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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DOCUMENT REVISION HISTORY 2
TABLE OF CONTENTS 3
LIST OF FIGURES 5
LIST OF ACRONYMS 7
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 9
1. INTRODUCTION 15
1.1 About the project 15
1.2 Objectives of the report 16
1.3 The relationship of this report to other tasks and work packages 17
1.4 Structure of the report 18
2. POLICY BACKGROUND 20
3. CONCEPTUAL APPROACH - The 'European Framework for Research Careers' 29
4. METHODOLOGY 32
4.1 Target groups 32
4.2 Data collection 32
4.3 Mapping instruments 32
4.4 Data clearing 32
4.5 Data analysis 33
4.6 Limitations 37
5. RESULTS 38
5.1 NATIONAL AUTHORITIES 38
5.1.1 An overview of the findings 38
5.2 RESEARCH FUNDING ORGANISATIONS 75
5.2.1 An introduction 75
5.2.2 Group A – RFOs with some strategy, policy, or measure addressing research careers and with a focus on gender equality 78
5.2.3 Group B – RFOs with some strategy, policy, or measure addressing research careers but not promoting gender equality or without any strategy, policy, or measure addressing research careers 87
5.2.4 Group A and Group B taken together 91

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5.2.5 Deepening the knowledge about Group A 96
5.3 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES BETWEEN NATIONAL AND RFOs POLICIES 102
6. CONCLUSIONS 105
7. REFERENCES 111
8. ANNEXES 113

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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. European Policy Background 28
Figure 2. The Research Career Value Chain 30
Figure 3. Synthesis of the reclassification of replies to questions 6.1, 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 35
Figure 4. Groups of countries with national strategies, policies, measures or laws for the R&I and HE systems promoting /addressing (or not) inclusive research careers 40
Figure 5. A revised list of strategies, policies and policy measures for the R&I and HE systems on inclusive research careers and respective countries identified by groups 45
Figure 6. A revised list of laws on inclusive research careers and respective countries identified by groups 46
Figure 7. Inclusive measures on research career- Overall 47
Figure 8. Overall picture – Inclusive measures on research careers – context and content (measures selected in question 6.4 of the survey 50
Figure 9. National policies – recent versus established 51
Figure 10. National policies – monitoring and evaluation 52
Figure 11. Intersections of gender equality with other grounds of inequality and power relations 54
Figure 12. Terms most frequently used in policies with other grounds of inequality and power relations 55
Figure 13. Policies – Group A and Group B – Synthesis 60
Figure 14. Terminology – Group A and Group B - Synthesis 63
Figure 15. Social security coverage – gaps 65
Figure 16. Situations linked to gaps in social security coverage 66
Figure 17. Obstacles to the development of policies / policy initiatives and actions on inclusive research careers – all groups 69
Figure 18. Initiatives to raise awareness of the issue on the national and European agendas .. 70
Figure 19. Cross Countries´ Policy Recommendations 74
Figure 20. The quasi-equal distribution of respondents in Groups A and B 76
Figure 21. A list of respondents and their distribution by groups 77
Figure 22. Gender-sensitive actions (typology) by number of RFOs that indicate using them ... 80
Figure 23. Gender-sensitive actions (typology) implemented by RFOs 81
Figure 24. Number of gender-sensitive actions (typology) implemented by RFOs 82
Figure 25. Groups of researchers targeted by funding schemes and RFOs 82
Figure 26. Forms of inequality besides gender 83

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Figure 27. Terminology used in relation to more comprehensive inclusive research careers 84
Figure 28. Key factors for the success of measures for more inclusive research careers 85
Figure 29. Reasons why RFOs are not participating in the discussions on the research careers agenda 89
Figure 30. Obstacles to developing strategies, policies, or policy measures on gender-inclusive careers 90
Figure 31. Obstacles to the development of strategies, policies, or policy measures on gender-inclusive careers versus institutional or cultural dimensions 91
Figure 32. Obstacles to versus key success factors behind the development of gender-inclusive research careers 92
Figure 33. Policy Recommendations across RFOs 95
Figure 34. Research careers – mapping strategies and policies 100
Figure 35. Inclusive research careers – mapping terminology 101
Figure 36. National and RFOs policies landscape 102
Figure 37. A list of policies and identified Groups of Countries, with re-classification rationales 116
Figure 38. A list of laws and identified Groups of Countries, with re-classification rationales .. 117
Figure 39. A list of strategies, policies and policy measures and terminology - Belgium 118
Figure 40. A list of strategies, policies and policy measures and terminology - Norway 120
Figure 41. A list of strategies, policies, and policy measures and terminology - Austria 121
Figure 42. A list of strategies, policies and policy measures and terminology - Greece 122
Figure 43. A list of strategies, policies and policy measures and terminology - Spain 122
Figure 44. A list of strategies, policies, and policy measures and terminology - Israel 123
Figure 45. A list of strategies, policies, and policy measures and terminology – Portugal 123
Figure 46. A list of strategies, policies, and policy measures and terminology - Sweden 124
Figure 47. A list of laws and terminology - Austria, Israel, Portugal, Spain, Sweden 126
Figure 48. A list of laws and terminology - Greece 127

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Abbreviation	Meaning
AC	Associated Countries
CA	Consortium Agreement
CESSDA	Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives
CoARA	Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment
CoP	Community of Practice
DMP	Data Management Plan
DOI	Digital Object Identifier
DPN	Data Protection Notice
EDI	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
EGET	European Gender Equality Taskforce
ERA	European Research Area
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GE	Gender Equality
GEP	Gender Equality Plan
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex or Asexual Plus
MS	EU Member States
NIP	National Impact Plan
RDI	Research Development and Innovation
RFO	Research Funding Organisation
R&I	Research & Innovation
SH	Sexual harassment
WP	Work Package

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LIST OF COUNTRY CODES

Code	Country	Code	Country	Code	Country	Code	Country
EU Countries							
AT	Austria	EE	Estonia	IE	Ireland	PL	Poland
BE	Belgium	EL	Greece	IT	Italy	PT	Portugal
BG	Bulgaria	ES	Spain	LT	Lithuania	RO	Romania
CY	Cyprus	FI	Finland	LU	Luxembourg	SE	Sweden
CZ	Czech Republic	FR	France	LV	Latvia	SI	Slovenia
DE	Germany	HR	Croatia	MT	Malta	SK	Slovakia
DK	Denmark	HU	Hungary	NL	The Netherlands		
Associated Countries - AC							
IL	Israel	NO	Norway	TR	Turkiye		

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Careers are at the heart of the Research and Innovation (R&I) and Higher Education (HE) systems. They significantly impact on the professional lives of all researchers and therefore, necessarily, impact on the quality of research overall.

Sustainable research careers are one of the key foundations for ensuring high standards of science, research results, knowledge transfer, and innovation. The path to building sustainable and *inclusive* research careers lies at the intersection of research careers, gender equality, and research assessment, and requires shifting policies in multiple non-discrimination and intersectional directions.

Concerns relating to research careers have long been the target of attention at the European policy level and are clearly articulated in several recent policy initiatives, including the *Council Conclusions "Deepening the European Research Area: Providing researchers with attractive and sustainable careers and working conditions and making brain circulation a reality* (28 May 2021), the *Council Recommendation on the Pact for R&I* (2021), the *ERA Policy Agenda*, the *new frame of profiles and Charter for Researchers*, the *Ljubljana Declaration* (July 2021), and the *European Framework for Research Careers* adopted in late 2023.

The GENDERACTIONplus Task 2.2 aims to expand and deepen current knowledge on the strategies and policies that govern research careers and inclusiveness and, whenever possible, on intersectional perspectives.

This report looks at the strategies, policies, and policy measures on inclusive research careers in R&I and HE systems that have been adopted by national authorities and Research Funding Organisations (RFOs), and maps existing policies and commonly used terminology. For this purpose, a comparative state of the art was developed to identify distinctive policy approaches and underlying concerns across countries and to further support the informational foundation for policymaking. The analysis used GENDERACTIONplus benchmark mapping and was conducted separately for the policies of national authorities and RFOs between September and mid-November 2022. Additional information, obtained through desk research, was added for greater robustness.

A conceptual framework for the analysis of research careers was also developed, in reference to the above-mentioned European Framework for Research Careers, in order to structure careers from the perspective of a 'value chain' - in conformity with the intrinsically coherent and continual character of a career – and to avoid taking a fragmented approach.

The most relevant findings include:

National authorities:

- Despite the longstanding European debate on research careers and the established ERA priorities on this issue, the analysis revealed that these priorities have not yet been properly translated into or become visible in national policies across all countries.
- The benchmark analysis has resulted in the identification of four distinct groups of countries:

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Group A contains two countries that have national strategies / policies / measures or laws in place that are specifically focused on research careers in R&I and HE systems and promoting gender equality / inclusiveness;

Group B contains six countries that have broadly conceived national strategies / policies / measures or laws in place in R&I and HE systems that deal with the issue of inclusive research careers;

Group C contains two countries that have in place specific or broadly conceived national strategies / policies / measures or laws on research careers in R&I and HE, with no focus on gender equality / inclusiveness;

Group D contains five countries that have no specific or broadly conceived national strategies / policies / measures or laws in place in R&I and HE systems on research careers.

- Only eight countries / regions, out of the fifteen that replied to the survey, address in some manner the issue of inclusive research careers. An underlying factor may be the transversal nature of careers, which are: i) seen as an integral and cohesive whole and difficult to segment and set apart from general R&I and HE policies; ii) seen as better addressed in a policy mix, instead of through a single main policy targeting the specific issues of inclusive research careers.
- The landscape of current research career inclusiveness is heterogeneous and depends on national contexts and priorities. A more diffuse focus on gender equality is prevalent in national strategies and policies that address HE and R&I systems overall.
- Concerns about gender equality, inclusiveness, and diversity are mostly addressed in general or in parallel in the analysed policies and are only rarely addressed in relation to research career considerations. How they are addressed also depends on the focus of the particular policy document.
- Countries may not have fully structured strategies or policies on inclusive research careers but may have developed initiatives, actions, or measures on this. Preliminary analysis suggests a stronger focus on work-life balance and working conditions in southern European countries and on career progression and international mobility in northern & central European countries. The latter countries did not indicate having any measures on the portability of social security, despite their relevance to international mobility.
- Terminology across countries and across policy documents tends to show similarities and denote the same main issues, despite specificities in some countries. The type of terminology used tends to reflect the policy level; the overall 'representation of women' is mainly addressed, especially in relation to leadership, in more general or broadly conceived policies, while, more specific terminology that goes deeper into the several phases of the continuum translated in the career 'value chain'[1], is used in dedicated documents.
- Regarding the components of the research career 'value chain', the terminology used concentrates mostly on 'recruitment and working conditions' and on 'career development and progress'. Some policy documents also discuss 'skills' and competences as instrumental to the flexibility of careers, enabling intersectoral, interdisciplinary, and

[1] Section 3. CONCEPTUAL APPROACH - The 'European Framework for Research Careers'

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international mobility. The 'circulation of talents' is also addressed, mainly as an international dimension of research careers.

- Some specifically oriented terminology on inclusive research careers has been collected such as: the compatibility of childcare with an academic career, the representation of women and removing obstacles, versatile assessment versus strengthening diversity and gender equality, gender balance in recruitment patterns, inequalities of recruitment processes, balance in top academic positions, gender balance and diversity in assessment processes, women's innovation, and entrepreneurial skills.
- Four (out of seven) countries state that policies on inclusive research careers have mostly been established (for more than 3 years). It is noteworthy that the countries that claimed to have recently established policies (less than 3 years) – namely Norway and Spain – are the ones with a stronger focus on (inclusive) research careers.
- The identified obstacles to implementing policies on inclusive research careers that have a cultural dimension, rooted in mentalities and mindsets, are very significant across all groups of countries regardless of whether there are specific or broad policies on inclusive research careers in place or no policies at all. The obstacles include a 'lack of political and societal awareness', followed by 'prevalent masculine notions about the research profession' and, to a lesser extent, the issue being 'still under preliminary debate' and 'not yet on the national agenda'.
- Very few national authorities discussed the topic of assessment before (the introduction of) the *Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment* and the *CoARA*, and they are therefore very unlikely to have already translated these concerns into policies.
- The use of an intersectional approach is still too recent and is not yet established in the policy narrative. Only two countries (Belgium Wallonia and Greece) addressed intersections with gender in an additive approach. The European discussion of careers and the research assessment reform process may have triggered attention being paid to this concern in some countries, but it is still at a very preliminary stage.
- Whether or not academics have a permanent employment contract impacts their contributory profile[2], or their social security status, and significantly affects their current and future social benefits. Early career researchers without a contract and PhD students with a fellowship as a result typically have the same type of social security coverage: they have no benefits across most situations (unemployment, illness, parental leave, and retirement).
- There is no clear correlation between the adequacy of social security systems and the existence of policies on research careers.
- The need to design better and more inclusive social security systems along with research careers and to effectively prevent non-discrimination across working situations and researchers' statuses is paramount.
- Improving legal frameworks at the national level is a crucial factor for the issue being raised at the national and European levels.

[2] Contributory profile/ pathway: Contribution period or insurance period, translated into the total amount of discounts to the Social Security system paid by the employee along the working life.

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RFOs:

- Progress on the inclusiveness of research careers has been considerable in recent times, and RFOs have played a key role in this mission. Different RFOs are pursuing this goal at a different pace: some are more advanced than others, with some still at a very early stage.
- Two groups were identified among the twenty-one responding RFOs:

  Group A contains eleven RFOs that have some strategy, policy, or measure in place addressing research careers and promoting gender equality, and

  Group B contains ten RFOs that have some strategy, policy, or measure in place addressing research careers but not promoting gender equality or they have no strategy, policy, or measure addressing research careers at all.

- Drawing upon the experience of more advanced RFOs, the following ideas and factors are critical for the success of promoting inclusive research careers:
  - a favourable national political environment of non-discrimination;
  - the participation of RFOs in the discussions on the research careers agenda at the national and international levels is a preliminary condition;
  - the participation of RFOs in international working groups;
  - a set of policies and action plans should be in place that address research careers and gender equality;
  - the awareness that promoting gender equality in R&D systems takes a long time and developments need to be continuously monitored, namely by providing reliable statistics and studies;
  - the availability of gender statistical data at the national and RFO levels;
  - social security measures that effectively support a work-life balance;
  - the existence of a gender unit in the organisational structure of each RFO;
  - a focus on research assessment processes, with measures beyond the gender distribution of chairs and members of the peer review panels.
- The measures needed to achieve more inclusive research careers can be classified into two types:
  - measures whose impact is reflected in the RFOs themselves, enabling these organisations to deal with the issue of gender equality in R&I systems, and

  - measures with a positive and direct impact on the careers and lives of researchers.

- Attention to inclusive research careers is an established area of activity (more than three years) for nine RFOs. Their institutional perspectives about inclusive research careers are primarily supported through the principle of equality (gender equality, gender balance, equal opportunity, and equal access), which is close to the ethical imperative of non-discrimination. Both principles underpin the policies that have guided the mission and vision of these RFOs.
- The strategies and policies already implemented by most of these organisations are the most relevant documents, not the GEPs, as in the case of less advanced RFOs. These strategies and policies have visible repercussions for managing RFOs' funding instruments.
- Besides the principle of 'non-discrimination', the interconnected values of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) underlie the most frequently used terminology.

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- Four RFOs consider other dimensions of inequality besides gender: FCT, FWO, NCN, and TACR. The dimension of inequality that emerges prominently is 'age'. Only TACR measures have an intersectional perspective.
- At least five RFOs (FNRS, NCN, RCN ETAF, and Forte) have funding instruments for almost all the stages of a research career.
- Regarding gender-sensitive actions, the three most significant ones relate to the research assessment processes of peer review panels (53% of the responses). Only 22% of responses were directly linked to positive discrimination – namely, gender balance in funding schemes, rewards like 'Women in Research', and return grants for parents.
- Among RFOs that are newcomers to gender equality issues, some identify many institutional or cultural/ideological obstacles, which means there is still a high degree of adversity ahead. For seven RFOs, research careers are not yet a subject of discussion, a necessary condition for progress, or there is a lack of coordination between the different actors in the national R&I and HE systems.
- Concerning the development of strategies, policies, or measures on gender-inclusive careers, the two most frequent obstacles are related to the two key success factors mentioned by RFOs:

  - a lack of gender-disaggregated data (obstacle) versus the availability of information that makes it possible to understand the state of gender equality, implement, adjusted measures, and monitor progress (success factor), and

  - a lack of gender-equality structures (obstacle) versus having a unit dedicated to this issue (success factor) in its organisational structure.
- It is evident from the recommendations of fourteen RFOs (from Groups A and B) that they share the imperative of continuously improving the impact of their actions towards inclusiveness in research careers. On this issue, there is a common sense of urgency about mutual learning, which is enabled mainly by discussing topics and solutions, raising awareness, and articulating action with other relevant stakeholders. It is also necessary to find solutions that make it easier to get the discussion of research careers on the agenda in contexts where this is more difficult.
- One key recommendation that emerged from the survey is the need for top-down European rules and policies to counteract national resistance or inertia – as found, for example, in the Horizon Europe eligibility requirement for GEPs. In fact, considering only non-mandatory European directives could potentially increase the gap between different countries.
- The focus on gender has been rightly identified as the first step towards fostering more inclusive research careers. In this sense, a collective will has been translated into multiple impactful actions in the last decade. Moreover, inclusiveness in research careers means paying attention to several elements of diversity: ethnicity, disability, age, seniority affiliation, geographic representation, socioeconomic background, cultural background, religion, gender, sex if differentiated from gender, gender individual expression, and sexual orientation.
- To promote inclusive research careers beyond gender, the already identified success factors for gender equality remain adequate. However, moving from a concrete point (gender-inclusive research careers) to an abstract one (inclusive research careers)

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requires that each RFO design a strategy to identify which equality dimensions are a priority along the lines of a phased plan for achieving maximum diversity. These strategies should be based on a study of the national context, particularly in reference to upstream inequalities, like the ones experienced in the HE sector, which are likely to negatively impact inclusiveness and diversity in the R&I system.

- More systematic interactions between RFOs and national policies seem crucial since national strategies and policies serve to establish the vision and overall goals for the R&I and HE systems as a whole – integrating the RFOs' sphere of action into a wider context and global direction.
- Ensuring that some common standards on research careers and inclusiveness exist at the European level and between countries will also facilitate the effective circulation of talent and international mobility.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 About the project

Building on the Horizon 2020 project GENDERACTION, the overall goal of GENDERACTIONplus is to help coordinate the gender equality and inclusiveness objectives of the new European Research Area (ERA) through the development of two communities of practice (CoPs), one consisting of representatives of national authorities and the other consisting of representatives of Research Funding Organisations. The network is made up of a total of 22 EU Member States (MS) and 3 Associated Countries (AC), along with 26 Project Partners and 14 Associated Partners.

Adding the plus sign to the title of the previous GENDERACTION project not only indicates that it is a follow-up project but also makes it explicit that this project additionally addresses diversity and intersectionality (the gender+ approach).

Specifically, the GENDERACTIONplus project aims to:

- Develop strategic policy advice on existing and emerging policy solutions;
- Enhance the policy-making process by engaging with stakeholders, civil society organisations, and citizens;
- Build capacities, competence, and expertise for gender equality and mainstreaming in Research & Innovation among members of the policy and RFO community, with special attention given to countries with a less comprehensive policy;
- Create an impact through communication, dissemination, and exploitation/ implementation

Thematically, the project focuses on:

- Intersectionality and inclusiveness
- Gender-based violence
- The gender dimension in research and innovation
- Monitoring and evaluating gender equality actions in the European Research Area (ERA)
- Promoting institutional change through Gender Equality Plans (GEPs).

GENDERACTIONplus aims to achieve the following impacts:

- Advance policy coordination among MS and AC countries and through stakeholder and citizen engagement;
- Improve research careers and working conditions in European R&I by developing policy dialogue and solutions on inclusion and intersectionality, combating gender-based violence, and promoting institutional changes through GEPs;
- Improve research quality and the social responsibility of knowledge by integrating the gender dimension into research and innovation (R&I);
- Reduce geographic inequality by targeting less experienced/engaged countries and regions.

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1.2 Objectives of the report

This deliverable report aims to assess national authorities' and RFOs' strategies, policies, and measures on inclusive research careers in R&I and HE systems and to map available policies and the most commonly used terminology in order to identify the most prevalent issues. The instruments used to achieve the central objective of this report, which is to provide advice and support evidence-based and coordinated policy-making at both the European and national levels, include studying the inclusive aspects of research careers, collecting evidence, identifying commonalities and diversities in standards and legal acquis, and systematising concerns, practices, and challenges across countries' national authorities and RFOs are.

Research careers build on a *coherent continuum that encompasses several career stages along a post-doctoral itinerary, that consists of professional development, the progressive acquisition of competences, and stable integration into and advancement along a career path in the Research and Innovation System.*[3] In other words, research career policies should be designed across a long 'value chain',[4] with core, upstream, and downstream features. As such, one challenge of this report is to identify aspects of inclusiveness across the whole career path, in a non-fragmented way, as a basis for building robust and wide policy recommendations targeting relevant levels/ and actors in the research and innovation ecosystem. Another important challenge is to create significant impact.

In particular, this report aims to:

- present the overall policy framework on research careers concerning the ERA and a conceptual framework;
- provide an overview of relevant policies and terminology on inclusive research careers in the Member States and Associate Countries of the ERA targeting national authorities and RFOs;
- establish a baseline and structured understanding of the current state of the art of inclusive research careers in the R&I and HE systems;
- serve as the basis for recommendations for policy development targeting the EC, MS, national authorities, and RFOs.

The current state of the art was primarily determined on the basis of the results of a dedicated section in the GENDERACTIONplus benchmark survey entitled Inclusive Research Careers, fielded in the fall of 2022 by the national authorities and RFOs represented in the project. The collected information was supplemented with further desk research performed by the WP2 Task 2.2.

As mentioned above, as well as mapping strategies and policies, more commonly used terminology was collected, which made it possible to produce a current picture of the situation

[3] in *Law 17/2022 that modifies the Law 14/2011 of Science, Technology and Innovation / Ley 17/2022, de 5 de septiembre, por la que se modifica la Ley 14/2011, de 1 de junio, de la Ciencia, la Tecnología y la Innovación.*

[4] See section on the CONCEPTUAL APPROACH - The 'European Framework for Research Careers'

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and provide inspiration for possible new visions, as they express the main prevalent concerns and challenges.

A baseline understanding was built on the identification of gaps and/or convergencies among groups of countries/RFOs with distinctive characteristics in terms of the scope of their research career policies (specific or broad), inclusive approaches to the issue of research careers (existing/non-existing), and their complexity or reach into the career 'value chain'. Further nuances relating to these gaps include the comprehensiveness of the policies and monitoring systems in place at the level of national and funding agencies and the receptiveness of countries to European discussions – in particular regarding research assessment, a core driver of inclusive research careers. Other important angles include a consideration of success factors and obstacles, the differences in social security systems (between countries and between career phases and research positions), and the degree to which intersectionality is taken into account in career policies.

The overall findings and conclusions are proposed as a basis for creating recommendations in a policy brief, to be co-created with relevant stakeholders, within the Policy and RFO CoPs activities, and they are expected to create impact and add new breadth to such a crucial subject for R&I and HE systems.

1.3 The relationship of this report to other tasks and work packages

It is recognised that young people and women are groups that are more vulnerable to gender based-violence (GBV), and this is exacerbated by the (intersectoral and international) mobility that characterises diverse and open careers. This connects closely to and is addressed in WP 3 – Gender-Based Violence. In particular, for developing coordinated policy frameworks for research careers and for GBV and addressing them in a systemic perspective that encompasses all actors in the ecosystem and researchers and research institutions at the European and national/regional levels; and when it comes to integrating new policies, targeting new problems, identifying new risks, valuing skills and awareness and knowledge on GBV concepts, targeting the safety of researchers throughout their career, and supporting positive synergies.

Promoting the gender dimension in R&I content may have an impact on research careers to some extent through the involvement of more researchers in gender equality, the emergence of more opportunities in terms of projects, and a deepening of the knowledge base on gender equality in all domains. Collaborations with WP 4 would help to identify the responsibilities of the national authorities, which have mostly been delegated to RFOs, and to demonstrate reciprocal impact, while promoting training initiatives in content and research in higher education as part of the curricula and developing new skills and new professions; and while strengthening the role of science advice for inclusive research career design and policy-making.

Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) are widespread across ecosystems in Europe and especially in RPOs and RFOs, since they have been set as an eligibility criterion for European funding under Horizon Europe. Their impact as catalysts for gender equality has been largely acknowledged, and they establish good integrative practices and targets relating to institutional culture, gender balance in leadership and decision-making, recruitment and progression, work-life balance, and

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fighting gender-based violence and sexual harassment. The full implementation of GEPs across the whole R&I and HE systems can be considered a valuable instrument for achieving inclusiveness in research careers, and in this way it is closely connected to WP 6 – Promoting institutional change through GEPs. Specifically, this connection may foster the development of GEP monitoring systems at the national level, providing a continual and overarching perspective on their real impact in the systems – and, as such, on research careers. Similarly, this connection may help to improve the content of GEPs, enabling them to move on to other aspects of inclusive research careers. Involving RFOs and policy CoPs in this discussion is also essential.

