

4.2.2 Implementing RESET definition of Scientific Excellence at a local scale

The RESET definition of scientific excellence is illustrated in its Joint Statement, which serves as a symbol of engagement that all partner universities adopted. Through the implementation of RESET activities and the development of GEPs, our institutions demonstrated their ownership of this core document and its principles. Below are just a few (non-exhaustive) examples of how RESET universities have embodied these principles, based on the four thematic areas of the statement.

Governance

By signing the Joint Statement, top management of RESET institutions committed to implementing the principles of equality and diversity in their governance practices. This engagement has led to the enhancement of co-design and collaboration in the creation, development, and monitoring of ideas and actions that promote equality and diversity, integrating these principles into institutional core documents, and fostering diversity and equal representation in decision-making bodies and processes. All partners

successfully implemented this task, notably through the network of GEBs, which provided strong support for equality policies (AUTh, UBx, UL, UPorto). GEB members have been actively involved in GEP co-design and implementation, holding regular meetings at all institutions and capacity-building sessions, including those on scientific excellence at U.Porto and UBx. Members of RESET institutions' governance were actively involved in the redefinition of scientific excellence and in the implementation of these principles. At some RESET universities, GEBs will be institutionalized even after the project concludes (UL, UBx).

After the election of the Rector at U.Porto in 2022, for the first time in the university's history, an equal rectoral team was appointed, composed of 6 men and 6 women. At RUB, the university board for diversity was established, and a project of audit has been conducted to evaluate RUB's measures from a diversity perspective. At UL, the anti-discrimination procedure was developed in 2023, and several task forces have been implemented to follow up on gender equality and diversity policies, including GEP implementation, work-life balance, and job satisfaction. UL's governance is strongly committed to the principles of the statement, notably through the appointment of the UL RESET project manager as the Rector's representative for Equal Treatment.

The issue of gender balance in decision-making has also been addressed at RESET universities, such as by integrating gender quotas or gender balance in evaluation committees within GEPs (AUTh, UBx, U.Porto, OULU) or through the Cascade Model (RUB).

Institutional Culture

Since the beginning of the RESET project, partners have made considerable efforts to drive institutional change towards a culture of equality and diversity. Through GEP implementation and RESET activities, they have progressively embedded practices that align with the consortium's commitment to more inclusive excellence. This excellence not only considers the content and methodology of scientific production but also the construction of a gender- and diversity-friendly academic environment through gender mainstreaming.

One of the main areas where partners have implemented cultural change towards greater equality in scientific excellence is in communication. In line with WP5 activities on gender-inclusive language, all partners have paid special attention to adopting inclusive forms of communication, including this principle in titles for employment positions (AUTh, RUB, UBx, UOULU) and adapting the RESET D5.4 toolbox on gender-inclusive language (UBx, RUB, U.Porto). At U.Porto, the issue of gender-inclusive language (GIL) has been strongly integrated into research practices, with the dissemination of a Guide for Inclusive Language in Portuguese to doctoral students participating in the academic competition, U.Porto Three Minutes Thesis, and through posters promoting the GIL toolbox at scientific conferences.

Another important element, aligned with WP5-6 activities, is the promotion of work-life balance (WLB) at all RESET institutions, which is emphasized in GEPs 2.0. For example, RUB offers financial support to students who become parents, UL has a task force

addressing WLB, and UBx provides a range of informative tools to support stakeholders during their careers. The creation of an inclusive and family-friendly environment enhances employee productivity and supports the advancement in research careers, contributing to the development of excellent research schemes.

Actions to tackle gender-based violence and discrimination are also in line with the Joint Statement's principle of promoting institutional change. The development or enhancement of reporting units (U.Porto, UL, UBx, ScPo), the dissemination of training sessions on the topic (all partners), and participation in national and international capacity-building sessions or conferences on gender-based violence and discrimination demonstrate this engagement.

