

# STRENGTHENING GENDER IN THE ERA

The European Commission has launched a proposal for the next EU Research & Innovation Programme (2021-2027), “Horizon Europe”. This Briefing Paper is a call to action to properly integrate gender equality policies in the “Strengthening the ERA” part of the Proposal. The aim is to strengthen gender equality in the ERA community and structures as well as to innovate gender equality policy implementation in the scientific field.

## What the EC wants to strengthen through Horizon Europe?

The Horizon Europe “Strengthening the ERA” part underpins the three pillar structure by focusing on supporting the 6 ERA priorities (including gender), as an aim in and of itself and as a way to *optimise the Programme’s delivery for increased impact.*

***“The goal is for an EU where knowledge and a highly skilled workforce circulate freely, research outputs are shared rapidly and efficiently, researchers benefit from attractive careers and gender equality is ensured, where Member States develop common strategic research agendas, aligning national plans, defining and implementing joint programmes, and where the outcomes of research and innovation are understood and trusted by informed citizens and benefit society as a whole.”*** (EC, 2018)

This is planned to be done through two Areas of Intervention:

- **Sharing excellence** (related to the H2020 Spreading Excellence & Widening Participation) *to fully exploit the potential in less R&I performing countries through four broad lines (Teaming, Twinning, ERA-chairs and COST).*
- **Reforming and enhancing the European R&I System** (related to H2020 Science with and for Society - SwafS), through 11 broad lines, including one on *Supporting gender equality in scientific careers and in decision making, as well as the integration of the gender dimension*

*in research and innovation content.* Gender is also mentioned in the broad line on *attractive career environments, skills and competences* which links the ERA and the European Higher Education Area to modernise universities and other R&I organisations through recognition reward mechanisms and incentives to promote trans-disciplinarity, entrepreneurship, citizen engagement, open science, inter-sectoral and international mobility, *gender equality plans and comprehensive approaches to institutional changes.* Other broad lines, *inter alia*, include: monitoring and evaluating the Framework Programme and disseminating and exploiting results; strengthening the evidence base for R&I policy; supporting enhanced international cooperation (see [Policy Brief no.6](#)); as well as other key issues for Responsible R&I (RRI) such as *ethics and integrity* as well as *citizen science.*

**This is the only part of the Horizon Europe proposal that explicitly claims to contribute directly to UN SDG5 Gender Equality.**

## What is missing and should be strengthened?

The “Strengthening the ERA” part is crucial for both the ERA roadmap and the impact of Horizon Europe. However, if we consider the budget as an indicator, the EC has stated that *“the largest share of resources is needed for Global Challenges and Industrial Competitiveness pillar, followed by Open Science and Open Innovation, whereas*

*Strengthening the ERA entails only limited budget”.* The SwafS community has pointed out that Horizon Europe envisages neither a specific program line nor a sufficient budget dedicated to SwafS activities despite their key role in ensuring smooth transition to more open and inclusive research endeavours (SiS.net, 2018). Actually, although the **Horizon Europe intervention area on reforming and enhancing the EU R&I system includes a higher number of broad lines that H2020 SwafS, its planned budget is even smaller.** The concern is that without sufficient visibility and funding for specific research and support actions, the goals will

be hardly achieved. To illustrate how can this affect the gender equality priority, it must be noted that H2020 SwafS has been the privileged space to develop gender equality plans, to increasingly put in place gender equality structures within Research Performing/Funding Organizations (RPOs/RFOs) and also to promote gender-friendly organizational cultures. The call for promoting Gender Equality in R&I (GERI) has been well received by the scientific community in light of increasing number of proposals submitted since 2014 and has made it possible to translate EU gender equality provisions into concrete measures within RPOs and RFOs.



*Horizon 2020 projects on gender and science (and also those on RRI) have contributed to shaping our RPOs and RFOs as well as to creating a community of gender equality practitioners, supporters and ambassadors in the scientific field.*



*All the joint efforts made under these projects have become a reference model for other global regions in the promotion of gender equality policies in R&I.*



The cooperation between more and less experienced RPOs and RFOs from different countries, with diverse organizational cultures, and all the projects funded, have contributed to creating a community of gender equality practitioners, supporters and ambassadors in the scientific field. This success of H2020 needs continued activities and funding to turn into sustainable gender equality policies. Otherwise, the job will be left only half done after spending

public resources, making efforts to breaking barriers and overcoming initial resistances. The Helsinki Group on Gender in R&I (2017) has highlighted the need to *keep and reinforce the funding line for more effective, harmonized and extended gender equality plans* for institutional change in RPOs and RFOs across EU.

## Recommendations on gender equality policies

While Horizon Europe pillars are the privileged space to integrate sex/gender analysis into R&I content, *Strengthening the ERA* is crucial to spread EU gender equality policies in R&I and to address the key issue of advancing gender equality in research: the organizational culture of research institutions. The Council of the EU (2015) invited the Commission to continue promoting institutional change as well as the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all gender equality objectives in H2020 (gender balance in research teams and decision-making, and gender dimension in research content). To do so, *Strengthening the ERA* in Horizon Europe must include:

- **Better gender statistics** and qualitative studies from a gender perspective for the monitoring and evaluation of the Framework Programme.
- Dissemination and exploitation of results taking into account **gender inclusive language and image**, as well as women's and men's (potential) different interests, roles and activities.
- Modernising more European universities and other R&I organizations through **innovative gender equality policies** and more effective tools developed by projects on women and science.
- Supporting enhanced international cooperation including gender and **targeting SDG5** (see [Policy Brief no. 6](#) for specific recommendations).
- Science, society and citizens as a work programme that mainstreams gender in every activity and includes a **specific funding line for Coordination and Support Actions to promote Gender Equality in R&I**. The support for these CSAs should ensure that changes towards gender

## References

Council of the EU (2015) [Council Conclusions on Advancing gender equality in the European Research Area \(14486/15 RECH\)](#).  
European Commission (2018) [Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination](#).  
European Commission (2018) [Horizon Europe \(Framework Programme for Research and Innovation\) – Proposal for a Decision](#).  
European Commission (2018) [Horizon Europe \(Framework Programme for Research and Innovation\) – Impact Assessment](#).  
Helsinki Group on Gender in R&I (2017) [Position paper on H2020 interim evaluation and preparation of FP9](#).  
SiS.net (2018) [Open letter on the need of a separate programme for funding science, society and citizens' initiatives](#).

equality in RPOs and RFOs will be sustainable and meet the expectations of the ERA priority.

## Conclusions

The activities supported under “Strengthening the ERA” address ERA policy priorities, one of them being gender equality and gender mainstreaming. Thus, strengthening the ERA means strengthening gender equality policies in the next EU Framework Programme for R&I. Supporting the implementation of EU recommendations on gender equality structures and plans in RPOs and RFOs with adequate funding is crucial for creating centres of excellence of the future. This will create the conditions for an excellent and open RRI. Such a change at a structural level will not happen accidentally. Moreover, giving gender a central role in Strengthening the ERA will help to generate and sustain public support for the Programme.

### Challenges in Strengthening the ERA

#### Centres of excellence of the future

*Horizontal structures*

*Collaborative leadership*

#### **Gender balance in decision-making**

*Staff participation in design, implementation and evaluation of R&I policies*

#### **Zero sexual harassment and sexist behaviour**

Non-discrimination based on gender, race, social class, ability...

#### **Care facilities and politics of time**

Reasonable mobility

#### **Professional gender equality structures and policies**

Diversity of career paths: career break opportunities