Last but not least, the relevance of evaluating policies definitely justifies collaborations with WP5, on monitoring and evaluating ERA Gender Equality Actions. The development of tailored indicators on progress in research careers is an important area for interchange and is very timely and useful at the national and European levels.

A policy brief built on the main findings and conclusions of this report is to be co-created with relevant stakeholders through a process that seeks to achieve sounder results and to maximise the impact on R&I policies and systems. This process will be developed in cooperation with WP 8 and the dedicated task on stakeholder and citizen engagement. Consultations with RFOs and policy CoPs are expected to widen the content of the National Impact Plans to include research careers and should improve their effectiveness. Likewise, for capacity building needs collaborations with WP7 as instrumental to better understanding all the issues that are at stake when approaching inclusiveness and research careers.

1.4 Structure of the report

This report presents the results of benchmarking among national authorities across Europe (Member Stated and Associated Countries) and research funding organisations (RFOs) on existing policies and on the terminology more commonly used on inclusive research careers. These two main parts of the report are preceded by a policy background, a thorough overview of European policies on inclusion and gender equality, on research careers, and on reward and research assessment, three aspects that converge in the subject of our analysis: inclusive research careers (Chapter 2).

To avoid a fragmented approach, a conceptual framework was developed by the Task team on the basis of the *European Research Career Framework* and the research career *´value chain´* discussed in another chapter (Chapter 3). Chapter 4 addresses the main methodological issues. The analysis of national authorities' policies and RFOs' policies based on the surveys and on additional information made available by MS or as a result of a search on RFOs' web sites and desk research (Chapter 5.1 and Chapter 5.2, respectively). These latter chapters aim to present current developments at the macro and institutional levels, particularly terminology concerns, creative solutions, and potential country/region divides.

Several questions are explored – for example, determining the existence of strategies, policies, or measures, the comprehensiveness of policies and respective monitoring and evaluation systems, possible dimensions that intersect with other grounds of inequality, countries

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receptiveness to European discussions, obstacles and initiatives to raising awareness, and the role of social security in research careers.

The section titled 'Cross-cutting Issues between National and RFOs Policies' (Chapter 5.3) addresses the main interconnections and commonalities found at the macro versus the institutional level in the course of the analysis.

The report ends with main conclusions. The Annexes provide detailed information on Reclassifications of Replies to the Survey, the Mapping of National Strategies and Policies, Case Studies and Success Factors, and extensive information on RFOs' policies collected from websites, along with information on social security issues.

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2. POLICY BACKGROUND

Inclusive Research Careers

Building sustainable research careers is one of the keystones of a Research and Innovation System and is crucial for ensuring high-standard, stable, and excellent science, research results, knowledge transfer, and innovation. Creating and enhancing attractive and safe working and employment conditions for more sustainable and appealing research careers aids in attracting and retaining excellent researchers and is a key component of the 'New ERA'.

The path to building sustainable and inclusive research careers requires shifts in policies in multiple non-discrimination and intersectional directions, and proceeds from the intersection of careers, reformed research/researchers' assessment practices, and gender equality and inclusiveness policies, which require higher levels of policy coordination.

An inclusive research career - a definition

This part of the report takes into consideration the following definitions of an (inclusive) research career:

- According to the MORE 4 Report 2021 (see GENDERACTIONplus Glossary): *A research career is a professional work life lived through the production of scientific knowledge that emphasises continuous learning and the accumulation of competences and connections. Research careers consist of four career stages: R1: First Stage Researchers (up to the point of PhD); R2: Recognised Researchers (PhD holders or equivalent who are not yet fully independent); R3: Established Researchers (researchers who have developed a level of independence); R4: Leading Researchers (researchers leading their research area or field). These different stages are sector-neutral (applicable to companies, NGOs, research institutes, research universities, and universities of applied sciences).*

- According to Spanish legislation, a research career is understood '*as a new post-doctoral itinerary in the scope of R&I, attractive and that promotes the professional development and progressive endowment of competences, independency and scientific leadership, and that enables a stable integration in the Science, Technology and Innovation System'.*[5]

[5] "***Carrera profesional pública*** *en el ámbito de la I+D+I entendida como un nuevo itinerario postdoctoral que resulte atractivo, que fomente el desarrollo profesional y adquisición progresiva de competencias, independencia y liderazgo científico, y que facilite la incorporación estable en el Sistema Español de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación*", Act 17/2022 amending the Act 14/2011 on Science, Technology and Innovation / Ley 17/2022, de 5 de septiembre, por la que se modifica la Ley 14/2011, de 1 de junio, de la Ciencia, la Tecnología y la Innovación.

"

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- According to the GENDERACTIONplus Glossary, *Features of an inclusive research career include the acknowledgement and valorisation of diversity in research roles and careers, considering gender balance and the gender dimension, taking diversity into account in the broader sense (e.g., racial or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, socio-economic, disability) in research teams at all levels, and in the content of research and innovation*'.

The European context

Concerns relating to research careers have long been an issue at the European policy level, that started with a focus on mobility and removing obstacles to mobility (2000) and evolved into efforts to promote the free circulation of researchers (2007-09) and requiring open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment for all research positions (2012-13). In the process, the 'Integrated Model of Scientific Careers' (2008) emerged as a forerunner to the current 'European Framework for Research Careers'. The policy focus has remained on supporting early-stage researchers, increasing the attractiveness of scientific careers (2016), creating an open labour market for researchers, and mitigating the fragmentation of European research, development, and innovation, while also ensuring equality between women and men (EU Strategic Agenda 2019-2024). In 2020 the Council Conclusions on 'A New ERA for Research and Innovation' provided the basis for a **comprehensive and more systemic approach to research careers with coordinated public policies.**

Gender equality is a core value of the EU and a fundamental right and key principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights. Over time, Europe has adopted several directives covering equality between women and men in society at large. A legal standard was gradually developed across Europe for ensuring broad protection from discrimination.

Equality between women and men in R&I, the participation of women in leadership positions, and the gender dimension in R&I content were already being addressed around the year 2000 and were part of the common and stable set of concerns. Further insights and perspectives were progressively added that related to gender mainstreaming in research and innovation policies, institutional change to avoid gender bias, the participation of women in STEM, **gender equality and equal opportunities in research careers,** and involving women in innovation. The need to systematically apply a **gender mainstreaming perspective in all stages of policy design in all EU policy areas**, on the one hand, and, on the other, the need to address diversity by opening policies to intersections with other social categories and using **intersectionality** as a **cross-cutting principle** have clearly emerged in recent European policy developments.[6] In fact,

[6] For a detailed overview of intersectionality in R&I policies in the ERA, see GENDERACTIONplus Deliverable report 2.1 Benchmarking report on terminology and policy on intersectionality (2023).
GENDERACTION Glossary: Intersectionality describes overlapping or intersecting categories such as gender, sex, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation and geographical location that combine to inform individuals' identities and experiences. The term was coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to describe how multiple forms of discrimination, power and privilege intersect in Black women's lives, in ways that are erased when sexism and racism are treated separately (Crenshaw, 1989). Since then, the term has been expanded to describe intersecting forms of oppression and inequality emerging from

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approaches for effectively tackling the complexity of gender-based inequalities and the greater level of interconnectedness between the required policies have become more widespread over time, which reflects (and contributes to) the consolidation of the ERA itself.

Significant examples of this policy densification are found in the efforts to foster 'inclusiveness'[7] within the ERA, with EURAXESS, the ERA pilot action to strengthen gender equality in Horizon Europe, and the European Competence Framework of Researchers, which takes gender equality into account (using the *ERA Policy Agenda* and the *Pact for R&I* as guidelines).

In relation to research assessment, it is worth mentioning the *San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment* (DORA), (May 2013) which aims to change the role of the impact factor in merits assessment, and the *LEIDEN Manifesto* (published in April 2015). The European Commission initiative named the *Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment* drafting process (2022), and the call for organisations to express an interest in being part of a *coalition on reforming research assessment* aim to shift the paradigm in the direction of primarily qualitative assessments supported by responsible quantitative metrics and to have a transformative impact by increasing the diversity of research careers.

From before 2000 to the creation of the ERA

The Framework Programmes have since the early 1980s been moving increasingly towards creating a new cooperative approach, allowing for a preliminary European Research Area to take shape. The 5th Framework Programme (1998-2002) paved the way towards more consistent EU policies, establishing a dialogue between MS. However, till 2000 the research polices of the Member States (MS) and of the European Union were formulated in parallel and did not form a coherent whole.

At the time, the Commission Communication *Women and Science* and the *Helsinki Group on Women in Science* (created in 1999) were already promoting equality between women and men and the gender dimension in science and in research and innovation content and programmes**.**

structural advantages and disadvantages that shape a person's or a group's experience and social opportunities.
An intersectional perspective emphasizes that race, class, gender, and other dimensions than can be basis for social discrimination are not isolated or independent, but rather intersect and interact, resulting in intricate social inequalities (Collins, 2015).

[7] 'Inclusiveness' means the broad, gender-balanced, and non-discriminatory participation of researchers and national and regional actors and R&I stakeholders across Europe in ERA activities in order to fully activate and use the potential of ERA to contribute to regional, national, and European policy objectives by means of targeted measures at national and/or EU level to promote and facilitate openness and inclusiveness of collaboration networks and to reduce fragmentation and disparities between and within Member States.

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From 2000 to 2015- from the full creation of the ERA to the ERA RoadMap

The **creation of the ERA** in 2000, with expected full deployment by 2010, and the commitment of MS to European policies were important catalysts for the emergence of European policies impacting the Research and Innovation (R&I) and Higher Education (HE) systems in the areas of- gender equality, research careers, assessment, and other areas.

The ERA becoming part of the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union*[8] in 2007-2009, where it is stated that '*[…] the Union shall have the objective of strengthening its scientific and technological bases by achieving a European research area in which researchers, scientific knowledge and technology circulate freely',* was another pertinent driver of policy coordination and the centrality of R&I policies for MS and the European Union (EU).

In 2000, increasing researchers' mobility and introducing a European dimension into **scientific careers**, with further prospects for researchers from other European countries, were major challenges. At the same time, **the role of women in research and giving the young a taste for a career** in science (2005) were no less important challenges, with targets for the participation of women in leading positions being set (25% for the public sector). As a forerunner to the development of a research careers framework, the Council suggested and the EC developed the '**Integrated Model of Scientific Careers'** was based on an appropriate policy mix for ensuring a family-friendly environment for researchers (2008).

In 2010, the Council Conclusions on the development of the ERA (26 May 2010) acknowledged that **institutional change requires a long-term strategy** and sufficient funding to reinforce the integration of the gender dimension in European research.

The *ERA Communication 2012 - A Reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth, COM(2012) 392 final* identified **the ERA priorities and recognised the start of a new phase in the development of the ERA** with the implementation of the **ERA Roadmap** at the national and the EU levels through the respective actions plans**.**

In order to effectively foster R&I excellence *the Council Conclusions of 11 December 2012 on "A Reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth*" identified **'gender equality and gender mainstreaming in research,** integrating the gender **dimension in the design, evaluation and implementation of research',** as one **key priority for the ERA.** In parallel, issues such as **transparent, open, merit-based recruitment emerged as crucial to making research careers more attractive and fostering mobility** and to making **a shift to brain circulation across the Union.** Several ERA Progress Reports (2012, 2013, and 2014) stressed the relevance of a coordinated effort to ensure that all research positions were subject to open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment.

Efforts to **reform research assessment practices** through disentanglement from the hegemony of author-level metrics, such as the h-index, emerged with the *San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment* (**DORA,** published in May 2013). DORA was intended to halt the practice of correlating the journal impact factor with the merits of a scientist's contributions and was supported by individual and collective signatories (more than 24,000 to date). Also, the *Leiden*

[8] (Treaty of Lisbon), under Article 179 of the Title XIX *on Research and Technological Development and Space.*

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Manifesto for research metrics (LM) (published in April 2015) aimed to serve as a **10-principle guide to combating the misuse of bibliometrics** when evaluating scientific research, and it broadened the ideas in DORA i and was subsequently endorsed by organisations such as LIBER and Elsevier.

The December 2014 Competitiveness Council Conclusions on the 2014 Progress Report stated that, despite having already met the conditions for **the completion of the ERA, further work was needed to ensure sustainability and to identify a limited number of key implementation priorities that could have a strong impact** on Europe's science, research, and innovation.

A more coherent and integrated approach to bridging components previously addressed in parallel emerged in the *Council Conclusions 'Advancing gender equality in the European Research Area' (December 1, 2015)*, which encouraged MS to make **institutional change** a key element in their national policy framework on gender equality in R&I by means of **gender mainstreaming strategies, gender equality plans including the gender dimension in RI content and programmes, transparency in recruitment and career progression and awarding procedures** in R&I, the allocation of research funding free from gender bias, **flexible and family-friendly working conditions and arrangements, equal sharing of care responsibilities**, and **reviewing assessments** of a researcher´s performance to eliminate gender bias.

2015-2020: from the ERA RoadMap to the creation of the new ERA

In this period, despite the progressive consolidation of the ERA, the European R&I system continued to be fragmented. MS were called on to **translate national equality legislation into effective action to address gender imbalances in research institutions and decision-making bodies and better integrating the gender dimension into R&D policies, programmes, and projects (Top priority 4).** They were also called on to use **open, transparent, and merit-based recruitment** practices with regard to **research positions**, to foster the role of human capital and human resources strategies including the **mobility of researchers**, from outside the EU as from and to the private sector, and **to empower young researchers by providing them with attractive career pathways (Top priority 3)** *(ERA Roadmap, 2015).*

Measures to support **early-stage researchers**, increase the **attractiveness of scientific careers,** and foster investment in human potential were addressed in the *Council Conclusions of November 2016***.** Other measures, such as the Gender Equality in Academia and Research (GEAR) tool, have provided guidance and advice on gender equality work in R&I since 2015. In turn, the *ERAC Standing Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation* was established in 2017 as a successor group to the Helsinki Group with the mandate to focus on **institutional change** in research organisations by promoting **gender equality and equal opportunities in research careers**, gender balance in leadership and decision-making positions, and the **integration of the gender dimension in R&I content and programmes.**

The *ERAC Standing Working Group on Human Resources and Mobility* was also established in 2017, with a mandate to cover areas related to researchers' careers and mobility, along with the European Charter for Researchers and the *Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers*

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(Charter & Code) and the *Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R)* and the *HRS4R Award*, through which the European Commission recognises the institutions that make progress in aligning their human resources policies to the 40 principles of the Charter & Code based on a customised action plan/HR strategy.

From 2020 onwards – the new ERA

Enhancing attractive and sustainable research careers was emphasised as a vital element of the 'New ERA'. Beyond the existing ERA instruments supporting researchers' careers, such-as the *Charter and the Code* for researchers and other actions to enhance mobility, including the *Marie Sklodowska Curie* actions - it **was recognised that a more comprehensive/systemic approach was required to deal with the growing complexity of the labour market and the economy.**

Great **concern was expressed about the still major gender imbalance,** which was preventing Europe from using the full potential of its R&I system. In concert with the *Communication on a European Skills Agenda*, *the Communication on the European Education Area*, and the new *Digital Education Action Plan*, the new ERA must further strengthen the focus **on the participation of women in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and foster entrepreneurship**. The need to **address diversity by opening up policy to intersections with other social categories** - such as ethnicity, disability (including accessibility and inclusion) and sexual orientation - and to the issues of gender-based discrimination and violence in R&I organisations emerged in policy **as a new approach**. This gender-inclusive culture **required more coordinated action with education policies** and research funders.

The Commission Communication on the new ERA for R&I (2020) formerly provided the formal framework for the new ERA and proposed several initiatives, namely: i) the enhanced **Researchers Competence Framework,** for comparable and interoperable research careers and setting core skills; (ii) a **mobility scheme to support exchange between industry and academia**; and (iii) the **ERA4You initiative**[9] aimed at **training under Horizon Europe**; and (iv) a **one-stop shop portal. Modernising reward and assessment** are, in turn, another concern addressed in the communication.

The Council Conclusions on the New ERA (2020) support the Commission Communication, namely through the co-design of the enhanced '**European Competence Framework for Research Careers**', which takes into account open science, **gender equality**, digital skills, **research assessment, diversification of research careers, and multiple career paths,** as well as through additional relevant elements of the *European Skills Agenda* and the *Zagreb Call for Action*. It also **supports a renewed focus on gender equality and mainstreaming, including through the instrument of gender equality plans and the integration of the gender dimension into R&I content**. The Council Conclusions also called on the Commission and MS

[9] ERA4You is an umbrella policy initiative that aims to: i) enable a geographically more balanced circulation of R&I talents, strengthening retaining, attracting, and return activities through favourable working conditions and better access to mobility funding programmes; ii) boost permeability and employability of R&I talents across sectors and improve interaction between ecosystem actors for training and career development.

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to develop **EURAXESS as the ERA pilot action to foster 'inclusiveness' within the ERA into an ERA Talent Platform**.

The *EU gender equality strategy (Union of Equality), a Communication from the Commission (2020),* **employs the dual approach** of targeted measures for achieving gender equality combined with strengthened gender mainstreaming. The Commission intends to enhance gender mainstreaming by **systematically including a gender perspective in all stages of policy design in all EU policy areas, internal and external**. The strategy will be implemented using intersectionality **as a cross-cutting principle** – '*An intersectional approach [...] addresses the different discrimination grounds and how they are experienced by different individuals as "synergistic". intersectional experiences are greater than the sum of separate axes of oppression or discrimination such as sexism or racism and are therefore inseparable. Including and combining various discrimination grounds, as an intersectional approach does, produces something unique and distinct from any one form of discrimination standing alone (Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2020, GENDERACTIONplus D2.1.- Intersectionality and Inclusion)*.'

The Commission introduced new measures to strengthen gender equality in Horizon Europe, such as requiring a **gender equality plan from applicants,** an initiative to increase the **number of women-led technology start-ups, and funding for gender and intersectional research.**

The *Ljubljana Declaration* (July 2021/endorsed November 2021) reiterated the importance of gender equality objectives, including **gender equality in research careers, gender balance in decision-making**, and the **integration of the gender dimension in research and innovation content**. It also recognises gender equality as a **driver for optimal and sustainable research and technological systems** - and therefore that gender equality and inclusiveness have to be **central to the Pact for R&I in Europe** and across its links with complementary European initiatives – for example, through higher education, innovation ecosystems, international cooperation, and Cohesion policy funds.

The CC on the European Pact for Research and Innovation (2021) set out the key commonly agreed values and principles that underpin the ERA, where EU countries, by developing **priority actions**, including **freedom of scientific research, gender equality, open access to scientific publications, and better career prospects for researchers**, will boost the economy and society.

The *Council Recommendation on the Pact for R&I* (2021), includes the principles, objectives, and direction for R&I policies, as well as the biennial ERA *Policy Agenda* (2022-2024), which includes: **Action 3** – Advance towards the reform of the assessment system for research, researchers, and institutions to improve their quality, performance, and impact**; Action 4 -** Promote attractive and sustainable research careers and balanced talent circulation and international, transdisciplinary, and inter-sectoral mobility across the ERA;[10] and **Action 5 -** Promote gender equality and foster inclusiveness, taking into account the Ljubljana Declaration.

10 *https://era.gv.at/public/documents/4588/04_-_Promote_attractive_research_careers_explanatory_document_revised.pdf*

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The Council Conclusions on *"Deepening the European Research Area: Providing researchers with attractive and sustainable careers and working conditions and making brain circulation a reality'*[11] (28 May 2021) provided guidance **on brain circulation, intersectoral mobility, the upskilling and reskilling of researchers, employment and working conditions for researchers, and the need for a robust monitoring system**.

With the aim of improving the European R&I system, **gender equality is mainstreamed in Horizon Europe, in an effort to create gender-equal working environments** and better integrate the gender dimension in projects and thereby **improve research and its relevance to society**. The *ERA Policy Agenda* and *the Pact for R&I* are intended to further guide the actions in the *Strengthening the ERA which is* part of the **WIDERA work programme.**

European policies on research careers culminated in the *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European framework for research careers*, the *new frame of profiles and Charter for Researchers* (annexed to the proposed Council Recommendation), and the launch of the *ResearchComp website.* This proposal – including *the Framework and the Charter* - was adopted by the Council on 18 December.

The new Charter for Researchers (2023) includes gender equality as one of its fundamental principles. Concretely, the European framework to attract and retain talent in Europe will ensure gender equality, gender balance, equal opportunities, and inclusiveness. Moreover, the Council Recommendation mentions the interconnections of research careers with other relevant gender topics, namely precarious conditions for early career researchers, the gender pay gap, gender bias in assessment, work-life balance, the underrepresentation of women in STEM, and gender-based violence. In doing this, the narrative of new framework shows significant progress in terms of the inclusion of gender equality provisions and the latest developments in gender & science policies in the ERA.

From March to November 2021, the European Commission consulted European stakeholders on how to speed up research assessment reform, a priority to ensure the quality, performance, and impact of research. The scoping report '*Towards a reform of the research assessment process'* set out the goals to be pursued in the reform of research assessment and proposed a ***coordinated approach***. As such, the Commission called for organisations to express their interest in being part of *a Coalition on Reforming Research Assessment* (early 2022).

Note: Figure 1 is a synoptical approach to the European policy progress along two axes: the consolidation process of the ERA (in the horizontal axis) and the transition from fragmented to systemic policies approaches (the vertical axis). Fragmented policies are presented mainly in the early period of the development of the ERA and, conversely, more systemic and coordinated policies are concentrated in the more advanced stage of the ERA.

[11] '*https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/49980/st09138-en21.pdf*

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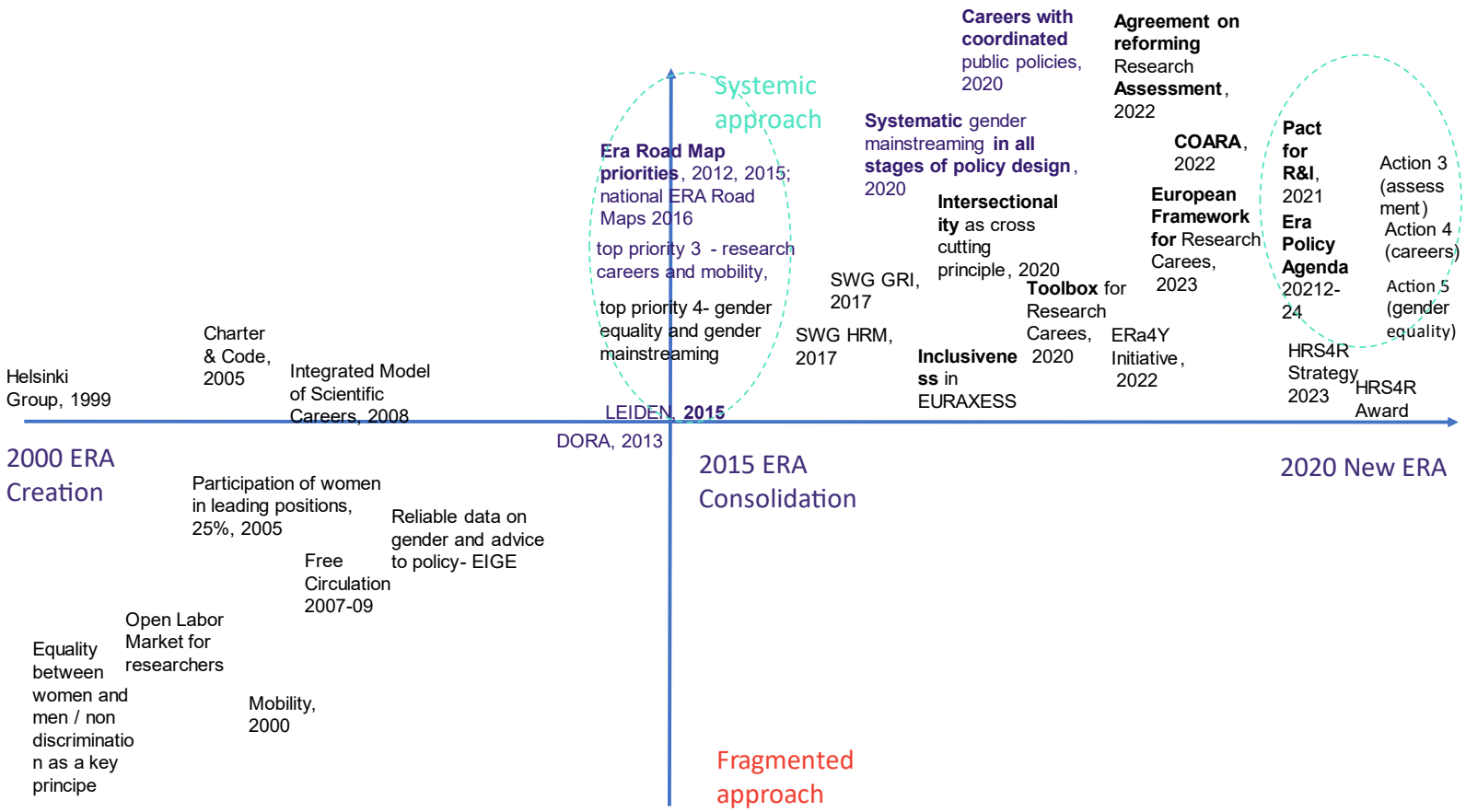

*Figure 1 - **European Policy Background***

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3. CONCEPTUAL APPROACH - The 'European Framework for Research Careers'

The development of the 2023 European Framework for Research Careers aims to respond to the concerns and recommendations raised by the European Commission and the Council and it implements one of the expected outcomes of action 4 of the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024. It provides the standards that can guide Member States, research organisations, funders and stakeholders in increasing the stability and attractiveness of research careers. The objective is to **retain European researchers and make Europe an attractive destination for foreign talents**.