Occupational Equality

Occupational equality is central to the redesigning of scientific excellence, as it enables the development of inclusive career paths and career advancement. The work conducted on T5.1, refining recruitment and promotion schemes, has been incorporated into all GEPs 1.0 and 2.0. While ScPo and UBx benefit from a strong national legislative framework on occupational equality, other partners have implemented actions at the local level, such as developing a set of checklists and guidelines (e.g., gender indicators in recruitment processes, gender mainstreaming in recruitment, forms for recording the gender of applicants, equal gender representation on recruitment boards, and recommendations for integrating gender into the assessment of recruitment panels) (U.Porto).

RESET partners also benefit from European incentives to promote equality in professional life for stakeholders in higher education institutions, such as the HRS4R strategy. While UOULU, UL, and RUB are already labeled, U.Porto and UBx began their engagement in the HRS4R process at the end of the RESET project.

Production and Transfer of Knowledge

The area of production and transfer of knowledge has been particularly driven by two RESET WPs: WP4 on training and WP7 on the development of GIA tools and strategies.

RESET partners implemented multiple training activities based on WP4 outputs, targeting stakeholders in the academic community. Training actions are essential for developing an inclusive research environment and advancing more egalitarian scientific excellence[2].

Additionally, the GIA checklist enabled the integration of gender into research content and methodology and facilitated the mobilization of communities of practitioners to implement this policy.

Finally, another crucial element is the impact of science on society. For this reason, partners have reflected on the implications of research results for environmental and

[2] To know more about the training activities and contents, the RESET D4.3 is available on Zenodo: https://zenodo.org/records/10722997. Additionnally, the RESET D4.4 will be published at the end of the project to illustrate all the training activities implemented at RESET institutions.

societal transitions (AUTh, UBx, UL, U.Porto). At U.Porto, research and innovation reports and the Activities Report explicitly highlight their contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals.

4.2 Selection of indicators for the follow-up and monitoring of the integration of the Joint Statement principles

To illustrate and enable the monitoring of RESET institutions' integration of the Joint Statement commitments into their practices, we developed a list of more inclusive criteria and metrics for scientific excellence.

D5.1 RESET Academic core charters revised, including engagement for scientific excellence, gender equality, and diversity[3], provides an overview of this literature review and the first steps in the reflection on RESET indicators. Since its submission in M28, RESET partners have collaborated to discuss the relevance of these indicators. Due to the variety of contexts, resources, and availability of metrics among partners, the task leader – UBx – decided to work with the common list of 88 indicators agreed upon with partners and select a short list for local implementation. The UBx RESET team collaborated with the service dedicated to monitoring indicators at UBx to make this selection, which is intended to serve as a source of inspiration for partner institutions. Below, we will describe the work carried out for the selection of these criteria.

4.2.1 Work on indicators

Reflections began with the submission of D5.1. For this purpose, we conducted a literature review and organized a capacity-building and co-design workshop titled "More Inclusive Criteria for Scientific Excellence" (M26). A list of 88 indicators resulted from this first step. In parallel, the task leader asked RESET partners to assess the existence of such indicators at their institutions.

The last consortium meeting (M46) provided an opportunity to hold a workshop to deepen the discussions on these indicators. In small groups, partners were asked to discuss the indicators presented in D5.1, considering their relevance and feasibility, and to provide comments on the actual follow-up of such elements at the local level. Each group was responsible for discussing two thematic areas of the statement. The RESET evaluator, advisory board members, and the ethics advisor participated in this session. This one-hour workshop was facilitated by the leader of T6.5 and T6.6, and the discussions were presented in an online table, in which partners could categorize the indicators according to their relevance, as illustrated in the following example:

[3] https://wereset.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/d5.1_compressed.pdf

