Towards inclusive gender equality in Research and Innovation

The EU's commitment to gender equality and inclusiveness in R&I

Equality is a fundamental principle of the European Union, enshrined in the Treaties. To promote diversity in R&I and open its gender policy to intersections with other social categories, such as ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation, the European Commission supports the development of inclusive gender equality plans (GEPs) and policies, in line with the 2020 Communication on the new European Research Area (ERA) and Action 5 of the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024. The latter takes note of the 2021 Ljubljana Declaration on Gender Equality in Research and Innovation, which first priority is to ensure fair, open, inclusive and gender equal career paths in research, and consider intersectional perspectives on gender inequalities.

What is inclusive gender equality in R&I?

- This approach acknowledges that other characteristics such as racial and ethnic origin, disability, socio-economic background or sexual orientation interact and can reinforce **intersectional and specific forms of discrimination** that may limit the impact of measures focused only on one characteristic.
- Inclusive approaches to gender equality aim to **understand and address** the different patterns and trajectories of discrimination and inequality that can be found in R&I and in wider society.
- Inclusive approaches to gender equality plans and policies enable **systemic action** to address different patterns of inequality and marginalisation.

Why inclusive gender equality in R&I?

- To ensure **fairness, inclusion, and equality of opportunity** in employment and education.
- To **attract, diversify and retain research talent** in a global research system.
- To **increase competitiveness and societal relevance of R&I** through diverse research teams and R&I content, which reflects the perspectives, behaviours and needs of diverse groups in society.
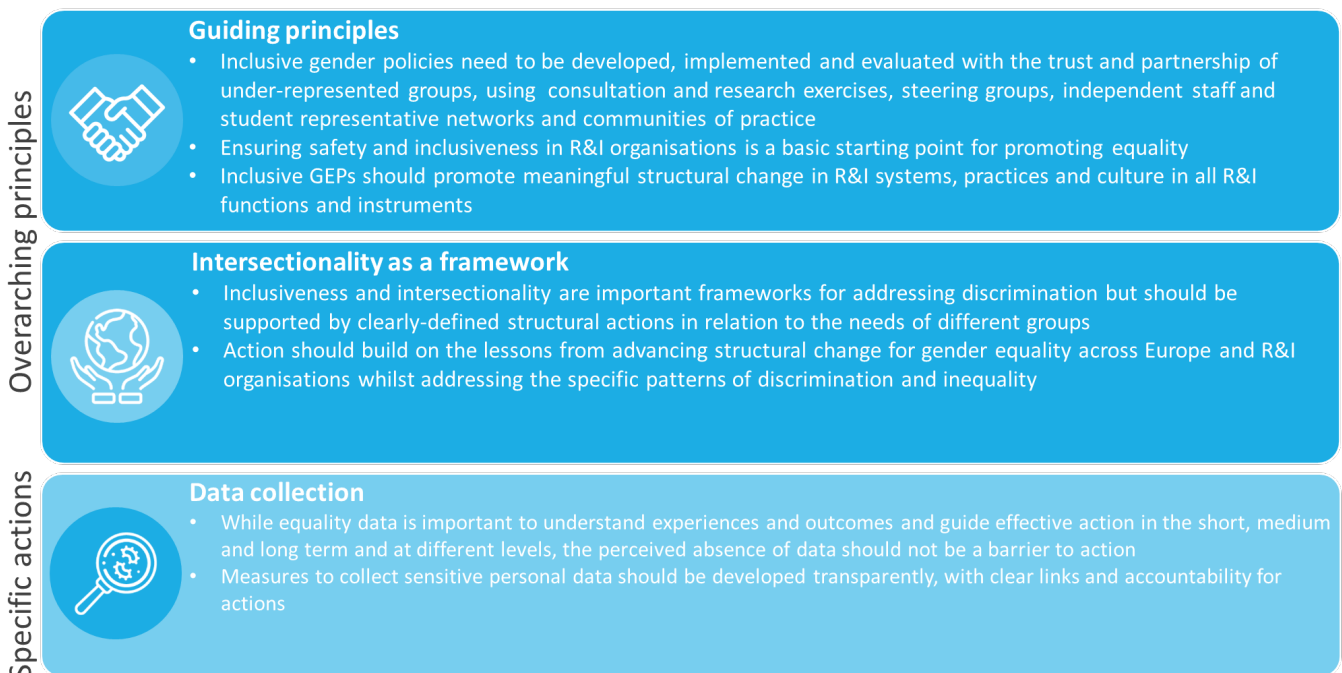
What action is needed?