A few "blocks" of core components were identified in the Framework such as:

- the definition of researchers/research professions
- the recognition of research professions and comparability of research careers,
- the recruitment and working conditions,
- the skills for intersectoral careers and the entrepreneurship innovation,
- the careers development and progression,
- the balanced circulation of talents and making Europe and attractive destination,
- the support actions for and
- monitoring of research careers.

The Framework's conceptual approach to inclusive research careers was built upon a simplified set of the above-mentioned 'blocks of components' and respective subcomponents, viewed from a 'value chain' perspective, in the sense that sub-components of these blocks may belong more to the core and/or to the upstream or downstream phases of a career path, and that several blocks may intersect with each other along the life cycle of careers in diverse stages. This conceptual approach allows for a thorough identification of possible inclusive features - visible and non-visible, direct and indirect, commonly addressed and not yet addressed – and can help detect missing links or potential along the value chain in a systematic and non-fragmented way.

For example, the 'research profession' component is quite relevant for more sustainable and diverse careers. In fact, it approaches research careers as a set of professional stages / categories, with a necessary interoperability between them, and as spanning teaching and research activities and the public and private sectors. However, there were no recommendations by national authorities and RFOs that explored the implicit policy implications of professions on gender equality (see Figures 19 and 33 on national and RFOs' policy recommendations, respectively).

A deeper insight into these blocks of components (Figure 2) shows that 'recruitment and working conditions' are typically impacted by inclusion and gender equality policies, since they encompass concerns with work-life balance and flexibility, incentives to [women's] entrepreneurship and innovation and the respective countering of risks, early career incentives, returns from previous paths, and social protection in terms of parental leave and unemployment and transferable entitlements.

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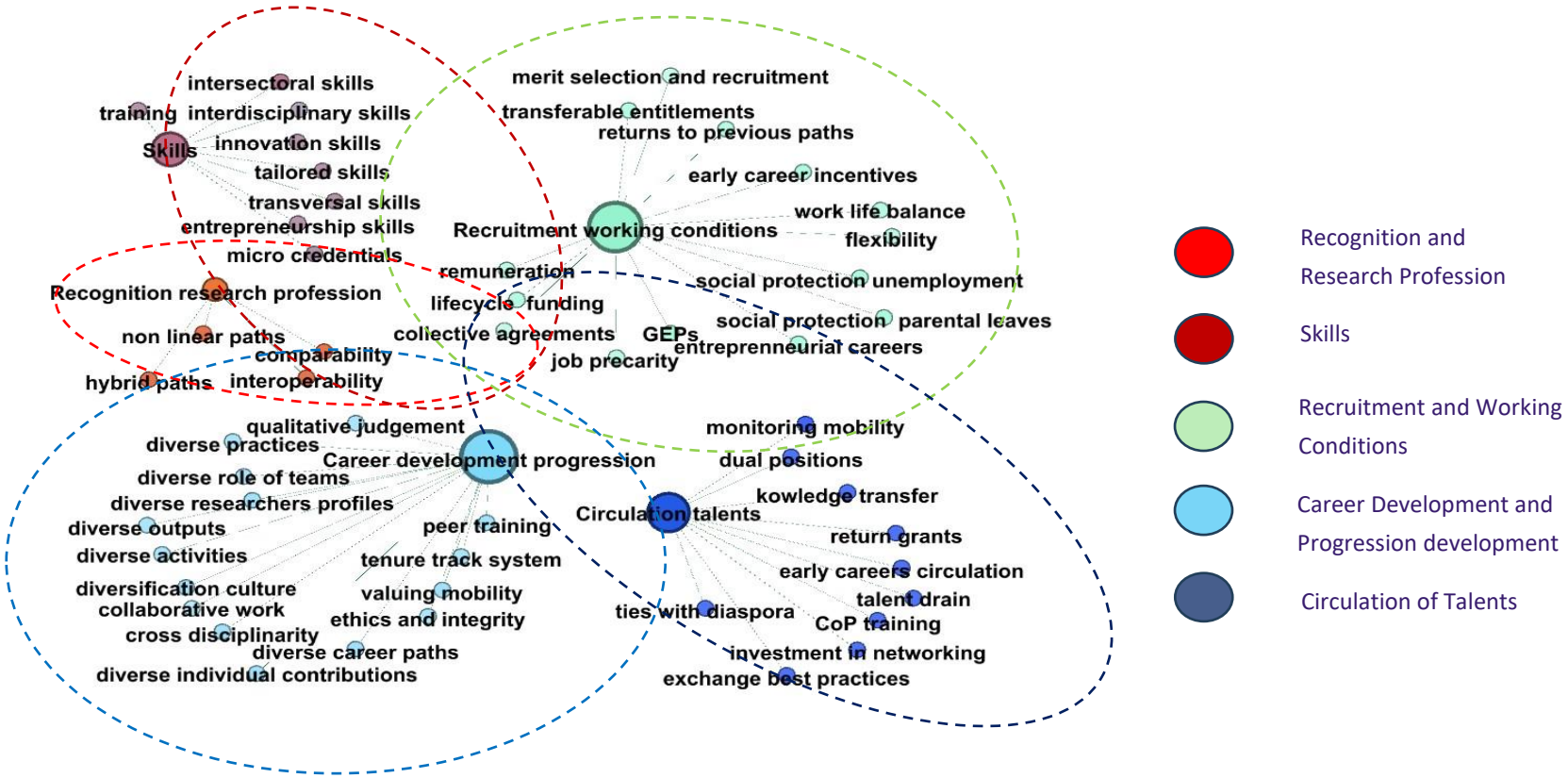

Figure 2 - ***The Research Career Value Chain***

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Note: Figure 2 represents the 'value chain' concept: the coloured balls represent the 5 anchoring blocks of components of the European Framework, and their size reflects the number of identified constituent features. These features are delimitated by the dashed circles – dashed since some of the features can be part of different blocks – e.g. the case of GEPs and mobility. Being a core feature of recruitment working conditions, GEPs can also be part of the circulation of talent: having an inclusive environment for researchers in the process of returning to institutions is relevant and can foster mobility; GEPs also have a role in career development and progression. Balls and circles do not have a linear sequence, they have a circular path and they all intersect along the life cycle of a career

At the heart of gender equality and inclusiveness in the R&I system are 'career development and progression' aspects, where assessment and diversity culture are of primary relevance: **valuing** qualitative judgement, links to concrete disciplines and national contexts, **valuing diversity** – i.e. diversity of *outputs* (*inter alia* publications, datasets, software, methodologies, protocols, patents), *activities* (*inter alia* mentoring, research supervision, leadership roles, entrepreneurship, data management, peer review, teaching, knowledge valorisation, industry-academia cooperation, support for evidence-informed policy-making, interaction with society), and *practices* (*inter alia* early knowledge and data sharing, open collaboration), as well as all mobility experiences. Widely valuing diversity in assessment may be, in itself, a potential game-changer as regards gender equality.

Endowing researchers with transferable, tailored, transversal skills through continuous training and micro-credentials will again enhance diversity, diverse opportunities, for non-linear intersectoral and entrepreneurial careers, and, as such, more potential for gender-balanced career paths.

The European Framework for Research Careers, which sheds light on a wide 'value chain' of aspects of a career, forms the backbone to a structured (rather than segmented) approach to gender equality and inclusiveness in careers. Our analysis aims to show how strategies, policies, and measures in several EU Members States and Associated Countries address this value chain from the margins to the core.

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4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Target groups

The benchmarking surveys targeted national authorities (the ministries, national agencies, and organisations that support them) and research funding organisations (RFOs). Overall, 113 representatives of national authorities, supporting organisations, and RFOs within and outside the consortium were approached with a request to provide answers to the questionnaire.

4.2 Data collection

The benchmarking surveys were distributed on 10.10.2022 with the deadline for responses set as 6.11.2022. In the case of some respondents, there was an agreement to postpone the deadline (often because the collection of information for the questionnaire had to be coordinated across the organisation and/or because of the heavy workload in the autumn and as the end of the year approaches). The last inputs were received on 18.11.2022.

4.3 Mapping instruments

The data were gathered through the LimeSurvey plaftform. To facilitate the work of coordinating inputs, a Word version of the questionnaires[survey] was sent to respondents along with a link to the questionnaire in the outreach email. Most of the inputs were entered via the online questionnaire, while in two cases (SK, BE) the answers were sent in a word document.

4.4 Data clearing

All data with the surveys answers were downloaded from LimeSurvey as excel files. Additional information was sent in attached documents, mostly in PDF format (only exceptionally in Word files). There were a total of 50 attached documents to the benchmarking survey in the case of the national policies benchmarking survey and 14 among the questionnaire responses by RFOs.

In the excel files with the survey answers, partial adjustments were made to respondents' answers to a few initial questions- for example, adding a country name or changing it to a country code (Poland => PL, Spain=>ES), and in one case the name of the organisation was omitted by the respondent and was therefore added in the data cleaning phase. The two answers to the survey that were submitted in a Word file were manually added to the excel files.

In the next step, the answers that were complete were filtered. The duplicate inputs were deleted. As a result, there were 20 answers from RFOs (out of 29 addressed) and 15 questionnaires describing national and regional policies (out of 23 countries, whose representatives of national authorities or supporting organisations were asked for inputs).

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4.5 Data analysis

Survey analysis

The main source of information for this report was the benchmarking surveys that were distributed among national authorities and RFOs. However, some clarification was additionally required from a few countries: some replies from RFOs, namely concerning national policies[12] and on the comprehensiveness of policies (whether recent / established; the countries concerned were Norway, Austria, Greece, Sweden, Croatia, and Spain). Some countries were asked to clarify their replies to questions 6.1, 6.2, 6.2.1, and 6.2.2, on their national policies; and RFOs as well were asked about their policies[13] as regards groups targeted by funding schemes. The consistency of data quality was confirmed in a later moment as regards social security coverage[14].

Replies Y/N to questions or multiple answers to a question were converted to numerical information and exploited in several kinds of figures, where information on the several domains addressed in the survey was cross tabulated with qualitative information on countries' and RFOs' policies. For a more differentiated analysis, countries and RFOs were classified into clusters or groups of countries.

National authorities reply (total=15)*:*

The countries were clustered into **4 groups** formed from the intersection of 3 main criteria: i) having (not having) dedicated strategies / policies / policy measures or laws on research careers, ii) having (not having) a focus on gender equality and / or inclusiveness; and iii) addressing (not addressing) the R&I and HE systems.

Those groups are[15]:

Group A - Countries that have a national policy or a law for their R&I and HE systems that **specifically focuses** on research careers **and promoting gender equality / inclusiveness**.

---

[12] The soundness of policies (recent/established, to Norway, Austria, Greece, Sweden, Croatia, and Spain);
[13] *Reply to question 5.9.1 - What groups are targeted by the funding schemes? (PhD, Postdocs, early career researchers, mid-career excellence, senior excellence and Other) and fill the cell 'please specify'. This question is conditioned to Y to Q. 5.4 and Q. 5.9. PT replied Y to question 5.9.1 (Y to PhD, PostDocs, Early Career researchers, mid-career excellence, senior excellence) - but it does not show in the results. We fear that this might have happened with other replies. (Denmark; Malta, Estonia, Sweden, Belgium-FWB, Norway, Poland, Belgium -FWO).*
[14] *Question: 6.7 Is there a difference in the social security coverage in your country between different types of researcher positions (permanent or temporary) and PhD students on fellowships, in the following situations? (Czech Republic and Belgium Wallonia).*

[15] *6.1 Are there national strategies / policies/ policy instruments [or laws] in place, specifically focused on research careers in higher education and research and innovation institutions in your country?*
6.2 Do this national strategies/policies , policy instruments promote gender equality?
6.2.1 If no, is the topic of inclusive research careers addressed in more broadly conceived national policies or strategies for the higher education and research institutions i.e.strategic plans, national research and innovation policies, etc)?
6.2.2 Do these strategies/policies/policy instruments also include intersections of gender equality with other grounds of inequality and power relations?

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This segmentation seems relevant in that it captures countries that are in principle more advanced and have more comprehensive policies and do not address just fragmented issues (6.1=Yes and 6.2= Yes) or (6.1 =Yes and 6.2 =Yes and 6.2.2.=Yes) or (6.1= Yes and 6.2 = Yes and 6.2.2= No).

Group B - Countries that have **broadly conceived national policies or laws** for their R&I and HE systems that address the **topic of inclusive research careers (and thereby address gender equality / inclusiveness).** This segmentation also seems relevant since these countries tend to have less comprehensive research careers policies and do not deal with the whole 'value chain'. (6.1/6.2= No and 6.2.1= Yes and 6.2.2 =Yes) or (6.1/6.2=No and 6.2.1 =Yes and 6.2.2= No)

Group C - Countries with **specific or broadly conceived national policies or laws** for their R&I and HE systems **on research careers** with **no focus on gender equality / inclusiveness.** (6.1 =Yes and 6.2= No and 6.2.2= No).

Group D - Countries with no specifically or **broadly conceived national policies laws** for their R&I and HE systems **on research careers:** Despite having no policies on research careers, this group of countries has more transversal policies or laws on a GE topic for their R&I and HE systems[16] (6.1= No).

Some reclassifications of primary data

The replies of 7 of the 15 countries were reclassified, as shown in Figure 3. Austria, Spain, and Sweden were reclassified as countries with broadly conceived laws or policies on a topic relating to inclusive research careers for their R&I and HE systems (but not specific policies; Q 6.1=Y and Q 6.2=Y). Additional information requested from Lithuania and Croatia revealed that their policies or laws for the R&I and HE systems (dealing with a topic relating to research careers but not addressing gender equality) consisted of funding programmes and schemes from funding agencies and research councils and that they are not in the nature of a national policy. As such this information was considered in Section 5.2. RFOs' policies. Given their absence of national policies, these two countries were reclassified as Q 6.1= N in the current section. Greece[17] did not clearly specify a policy document but claimed to have in place policies for the R&I and HE systems that address topics relating to inclusive research careers, together with general laws on GE and non-discrimination for society as a whole.

Finally, Portugal, has a mix of policies comprising specific laws on research careers for the R&I and HE systems that do not fully address gender equality (beyond requiring gender parity in evaluation panels) and a broad gender equality and non-discrimination strategy that is very

[16] 4.1 Do you have a national/ regional law for higher education and/or research and innovation that includes gender equality?
4.1.2 If no, is gender equality in higher education and/or research and innovation addressed in a more
4.2 Do you have a national/regional policy specifically on gender equality for higher education and/or research and innovation in your country?
4.2.2 If no, is gender equality in higher education and/or research and innovation addressed in a more broadly conceived policy on higher education, policy on research and innovation or their combination or equality policy?

[17] For this reclassification, the Greek contact person for the Project was further questioned on the reply to the Survey and more information was required. However, no more information was provided.

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transversal, while it also addresses the R&I and HE systems and research careers. As such, Greece and Portugal occupy a `borderline' position but were still reclassified as Q 6.2.1= Y.

COUNTTRY / ACRONYM	STRATEGIES/ POLICIES AND POLICY INITIATIVES OR LAWS FOR THE R&I AND HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS	
	SELF-CLASSIFICATION	RE-CLASSIFICATION
AUSTRIA / AT	6.1 = Y / 6.2 = Y / 6.2.2 = N	6.1/6.2 = N → 6.2.1 = Y/ 6.2.2 = N
SPAIN / ES	6.1 = Y / 6.2 = Y / 6.2.2 = Y	6.1/ 6.2 = N → 6.2.1 = Y / 6.2.2 = Y
SWEDEN / SE	6.1 = Y / 6.2=Y / 6.2.2 = N	6.1 /6.2 = N → 6.2.1 = Y/ 6.2.2 = Y
CROATIA / HR	6.1 = Y / 6.2 = N /6.2.1 = Y / 6.2.2 = Y	6.1 = N Reclassified as RFOs Policies (Section 5.2)
LITHUANIA / LT	6.1 = Y/ 6.2 = N / 6.2.1 = Y /6.2.2 = N	6.1 = N Reclassified as RFOs Policies (Section 5.2)
GREECE/ EL	6.1 = Y / 6.2 = Y / 6.2.2 = Y	6.1/6.2 = N → 6.2.1 = Y/ 6.2.2 = Y
PORTUGAL / PT	6.1 = Y / 6.2 = Y / 6.2.2 = Y	6.1/ 6.2 = N → 6.2.1 = Y / 6.2.2 = Y

Figure 3 ***- Synthesis of the reclassification of replies to questions 6.1, 6.2.1 and 6.2.2.***

For more information on the reclassification rationales, see Section 5.1 and Annex I, Figures 37 and 38.

Once the several phases of the research career value chain were defined, information was organised by group and by career 'block component' in order to gain insights into given career phase. Qualitative analysis provided by the survey was also compiled and organised to showcase country examples and, when possible, organised also by cluster group and career phase.

Once defined several phases of the research careers *value chain*, information was organised by group and by career 'block component', allowing to gain insights on the addressed career phase. Qualitative analysis provided by the survey was also compiled and organized showcasing countries examples, also by cluster group and by career phase, when adequate.

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RFOs Policies replies (total = 20)

Regarding RFOs, the analysis reveals a clear demarcation between the two groups. The answers to the second and fourth questions define a cleavage:

"5.2 Are there strategies/policies/policy measures addressing research careers in higher education and research institutions at your RFO?" and

"5.4 Do these strategies/policies/policy measures promote gender equality (as programmes of support, for example)?"

Group A consists of ten RFOs with some strategy, policy, or measure addressing research careers (5.2=Yes) and promoting gender equality (5.4=Yes); and the Irish Research Council (IRC) with some strategy, policy, or measure addressing research careers (5.2=Yes) but not promoting gender equality (5.4=No).

Group B consists of nine RFOs, without any strategy, policy, or measure addressing research careers (5.2=No).

Document analysis

National Policies

Countries supplied information on ten policy documents and four laws with a diverse focus on careers. The initial information delivered with the survey was supplemented with other interactions with the country representatives in the project who provided extra information [on up to eleven policy documents and seven laws]. The information in these policies was thoroughly analysed and mapped according to its focus, the phase of the career value chain addressed, and the terminology used. An extensive analysis of all policies made available by MS and AC was also carried out, including an analysis of broadly conceived policies and other policies and laws for the HE system, (see Figures 39 to 48 in Annex II).

RFOs Policies:

RFOs supplied only five GEPs as policy documents.

As nine RFOs have not yet taken action addressing research careers and face complex challenges that are not easily overcame (Group B), we explored the experiences of seven RFOs that are more advanced in Inclusive Research Careers (some of the Group A), gathering more information from their websites, namely strategies and policies. This extra information (not available through the survey) is essential to map policies, strategies, and terminology regarding inclusive research careers from the perspective of RFOs (Figures 34 and 35).

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4.6 Limitations

In the course of the analysis of the data collected on research careers, several limitations were identified:

- Only 15 countries/regions out of 23 that are partners in the Project replied to the GENDERACTIONplus survey (65%). Among these countries/regions, not all responded to both surveys, the one addressed to national authorities and the one for RPOs, which mainly reflects the lack of institutional representation in the Consortium;

- Belgium Flanders (BE- FL) and Federation of Wallonia Belgium (BE-FWB) replied as 2 different regions, which may mean BE not fully covered for some issues;

- Given the undue routing format (misguided sequential dependency) in question on Research Assessment (*6.4.1 - Has Research assessment been a topic before the launch of the Reforming Research Assessment Initiative and under action 3 of the European Research Area Policy Agenda*?), which is in the National Authorities section of the survey, responses were received from only a few of the countries in Groups A and B (see above). This is a relevant limitation, since it is important to know across all countries – with and without dedicated inclusive career policies – how they have come to address an issue so intrinsic to research career development;

- The survey accepted a wide range of policy instruments as valid (Yes reply), from strategies to policies, measures, and actions, the effect of which was to level very different approaches in terms of political commitment, systemic impact, and career focus. While this approach made it possible to capture all the available information on inclusive research careers, it may also somehow blur the distinction between more dedicated and more general policies. As such, the results of the survey must therefore be interpreted with caution and while taking into account the great variety and/or granularity of primary information and should be complemented with other information.

- Similarly, the fragmentation and the lack of a clear borderline or definition of a research career also tended to mislead or somehow blur the self-classification of policies by some countries when responding to the survey. In their first answer a few countries considered very general anti-discrimination policies or laws to be ‘gateways’ (creating basic environment) to inclusive research careers (see 4.5 Data Analysis).

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5. RESULTS

5.1 NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

An introduction

The need for more systematic gender mainstreaming in R&I and HE policies and programmes has grown over time, in particular as part of efforts to address gender equality in research careers and use intersectionality as a cross-cutting lens.

Research careers are at the very heart of R&I and HE systems. The research career conditions affect, both formally and informally, directly and indirectly, all those who conduct research, who provide tacit knowledge and who create new knowledge. Sustainable and attractive research careers are of paramount importance to ensure fairer professional lives for all researchers – women and men, older and younger – and to facilitate higher levels of research integrity, excellent research outcomes, and optimal R&I and HE systems overall. Improvements in the direction of more inclusive research careers that coherently ensure gender equality along the continuum of several career stages and enable stable integration and progression require a demanding policy mix to deal with existing and future challenges.

The recently issued European Framework for Research Careers provides standards that can guide Member States, research organisations, funders, and stakeholders in increasing stability and attractiveness of research careers. As such, the Framework serves as a sound baseline for applying a systematic approach based on a value chain rationale (Section 3. Conceptual Approach – the 'European Framework for Research Careers').

This chapter provides a mapping of the existing policies in several countries and identifies more commonly used terminology, making it possible to determine the state of the art and pinpoint gaps within the European MS and AC. It also provides the necessary information for improving strategic coordination at the national and European levels and for strengthening exchange within the GENDERACTIONplus national authorities' Community of Practices.

5.1.1 An overview of the findings

Existing policies on inclusive research careers

The analysis of the replies to the GENDERACTIONplus survey that was distributed among national authorities on the issue of inclusive research careers revealed that across countries there are still no or very few consolidated national policy frameworks in place that deal with (inclusive) research careers. It also unveiled that policies in general – whether specific or broader - do not

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approach research careers as a value chain and each career as a whole, and, instead, commonly focus just on fragments or specific issues (e.g. early-career researchers). This fragmentation and the lack of a clear definition tended to mislead or somehow blur the self-classification of policies by some countries when they were responding to the survey. In their first response a few countries considered very general anti-discrimination policies or laws to be 'gateways' (creating the basic non-discrimination environment) to inclusive research careers (see 4.5 Data Analysis).

A disclaimer has to be made about the contextual environment of countries, which is certainly also relevant. However, our approach, which is purposely based on national authority policies only, does not capture the dynamics of non-governmental stakeholders in more bottom-up ecosystems, such as research associations, networks, and the nonprofit sector and their efforts to address specific issues like mentorship and advise women postdocs for career choices, attracting senior scientists living abroad, etc. (e.g. the Wiser Program and Science Abroad in Israel).

Based on a further analysis of policies[18] and laws and after consulting again with some of the countries on the benchmarking survey, some Y/N replies to questions 6.1, 6.2, 6.1.2 and 6.2.2 were adjusted in an effort to obtain a more precise and distinctive scoping of policies relating to R&I and HE systems, research careers, and gender equality and inclusiveness (Section 4.5 Data analysis, Some reclassifications of primary data). However, it is important to note that the heterogeneity of contexts and policies made it particularly difficult to compare them in a systematic way.

On the basis of this previously mentioned readjustment of the responses, countries were subsequently clustered in groups that were as much as possible anchored in relation to structured policies rather than to single measures. The fact that the survey questions referred collectively to several levels of policy (as 'strategies / policy / policy measures or laws') is a problem that was partly resolved for the Y/N replies by taking extra information into account. However, single measures, when relevant, were also considered complementary information.