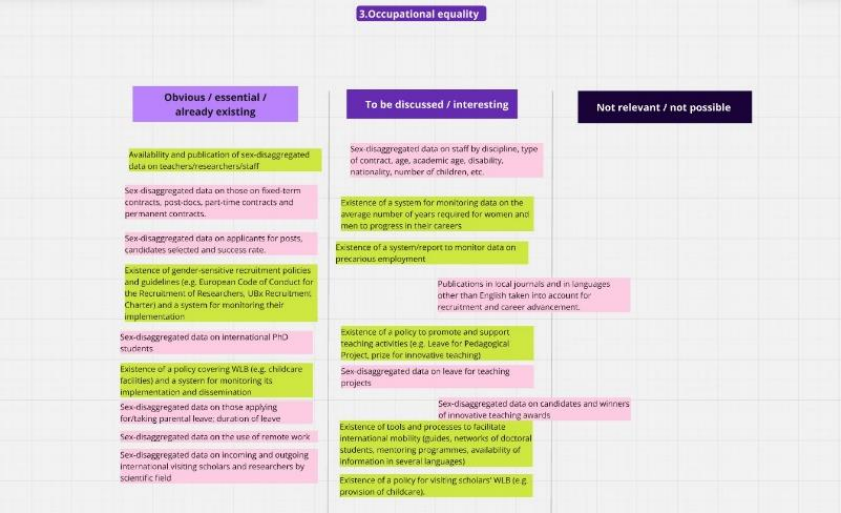

Figure 4 Example of results of the discussion workshop on indicators of scientific excellence

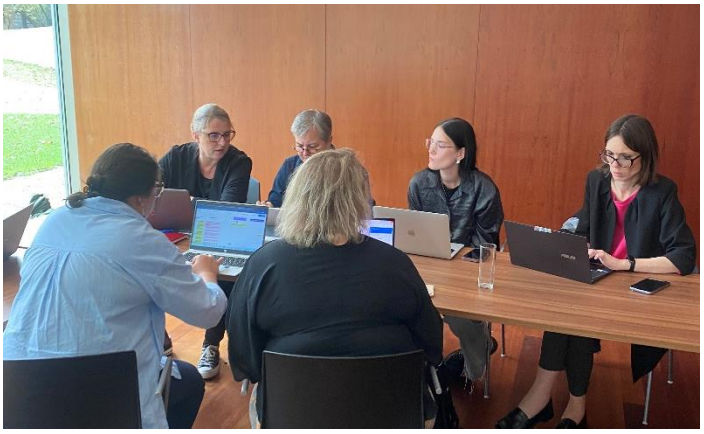

Figure 5 Group working on indicators during the session

At the end of a 45-minute working session in groups, partners were invited to share their remarks and feelings. The main points raised were the following:

- Some indicators need to be rephrased, specified, and adapted to local contexts,
- For some indicators (especially concerning the number of cases of gender-based violence), there is a national legal framework that prevents the collection of such data,
- Partners suggested publishing these indicators at the Governance level to ensure transparency and accountability from top management,
- GEB members could be responsible for the regular and effective follow-up of such indicators,
- The priority for partners who wish to implement the follow-up of indicators is to determine who will be in charge of collecting them, with which resources, and by when.

In this deliverable, we will describe the pathway followed by UBx, which can be used as an example. However, data collection, publication, and analysis must be adapted to local contexts and discussed with institutional decision-makers.

4.2.2 Indicators selected by the UBx

The University of Bordeaux could rely on the support of governance and institutional services for the selection and organization of the collection of indicators. One of the main priorities of the HR policy for 2025 is to identify the causes of career inequalities between female and male researchers and teacher-researchers. To this end, the analysis of a set of indicators related to careers is needed. Therefore, the RESET work on scientific excellence and the redefinition of this concept was highly relevant to UBx's strategic orientations.

Furthermore, the UBx RESET team held four meetings with the service responsible for monitoring indicators at UBx: the 3D service. They received valuable advice on which indicators to choose and how to follow them up. This service will also prepare an online dashboard for presenting the indicators.