- Building inclusiveness requires **long-term coordinated action** by national authorities, research funding organisations, and research performing organisations. Measures may include actions to address entry to and equal progress in research careers, R&I cultures, the research funding process and organisational policies that may disadvantage certain groups.

Research and Innovation

- It will be important to **move beyond general approaches to diversity and inclusion** by setting specific organisational objectives and associated actions. This may include addressing the specific drivers of inequalities that may be experienced by different groups, both in the context of gender equality actions and actions focusing on other characteristics.
- European R&I organisations have started to develop inclusive gender equality strategies and action plans. Many of these have sought to highlight the **positive value of the diversity** among researchers and students.
- Activities include diversity awareness campaigns and training, **reinforcing codes of conduct and anti-harassment policies** to include multiple patterns of discrimination, **encouraging reporting of harassment and discrimination**, and ensuring these processes inform organisational change.

Principles for action

Inclusive gender equality policies and plans in R&I should reflect the contexts of different organisations. The range of different national contexts, R&I sectors and organisations means that there is no one-size-fits-all approach. However, some common principles for European R&I can help to guide meaningful action.

Overarching principles

Guiding principles
- Inclusive gender policies need to be developed, implemented and evaluated with the trust and partnership of under-represented groups, using consultation and research exercises, steering groups, independent staff and student representative networks and communities of practice
- Ensuring safety and inclusiveness in R&I organisations is a basic starting point for promoting equality
- Inclusive GEPs should promote meaningful structural change in R&I systems, practices and culture in all R&I functions and instruments

Intersectionality as a framework
- Inclusiveness and intersectionality are important frameworks for addressing discrimination but should be supported by clearly-defined structural actions in relation to the needs of different groups
- Action should build on the lessons from advancing structural change for gender equality across Europe and R&I organisations whilst addressing the specific patterns of discrimination and inequality

Specific actions

Data collection
- While equality data is important to understand experiences and outcomes and guide effective action in the short, medium and long term and at different levels, the perceived absence of data should not be a barrier to action
- Measures to collect sensitive personal data should be developed transparently, with clear links and accountability for actions

Tips to get started – policymakers

- Focus on **policy actions** to widen participation in R&I and in education more widely. Good examples include the Austrian National strategy on the social dimension of higher education – towards more inclusive access and wider participation and Promotionsstellen ohne Limit – PromoLi, which supports people with disabilities and/or chronic illness to study for their doctorates.

- Focus on **attracting and financially supporting students** from diverse backgrounds to enter research careers. Relevant schemes include Mission MINT (Germany) for women from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, MOSAIC 2.0 (Netherlands) for students from a non-European migrant background, and Doctoral Handicap (France) for individuals with disabilities.
- Examine and address **inequalities in research funding,** including through funding policies, award processes, and **professional development** schemes, such as the Austrian Science Fund's inclusive funding procedure for people with career breaks due to chronic illness, disability or family care work.

Key questions to get started – organisations

- What quantitative and qualitative **data is available** on the characteristics, experiences, and outcomes of researchers, staff and students from different backgrounds and how might this be enhanced? **Data collection** is a key basis for action.
- Does the organisation **understand the experiences** of staff and researchers from diverse groups and what channels are in place for engaging in a dialogue about inclusiveness?
- Do policies address **different forms of harassment** and do all staff and students, including those from minority backgrounds, have confidence to report their experiences?
- Does **training** for decision-makers, staff and students address inequalities and unconscious biases for social characteristics and is this embedded in efforts to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion?
- Do **recruitment and career evaluation methods** encourage and enable the recruitment and progression of researchers and staff from different backgrounds, including at senior levels?
- Do **research and education programmes** reflect the perspectives and needs of diverse groups, including in research topics, methodologies, and curricula?

Gathering equality data

Many R&I organisations have undertaken research and consultation exercises to understand inequalities in national systems or organisations. For example, the **KIF committee in Norway** and the **Higher Education Authority (Ireland)** have both published research on the experiences of racial and ethnic minority staff, including staff with a migrant background, in their national R&I sectors. The KIF committee also shares examples of good practices to foster equality and diversity in R&I. At the RPO level, **Vilnius University (Lithuania)** published a study of "Diversity and Equal Opportunities in Vilnius University in 2018- 2019" and publishes annual monitoring data. Equality data benefits from an intersectional approach: **Advance HE (UK)** has published a guide on intersectional approaches to research and equality data. The GEAM tool, developed by the Horizon 2020-funded project ACT, also includes guidance on intersectional data analysis in R&I.

@EUScienceInnov   #EUResearchArea   #GenderEquality   #UnionOfEquality

More info: Gender equality in research and innovation | European Commission (europa.eu) **https://europa.eu/!Q4Hm7J**