Four groups of countries were identified, as represented in Figure 5, evidencing that only 53% of countries have policies in place for the R&I and HE systems that are dedicated to research careers only or in broadly conceived terms and that address GE (8 out of 15 countries or regions). Portugal and Greece were clustered as a special case of Group B.

[18] Strategies / Policies / Policy instruments hereafter mentioned as policies, for simplification.

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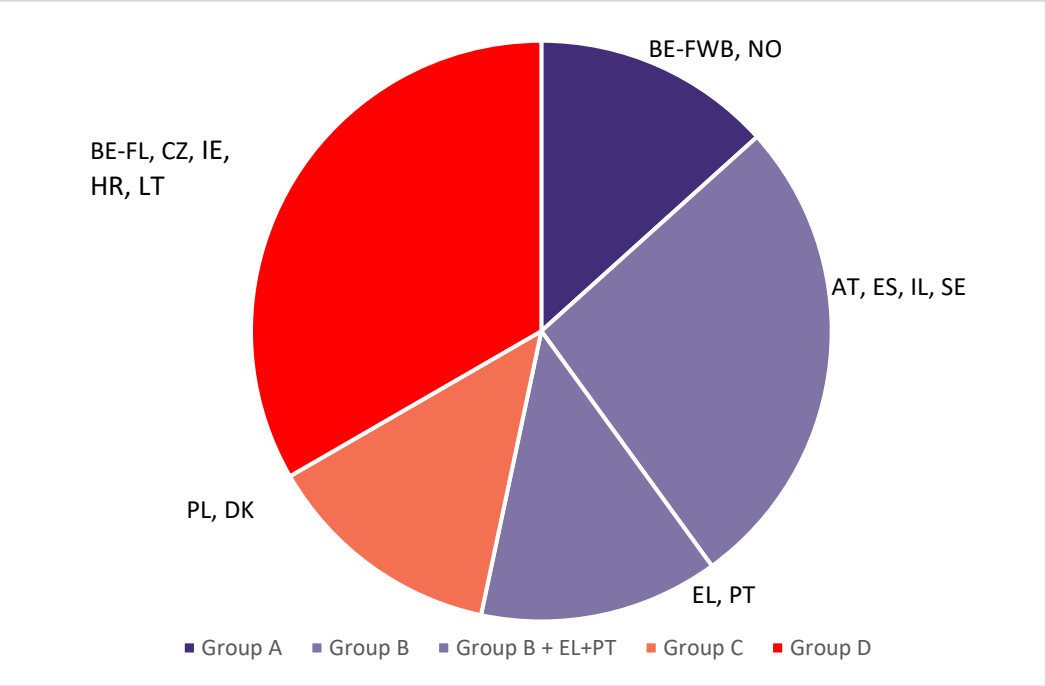

Figure 4 ***- Groups of countries with national strategies, policies, measures or laws for the R&I and HE systems promoting /addressing (or not) inclusive research careers***

Group A: Countries with policies or laws in place for the R&I and HE systems specifically focused on research careers only and promoting GE or inclusiveness.

Group B: Countries with broadly conceived policies or laws in place for the R&I and HE systems with a topic on inclusive research careers –addressing GE or inclusiveness.

Group C: Countries with specific or broadly conceived policies or laws in place for the R&I and HE systems dedicated to research careers not addressing GE or inclusiveness.

Group D: Countries with no specific or broadly conceived policies or laws in place for the R&I and HE systems on research careers.

A closer insight into the main policies

The groups broadly characterised above are described in greater depth in this section.

GROUP A – includes **countries that have policies**[19] **or laws in place for R&I and HE systems that are specifically focused on research careers and promoting Gender Equality/ Inclusiveness.**

[19] Strategies / Policies / Policy instruments are for simplification hereinafter referred to as policies.

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Only **2 countries** were positioned in this group, with policies more structured around the concept of careers or more advanced in tracking career paths or in taking concrete action in relation to them, but with some heterogeneity between them:

Norway has established a dedicated policy targeting a specific career segment - young researchers' careers – that has several aims: to provide a framework for postdocs to develop an independent profile as a researcher and gain relevant competences for an academic career; to clarify roles and responsibilities in recruitment; to call for continued efforts to maintain a gender balance and ethnic diversity among employees in recruitment positions; and to ensure a balance also in top academic positions. Additionally, Norway's universities developed a tool of recognition and rewards (NORCAM), with a focus on gender equality as a principle, the use of which is recommended on a voluntary basis by all universities, whereby it becomes national in breadth. The tool applies to research assessment and it thereby relevant to research careers in general and also for inclusive research careers, and in this way the tool adds to the national policy mix.

Belgium-Wallonia developed a concrete action on research careers through the Observatory of Research and Scientific Careers, which seeks to trace and analyse the careers of women and men researchers in Federation Wallonia Belgium. The mission of this observatory is to develop cohesive knowledge on the doctoral and postdoctoral pathways and formulate recommendations for the professional integration of doctorates, with particular attention devoted to obstacles such as stereotypes and discrimination on the basis of gender, international mobility requirements, and impact and publish-or-perish pressures in early careers. Hosted in FNRS, and working in collaboration with five other Wallonia Universities, this initiative is funded by a government budget line specifically allocated for this purpose and it has an overall national scope.

The Observatory in itself justifies the inclusion of this country in Group A, as it represents a concrete step forward from other policy initiatives, such as the general Plan Droit des Femmes (Women's Rights Plan 2020-2024) that only transversely approached women's rights and gender equality.

GROUP B – is composed of countries with broadly conceived **strategies/policies/policy measures or laws in place for the R&I and HE systems – but are NOT dedicated to the topic of inclusive research careers or to addressing GE or inclusiveness**– 6 countries out of the total of 15.

This group includes a great variety of countries whose polices on research careers in R&I and HE systems are addressed in a broader context, and are heterogeneous in focus while applying a in-depth approach to research careers and gender equality. This may translate into lower levels of policy engagement compared to Group A or may simply result in these matters not being envisaged as specific policies.

Spain stands out in the Group with its Act 17/2022, which 'amends Act 14/2011 on Science, Technology and Innovation, which specifically deals with **the careers and professional development** of researchers, including measures such as the design of a post-doctoral itinerary for their integration in the system; and a **new open-ended model of contract** (the contracts for scientific and technical activities) as being part of the public offer'.

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This law takes further action on a broad framing strategy – the Spanish Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (Estrategia Española de Ciencia, Tecnología y Innovación), which aims at developing, attracting, and retaining talent, facilitating the professional advancement and mobility of research staff in the public and private sectors and their ability to influence decision-making. It addresses the need to establish **a scientific and technological pathway** to enter the Research, Development, and Innovation System (RDI) to facilitate promotion and job security (Tenure Track). It deals with the design of a **well-defined research career**, with effective selection, evaluation, and promotion mechanisms, and it considers mobility and new scientific career evaluation metrics. It also promotes the gender perspective to ensure the application of the principle of real gender equality in RDI.

Despite the broader nature of the two policy documents, they position this country as an advanced one within the group given the centrality of research careers as a topic in the documents, including a pathway perspective, they presume further policy engagement (while promoting and not just addressing the subject).

Austria introduced a general strategy for research, technology, and innovation – the RTI Strategy 2030 – which, while it addresses the system broadly, articulates specific concerns on research careers, detailed in Objective 3 – Focus *on knowledge, talents and skills: Strengthen gender equality and diversity in R&D and enhance the attractiveness and promotion of research careers, particularly for women, by intensifying equal opportunity programmes and measures in human resources and career planning.*

Israel has a multiyear plan for the higher education system that is in the remit of the Council for Higher Education (CHE) and the Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC) and is titled the Gender Fairness Plan to Increase representation of Women among Academic Staff Members. Its key objective is promoting women in academia, with a focus on senior faculty members (2018-2022), and working to break down the cultural, social, and organisational barriers that prevent them from moving up. Beyond annual gender reports, this plan establishes a special budget for activities on gender fairness, annual incentives (prizes of excellence), scholarships for outstanding women post-doctoral students, and competitive budgets for solutions for the recruitment and promotion of women faculty members. Israel has other non-national or bottom-up programmes that could highlight diversity and inclusiveness, such as ScienceAbroad, a network connecting local communities and international scientists and strengthening the identity of scientists living overseas. Finally, there is WISER (September 2020), an initiative 'by postdocs for postdocs' that connects Israeli women postdocs in any academic field (mentees) with senior scientists from all the universities in Israel (mentors), the main purpose being to provide informal support and guidance during the postdoc period.

Sweden has some specific/unique features, since higher education organisations there are regulated primarily by laws and statutes, namely the Swedish Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance. Though not dedicated to careers, these laws state that equality between women and men shall always be taken into account and promoted in the operations of higher education, namely through gender mainstreaming in all policies, non-gender-stereotypical study choices, and equitable career paths. To accompany the Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance, the Swedish government adopted a system of 'appropriation directions' or annual public service agreements for the operations of HEIs that set annual targets

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for parity in the recruitment of women professors at the university level (since 1997-1999 to now, Government Bill 1996/87:141). These measures strongly contribute to the classification of Sweden in this Group.

Portugal is a less clear case, as it has, on one hand, specific laws on research careers for the R&I and HE systems, but, on other hand, it does not address gender equality deep into the career or beyond gender parity in evaluation panels. These laws], mention can be made of the regime for promotion to intermediate and top categories of higher education teaching careers and scientific research careers (Decree Law 112/ 2021), or the Statute of Research Careers (Decree Law 124/99, revised by the Minister Council in 2023). In addition, Act 26/2019 of March 2019, on a balanced representation regime for men and women in leadership positions in public administration, including public HEIs (40% minimum quotas for the less represented sex), is pulling the policy in a more gender-sensitive direction: despite being more broadly conceived, this law addresses a particular issue relevant for inclusive careers.

On the other hand, the revamped ENIND 2025-2027 – the General Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination – adds to the policy mix, being broadly conceived on[to deal with?] gender equality and women's rights, but not specifically addressing the R&I and HE systems. However, it touches on research careers through the issue of parity targets on the percentage of women in management and governance bodies, the percentage of women researchers in R&D activities, the percentage of women as associate professors, principal coordinators and full professors, or the feminising of higher education degrees in ICT. As such, Portugal could be classified either in Group B or in Group C, with a complementary policy mix. Given the advances on gender equality stemming from the broader ENIND strategy, impacts on careers are expected, and, as such, the country is included in Group B.

Greece did not fully reply to the survey, and, importantly, it did not provide a link to the relevant policy document(s).[20] However, further desk research has shown that Greece has developed a National Strategy for Research 2015-2020 (Priority 4, ERA RoadMap) that challenges gender inequalities in research teams as well as gender hierarchies in research institutions. It aims to strengthen the participation of women in positions of responsibility (minimum representation of one third) and in recruitment and development committees and to support training women in leadership and management. More information is available in GEAR. Greece was presumed to have policies for the R&I and HE systems (broad or single measures) on research careers and as such was also added to this group.

The three clustering criteria – addressing the R&I and HE systems, addressing research careers, and addressing gender equality and inclusiveness – were not fully met by Groups C and D. This means that in terms of national policies they are in a less advanced position on inclusiveness in

[20] The only policy document appointed, was an overarching non- discrimination law - as Law - L. 4604/2019 Official Gazette A 50/26-03-2019, that recognizes the need to include both gender identity and sexual orientation in measures to combat discrimination, encouraging the holistic treatment of inequalities that run along axes such as gender, identity and sexuality. Regarding the University, in art. 17 par. 2 of Law 4604/2019 the importance of gender equality is found in all dimensions of university life. Specifically, it states that "**Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) ensure the promotion of gender equality at all levels of operation and in all procedures of academic life, in accordance with article 33 of Law 4589/2019 (A' 13)".**

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research careers. However, this does not mean that there are no relevant bottom-up initiatives among other actors in the ecosystems. Furthermore, all the countries that are part of these two groups have national or regional laws or national or regional policies for the R&I and HE systems (specific or broadly conceived) that include gender equality (Q4.1=Y, or 4.1.2=Y or Q4.2=Y, or Q 2.2=Y)[21]. Likewise, all countries across all groups have national and regional anti-discrimination or equal opportunity laws or policies (Q2.1=Y or Q2.2=Y).[22]

GROUP C – includes **countries with specific or broadly conceived strategies / policies / policy measures or laws for the R&I and HE systems dedicated to research careers but with no focus on GE or inclusiveness:** (6.1=Y / 6.2= N/ 6.2.1= N) - **4 countries** out of a total of 15.

Two countries are part of this Group- **Poland and Denmark** – that to have policies on research careers but the policies have no focus on gender equality or inclusiveness.

GROUP D – comprises **countries with NO specific or broadly conceived strategies / policies / policy measures or laws for the R&I and HE systems on research careers** (6.1=N) – 5 countries out of a total of 15.

These countries are **Belgium Flanders, Czech Republic**, and **Ireland**, which indicate having no national policies specifically focused on research careers. Some of these countries stated that it is not clear whether these policies should be centrally addressed (CZ) – and it is quite possible that a strict and demanding approach on the careers concept may have influenced their self-classification.

As mentioned above (Section 4.5 Data analysis, Subsection 'Some reclassifications of primary data'), information provided by Lithuania and Croatia - Career Development, Mobility and Networking Opportunities and Young Researchers' Career Development Project, respectively - was considered under Section 5.2 RFOs' Policies, since these policies are not national in scope. While they did not present other national policies on research careers, both countries were reclassified in Group D in the current section.

Figures 5 and 6 summarize this information:

[21] *4.1 Do you have a national/ regional law for higher education and/ or research and innovation that includes gender equality?*
4.1.2 If no, is gender equality in higher education and/or research and innovation addressed in a more broadly conceived law on higher education, law on research and innovation or equality law?
4.2 Do you have a national/regional policy specifically on gender equality for higher education and/or research and innovation in your country?
4.2.2 If no, is gender equality in higher education and/or research and innovation addressed in a more broadly conceived policy on higher education, policy on research and innovation or their combination or equality policy?

[22] 2.1 Does your country have a national/regional anti-discrimination and/or equal opportunity laws?
2.2 Does your country have a national/regional anti-discrimination / equal opportunity policy?

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COUNTRY ACRONYM	STRATEGIES / POLICY DOCUMENTS / POLICIES INITIATIVES ON GENDER INCLUSIVE RESEARCH CAREERS	GROUP
BELGIUM / BE- FWB	Plan Droit des Femmes /Women's Rights Plan 2020-2024	A
	Observatoire de la Recherche et des Carrrieres Scientifiques /FNRS /Observatory of Research and Scientific Careers	
NORWAY / NO	Strategy for the Recruitment and Career Development of Young Researchers	A
	NOR-CAM - A Toolbox for Recognition and Rewards in Academic Careers	
AUSTRIA/ AT	RTI Strategy 2030- Strategy for Research Technology and Innovation of the Austrian Federal Government, Objective 3	B
GREECE/ EL	National Strategy for Research 2015-2020 (Priority 4)- National RoadMap for the ERA	B
ISRAEL / IL	Program Senior Leadership Development in Higher Education https://leadershipinacademia.com/en/	
	Gender Fairness Plan to Increase Representation of Women among Academic Staff Members	B
PORTUGAL / PT	ENIND - National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2018-2030 - Portugal + Equal, Council of Ministers Resolution 61/208, may 21,/ Estrategia Nacional para a Igualdade e Não Discriminação 2018-2030 - Portugal + Igual Revamped ENIND – Action Plans – Period 2023-2026	B
SPAIN / ES	Estrategia Espanõla de Ciencia, Tecnologia y Inovacion	B
SWEDEN / SE	Gender Equality Policy in Sweeden - A Feminist Government	B
DENMARK/ DK	Not identified	C
POLAND / PL	Not identified	C
BELGIUM / BE-FL	Not identified	D
CZECH REP / CZ	Not identified	D
IRELAND/ IE	Not identified	D
CROATIA / HR	Not identified	D
LITHUANIA / LT	Not identified	D

Figure 5 ***- A revised list of strategies, policies and policy measures for the R&I and HE systems on inclusive research careers and respective countries identified by groups***

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COUNTRY ACRONYM	LAWS ON GENDER INCLUSIVE RESEARCH CAREERS	GROUP
PORTUGAL /PT	Decree Law 112/2021, on the regime for promotion to intermediate and top categories of higher education teaching careers and scientific research careers (2021) Decree Law 124/99, on the Statute of Research Careers,amended by the new statute of research careers (Minister Council, (2023) Act 26 2019, Balanced representation regime for men and women in leadership positions in PA, including public HEIs, (March 2019)	C B
SPAIN / ES	Act 17/2022 that amends the Act 14/2011 of Science, Technology and Innovation / Ley 17/2022, de 5 de septiembre, por la que se modifica la Ley 14/2011, de 1 de junio, de la Ciencia, la Tecnología y la Innovación.	B
SWEDEN/ SE	Swedish Higher Education Act Higer Education Ordinance Government Bill 1996/87:141	B
GREECE / EL	Law - L. 4604/2019 Official Gazette A 50/26-03-2019,	D

Figure 6 ***– A revised list of laws on inclusive research careers and respective countries identified by groups***

An overview on inclusive measures

All countries in Group A and B have replied to the question on inclusive measures relating to research careers, which, on their own or in reference to the above-mentioned strategies and policies, are presented in Figure 8 according to the main block components of the research career 'value chain' (see Section 2, Policy Background, Framework for Research Careers) and segmented across countries. Overall, countries highlighted gender equality, work-life balance, and career progression as the top priority domains for their measures, closely followed by working conditions, job precarity, and early careers. On a third level, skills and employability, equal access to employment, and international mobility were addressed as well, while other types of mobility, such as intersectoral, non-linear careers, the gender pay gap, professional visibility, and research assessment, do not yet seem to be more prominent. Finally, the portability of social security, despite its relevance for progression and mobility, is still marginally addressed, as is interdisciplinary mobility.

Figure 8 also reveals that measures developed by Southern European countries (Greece, Spain, and Portugal) primarily focused on work-life balance and working conditions (block component on recruitment and working conditions). Interdisciplinary mobility was only signalled by one southern country, while Northern and Central Europe (Austria, Belgium Wallonia, Norway, and Sweden – plus Israel) seem to place more emphasis on career progression (block component on career development and progression). The portability of social security was not indicated as a measure among these latter countries, in spite of the relevance of international mobility (only one southern country indicated this measure). A look at the deeper differences between national R&I

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systems and the underlying factors behind them (historical, political, socioeconomic, geographic) and how they shape narratives and policies would be interesting but is not possible within the scope of this report.

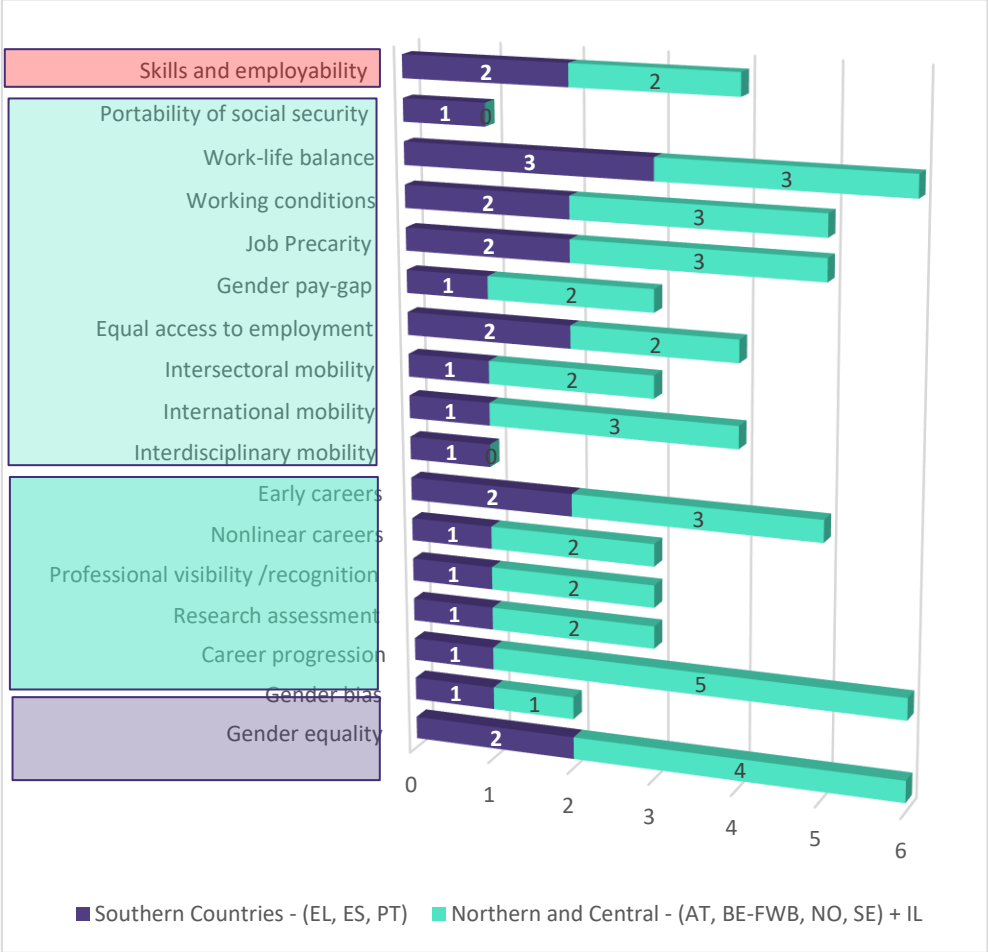

Figure 7 - Inclusive measures on research career- Overall

6.4 What do the inclusive measures of these strategies/policies/policy initiatives focus on?

Note:
Red rectangle: Skills
Light green rectangle: Recruitment and working conditions.
Darker green rectangle: Career development and progression
Light blue: Transversal gender equality measures

A deeper analysis of other qualitative information stated in the survey allows for a clearer pattern on inclusive measures developed by the countries, as follows:

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Northern and Central European Countries:

Group A – ***Countries with policies or laws for the R&I and HE systems dedicated to research careers only and addressing GE or inclusiveness ((simplified denomination).).***

Norway: *Strategy for the recruitment and career development of young researchers*: focuses on the need for clearer and more stable career paths for researchers, in particular in early career stages, and for real opportunities for permanent positions at university and university colleges; and focus on the need to observe/tackle recruitment challenges and the career barriers that men, women, foreign nationals, and descendants of immigrants face and to create awareness

Belgium Wallonia: *Creation of the Observatory of Research and Scientific Careers in Research and Higher Education (art. 64), in 2018*: aimed at tracking and **analysing researchers' careers and obstacles**, including **gender-related stereotypes and discrimination**. *Creation of the Women and Science Committee*: intended to promote and improve the balanced participation of women and men in scientific and academic careers. In addition, the *Plan Droit des Femmes/Women´s Rights Plan 2020-2024*, *a roadmap in 4 axes (92 measures)* focuses on a better representation of women in all professional sectors and at all levels in decision-making bodies and high positions, on reconciling private and professional life, and removing **obstacles to women researchers' career (mobility and productivity criteria)**.

Group B - ***Countries with policies or laws NOT dedicated to research careers – broader in scope and addressing GE or inclusiveness (simplified denomination)***

Austria: RTI Strategy 2030- Strategy for Research Technology and Innovation of the Austrian Federal Government, Objective 3: gender equality is addressed here as a cross-cutting issue (such as digitalisation, open science, and open innovation), and it is acknowledged that there is room to strengthen **gender equality and diversity in R&D** and increase the **attractiveness and promote research careers**, **particularly for women**, by intensifying **equal opportunity programmes** and measures in human resources and **career planning**.

Israel: Senior Leadership Development in Higher Education: a programme aimed at developing the next generation of academic leadership based on conditions of excellence and on gender balanced cohorts. Gender Fairness Plan to Increase representation of Women among Academic Staff Members: developing **solutions for the recruitment and promotion of women faculty members.**

Sweden: The country has had **concrete recruitment goals on female professors since 1997**, which are revised and intensified on a yearly basis and defined in terms of the percentage of female professors to be recruited per RPO in Sweden; it continues gender mainstreaming in order to achieve gender equality policy goals (Com.2016/17:10), such as gender equitable / **equal career paths** in academia, **counteracting gender-stereotypical career paths**, and working to prevent women and men from dropping out of education.

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Southern European Countries:

Group B - ***Countries with policies or laws NOT dedicated to research careers – broader in scope and addressing GE or inclusiveness (simplified denomination)***

Spain: The reform of research careers has been translated into two fundamental measures: the design of a **post-doctoral itinerary** leading to the stable incorporation of researchers into the system and their subsequent professional development; the introduction of a new **open-ended employment contract** linked to the development of scientific-technical activities for all types of research personnel within defined research lines. **This new form of contract** for doctoral researchers/research personnel includes an **intermediate evaluation** of their **research activity** (contracted by public universities, the Public Research Bodies). The new Act further provides specific measures for effective gender equality, namely mechanisms to evaluate the gender impact of measures and instruments implemented, support programmes to correct inequalities in the higher levels of research careers, and foster women's entrepreneurship.