We decided to integrate the four thematic areas of the RESET Joint Statement into targeted analyses of broader areas. This presentation enables the analysis of career evolution and institutional culture at UBx. The indicators will be updated annually by the 3D service. The UBx teams are finalizing the work on the dashboard, and governance will decide on the platform where it will be published. The selected indicators are the following:

Field	Indicator
Student life	Sex disaggregated data on - Students overall - Students by scientific field - Students by level (Bachelor, Master)
PhD students and post-docs	Sex disaggregated data on - PhD students overall - PhD students by scientific field - PhD students who have a contract at the UBx, by scientific field - Post-docs
Career advancement of teacher-researchers (TRs)	Sex disaggregated data on - TRs - Lecturers - Lecturers with habilitation to supervise research - Promotions for full professorship - TRs who take a leave for pedagogical project - Laboratory directors - Members of selection committees

International dimension	Sex disaggregated data on - Doctor Honoris Causa recipients - PhD students by geographic region (France / EU / outside of EU) - Visiting scholars
Occupational equality	Sex disaggregated data on - Personnel in total (TRs and staff) - Administrative staff - TRs - Staff by category (A, B, C) - Status (civil service/contractual) - Type of contract (fixed-term/permanent) - Parental leave Number of paternity and maternity leave taken in past year
Governance	Sex disaggregated data on the composition of - The Administrative Board - The Academic Council - The presidential team - The administrative top management
Culture of equality	Link to the online version of the GEP Link to "Equality, diversity, respect" webpage Possibility of downloading PDF version of UBx recommendations on gender-inclusive language Number of: - Training sessions on gender equality and diversity in the past year - Staff trained on gender equality and diversity in the past year - Students trained on gender equality and diversity in the past year
Gender-based violence and discrimination	Sex disaggregated data for students and for personnel by: - Type (victim/witness/perpetrator) - Professional status (EC/ BIATSS / doctoral student) - Category (A, B, C) - Type of violence (GBV, discrimination, harassment, etc.)

Table 1 List of indicators selected by the UBx for the follow up of the implementation of policies towards more inclusive scientific excellence

4.2.3 The Limits of Indicators

The selection and adoption of indicators has been quite challenging for RESET partners due to the diversity of local contexts and monitoring tools. Institutions are overwhelmed with demands for producing metrics on various topics related to productivity and

sustainable development, leading to a general fatigue with indicators. Some authors even speak of a "race for indicators" (Déjean, 2021). The difficulty in agreeing on common indicators also stems from the absence of an international reference method for constructing indicator systems and methodologies (Descamps & Vicard, 2010).

Despite the goodwill of RESET universities to follow up on indicators, implementation has proven challenging due to three main factors:

- The policies promoted by the central level of universities may encounter inertia within the laboratories, as they are not always adapted to the local context of the unit. At UBx, this inertia is also due to the fact that some laboratories depend on multiple administrative supervisions (UBx shares management with other national or regional research centers). This results in a variety of operating methods, methodologies, and indicators;
- Laboratories face a lack of human resources to support data collection. Since indicators concern careers and occupational equality, researchers are not always able to, nor have the time to collect such data. This leads to a heavy workload;
- The follow-up of indicators can be seen as a source of constraint and their usefulness can be questioned when stakeholders do not have control over the elements that could make these indicators evolve in a more positive direction.

In the case study of the University of Bordeaux, the team had to set aside some indicators previously identified as relevant because it was not possible to collect the necessary data.

The main challenge is related to the area of research funding: existing tools do not allow for the production of sex-disaggregated data on research funding and publications. The follow-up of indicators may vary from one unit to another. The issue is how to ensure more transparency while safeguarding workers' well-being, knowing that producing additional indicators may be time-consuming. Such indicators would be useful to understand the potential gap between men and women in scientific productivity, which could explain differences in access to excellence recognition.

Additionally, at the University of Bordeaux, it is not yet possible to follow up on criteria for advancing positions in research (expected skills and experience, criteria for selection, description of accessibility). This depends on the scientific field and local practices, so it could not be identified as a common criterion.

At the University of Bordeaux, there is no sex-disaggregated data on keynote speakers or members of conference juries, since this data is not centralized and depends on the organizers. There is also a lack of transparency in the award processes, as they are very research unit-dependent. The only data we could follow up on is the Doctor Honoris Causa awards, as these are limited in number.

