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Helsinki Call for Action

Advancing gender equality in research and innovation in Europe

The first European Commission Communication on Women in Science was adopted in 1999. Now, 20 years later, we are urging European leaders and stakeholders to take bold action to promote gender equality in research and innovation at the start of the new European Commission and the next programme period. We welcome gender equality being a top priority on the political agenda of the new European Commission.

This Call is a message from participants of the *Research and Innovation Excellence through gender equality: New pathways and challenges* -conference organized by the Finnish Presidency of the Council of the EU. It is directed to EU Member States and Associated Countries, the European Commission, research and innovation funding agencies, R&I-performing institutions, private companies and stakeholders. This message is also meant for the future European Union Presidencies to take forward action on gender equality and diversity.

Europe has taken steps forward and gender equality and gender mainstreaming have become one of the ERA priorities, with the three objectives of gender balance in research teams, gender balance in decision-making and the gender dimension in research content. Gender gaps are slowly diminishing in R&I, but the development is uneven across Europe and stakeholders, and a lot more remains to be done.

Gender equality in Research and Innovation contributes vitally to achieving other European policy priorities, including the European Green Deal, the Digital Age and European Democracy. New areas with high social transformational potential, including Artificial Intelligence and digitalization, Open Science and Open Innovation, must address gender equality issues. The integration of the gender dimension ensures the quality research and increases the responsibility and trustworthiness of research and innovation. To do this, gender equality must take an intersectional approach, addressing other axes of inequity.



Main messages:

- The **EU member states** and the **European Commission** should maintain and further reinforce the structural change approach as a sustainable policy framework for promoting inclusive gender equality in the research and innovation ecosystem, including temporary special measures e.g. quotas, ear-marked funding for women, prizes, and to ensure adequate resources for these actions.
- Gender equality and gender mainstreaming need to be embedded in the core of the future European Research Area.
- **The European Commission**, in the implementation the new Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon Europe, should ensure the effective integration of the gender dimension in research and innovation throughout the entire programme as well as gender-specific research and policy-oriented action for gender equality in R&I.
- European Commission and the Member States are strongly encouraged to ensure gender-equitable working conditions addressing work-life-balance and pay gap.
- European Commission and the Member States are further strongly encouraged to adopt policies and strategies to combat gender based violence and harassment in research, innovation and higher education. Research funding organizations are encouraged to consider measures to combat gender based violence and harassment and research performing organizations are encouraged to take bold action in this regard, to protect researchers especially in the early-career stages.
- The uneven implementation of gender equality measures across the **EU Member States** should be addressed. Additionally, all states should build robust context-specific and gender-specific data and indicators to measure progress.
- Research and innovation funding agencies should take more responsibility for gender equality in R&I actions. Many European funding agencies incorporate gender equality in all research funding mechanisms. This approach should be spread throughout Europe as well as deepened by adopting gender equality as a truly cross-cutting element in all research funding organizations' activities (e.g. gender balance in funding decision-making bodies and scientific evaluation panels, as well as the gender dimension in the research content). Public funding for R&I should be tied to applicants proving they have gender equality measures in place.



- **Research performing organizations** should ensure they have the adequate structures in place and implemented for promoting gender equality and diversity, including: regularly updated gender equality plans and statistics, equality boards, institutional equality ombudsperson, available training on gender equality, in particular on gender bias, including intersectional aspects, expertise on integration of gender-related research content for all researchers, and gender equality as a visible and integral part of leadership and decision-making.
- The **business sector** needs a new and more proactive approach to gender equality as part of their social responsibility. The EIC should take a leading role in this. A broad concept of diversity, and gender equality specifically, should be ensured in all innovation processes and activities in the private sector. The European business sector should adopt strong measures to foster structural change and take into account the talent, needs and experiences of women and other currently marginalized groups in RDI activities.