Greece: The participation of women in positions of responsibility and in committees (recruitment and development) has been strengthened and there is support for the training of women in leadership and management.

Portugal: *The National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2018-2030 Portugal + Igual (ENIND)*: It defines **parity targets** for women in the management and governance bodies of HEIs, women researchers with R&D activities, women as associate professors, principal coordinators and full professors, the feminisation of higher education degrees in ICT, sensitising HEIs to integrate the gender perspective, and the gender stereotype deconstruction in graduates and master's degrees. The legal framework, such as Act 26/2019 (28 March), established a minimum **threshold of 40% of the underrepresented gender should be senior leaders in direct and indirect state administration (including in HEIs**), which also impacts research careers.

In summary, countries have implemented a diverse range of measures – as represented in Figure 8: some target the career-typical value chain with explicit inclusive concerns, addressing gender equality and more[some focus on explicit inclusiveness concerns in the career-typical value chain and address gender equality and more[(e.g. Norway, Austria, Belgium Wallonia, Sweden, Spain and to a certain extent Portugal and Greece, circle 1), and some address general institutional change, which is still a point upstream to careers, or just assume gender equality as a basic structuring principle (e.g. Greece, circle 2). Issued addressed by measures cover the following areas: career planning, stable career paths, itinerary and open-ended contracts, permanent positions, track on careers, career progression; recruitment, productivity criteria; mobility; work-life balance; quotas, parity targets for career stages (research and academia), training women.

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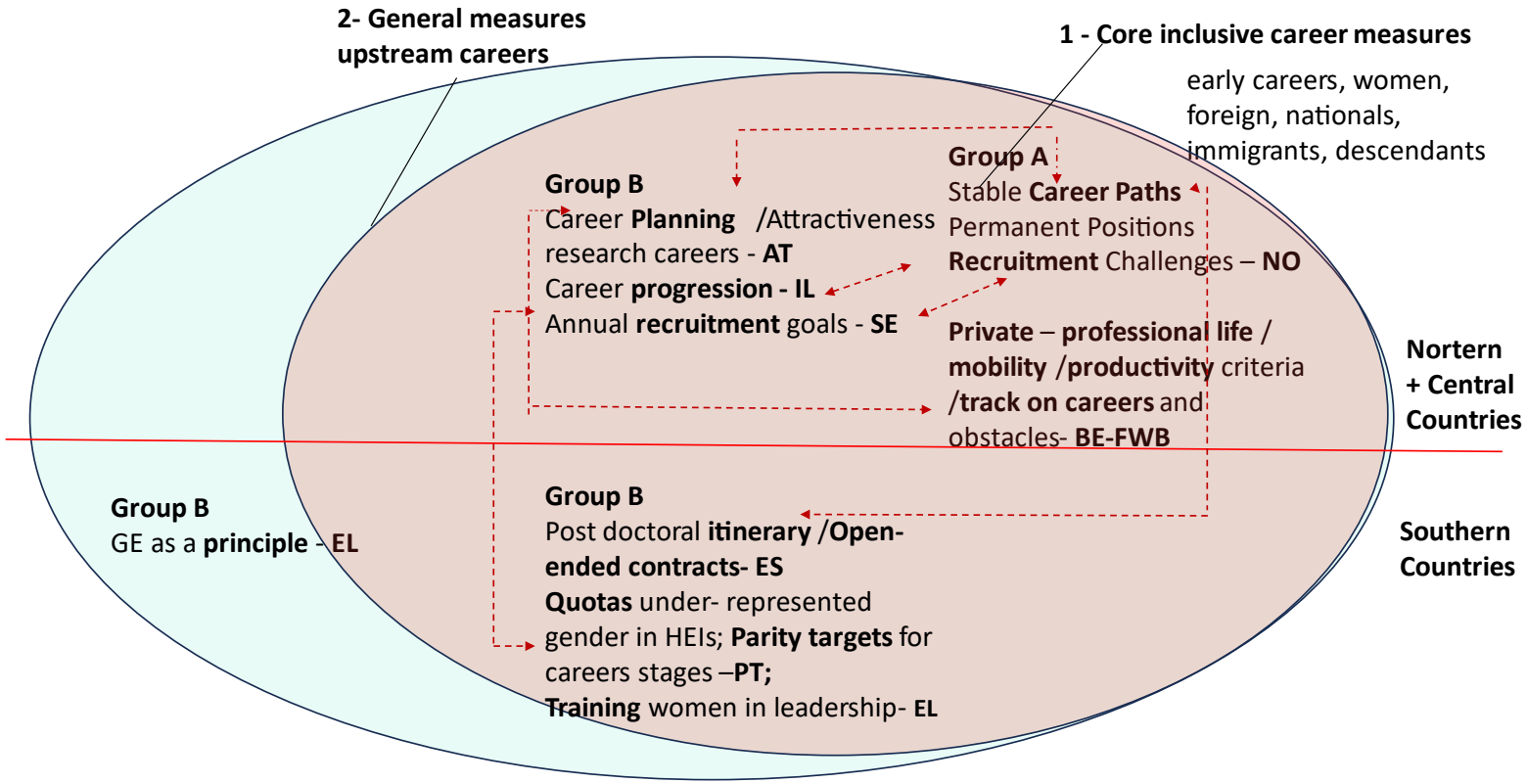

Figure 8 - ***Overall picture – Inclusive measures on research careers – context and content (measures selected in question 6.4 of the survey***

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Soundness of the policies

Policies on inclusive research careers (Group A + Group B – for example, countries with dedicated and broadly conceived policies on research careers and a focus on gender equality) are mostly established (i.e. in place for more than 3 years) in 5 countries (out of 8): Belgium Wallonia, Greece, Israel, Portugal, and Sweden. In turn, Norway, Austria, and Spain have more recent policies (i.e. in place for less than 3 years) (see Figure 9), and these tend to be the policies with a stronger focus on (inclusive) research careers.

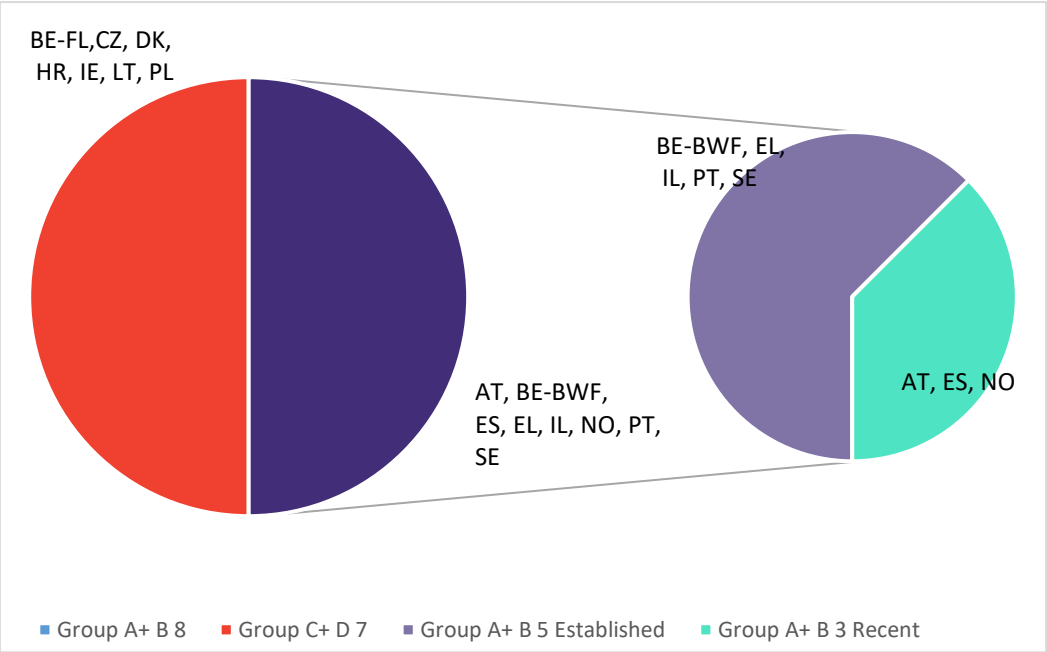

Figure 9- ***National policies – recent versus established***

6.3 Is attention to inclusive research careers in national policies or strategies a recent development (less than 3 years) or an established area of work (more than 3 years)? Please specify.

A similar number of countries - 5 out of 8 – stated they have some kind of process to evaluate policy initiatives that they have already adopted or implemented, such as Belgium Wallonia, Greece, Portugal, and Sweden, mostly with established policies (and also Austria). Conversely, the other 3 countries tend to have policies not (yet) evaluated - namely Norway and Spain – and still have very recent and at the same time more dedicated policies (and also Israel) (see Figure 10).

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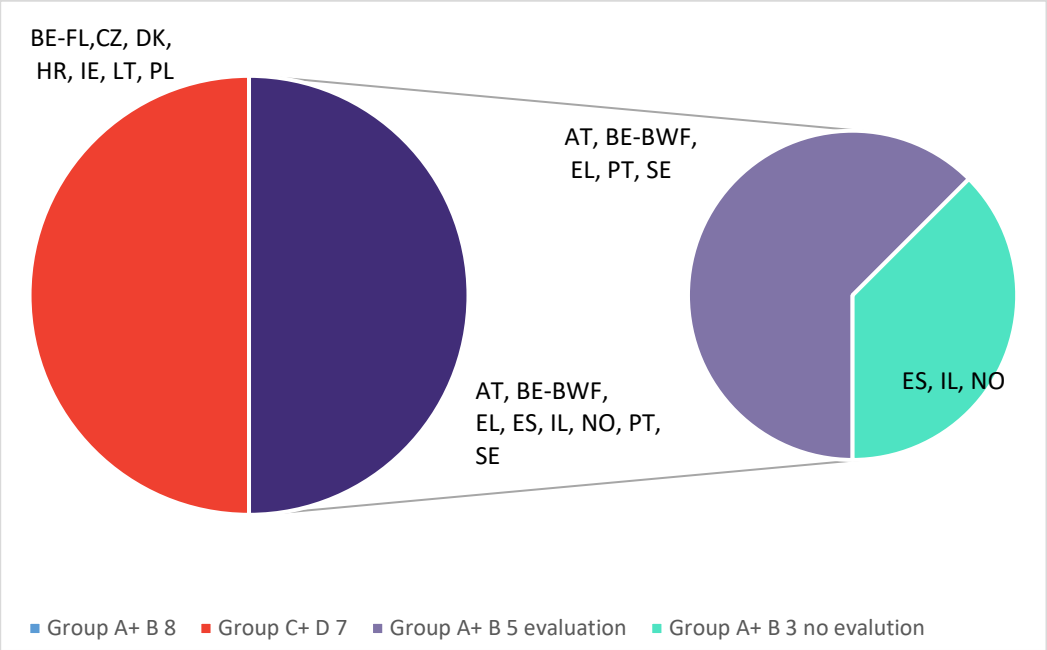

Figure 10 - - ***National policies – monitoring and evaluation***

6.6 Is there any kind of evaluation process on already adopted / implemented policies / initiatives?

Further analysis on the policies reveal that **evaluation / monitoring** systems are too general because the policies themselves are diffuse and not focused, they only capture the main activities of the R&I and HE national ecosystems and not specifically the implementation of inclusive research career measures; monitoring and evaluation are mostly developed under GEPs and as such addressing only the institutional and not the macro level. It is worth mentioning the case of Sweden, where gender balance in recruitment is monitored (an important but segmented part of a career), and Belgium Wallonia, which has a dedicated Observatory for Research and Scientific Careers and monitoring bodies.

More information on these mechanisms is detailed as follows:

Austria: The Austrian Research Financing Act (FoFinaG) provides for the **monitoring of the ten central institutions in Austria** on the basis of annual reports submitted to the National Council within the framework of the Austrian Research and Technology Report, which cover several issues such as: i) financing and third-party resources, ii) quality assurance and evaluations, iii) human resources and qualifications, iv) output, innovation, and excellence, v) internationalisation, vi) knowledge and technology transfer, vii) communication and interaction with society, and viii) **gender and the promotion of gender equality**;

Sweden: The government follows up recruitment procedures with a **yearly revision of targets, namely regarding the recruitment** women professors in different fields.

Belgium Wallonia: Plan Droit des femmes*:* the implementation of the Plan is supervised by a monitoring committee (*art. 8 of Décret relatif à l'intégration de la dimension de genre dans l'ensemble des politiques de la Communauté française*), made up of Administration, Offices of Ministries, public bodies, and civil society representatives. **The Observatory of Research and**

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Scientific Careers is also assisted by **an advisory board,** which is informed on the progress of the Observatory's projects and suggests improvements and potential developments. Each year, the Observatory is mandated to prepare: i) **a statement of work**, a **report that lists and details future projects; ii) an activity report to be submitted to the government.** An assessment of the Décret relatif à la lutte contre certaines formes de discrimination is planned.

Portugal: At the macro level, the implementation of ENIND is supported through a multi-level governance structure that relies upon committees and appointed counsellors across ministries responsible for the follow up of the measures and for regular reports. Several bodies in the remit of the Ministry for Science are part of this governance structure and **ensure the integration of the gender dimension in higher education and research** and in the **respective monitoring and definition of new Work Packages** and **measures**. A set of key performance indicators has been defined for this purpose.

A first approach to Intersectionality

Intersectionality – or the intersections of gender equality with other grounds of inequality and power relations - was addressed to some extent by the countries within Group A and B, these being the groups of countries that have research careers, respectively dedicated or broader, with a focus on gender: 5 countries out of 15 (Belgium Wallonia, Greece, Norway, Portugal and Spain).

Considering the novelty of the concept of intersectionality,[23] it is quite likely that just a few research career strategies or policies will have fully addressed it, in a tangible way and beyond a mere statement as a general principle, and not necessarily with a focus on careers but within the wider context of institutional change, or they may rely more on an additive than an intersectional approach (Figure 11). The European discussion on careers and the research assessment reform process may have triggered this concern in some countries, but it is still at a very preliminary stage.

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Dimensions	Countries where strategies include intersections of gender equality with other grounds of inequality and power relations*	
	Group A	Group B
Age	Norway	Greece, Portugal and Spain
Socio -economic status		Greece, Portugal
Inequality grounds in line with antidiscrimination directive (taken together)	Belgium – FWB	Greece
Gender Identity		Greece, Portugal
Sexual orientation /Religion / LGBTQIA+ / Ethnicity / Disability /		Greece, Portugal
Diversity	Belgium-FWB	
Descendants of immigrants	Norway	

Figure 11 - ***Intersections of gender equality with other grounds of inequality and power relations***

6.*2.2 Do these strategies/policies/policy instruments also include intersections of gender equality with other grounds of inequality and power relations?*

However, an explicit example is worth mentioning in the case of Spain, according to the recent Act 17/2022 that amends Act 14/2011 on Science, Technology and Innovation:[24] *In fact, the public bodies of the Science, Technology and Innovation System of Spain will put on the ground measures to promote and guarantee working environments that are diverse, inclusive and secure, besides egalitarian, in order to prevent and detect in an early stage and eradicate any form of direct or indirect discrimination, such as: measures to* ***streamline intersectionality*** *in the* ***design of the gender equality policies*** *in research and innovation, as well as in the content of research and knowledge transfer.*[25]

Intersectionality is also mentioned in ENIND - The National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2018–2030 Portugal + Igual (2018), a broad policy for gender equality that addresses research careers. There intersectionality is '*a premise in defining measures addressed to disadvantages that occur at the intersection of sex with other factors of discrimination, including, age, racial and ethnic origin, disability, nationality, sexual orientation, identity and expression of gender, and sexual characteristic*'. ENIND recognises '*targeted interventions to intersectional disadvantages, such as those suffered by migrant women belonging to ethnic minorities, refugees, disabled, alone with dependent descendants and elderly'.* Relevant

[24] *(Ley 17/2022, de 5 de septiembre, por la que se modifica la Ley 14/2011, de 1 de junio, de la Ciencia, la Tecnología y la Innovación):*

[25] *3. Los agentes públicos del Sistema Español de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación pondrán en marcha medidas para promover y garantizar entornos laborales diversos, inclusivos y seguros, además de igualitarios, y tomarán medidas para prevenir, detectar de forma temprana y erradicar cualquier discriminación directa o indirecta, tales como:*
a) *Medidas para integrar la interseccionalidad tanto en el diseño de las políticas de igualdad de género en la ciencia y la innovación como en el contenido de la investigación y en la transferencia del conocimiento.*

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measures in this regard include **support for the creation and implementation of GEPs and for advanced training in discrimination issues**~~, in particular~~ **intersectional issues**, in **HEIs**. However, this long-term umbrella strategy (2018-2030) for gender equality has not yet been fully translated into specific intersectional research career measures.

Inequality grounds and terminology

Regardless of whether there was an effective and established intersectional approach in place, the dimensions predominantly addressed within Groups A and B (by Belgium Wallonia, Greece, Portugal and Spain) ranged from age and socioeconomic status (more traditional grounds) to gender identity and the anti-discrimination directive (a 'catchall' category). Portugal and Greece specifically stated that they identified a broader spectrum of **inequality grounds** in their policies that extended to sexual orientation, religion, LGBTQIA+, and ethnicity.

As regards **terminology** (Figure 12), non-discrimination stands out as the most commonly used term in policies across all countries except for Norway. Given its comprehensiveness, this fact may indicate that policies are still too general and upstream from the specific dimensions typically associated with research careers along its 'value chain'. Countries also refer to inclusiveness / inclusion, equity / equality and diversity in their policies – and to intersectionality as well, as found in the policies of Belgium – FWB, Greece, and Portugal (Groups A and B). Further analysis of policy documents in addition to the survey results (ANNEXII) revealed Norway and Spain to be other frequent users of this term. Greece and Portugal emerge as having a more diverse and broader range of terminology on the grounds of inequality.

Terms most frequently used	Countries that indicated different grounds of inequality in their policies *	
	Group A	Group B
Non-Discrimination	Belgium – FWB	Greece, Spain and Portugal
Intersectionality	Belgium – FWB	Greece and Portugal
Inclusiveness / Inclusion		Greece and Portugal
Equity / equality	Norway	Greece and Portugal
Diversity	Norway	Greece
Gender + equality		Greece and Portugal
Representation		Portugal
Inclusive equality		

Figure 12 - ***Terms most frequently used in policies with other grounds of inequality and power relations***

6.5 Given that you have indicated different grounds of inequality covered in your policy, what are the terms most frequently used in your policies and initiatives on inclusive research careers?

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Research Assessment as a topic

Given the undue routing format [26]in the question on Research Assessment (*6.4.1 - Has Research assessment been a topic before the launch of the Reforming Research Assessment Initiative and under Action 3 of the European Research Area Policy Agenda?),* the countries in Groups A and B were the ones that mainly replied. As noted above, this is a limitation, since it is critical to know across all countries – with and without dedicated inclusive career policies - how they have progressed on such on a matter of such intrinsic importance to the development of research careers. Curiously, measures on research assessment do not seem to be among the top priorities of countries in Groups A and B see Figure 13 and Figure 8]), in spite of the acknowledged relevance of career progression. In fact, only three countries – Norway, Belgium Wallonia, and Greece – indicated having discussed the topic before the **Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment** and the **CoARA** processes, and only the first two of these three considered including/embedding gender equality and/or other grounds of discrimination among their research assessment criteria. As such, it is very unlikely that these concerns have already been translated into policies. However, it should be taken into account that these discussions were still being launched when national authorities and RFOs authorities submitted their survey responses.

Regarding previous discussions of assessment at the national level, a few examples could be highlighted:

Norway: The Strategy for the recruitment and career development of young researchers has been issued together with the '**Norwegian Career Assessment Matrix – NOR-CAM '**– a systematic framework and a toolbox for providing recognition and rewards in academic careers that was developed by **Universities Norway, on the basis of an evaluation of research careers. Six principles** were defined: create a better balance between quantitative and qualitative to measure quality and excellence; recognise diverse competencies as merits; assess all results, activities, and competencies in the light of the Open Science principles; practice **transparency in assessment and visibility of what should be recognised as merit; promote gender balance and diversity; assist the concrete practice of job vacancy announcements and assessment processes locally**. It also puts forward **four recommendations**: establish **a comprehensive framework for the assessment of academic careers; engage internationally** in developing a Norwegian **assessment model;** use **NOR CAM as a practical and flexible tool for assessing academic results, competences, and experience for academic personnel;** develop an automatic CV System that allows academics to retrieve data to document competencies and results in their own careers**.**

Belgium Wallonia: There are no overarching national measures, but there are individual/institutional initiatives of several universities and agencies. With regard to research assessment, there are a few regulations and procedures worth mentioning: the regulation ***'De l'organisation académique de l'Université'***, which contains provisions on the **composition of research evaluating[assessment] bodies,** targets for **representativeness** (**career stages** and **research fields)**; the regulation that governs **promotions** in **the teaching profession**, which states that the advisory and consultative bodies involved in this procedure **shall be sensitised to gender issues before starting their work;** and the *Regulations of the University Council for*

[26] Misguided sequential dependency of one response on another.

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Doctoral Training and the Doctorate (CUFDD), which ensures **a good representation of doctoral students and fields in the composition of the council.**

Overall, the responses indicate that practices rely on dedicated regulations (especially in Belgium - Wallonia, namely in universities and agencies) and assessment tools (the Norway matrix). As regards assessment, the dimensions gaining relevance are awareness raising and training and diversity in scientific committees and advisory and consultation bodies at the evaluator level – as well as a greater quantitative/qualitative balance in assessment. The valorisation of diverse careers paths and mobility over the number of publications is progressively being asserted.

In reference to the career 'value chain', valuing diverse career paths, profiles, activities, and outputs is likely to entail greater gender equality and inclusiveness. However, in no country – or very seldom – was gender equality/inequality claimed to be explicitly part of the assessment criteria themselves.

The Mapping of Policies and Terminology

In spite of their critical role in R&I and HE systems and the long-standing European discussion of the subject (see the section on Policy Background), research careers, which are understood '*as a new post-doctoral itinerary in the scope of R&I, attractive and that promotes the professional development and progressive endowment of competences, independency and scientific leadership, and that enables a stable integration in the Science, Technology and Innovation System*', are still not effectively embedded in policy, which at most addresses only parts of the full 'value chain'.

Furthermore, permeability to European discussions is circumscribed by the fact that sustainable (and inclusive) research careers are *par excellence* a sphere of national regulations and significantly depend on the national contexts of the R&I and HE systems and on national prioritisation, in particular budgetary prioritisation. and as such entailing broader acknowledgement and appropriation in the national agenda.

The continual increase in the number of researchers and teachers in the R&I and HE systems may have triggered an acute awareness of research career issues, and this awareness has also been prompted by dynamics within the system and the recent push to remove career obstacles.

General approach to policies:

This section addresses the project requirement for Task 2.2 – Inclusive Research Careers and is based on a thorough reading of all the supplied strategies and policy documents and additional information, combined with a selective and 'impressionist' collection of terminology.[27]

[27]The collection of terminology was done without using any data mining tools, but through an attentive reading of the texts, keeping in mind the context of the terms, but nevertheless subjective and thus 'impressionistic'.
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As noted above (Section 4.6 – Limitations), the survey considered a wide range of policy instruments to be valid, from strategies to policies, measures, and actions, the rationale being to capture all the available information on inclusive research careers, even if very preliminary or too circumscribed, and regardless of the policy level. As such, the interpretation of the direct results of the survey must take into account this great variety and/or **granularity** of primary information and should be supplemented with other information.

It is worth mentioning that, in general, the focus of policies depends on: i) the policy level – with strategies tending to be more overarching, while policies are more concrete, through action plans, and policy instruments are more circumscribed and more to the point; ii) the scope of the policy – whether it addresses the R&I and HE systems as a whole or is dedicated / specific to research careers This is also reflected in the type of terminology used, which in general policies tends to address the overall 'gender balance environment, or women representation' and, conversely, in dedicated policies tends to use more incisive/specific terminology that refers to components deeper within the career 'value chain'.

Thus, countries with specific strategies/policies tend to address career and inclusive subjects in greater depth and with more comprehensiveness and commitment, while promoting and not just addressing the issues, and as such they are likely to be considered 'more advanced'. However, dedicated policies on research careers may also be too focused on just specific parts of the career value chain (such as the early stages of a research career, recruitment, other). In turn, countries with a broader policy approach may also gain from addressing careers as part of a whole, while still retaining complexity and reaching further into several phases of the career 'value chain'.