Thus, the indicators presented in the table constitute a first step in UBx's engagement for accountability in terms of inclusive scientific excellence. These will need to be

complemented with additional indicators that will provide more transparency and lead to changes in practices, particularly in terms of research funding.

The example of the University of Bordeaux aims to serve as a source of inspiration for RESET partners, and other universities which would like to question scientific excellence and gender inequalities. They are encouraged to adapt this methodology to their own context to ensure the sustainability of the implementation of the Joint Statement principles and transparency in their practices.

Conclusion

Qualified by the RESET evaluator as an "unprecedented bold statement in favor of transforming the governance, culture, and missions of universities towards equality" (Interim Monitoring Report, 2023), the Joint Statement is a strong symbol of commitment for RESET institutions. Such engagement by decision-makers to question deeply rooted principles of scientific excellence is a very positive sign of the institutions' willingness to adapt to current challenges and change the rules of a game that is not always fair. Through the numerous activities and content created throughout the RESET project, institutions were able to progressively take ownership of this new definition of scientific excellence, adapt it, and enrich it. The collaborative work of partners resulted in a more inclusive definition of scientific excellence, which has been disseminated at all levels: governance, institutional culture, occupational equality, and production and transfer of knowledge.

One of the key objectives of RESET was to promote this definition among European decision-makers. Through a variety of events, conferences, and capacity-building sessions, RESET communicated these principles to stakeholders at local, national, and international levels. The dissemination of RESET tools through Zenodo[4] and the RESET toolkit[5] and website[6] are additional important levers.

The effective implementation of the statement's principles, particularly through the selection of indicators, demonstrates the commitment of RESET institutions and facilitates the monitoring of progress. However, even in institutions with a strong desire to evolve and ensure transparency, working with indicators remains a challenge. Limited human resources, workload pressures, and centralized decision-making make it difficult for university stakeholders to fully monitor a large number of indicators. To address this, it is crucial to streamline the number of indicators to ensure they are relevant and manageable. Additionally, it is essential to develop tools for tracking metrics, particularly in terms of data on research funding.

After the project ends, RESET partners will work on these indicators, based on the University of Bordeaux's experience, to ensure sustainability and transparency.

[4] https://zenodo.org/communities/reset-h2020/records?q=&l=list&p=1&s=10
[5] https://toolkit.wereset.eu/#/
[6] https://wereset.eu/about/

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RESET

Redesigning Equality and Scientific Excellence Together

Annex 1: Signatures

Section Signatures

THE UNIVERSITY OF BORDEAUX
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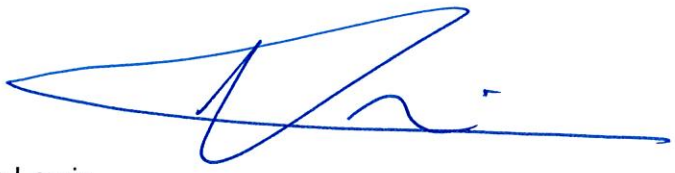

Dean Lewis
President

Date

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THE ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY OF THESSALONIKI

Signature(s), Stamp

Nikolaos Papaioannou
Rector

Date: Thessaloniki, 9th May 2022

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PROREKTOR
UNIWERSYTETU ŁÓDZKIEGO
DS. NAUKI
I zastępca Rektora UŁ
prof. dr hab. Zbigniew Kmieciak

Prof. Zbigniew Kmieciak
Rector for Research

Date: 27.06.2022

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Pr. Dr. António Sousa Pereira
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Date:

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RUHR-UNIVERSITAET BOCHUM
Signature(s), Stamp

Martin Paul
Rector

Ruhr-Universität Bochum
Der Rektor
D 44780 Bochum

Date 3.5.2022

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Framework Program for Research and Innovation under Grant Agreement no **101006560**.

RESET Redesigning Equality and Scientific Excellence Together

Essi Kiuru
Administrative Director

OULUN YLIOPISTO
Signature(s), Stamp

Jouko Niinimäki
Rector

Date 10.5.2022

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Mathias Vicherat
Director

ENSP - IEP DE PARIS
Direction

Date June, 9th, 2022