

# GENDER-RESPONSIVE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR HORIZON EUROPE

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 redefine the proposed model of International Cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation, known as *Openness to the World*, in light of the Women’s Human Rights principles and UN Sustainable Development Goals. Given that both Gender and International Cooperation are ERA priorities, the European Commission is responsible for taking the lead on mainstreaming gender in international cooperation in STI. Key provisions for it should be specified in Horizon Europe.

## The Starting Point

Gender equality and International Cooperation are **cross-cutting issues** in Horizon 2020. Moreover, the ERA Roadmap 2015-2020 adopted by the Council in May 2015 included them among the **6 ERA priorities**, and notes for these two priorities only, **clear transversal links to all other ERA priorities**. Consequently, the Council Conclusions from 1 December 2015 on *Advancing gender equality in the European Research Area* invited the Commission and Member States (MS) to *consider including, among others, a gender perspective in dialogues with third countries in the area of science, technology and innovation (STI)*, while also inviting the Strategic Forum for International S&T Coop-

eration (SFIC) and the former Helsinki Group (now Standing Working Group on Gender in R&I, SWG GRI), **to consider developing joint guidelines on a gender perspective for international cooperation in STI**.

Therefore, SFIC and SWG GRI set up an ad hoc working group to assess the current state of gender mainstreaming in international cooperation in STI, and conducted a survey to that effect which targeted national governments and research funding organizations/programme managers of MS and associated countries (AC). In January 2018 these advisory groups of the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) published a joint report, with recommendations for the Commission, MS and AC, highlighting that:



**Gender aspects in International STI Cooperation may need to consider specific issues, such as the underrepresentation of women in certain scientific fields and research areas, cultural differences, etc. while at the same time for a number of current societal challenges (climate, poverty, health) the gender dimension is important. International cooperation activities (in bilateral as well as multilateral activities) have the potential to be a positive example for integrating gender aspects.**

ERAC SFIC and ERAC SWG GRI,  
2018



- The inclusion of gender in formal agreements for STI cooperation (bi-/multi-lateral) is rather low (at governmental and funding/programme level), although some countries are willing to improve it.
- Capacity building is needed through best practice exchanges and sharing examples, special training and increased political support.

SFIC and SWG GRI underscore that **more effort is needed to explain the added value and potential benefits of including gender** in agreements, work programmes and joint activities in international STI co-operations. **The Commission was invited to consider gender equality and gender-related research in projects as issues to be taken up within its future international cooperation initiatives and dialogues, as well as in the context of its internationalization strategy and activities within the next EU Framework**

**Programme. The inclusion of “gender aspects” in the evaluation of the calls involving project partnerships with non-EU partners was also encouraged, as appropriate.**

To follow up on it, after consulting with the rapporteurs of the joint SFIC-SWG GRI report, GENDERACTION has developed a checklist for policy makers as an efficient way to provide further guidelines on integrating the gender dimension in international cooperation in STI.

### **International Cooperation in Horizon Europe**

International STI Cooperation is planned to be reinforced as a cross-cutting issue in the next Framework Programme, supported and enhanced by means of activities in “Strengthening the ERA”. A greater impact of EU R&I is expected through aligning actions with other nations and regions of the world through international cooperation effort on an unprecedented scale. For mutual benefit, partners from across the world will be invited to join EU efforts as an integral part of initiatives in support of EU action for sustainability, reinforced R&I excellence, and competitiveness.

International cooperation is expected to ensure effective tackling of global societal challenges; access to the world’s best talents, expertise and resources; and enhanced supply and demand of innovative solutions. Horizon Europe will promote an extended openness to association with third countries with good capacity in STI.

However, a well-structured and clear section for international cooperation actions and regulation is missing in the Proposal, addressed mainly in the “Impact Assessment” analysis. There are two other disconcerting aspects which affect gender in the International Cooperation model that need to be improved in a final proposal text:

- The focus is on attracting world's top researchers, ensuring access to facilities and markets worldwide, and exerting more influence in shaping global R&I systems, but the challenge of implementing EU global commitments to Human Rights and SDGs does not appear to be at the core.
- Gender should play a role in all of these aspects but the gender equality objectives are not considered as part of STI International Cooperation. This is a missed opportunity because International Cooperation that does not integrate and promote SDG 5 *Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls* will be a failed one. Many other SDGs (education, peace, good health, decent work, no poverty ...) depend on closing gender gaps in society and on the benefits that come from women's potential, capacities and contributions to society.

### Recommendations from a Gender Perspective

The International Cooperation model of Horizon Europe needs to be redefined so as to place **Human Rights and Sustainable Development Goals (including SDG 5)** at the core of this cross-cutting issue in addition to optimising benefits from cooperation and EU competitiveness. For instance, access to the **world's best talents needs to incorporate gender equality** policies (including, *inter alia*, provisions in mobility schemes to tackle protection against sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence), as a matter of justice and high-quality human resources strategy to ensure the mutual benefit approach. As Horizon Europe will be open to association of **third countries** according to their STI capacity, **Horizon Europe** requirements on gender provisions can be used **as an incentive to ensure real commitment to actively improve gender equality poli-**

### CONCLUSION

It is crucial to mainstream gender in the STI International Cooperation model of Horizon Europe to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (including SDG 5). This will help in the advancement of the EU R&I capacities but also in the attainment of political, social, economic and humanitarian commitments.

### cies in STI worldwide, including better accountability mechanisms for it.

More support is needed for conducting specific **research on Women and Gender in International Cooperation on STI** to produce knowledge on the specific links between the two priorities and cross-cutting issues, but some further concrete recommendations can be made based on the GENDERACTION checklist mentioned above:

- To declare **gender equality as a value** in international agreements, programmes and calls of Horizon Europe.
- To incorporate **gender balance in research teams** in international agreements, programmes and calls of Horizon Europe.
- To ensure **gender balance in decision-making** in international agreements, programmes and calls of Horizon Europe.
- To require the **integration of sex/gender analysis** where appropriate in international agreements, programmes and calls of Horizon Europe, especially in any calls involving humans.
- To include **gender-friendly clauses in programme announcements**, calls and

guidelines for applicants that encourage women to apply, such as, *inter alia*, caring responsibilities, maternity/paternity leave, pregnancy, etc.

- To **mainstream gender in the process of proposal evaluation** and funding decisions: gender balance and gender expertise in evaluation panels, training in gender equality, appropriate templates to assess the gender dimension, gender as a criterion for scoring, among others.
- To consider gender equality training, gender expert advice, mentoring activities from a gender perspective and family support services as **eligible costs** of Horizon Europe.
- To collect **sex-disaggregated data** of success rates of applicants, Principal Investigators, research workforce and horizontal segregation in research teams.
- To assess the **impact of gender equality measures** as part of the programme evaluation.

## Conclusion

**Openness to the World** should also mean the commitment to shape the world with a view to attaining Women's Human Rights and Sustainable Development Goals through EU International Cooperation in STI.

## References

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