In fact, very few countries replied to the question: '*are there national strategies/policies/measures in place specifically focused on research careers in higher education and research and innovation institutions in the country?'*, since most strategies and policies addressed the whole R&I system or HEIs. They therefore addressed other subjects such as building capacity, research and teaching excellence, knowledge transfer, funding mechanisms, cooperation and the institutional organisation of HEIs, and monitoring mechanisms. Therefore, most strategies and policies are not *specifically focused* but rather have *a focus or some focus* on research careers. Underlying factors could be the specific contexts of the different R&I and HE systems and/or the transversal nature of research and teaching careers per se, making it difficult to differentiate the policy and develop it autonomously. It could also be argued that despite how comprehensive and cross-cutting research career policies are, research careers might be more adequately addressed by a wider policy mix than just by a specific/dedicated policy.

Policies and terminology – a complementary overview:

A first mapping of the policies was presented in Section 5.1.1 (Existing policies on inclusive research careers) to support the clustering of groups and respective rationales based on the links provided on the survey and the desk research. The same section also presented an overview of] the main measures contained in those policies or of just single measures, based on the qualitative replies to the survey (Section An overview of inclusive measures).

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The present section aims to complement the first overview with a comparative cross-section analysis of existing policies by country / policy / group and of the most commonly used terminology both in reference to the 'research career value chain' – in order to portray the current situation regarding gender equality and inclusiveness and the main career challenges.

As noted above, some strategic documents / policy initiatives explicitly address research careers and promote GE and inclusiveness (Norway, Belgium Wallonia) and concentrate either on recruitment and development or on assessment processes (NORCAM, BE Observatoire) - **Group A.**

Group B contains countries that have a great diversity of policy documents, such as strategies on the R&I and HE systems that address inclusive research careers (Austria, Spain, Israel) or encompass the university system as a whole (Austria), or laws (Austria, Spain and Sweden) that include research careers and GE as a subject. Some policies address mainly gender equality horizontally in the R&I and HEIs landscape but still with links to research careers, such as parity in career stages and teaching positions (Portugal) or the participation of women in leading positions, the minimum representation threshold, and training in leadership (Greece).

Group C is made up of countries – Denmark and Poland – that have policies for the R&I and HE systems addressing research careers but do not have a focus on Gender Equality, and **Group D** contains countries that do not have a national strategy / policy / measure on research careers - being by definition diffuse or null on inclusive dimensions.

Concerns about gender balance, inclusiveness, and diversity are mostly overarching in character and they tend to exist more in parallel to research career considerations. In all cases, careers are dealt with in a fragmented way, and not in a full cycle way – and this also applies to inclusive research careers for bigger reasons.

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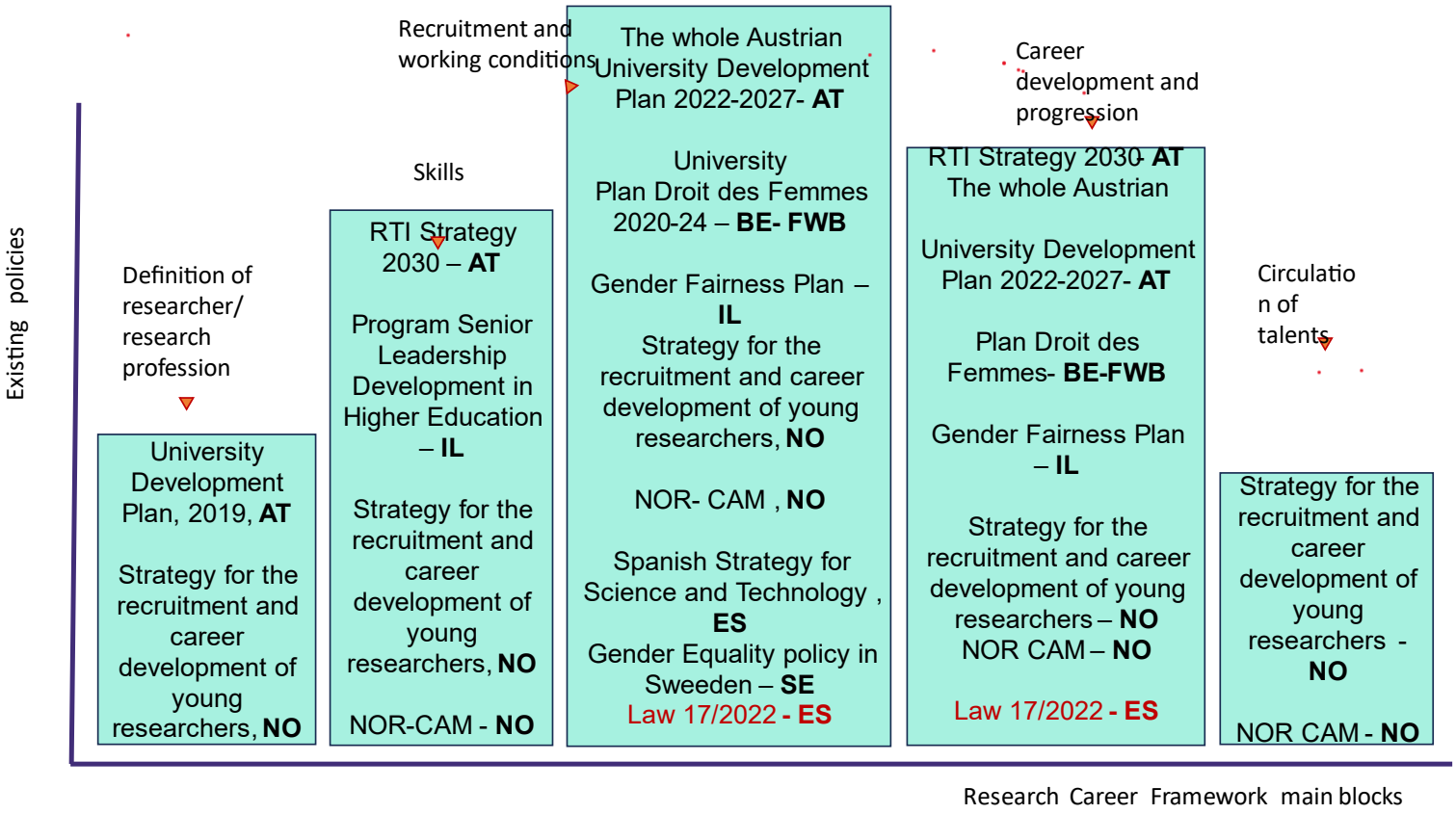

Figure 13 - ***Policies – Group A and Group B – Synthesis***

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Note on Figure 13: the several main blocks/components/ of the career value chain are on the horizontal axis and existing policies are on the vertical axis. Policies are included in each column whenever the subjects addressed are ones that are part of the corresponding components in the research career value chain. As a corollary, policies can integrate[encompass] several block components.

In an analysis of strategies and policies according to the career subjects they address (Figure 13), Norway stands out for dealing with the broadest spectrum of corresponding blocks/components in the value chain, followed by Austria, while Belgium Wallonia and Spain mainly concentrated on recruitment and working conditions and on career development and progression, which are in fact very important subjects for careers. Norway and Austria also focused on the issues of research profession, skills, and the circulation of talent (Norway).

The terminology used (Figure 14) reflects the above policy profile and most reflect the themes/issues of 'Recruitment and working conditions' and the 'Career development and progress' phases of the research career 'value chain':

- Concerns with work-life balance, parental leave, care obligations, temporary versus open-ended contracts, career concepts / models / tenure track,[28] precariat, career breaks/return to work, dual career services, compensation / salary, are very common across policies.
- Also terminology on assessment is frequently used, such as selection process / integrative culture / productivity criteria / recruitment culture / assessment and reward system / versatile assessment / excessive focus on competition / quantitative metrics / multiple competences / multiple results/ activities / transparent assessment / visibility of merit / automatic CV system / horizontal career / horizontal and vertical promotion / dual approach / assessment /unconscious biases / recognition / prestige.
- Some policy documents approach skills and competences as instrumental to the flexibility of careers and as facilitators of intersectoral, interdisciplinary, and international mobility (Austria, Norway), such as / transferability / transferable / breadth of competences / multiple competences / long-term competence.
- Circulation of talent is also addressed, mainly as an international dimension of a research career (Norway calls attention to the need to collaborate in the international arena in order to really improve the working conditions (for young researchers)] and assessment procedures and criteria.
- Less common terminology is that deals with the definition of a research profession, and with the lack of measures and recommendations on this issue (Figure 19 Cross Countries Recommendations).
- In addition, specifically oriented terminology on inclusive research careers was also collected (Figure 14, in red characters) such as: compatibility childcare in academic careers, representation of women & removing obstacles / versatile assessment versus strengthening diversity and gender equality / gender balance on recruitment patterns / inequalities of recruitment processes / balance in top academic positions / gender balance and diversity assessment processes / women's innovation and entrepreneurial skills.

[28] **Tenure track**: tenure track positions are fixed-term positions of six to seven years held by someone employed as a postdoctoral fellow or an associate professor. During a fixed-term contract, the employee has the opportunity to qualify for the position of a tenured associate professor or professor / ERA, EC, MS, and AC – Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for Researchers (Charter & Code) and the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) - Improving Working Conditions/Strategy for the Recruitment and Career Development of Young Researchers of Norway (page 9, § 2).

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- Concerns with work life balance, parental leaves, care obligations, temporary versus open ended contracts, career concepts/models / tenure track[29], precariat, career breaks/return to work, dual career services, compensation / salary, are very common across policies.
- Also terminology on assessment is frequently used, such as selection process / integrative culture/ productivity criteria /recruitment culture / assessment and reward system / versatile assessment / excessive focus on competition / quantitative metrics / multiple competences / multiple results/ activities / transparent assessment / visibility of merit / automatic CV system / horizontal career / horizontal and vertical promotion /dual approach / assessment / unconscious biases /recognition /prestige.
- Some policy documents approach skills and competences as instrumental to the flexibility of careers, and enablers of intersectoral, interdisciplinary and international mobility (Austria, Norway), such as / transferability / transferable / breadth of competences / multiple competences / long-term competence.
- Circulation of talents is also addressed, mainly as an international dimension of research career (Norway, calling attention to the need to articulate in the international arena to improve the working conditions [for young researchers], assessment procedures and criteria, as well.
- Terminology is less common, regarding the definition of research profession, in coherence with the lack of measures and recommendations on this issue (Figure 19 Cross Countries Recommendations).
- In addition, specifically oriented terminology on inclusive research careers could be collected, (Figure 14, in red characters) such as: compatibility childcare in academic careers, representation of women & removing obstacles / versatile assessment versus strengthening *diversity and gender equality / gender balance* on recruitment patterns / *inequalities* of recruitment processes / *balance* in top academic positions / gender balance and diversity assessment processes / women innovation and entrepreneurial skills.

[29] **Tenure track**: tenure track positions are fixed term positions of six to seven years held by someone employed as postdoctoral fellow or an associate professor. During the fixed term contract, the employee has the opportunity to qualify for the position a tenured associate professor or professor position / ERA, EC, MS and AC-Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for Researchers (Charter & Code) and the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) - improving Working Conditions/ Strategy for the Recruitment and Career Development of YoungR esearchers of Norway, page 9, § 2.

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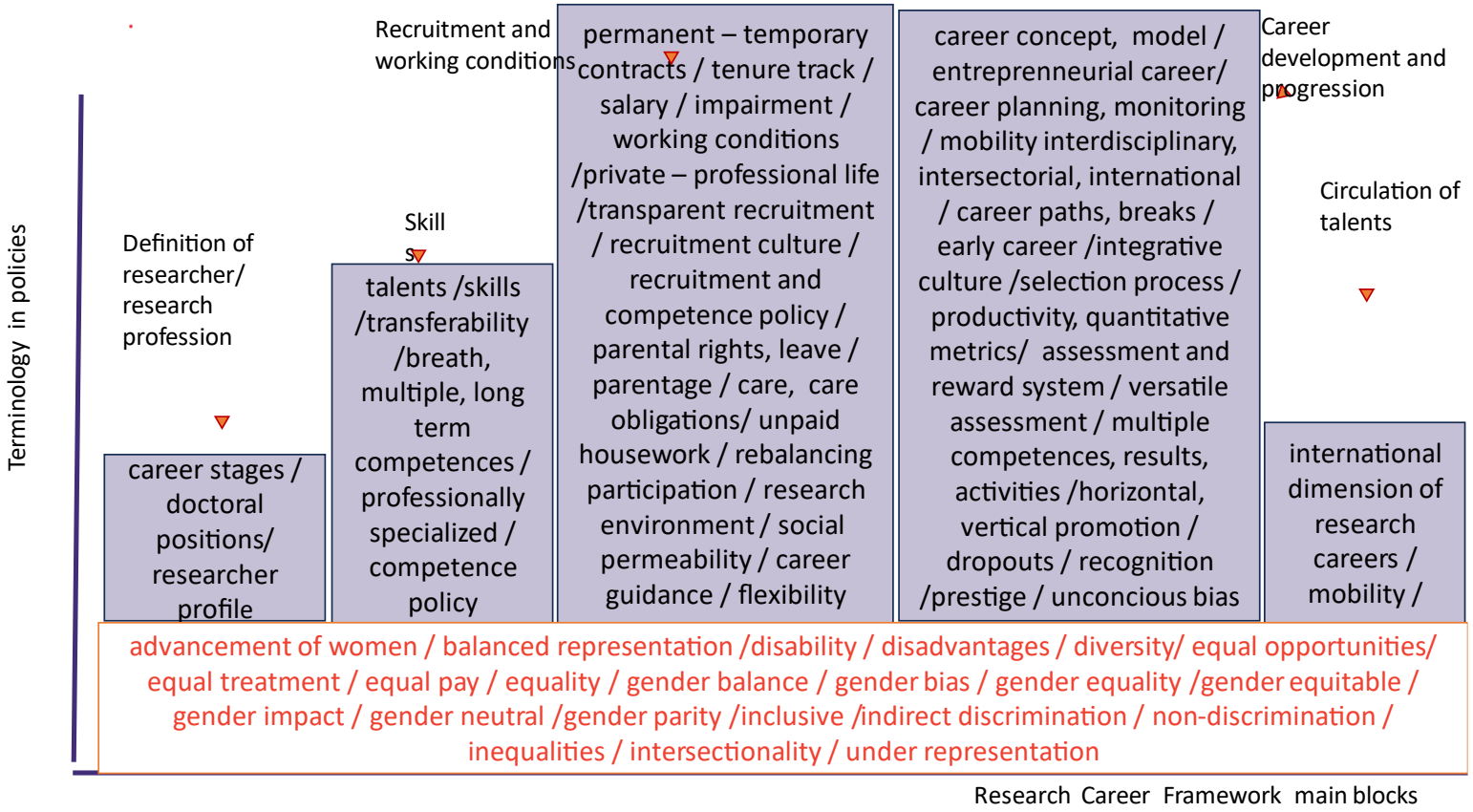

Figure 14 - ***Terminology – Group A and Group B - Synthesis***

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Note on Figure 14: in the horizontal axis the several career value chain main blocks are distinguished and in the vertical the collected terminology, which was included in each column whenever addressing the subjects that are part of the corresponding research career value chain component.

All in all, terminology has some degree of variety across countries and across policy documents, which is due in part to contextual factors, but not so much to the very nature / scope / specificity of the identified problems. In other words, despite the different contexts, terminology seems to reflect the same main blocks of components. Notably underlying the most frequently used terminology is the principle of 'non-discrimination', the intertwined values of equity ('equity/equality', 'equal access', 'equal opportunities'), and diversity and inclusion (EDI).

Figures 13 and 14 provide a synthetical overview. For a complete mapping and more information, see ANNEX II, Figures 39 to 48.

Social security as a mechanism for inclusiveness

This section aims to address the role of social security while promoting fairer working conditions in the research and higher education systems and the respective direct and indirect gender impacts. These impacts may be inferred by analysing the social security incidence/coverage across research/teaching positions (regarding permanent versus temporary contracts) and PhD students on fellowships and across diverse selected situations in the research labour market.

Among all 15 countries (Figure 15) and all Groups, two-thirds **claimed to have differences in the social security coverage** across types of research positions (permanent or temporary) and for PhD students on fellowships (such as Belgium Wallonia and Norway in Group A; and Greece, Israel, Portugal, and Spain in Group B; Denmark and Poland in Group C; and Czech Republic and Ireland in Group D). Conversely, 6 countries indicated having **no differences** in social security coverage (Austria and Sweden in Group B and Belgium Flanders, Lithuania, and Croatia in Group D).

A first inference from this is that **there is no clear correlation between the adequate social security coverage and the existence of policies on research careers. In fact, gaps in coverage may persist in countries that have dedicated or broadly conceived strategies and policies on research careers with a focus on inclusiveness**, while they may not exist in countries with no career policies, such as Belgium Flanders.

Indeed, on the one hand social security systems are widely anchored to general regulations in society and the labour market and are not directly linked to the specific divides in research careers. On the other, existing research careers strategies and policies have not efficiently addressed these issues, to the point where this has impacted the social security system as a whole. Another inference is that countries with more advanced general social security systems tend to embrace more diverse situations and further integrate more marginal cases.

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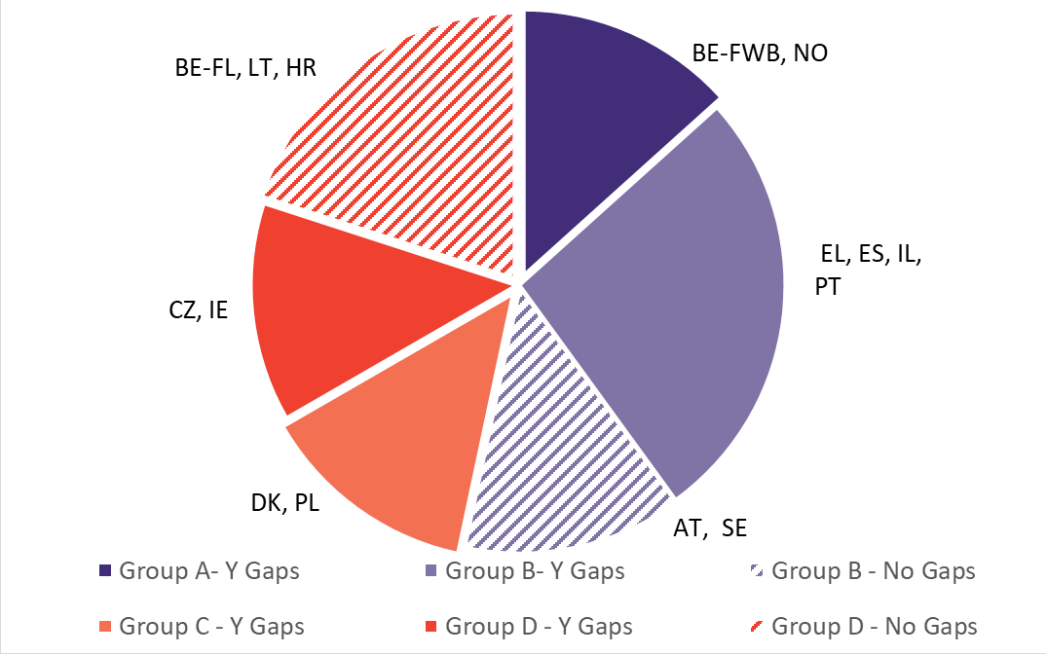

Figure 15 - ***Social security coverage – gaps***

6.7 Is there a difference in the social security coverage in your country between different types of researcher positions (permanent or temporary) and PhD students on fellowships, in the following situations?

Overall, illness is the most common situation across countries where gaps in social security coverage can be found (8 countries in 15), followed by retirement, unemployment, and maternity/parental and post-maternity leaves (6 countries). Greece is apparently the country with the greatest range of divides on social security coverage, followed by Israel, Ireland, and the Czech Republic (Figure 16).

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Gaps in Social Security Coverage	Countries with a gap - Total	Group A&B	Groups C&D
Illness	8 countries	Belgium Wallonia, Greece, Israel, Portugal	Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland Poland
Maternity and parental leave	6 countries	Belgium Wallonia, Greece, Israel	Czech Republic, Ireland, Poland
Retirement	6 countries	Greece, Israel, Portugal	Czech Republic, Ireland, Poland
Unemployment	6 countries	Greece, Israel, Norway Portugal	Czech Republic, Ireland
Work-life balance	1 country	Greece	
Other. Reduced working hours	1 country	Spain	

Figure 16 - ***– Situations linked to gaps in social security coverage***

6.7.1 – If yes, tick all that apply

More qualitative data provides deeper insight from which we can infer the following: having or not having an employment permanent contract has a huge impact on a person's contributory profile/pathway.[30] Without a permanent contract, social security has to be supported by the beneficiaires through health insurance, on a voluntary basis, and the level of contribution payments (which tend to be low)] significantly affect current and future social benefits. Researchers at the beginning of their careers, without a contract, and PhD students with a fellowship are very often (typically) subject to the same pattern of social security coverage: they have no benefits across most situations (unemployment, illness, parental leave, and retirement). No mandatory taxes on scholarships mean that there are also no social security benefits in most of the countries.

This pattern may be showcased as follows across Groups:

Group A and B - Dedicated or more broadly conceived policies on research careers with a focus on gender equality

Belgium Wallonia: Doctoral and post-doctoral fellows, both Belgians and EU nationals (or nationals of a country with an effective treaty with BE on social security) are covered the same way. Foreign fellows only have coverage in the case of work accidents and sickness/disability coverage (health care and idemnity).

[30] Contributory profile/pathway: The contribution period or insurance period translates into the total amount of contributions paid to the social security system by employees over the course of their working life.

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Spain: A PhD position requires a full-time contract (not a fellowship), which means that while other researcher positions allow part-time/reduced working hours, this is not possible on a PhD contract.

Greece: There are differences in coverage between different types of researcher positions in both the private and public sectors that are determined by the employment relationship.

Israel: There are no sick days, no unemployment allowances, and no same access to pensions; **parental leaves** for PhD students mirror the leaves for salaried women, but cannot be split between the two parents; women on the academic track **retire at an earlier age** and consequently have reduced **pensions**.

Norway: There are no benefits for PhDs since they are not taxpayers.

Portugal: For a PhD with a fellowship (or a researcher with a fellowship) it is not mandatory to pay social security contributions and therefore support for **retirement** depends on some voluntary retirement plan and therefore remains uncertain. In the case **of parental leaves,** any PhD is allowed social security support, regardless of their contribution status, as the research funding agency (FCT) ensures the full payment of the fellowship throughout the leave period – a specific coverage not common in the other country cases.

Group C and D – Policies on research careers with no focus on gender equality and no policies on research careers

Czech Republic: PhD candidates and scientists at the beginning of their career and those without an employent contract are **not eligible for sick leave** under **a certain amount of income**; PhD candidates are not eligible for **maternity and paternity leave,** since they are **state-insured and not health insurance payers** – and these leaves are tied to health insurance as part of social security coverage; they are, however, eligible for parental leave. Researchers at the beginning of their careers do not meet the criterion for **maternity/paternity** pay, as they do not meet the **minimum health insurance payment period** or they don´t have an employment contract (and therefore they don't have health insurance coverage or coverage is possible only from a certain income level that they do not reach); further gender segmentation stems from the fact that low salaries implicate eligibility only for the long leave options (and not the short two-year leave option); **retirement pensions** are tied to the **number of years** a person worked before retirement, to the **amount of income**, and, in the case of women, to the number **of children raised** (which shortens the number of years a person has to work before retiring and raises the retirement pension, but only slightly); scientists without an employment contract and with different types of contracts and low income **are eligible for a lower retirement pension.**

Denmark: There are limits on how long a PhD's project / employment can be extended in the case of prolonged **illness**.

Ireland: PhD researchers are regarded as **students rather than employees,** so they have a different status from researchers.

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Poland: Under specific contracts a worker is not covered by health insurance, so the worker has to support it through a voluntarily purchase of health insurance.

All in all:

Regardless of existing policies on research careers with a focus on gender equality, gender discrimination still prevails given the social security coverage gaps across situations in the research labour market (with Czech Republic apparently the most representative example of this). Issues were raised, such as the care burden, which is often entirely assumed by women, since in some social security systems **parental leave cannot be shared by partners due to the absence of co-responsibility in social practices**; there is still a risk of the perpetuation of the gender gap in pensions given the existing salary gaps and the shorter contributory patterns/pathways of women (as in Israel); the indirect discrimination underlying patterns of absenteeism for PhD fellows, discriminating women (Denmark); the impact of **sick leaves** and reduced research activities on employment opportunities and on social protection (Spain).

It seems paramount that a more inclusive social security support system must be designed in order to effectively prevent nondiscrimination across working situations and researchers statuses and to avoid deepening gender inequalities. Yet, it is worth noting the absence of consideration given to the possibility of social security portability – across sectors and across countries.

Current debates on social security are pointing to a broadening of the right to parental leaves and extending it to fellows in Wallonia Belgium and involving universities and unions; and to HEIs dilemmas focused on restrictive laws on residence permits while recruiting foreigh PhD students (through the unions' representatives – Sulf, the SE Association for Universities, SUHF). Ireland is also carrying out a national review of state supports for PhD researchers, namely the adequacy, consistency, and equity of current arrangements across research funders and higher education institutions, including equity and welfare considerations, visa requirements, and duration for non-EU students.

Obstacles to the development of policies

The main obstacles with a **cultural** dimension to the development of policies (Figure 17) are a 'lack of political and societal awareness', followed by 'prevalent masculine notions about the research profession' and, to a lesser extent, the situation where such policies are 'still under preliminary debate' and are 'not yet on the national agenda'. This is a common pattern across all groups of countries regardless of whether they have specific or broad policies on inclusive research careers or no policies addressing inclusive research careers at all (Groups A & B and Groups C & D, respectively). Obstacles with a more **institutional** dimension were mostly observed in the countries in Groups C & D and they included a 'lack of a unified understanding of underlying notions' and 'uncertainty about the **terminology to be used**'. Only one country indicated a 'lack of gender equality structures' and a lack of 'gender disaggregated data' as obstacles. However, it should be noted that two countries suggested other obstacles and four countries mentioned that none of the identified obstacles applied in their case.

The main obstacles identified (Figure 17) that have a **cultural** dimension, consist of the "lack of political and societal awareness", followed by the "prevalent masculine notions about the research

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profession", and to a lesser extent, "still under preliminary debates" and " not yet on the national agenda". This reflects a common pattern across all groups of countries regardless of having specific or broad policies on inclusive research careers or no policies addressing inclusive research careers at all (A & B groups and C & D respectively). Obstacles with a more **institutional** dimension, were mostly observed in countries of Groups C & D, such as "the lack of unified understanding of underlying notions" and "uncertainty about the **terminology to be used"**. Only one country signaled "lack of gender equality structures" and of "gender desagregated data". However, it should be noted that two countries suggested other obstacles and four countries mentionned that none of the identified obstacles apllied in their case.

Dimensions / Obstaces in developing measures on gender inclusive careers	National relevant authorities	
	Group A & B	Group C & D
INSTITUTIONAL DIMENSION		
Lack of unified understanding of the underlying concept	1 country	3 countries
Uncertainty about terminology to be used		2 countries
Budgetary constraints	2 countries	
Lack of gender equality structures	1 country	
CULTURAL DIMENSION		
Lack of political / societal awareness	3 countries	2 countries
Prevalent masculine notions about the research profession	2 countries	2 countries
Still under preliminary debate	1 country	2 countries
Not yet on the national agenda	1 country	1 country
Lack of gender disaggregated data		1 country
OTHER		
None of the above	3 countries	1 country
Other	1 country	1 country

Figure 17 - ***Obstacles to the development of policies / policy initiatives and actions on inclusive research careers – all groups***

*6.9 Has your ministry or any other relevant national/regional authority faced any of the following obstacles in developing policies/policy initiatives and actions on gender-inclusive research careers**?***

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Other initiatives needed to raise the issue

All the initiatives for raising awareness identified seem relevant to the countries. Awareness-raising initiatives aimed at advancing the national legal framework appear to be the most common and impactful for getting inclusive research careers on the agenda, while least common are initiatives prompted by EC guidelines, (respectively 11 and 8 countries out of 15). The distribution pattern is quite even across countries and groups, apparently with no comparative gaps as regards appointed initiatives (Figure 18).

Initiatives to raise the issue	Relevant national authorities		
	Total	Group A & B	Group C & D
Advancing national legal framework	11 countries	Austria, Belgium Wallonia, Greece, Spain, Israel, Portugal,	Czech Republic, Croatia, Ireland, Lithuania, Poland
Financial incentives and support	9 countries	Belgium Wallonia, Greece, Spain, Israel, Norway, Portugal	Croatia, Ireland, Lithuania,
Mutual learning initiatives	9 countries	Austria, Belgium Wallonia, Greece, Israel, Norway, Portugal -	Belgium Flanders, Croatia, Denmark
Clear guidelines from EC	8 countries	Austria, Belgium Wallonia, Greece, Israel, Norway ,	Croatia, Lithuania, Poland

Figure 18 - - ***Initiatives to raise awareness of the issue on the national and European agendas***

6.10: What initiatives are needed to raise the issue on the national and the European agenda?

Sweden suggested other topics through which to raise the issue: addressing concerns about mobility and internationalisation and gender equality as a 'critical combination' of issues due to the consequences of the experience of GBV among mobile researchers (and students), which are more severe than for other national researchers (and students). Financial and systemic support is also needed, together with a general review of the relevant social security systems and the importance of establishing active social networks for mobile researchers (and students).

The social context for setting the agenda was an interesting key factor for success in the implementation of policies and measures mentioned by Portugal: an increased critical mass of women researchers and PhDs in the system is generating bottom-up movements and tensions from within, increasing the visibility of research careers versus family life conflicts, such as an overload of unpaid care work, increasingly unequal working conditions, and strong competition for jobs.

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Recommendations to promote the design and implementation of inclusive research careers

Some countries have suggested recommendations to make research careers more inclusive across all groups, regardless of whether or not there are strategies/policies and measures already in place. These recommendations are outlined below:

Group A and B – Dedicated or more broadly conceived policies on research careers with a focus on gender equality

Belgium Wallonia : Notice of the "Women and Sciences Committee / Avis du Comité Femmes et Sciences

To the Government:

- Increase the **presence of women** in the different phases of the career, supported through 'cascade'[31] type measures;
- Fight all **forms of harassment** in the research environment ('recruitment and working conditions);
- Introduce a **gender equality criterion** in research funding sources earmarked to universities ('career development and progression').

To the universities and / or RFOs:

- **Work-life conciliation[balance]** through daycare, flexible schedules, and personnel occupation ('recruitment and working conditions');
- **De-gendering assessment** and **the scientific concept of excellence** (which is based on publications and neglects other research results and academic missions) ('career development and progression');
- Analysing **institutional relations** on **gender equality** in order to:
  - Develop **specific approaches** to **fields with bigger gender imbalances**;
  - Set **correction norms for career breaks** in the recruitment, promotion, and assessment processes (accounting for **maternity/paternity leaves**, **co-parenthood, adoption** and **parental leaves**) ('recruitment and working conditions);
  - Propose **scholarships** of at least two years **for those with a temporary break** for **personal reasons (family**, **care responsibilities, health** problems) ('recruitment and working conditions');
  - Sensitise **members of decision bodies** about **gender bias** (management and administrative staff of faculty bodies and research units, members of recruitment, promotion, and assessment commissions) ('career development and progression');

[31] The cascade model is now well established as a tool for setting targets to achieve equality between women and men at all relevant career stages in science and research. The basic idea behind the cascade model is that the target for the proportion of women at a higher career level is based on the proportion of women at the career level below.

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- Favour **gender mainstreaming** and **gender budgeting** in all **policies** in research (decentralised '**gender cells**');
- Systematically question **gender variables** (a **socio-cultural construction) and sex** (**biological**) **in research content** with an **intersectional**;
- Fund **research on gender-based violence** in HE and research institutions through specific calls ('recruitment and working conditions').

Sweden:

- **Establish regular and more detailed gender disaggregated data** – and do so, if possible, with **an intersectional lens** – on different cohorts in the HE system to measure and monitor the progress in research careers over time;
- Create **stronger incentives for early career researchers** from **under-represented groups/minorities** by means of **strategic and directed research funding** targeting subject areas relevant in which these groups are over-represented.

Portugal:

- **Tackle factors behind the discouragement of women** from research careers and women **dropping out of research careers**,
- Develop **research assessment** on the basis of the **Assessment Reform discussion** and move to more qualitative criteria, specifically taking into account diverse career paths and discontinuities associated with gender ('career development and progression').
- **Deepen knowledge about the causes of the 'glass ceiling'**;
- **Involve other stakeholders** in **designing careers** (such as associations of women researchers and higher education unions);
- Further **encourage women's interest in STEM** areas ('skills').

Group C and D – Policies on research careers with no focus on gender equality and no policies on research careers

Denmark:

- Introduce (national or European) requirements for **rigorous recruitment procedures** based on **clear and transparent criteria** and **include a systematic focus on equality and diversity** ('recruitment and working conditions').

Poland:

- **Give more focus and support** to **talent development** (**mentoring schemes)**;
- Support **early-career researchers**, especially **early-career women researchers,** to prevent **dropouts from science**;
- Promote and implement **open and transparent recruitment** ('recruitment and working conditions');

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- **Provide better recognition and an award system for different career paths**, value **other forms of excellence** in **teaching or societal engagement, support the diversification of career paths** helping to better **recognise the diverse pool** of **talent** present in the HE and research sector;
- Support **solutions to reconcile research work with family and private life** and create family-friendly working environments (‘recruitment and working conditions’);
- **Recognise and promote sensitivity to gender balance** in **career accession and progression** (‘career development and progression’).
- **Target solutions to different family situations** (childcare, elderly care, non-linear careers etc.) (´recruitment and working conditions’);
- **Support discussions and cooperation between the national authority and RFOs** for better addressing this topic.

Recommendations across countries (Figure 19) largely converge on the development of skills (talent, STEM), recruitment and working conditions (clear and transparent recruitment, support for early careers and a work-life balance, maternity/paternity/parental career breaks/support for temporary breaks), and career development and progression (an award system valuing different career paths, results, and talents, sensitising members of recruitment, promotion, and assessment committees to gender bias) along the career ‘value chain’. It is also worth mentioning the lack of recommendations on recognition and the research profession and the few recommendations on the circulation of talents

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	Recognition and Research Profession	Skills	Recruitment and working conditions	Career development and progression	Circulation of talents
Research career "value chain"		Talent development / Women in STEM areas	Open and transparent recruitment / systematic focus on equality and diversity supporting early career researchers, esp. women /prevent dropouts supporting under represented groups /minorities by strategic and direct funding Work-life balance (care, flexible schedules)/ correcting norm for career breaks / scholarships for temporary breaks fighting GBV /	Recognition & award system for diferent career paths /diverse talent pools / degendering assessment /valueing research results, other academic missions / sensitizing on gender bias, recruitment, promotion and assessment/ Increasing women presence in different career phases/ deepening glass ceiling causes	Fighting GBV
Support Actions	Gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting Gender equality criterion for universities research funding National authorities and RFOs cooperation / Other stakeholders involvement Gender disaggregated data / Gender and intersectional perspective in research content				

Figure 19 - ´ ***Policy recommendations across countries***

6.11. Based on your experience, what recommendations could you provide at the national level to promote the design and implementation of gender inclusive research careers?

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5.2 RESEARCH FUNDING ORGANISATIONS

5.2.1 An introduction

Inclusiveness is the cornerstone for a renewed way of creating and accessing knowledge. Research funding agencies are central to this critical transformation that is necessary to increase the results and impacts of science and, consequently, improve the common good. Fostering diversity and equity in scientific activities, in particular in the realm of research careers, is the responsibility of these organisations, especially if they are public institutions.

In its Position Statement, *A Values Framework for the Organisation of Research*, published in 2022, Science Europe considered inclusion to be one of the six essential values for a positive research culture, including in institutions. This value appears intrinsically linked to two other values: equality and diversity. The connection between these three values is so strong that it is reflected in one expression: equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). Metaphorically speaking, these values are like the three sides of a triangle. The EDI concept has been widely adopted and Science Europe is no exception.

Science Europe presents the following definition of EDI: it is a value that *ensures that all roles within the research community are accessible and accommodating to all, regardless of sex and gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, class, faith and other possible factors. It highlights the importance of supporting a diversity of social categories, experiences, competencies, and merits of individuals within the research community as well as the research inputs (methods, data, tools) and outputs (communication and dissemination types) that contribute to the research process and the organisational structures that govern them. These should be accessible to any individual, research unit, discipline, or organisation within the research community and beyond.*

Adopting the point of view of Science Europe, inclusiveness in research careers means opening these careers to all, *regardless of sex and gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, class, faith and other possible factors.* Pursuing this goal is a necessary condition for inclusive and, therefore, fair national research systems across Europe. Gender has been a priority in R&D policies. However, without losing the progress achieved and continuing this path, other inequality grounds must be considered.

This chapter of the benchmarking report considers the answers given by twenty research funding organisations to section 5 of the benchmark survey, entitled *Inclusive research careers*. At a later stage, the information provided by Croatia under the section *National Authorities* was moved to this section since it has an RFO scope. Through an exploration of the RFOs' responses, this analysis endeavours to clarify the state of the action taken by RFOs on inclusiveness in research careers and dissect the facilitators that promote progress or the barriers that impede better developments. The goal is to map current and emerging institutional strategies and policies, or gaps, relating to this issue in order to develop policy recommendations.

First, section 5, '*Inclusive research careers',* reveals a clear demarcation between two groups of RFOs, which we call Group A and Group B. The cleavage is defined by the answers that were given to the second and fourth questions: '5.2 *Are there strategies/policies/policy measures addressing research careers in higher education and research institutions at your RFO?'* and '5.4

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Do these strategies/policies/policy measures promote gender equality (as programmes of support, for example)?'

The RFOs with the following characteristics belong to Group A: ten RFOs with some strategy, policy, or measure addressing research careers (5.2=Yes) and promoting gender equality (5.4=Yes); and the Irish Research Council (IRC) with some strategy, policy, or measure addressing research careers (5.2=Yes) but not promoting gender equality (5.4=No). The IRC was included in Group A even though this RFO answered 'no' to question 5.4 because the IRC published its first Gender Strategy and Action Plan in 2013, which focused on two main issues: addressing gender equality in research careers and promoting the inclusion of the sex/gender dimension in research. In 2020, the IRC commissioned two institutions to assess the developments that had occurred in this area and recommendations were made for the following years (see detailed information on Annex V).

Group B contains the other ten RFOs that have some strategy, policy, or measure addressing research careers (5.2=Yes) but not promoting gender equality (5.4=No) or have no strategy, policy, or measure addressing research careers (5.2=No) (Figures 20 and 21). The information provided by the Research Council of Lithuania was replaced by the information provided by Lithuania under the *National Authorities* section since it has an RFO scope.

In the following two sections, we analyse these groups separately.

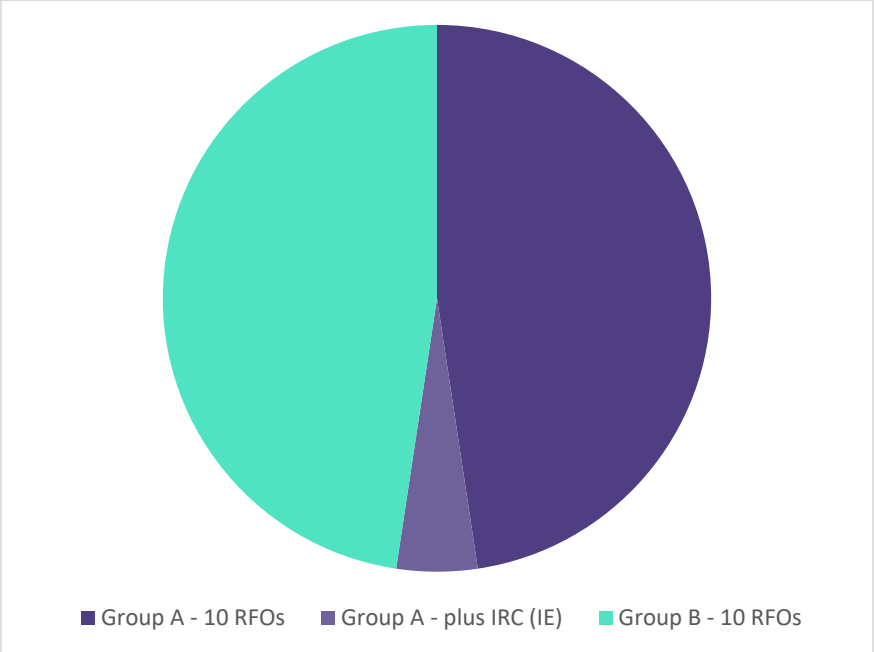

Figure 20 - ***The quasi-equal distribution of respondents in Groups A and B***

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COUNTRY	ACRONYM	NAME RFO	GROUP
Belgium FWB	F.R.S.-FNRS	Fund for Scientific Research	A
Belgium-Flanders	FWO	Research Foundation - Flanders	A
Czech Republic	TACR	Technology Agency of the Czech Republic	A
Denmark	DFF	Independent Research Fund Denmark	A
Estonia	ETAG	Estonian Research Council	A
Ireland	IRC	Irish Research Council	A
Malta	MCST	Malta Council for Science and Technology	A
Norway	RCN	Research Council of Norway	A
Poland	NCN	National Science Centre	A
Portugal	FCT	Foundation for Science and Technology	A
Sweden	Forte	Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare	A
Turkey	TÜBITAK	Scientific and Technological Research Council	B
Bulgaria	BNSF	Bulgarian National Science Fund	B
Croatia	HRZZ	Croatian Science Foundation	B
Cyprus	RIF	Research and Innovation Foundation	B
Italy	FRRB	Regional Foundation for Biomedical Research	B
Lithuania	RCL	Research Council of Lithuania	B
Poland	NCRD	National Centre for Research and Development	B
Romania	UEFISCDI	Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding	B
Spain	AEI	State Research Agency	B
Sweden	Vinnova	Swedish Agency for Innovation Systems	B

Figure 21 - ***A list of respondents and their distribution by groups***

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5.2.2 Group A – RFOs with some strategy, policy, or measure addressing research careers and with a focus on gender equality

Characterisation

Since the basis of question 5.2 is a set of options covering a broad spectrum of situations, ranging from a simple measure to an institutional policy or strategy addressing research careers, Group A may contain a heterogeneous group of RFOs. Throughout section 5.2, we will delve more deeply into the knowledge of the organisations of Group A by analysing other sources besides the survey. Gathering more systematised information is an additional way of helping to understand the diversity of institutional profiles, map policies and terminology, and identify good practices for thinking about future actions.

We list three complementary questions for the characterisation of Group A: '5.10 *Is attention to inclusive research careers policies or strategies a recent development (less than three years) or an established area of work in your institution (more than three years)?*'; '5.11 *Are these policies/policy instruments/programmes of support already implemented?*' and '*5.11.1 Is monitoring of these instruments in place, through any kind of evaluation process?*'.

Observing Group A, we see that eight RFOs have made attention to inclusive research careers an established area of their activities (for more than three dedicated years). Consistent with this, the same RFOs indicate having implemented some related action regarding gender equality. These organisations are:

- ✓ DFF - Independent Research Fund Denmark (Denmark),
- ✓ ETAG - Estonian Research Council (Estonia),
- ✓ FCT - Foundation for Science and Technology (Portugal),
- ✓ FNRS - Fund for Scientific Research (Belgium FWB),
- ✓ Forte - Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare (Sweden),
- ✓ FWO - Research Foundation – Flanders (Belgium-Flanders),
- ✓ NCN - National Science Centre (Poland), and
- ✓ TACR - Technology Agency of the Czech Republic (Czech Republic).

Only one of these organisations has no mechanism in place to monitor these actions: DFF - Independent Research Fund Denmark.

Two other organisations indicate that attention to inclusive research careers is a recent development of their activities:

- ✓ MCST - Malta Council for Science and Technology (Malta), and
- ✓ RCN - Research Council of Norway (Norway).

We can add that both have implemented some measures. However, the Malta Council for Science and Technology (MCST) answered 'no' to 5.11, but this RFO indicated a measure implemented at another point of the survey (5.9).

Finally, as already explained, we have a last but not least RFO:

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- ✓ IRC - Irish Research Council (Ireland).

The consultation on its website, detailed in Annex V, confirmed this classification. However, because the IRC answered 'no' to question 5.4, it did not always answer the same questions as the other ten RFOs in Group A, namely the above-mentioned complementary questions (due to the sequential dependency of the questions in the survey).

In Group A, only TACR has measures with an intersectional perspective (5.6). Intersectionality is approached through the former funding programme ZÉTA and now through SIGMA for 2022-2027, which addressed gender equality through support for young researchers and early career researchers).

TACR (CZ)

5.6 Do these strategies / policies / policy measures have an intersectional perspective?

The intersectional perspective is implicit; however, it is behind both the measures implemented in the past and those suggested for the future.

In the past (2017-2020, when the last call for proposals took place), TACR had a funding programme called ZÉTA. This probably does not qualify as a policy or strategy, but the programme document approved by the government, which defines the basic parameters for individual calls for proposals, formulated as the main objective support for 'young researchers', and as a sub-objective the promotion of equal opportunities for men and women in the development of their career paths. In the programme document itself, young researchers are defined by age (up to 35 years). However, in the later stages, when individual calls for proposals were launched, there was an effort to make the definition more inclusive - to work with the junior status of researchers regardless of their biological age. In general, the dual focus of the programme was informed by the fact that a significant proportion of women quit their research careers at the doctoral and postdoctoral stages. In the Czech Republic, this effect is particularly strong, mainly due to the long parental leave, to which there are only limited alternatives (due to the insufficient capacity of care facilities for children under 3 years of age that are financially affordable). The measure (which is not described in the programme document itself) was based on the bonus points for gender-mixed research teams and projects with a female principal investigator in the evaluation stage (however, in addition to the gender composition of the teams, the evaluation of this criterion also considered the distribution of roles and responsibilities within the team).

Currently, TACR has a new framework programme called SIGMA, in which public calls with a similar focus will be announced in the years 2022–2027. One of the five sub-goals of this framework programme, as formulated in the document establishing the goals of the programme (p. 5), is: 'to increase the involvement of starting researchers and equalise opportunities for women and men in the competition of applied research'.

At the same time, TACR´s Gender Equality Plan for 2022–2025 formulates several measures addressing the specific situation of researchers with care responsibilities (mostly women in the Czech Republic). Here, the age axis is considered implicitly. But as described above, this focus is of key importance to make research careers more gender-inclusive in the Czech Republic.

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Gender-sensitive actions

To characterise the actions that ten RFOs of Group A have been implementing to promote gender-inclusive research careers (without IRC), we use figures 22, 23, and 24, respectively, giving visibility to:

- gender-sensitive actions (typology) by number of RFOs,

- gender-sensitive actions (typology) by specific RFO, and

- RFOs by the number of gender-sensitive actions (typology).

Regarding the gender sensitive-actions (typology) by the number of RFOs that identified them (Figure 22), the three most frequent options are about research assessment processes (considering the aforementioned Research Career 'Value Chain', a focus on the topic 'Career development progression'), particularly in relation to peer review panels, which accounted for 53% of the responses (each RFO chose the appropriate options for its case, as we can see in Figure 23).

Following the analysis of the number of occurrences per chosen option, from the highest to the lowest, two concerns emerge: international mobility (a priority of European policy that is no longer recent) and the employability of researchers (a severe current problem).

The other options, directly linked to positive discrimination (gender balance in funding schemes, rewards like 'Women in Research', and return grants for parents), were not the most selected, with only 22% of responses. However, this trend is also visible in the two responses that selected the option 'Other': that of the FWO, an initiative that goes beyond gender, and that of the TACR, which, valuing both motherhood and parenthood, promotes gender equality and equal opportunities.

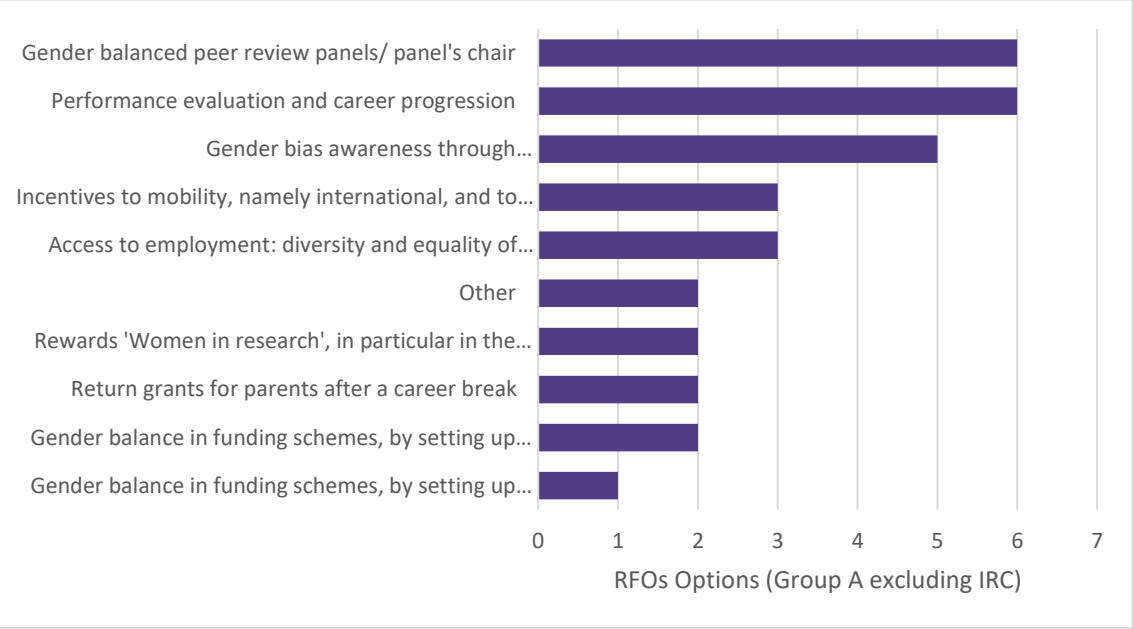

Figure 22 - ***Gender-sensitive actions (typology) by number of RFOs that indicate using them***

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Notes:

Two occurrences of 'Other':

1) FWO – has flexible scientific seniority limits for funding schemes and offers an extension of ongoing fellowships in the case of pregnancy, long-term illness, or other career interruptions.

2) TACR – has completed an analysis of the possibility of including the costs of babysitting (e.g. in the case of conferences) among the eligible costs of projects and establishing rules generally applicable to the provision of support. It seeks to communicate clearly to researchers the options they have in the project in case of pregnancy, maternity/parental leave and return from leave.

As for the diversity of initiatives they cover, there is significant heterogeneity among RFOs, from three RFOs identifying only one of these actions to one RFO indicating six actions (Figure 24).

Gender-sensitive actions (5.9)	Respondents (Group A, without IRC)
Access to employment: diversity and equality of opportunities in recruitment and selection processes	FCT (PT); NCN (PL); RCN (NO)
Gender balance in funding schemes, by setting up target groups	TACT (CZ)
Gender balance in funding schemes, by setting up gender related topics	RCN (NO); FCT (PT)
Gender balanced peer review panels/panel's chair	TACT (CZ); Forte (SE); FNRS (BE); FWO (BE); NCN (PL); FCT (PT)
Gender bias awareness through training/reflection/skills development for peer review panels and panel chairs	ETAG (EE); TACT (CZ); Forte (SE); FNRS (BE); FWO (BE)
Incentives to mobility, namely international, and to returns	Forte (SE); FNRS (BE); NCN (PL)
Performance evaluation and career progression	DFF (DK); TACT (CZ); FNRS (BE); FWO (BE); NCN (PL); FCT (PT)
Return grants for parents after a career break	NCN (PL); FCT (PT)
Rewards 'Women in Research', in particular in the under-represented areas	MCST (MT); FCT (PT)
Other	TACT (CZ); FWO (BE)

Figure 23 - *Gender-sensitive actions (typology) implemented by RFOs*

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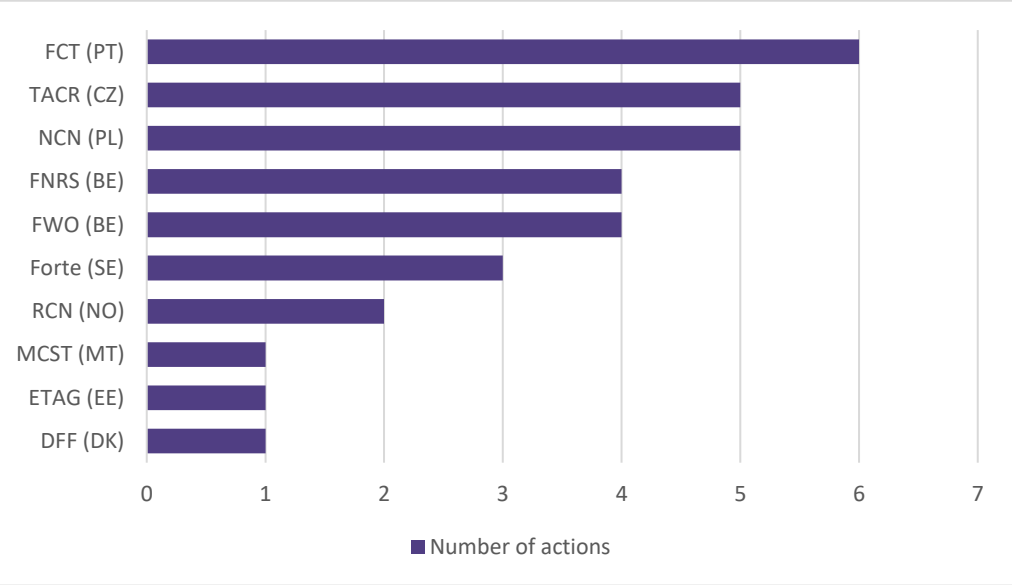

Figure 24 - ***Number of gender-sensitive actions (typology) implemented by RFOs***

Regarding the groups of researchers covered by RFOs funding instruments (Figure 25), three RFOs (FNRS, NCN, and RCN) fund all the stages of a research career (five), two (ETAG and Forte) fund four stages, and only one (TACR) funds just one group, early-career researchers. In other words, most of these RFOs have funding instruments for the entire range of researchers.

Groups of researchers targeted by the funding schemes (5.9.1)	Respondents (from Group A)
PhDs	ETAG (EE), FNRS (BE), NCN (PL), RCN (NO)
Postdocs	ETAG (EE), FNRS (BE), FORTE (SE), NCN (PL), RCN (NO)
Early-career researchers	FNRS (BE), FORTE (SE), NCN (PL), RCN (NO), TACR (CZ)
Mid-career excellence	ETAG (EE), FNRS (BE), FORTE (SE), NCN (PL), RCN (NO)
Senior excellence	ETAG (EE), FNRS (BE), FORTE (SE), NCN (PL), RCN (NO)

Figure 25 - ***Groups of researchers targeted by funding schemes and RFOs***

Other forms of inequality besides gender and the terminology used

We asked RFOs that answered yes to question 5.4 (Group A excluding IRC) if they considered any other forms of inequality besides gender (5.5). We only received four positive responses

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(Figure 26): from FCT, FWO, NCN, and TACR. By default, FCT included all the dimensions expressed in its anti-discrimination statement.

The only ground of inequality that emerges significantly is 'age', which was indicated by the four above-mentioned RFOs. In addition, 'disability' is mentioned by FWO and 'sexual orientation' by NCN (in addition to FCT's response).

These answers prove that the focus on inclusive research careers continues to be aligned with gender issues beyond some concern about ageism. We hope that the challenge of inequality/equality becomes more comprehensive so that any talent who wants to conduct science is not left behind for reasons unrelated to this activity. However, the focus on gender action remains crucial, given that six RFOs did not give a positive response to question 5.5.

Forms of inequality besides gender (5.5)	Respondents (Group A)
Inequality grounds in line with anti-discrimination directive (taken together)	FCT (PT)
Ethnicity	FCT (PT)
Religion	FCT (PT)
Disability	FWO (BE); FCT (PT)
Sexual orientation	NCN (PL); FCT (PT)
Gender identity	-
LGBTQIA+	-
Age	TACR (CZ); NCN (PL); FWO (BE); FCT (PT)
Socioeconomic background/class	FCT (PT)
Political orientation	FCT (PT)
Origin country	FCT (PT)
Power relations	-
Other (Equal access)	FCT (PT)

Figure 26 - ***Forms of inequality besides gender***

The RFOs that considered other grounds of inequality, in addition to gender, also indicated the terms most used in the respective policies (Figure 27).

In addition to the principle of 'non-discrimination', the most frequently used terminology is informed by the interconnected values of equity ('equity/equality', 'equal access', 'equal

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opportunities') and diversity and inclusion (EDI), which were mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

Among the terms not mentioned by any RFO, we highlight 'intersectionality', as it is a concept that we especially value within the scope of GENDERACTIONplus. The other two terms not used have a meaning that is close to other terms that were used or the term gender itself.

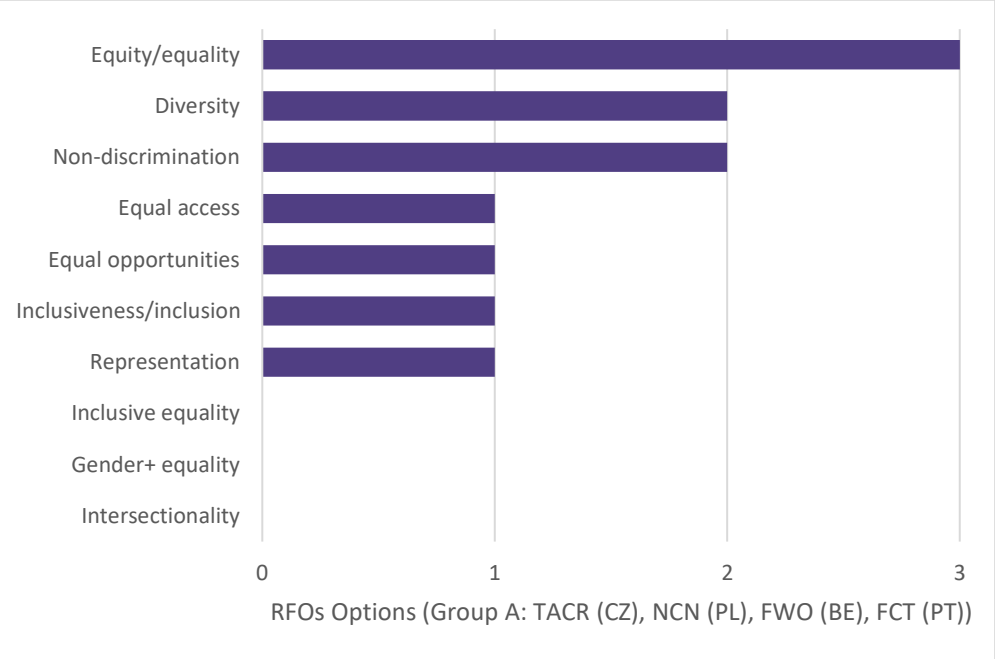

Figure 27 - ***Terminology used in relation to more comprehensive inclusive research careers***

5.8 - Given that you have indicated different grounds of inequality, what are the terms most used in your policies and initiatives on inclusive research careers?

Three RFOs commented on the use of a richer terminology (5.8.1):

TACR (CZ)
As the gender perspective is still something rather new to the Czech research ecosystem, 'equal opportunities' and 'equality' are used as the least controversial framing. Moreover, there is currently a tendency to use 'plain language' in TACR documents (and public organisations more broadly) in order to be more 'friendly' towards our beneficiaries. This also means that foreign words should not be used, which may have, of course, an impact on the possibilities of framing the issue...

FWO (BE)
Providing equal opportunities to all those who apply for funding at FWO is a key part of our mission. In the past, many measures have focused mainly on gender (equality), but we are expanding this into other areas/aspects of diversity.

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FCT (PT)
Our policy is focused on our Constitution Law and its main pillar is non-discrimination and equal access.

Key factors for the success of implementing gender-sensitive actions

Figure 28 presents the critical factors for the success of the actions implemented by some RFOs. Sharing positive experiences is helpful for all RFOs.

Key factors for the success in implementing measures (Q5.11.2)	Respondents (Group A)
Participation in international groups/projects, namely at the European level	ETAG (EE): H2020 GEARING Roles project; Global Research Council, Gender Working Group FCT (PT): Gradual national appropriation of the European-level discussions
Data on disaggregation by sex available	ETAG (EE)
Bonus points for proposals with gender sensitive	TACR (CZ)
A committee to suggest improvements and potential developments	FNRS (BE)
A national environment with laws informed by equality and inclusion concerns, not specifically through the lens of gender	FCT (PT)

Figure 28 - ***Key factors for the success of measures for more inclusive research careers***

Five factors were highlighted by the identified RFOs (ETAG, FCT, FNRS, and TACR), which we can summarise in four points:
- participation in groups beyond national borders, which generates positive influence;
- statistical data that allow for an understanding of the state of gender equality, the implementation of adjusted measures, and the monitoring of progress (in particular positive discrimination, like bonus points);
- a unit dedicated to this issue in its organisational structure; and
- a favourable national political environment of non-discrimination.

Below we transcribe the practices that some RFOs gave as an example:

TACR (CZ)
'As the Czech Republic has long been one of the EU countries with the lowest representation of women in research, TACR decided to use a positive measure in its ZÉTA programme (bonus

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points for proposals with gender-mixed teams (min. 35% of the underrepresented group) and a woman principal investigator). Even though the number of points was 'negligible', the gender composition of research teams in proposals changed quite dramatically. Although considering the gender composition of research teams in the evaluation of proposals can be seen as controversial, in countries and scientific fields with a low representation of women among researchers, it may initiate the first steps towards gender equality.'

FNRS (BE Wallonia)
'A steering committee, which consists of a representative from each university of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, a representative from the Office of the Minister in charge of Scientific Research, a representative from the F.R.S.-FNRS, and a representative from the Direction générale de l'Enseignement supérieur, de l'Enseignement tout au long de la vie et de la Recherche scientifique (DGESVR) corresponds to acts as an advisory board to the Observatory. This committee aims to be informed of the progress of the Observatory's ongoing projects, and to suggest improvements and potential developments. Each year, the Observatory is mandated to prepare (1) a statement of work, a report that lists and details future projects that will be undertaken by the Observatory for the upcoming year, which is discussed by the steering committee and later approved by the Board of Trustees of the F.R.S.-FNRS, and (2) an activity report submitted to the government, which details the progress of various projects of the Observatory such as studies or political representations and lists its deliverables: publications, presentations, recommendations, etc."

FCT (PT)
Pointed out as critical factors:
Cultural ownership (democracy, democratisation of education across all ISCED levels, greater awareness of human rights and openness to diversity, the visibility of women's movements, and of female role models). The revolution in the early 70s brought new cultural, social, and political paradigms to Portugal.
The translation of cultural ownership into the legal framework, with equality, diversity, and inclusion concerns underlying laws. A broad approach towards an inclusive research and innovation system, stemming from general social inclusion, and not specifically through the lens of gender.
Critical mass: increasing the number of women researchers in the national ecosystem (parity achieved), generating movements from within and greater affirmation of female research quality.
Agenda-setting: the gradual national appropriation of the European-level discussions; national contributions to the ERA policies: ERAC recommendations, ERA RoadMap, Helsinki Group, ERA SWG GRI; Ljubljana Declaration endorsement; the endorsement of all actions of the Pact for R&I and the ERA Policy Agenda, namely action 4 and action 5; the emergence of a policy dedicated to gender equality that, for the first time, addresses the higher education and research contexts.
Case Study: see the ELSEVIER Report "'Gender in The Portugal Research Arena: A Case Study in European Leadership'.

Participation in discussions on the research careers agenda

In Group A, all RFOs – except the IRC – replied 'yes' to question 5.1 – '*Is your RFO involved in the discussions (such as participating in expert groups, advisory bodies, and others) on the research careers agenda*?'. At the same time, in Group B, only two RFOs answered 'yes'. Given

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this fact, the participation of these organisations in these discussions, including in national and international contexts, can be identified as a primary framing condition for institutional gender-inclusive culture and a preliminary and favourable condition for progress on the issue of inclusive research careers. However, this condition was not mentioned precisely in these terms as a key factor (5.11.2).

The analysis of the answers to question 5.1 (*if yes, what is your role or contribution to the discussions?),* given by the RFOs of Group A, allowed for the following systematisation:

1) At the national level, we emphasise the contributions by RFOs to other relevant national stakeholders and the development of specific institutional strategies (identified by DFF, ETAG, FCT, MCST, and TACR).

2) On an international level, five types of forums were identified:
- the OECD (FCT),
- the European Commission and European Council, namely the debates around the Ljubljana Declaration (FCT),
- the Horizon Europe network of National Contact Points (MCST),
- the European movement towards an agreement on reforming research assessment (DFF, FCT and FWO),
- the umbrella organisations involved in gender issues and sister projects, like GENDER-NET Plus Consortium, AcademiaNet, GRANTeD, GEECCO, TAFTIE and the Science Europe working groups (FNRS, NCN and TACR).

The analysis of the answers of Group A identified factors and conditions that could positively impact the development of research careers in the direction of becoming more inclusive and, therefore, fairer and more sustainable.

In the next section, we look at RFOs that have not adopted specific policies yet but have potential for the coming years given their active involvement in gender equality actions such as GENDERACTIONplus.

5.2.3 Group B – RFOs with some strategy, policy, or measure addressing research careers but not promoting gender equality or without any strategy, policy, or measure addressing research careers

Characterisation

The second group of RFOs identified in our two-track survey analysis comprises ten RFOs. These organisations have in common that they have some strategy, policy, or measure addressing research careers but not promoting gender equality or they do not have any strategies, policies, or policy measures addressing research careers (question 5.2). These organisations are:

- ✓ AEI – State Research Agency (Spain),
- ✓ BNSF – Bulgarian National Science Fund (Bulgaria),
- ✓ FRRB – Regional Foundation for Biomedical Research (Italy),
- ✓ HRZZ – Croatian Science Foundation,

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- ✓ NCRD – National Centre for Research and Development (Poland),
- ✓ RIF – Research and Innovation Foundation (Cyprus),
- ✓ RCL – Research Council of Lithuania (Lithuania),
- ✓ TUBITAK – Scientific and Technological Research Council (Turkey)
- ✓ UEFISCDI – Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (Romania), and
- ✓ Vinnova – Swedish Agency for Innovation Systems (Sweden).

Group A and Group B are quasi-similar in the number of RFOs that make up each group (Figure 20). Considering the support that RFOs should provide to the national R&I systems, there is still a long way to go until we have structured and inclusive research careers in various countries.

The Croatian Science Foundation (HRZZ) and the Research Council of Lithuania (RCL) are the RFOs in Group B that indicate they have some strategy, policy, or measure addressing research careers but not promoting gender equality. Both have funding mechanisms that support early career researchers, which are, respectively, the Young Researchers' Career Development Project and the Career Development, Mobility and Networking Opportunities.

The programme mentioned by the HRZZ aims to develop the careers of young researchers and strives towards continuous education and the exchange of knowledge, aiming to create a network of scientists whose skills can compete in the international community. Despite the fact that this funding mechanism does not focus on gender equality, the national authority declared that it would address intersections of this topic with other grounds of inequality and power relations. The HRZZ systematically monitors the work of doctoral students funded within this scope, and mentors are obliged to submit individual reports.

Other than this information submitted by the respective national authority, the report will not deal any further with HRZZ, as it did not respond to the RFOs' survey. From the point on, only the other nine RFOs belonging to Group B are considered.

Out of these nine RFOs in Group B only two are already involved in discussions on the research careers agenda: RCL and Vinnova. Considering the information submitted by the national authority of Lithuania, other complementary non-governmental initiatives can be mentioned, like the Young Academia of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences. This entity brings together young scientists who have achieved outstanding results in science and innovation and involve them in a process of providing opinions on Lithuanian science policy issues and facilitating the pursuit of academic careers.

The fact that seven RFOs, a significant number, are not yet involved in discussions on the research careers agenda, underscores the considerable delay in the respective national policies. The reasons for this delay, as depicted in Figure 29, could be that research careers are not yet a debated issue, or that there is a lack of coordination between the different actors.

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Why is your RFO not involved in the research careers agenda? (Q5.1 = No)	Respondents (Group B) 1 RFO / 1 reason
There is a discussion but the national authority and the RFO are not articulated or not forward simultaneously	TÜBITAK BNSF NCRD
There is no discussion about inclusive research careers at all	RIF UEFISCDI
So far, we have not been involved ('other' option)	FRRB
There is no discussion about inclusive research careers as a separate topic ('other' option)	AEI

Figure 29 - ***- Reasons why RFOs are not participating in the discussions on the research careers agenda***

Group B may also be considered a heterogeneous group of RFOs like Group A. For example, not all RFOs are engaged in activities directly related to research careers. This is the case of Vinnova (Figure 31).

Obstacles identified

The perception of a political delay intensifies when we observe that several RFOs identified multiple obstacles, which tells a lot about the degree of adversity still ahead. Denoting more difficulty than the others, we have three RFOs that are newcomers to gender equality issues.

We should not consider Vinnova among these RFOs, given that the obstacle identified as 'Other' is related to its institutional profile and not means a specific difficulty (Figure 31).

Regarding the obstacles concerning the development of strategies, policies or policy measures on gender-inclusive careers (Figure 30), the two more frequently cited obstacles tend to counteract two of the four key success factors above mentioned by RFOs (compared to Figure 28):

- a lack of gender-disaggregated data (obstacle) versus the availability of information that allows for an understanding of the state of gender equality, the implementation of adjusted measures, and the monitoring of progress (success factor), and

- a lack of gender-equality structures (obstacle) versus having a unit dedicated to this issue (success factor) in its organisational structure.

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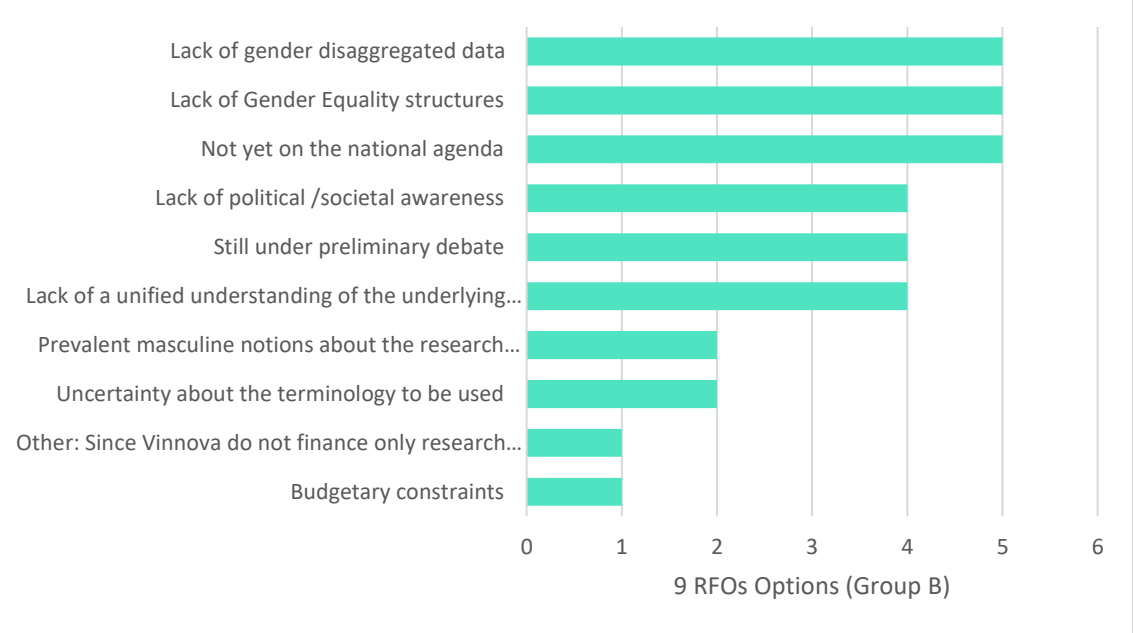

Figure 30 - ***Obstacles to developing strategies, policies, or policy measures on gender-inclusive careers***

When we exclude the 'other' option and divide the remaining nine obstacle options into two distinct sets (Figure 31), depending on whether they are more of an institutional or of a cultural & ideological nature, we find that the latter is the most significant. It is helpful to make this distinction because it highlights some of the RFOs' difficulties: it is hard to shift mentalities in the direction of a more inclusive way of thinking. Furthermore, it is particularly worrying that two RFOs are still contending with the stereotype that research is a prevailingly male profession. The problem seems smaller when it only has institutional constraints (the lack of a budget or human resources dedicated to this issue), but these can also sometimes result from an underlying cultural/ideological obstacle.

Even though RCL is the RFO that identified more dimensions of obstacles, it has the advantage of already being part of the discussions on the research careers agenda.

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Obstacles to the development of measures on gender- inclusive careers (Q5.3)	Respondents (Group B)
INSTITUTIONAL DIMENSION	identified 12 times identified by RFOs
Budgetary constraints Lack of Gender Equality structures Lack of a unified understanding of the underlying concepts Uncertainty about the terminology to be used	1*BNSF; 1*FRRB; 1*NCRD; 2*TÜBITAK; 3*UEFISCDI; 4*RCL
CULTURAL DIMENSION	identified 20 times by RFOs
Prevalent masculine notions about the research profession Lack of political /societal awareness Lack of gender disaggregated data Not yet on the national agenda Still under preliminary debate	1*AEI; 1*RIF; 2*BNSF; 2*FRRB; 3*NCRD; 3*TÜBITAK; 4*RCL; 4*UEFISCDI
EXCEPTION	
Other: 'Since Vinnova does not just finance research, we are not too much involved in research careers'	1*VINNOVA

Figure 31 - ***- Obstacles to the development of strategies, policies, or policy measures on gender-inclusive careers versus institutional or cultural dimensions***

Although this group of RFOs indicated that they do not have strategies, policies, or measures addressing research careers, four of the five shared GEPs were supplied by AEI, RCL, UEFISCDI, and Vinnova. The case of Vinnova is the easiest to understand since we have already highlighted its exceptional character in Figure 31. Regarding the other cases, we assume that what is stipulated in these GEPs is still not enough for these organisations to acknowledge that their activities have a specific impact in terms of research careers.

5.2.4 Group A and Group B taken together

The convergence between key success factors (Group A) and obstacles (Group B) regarding the promotion of inclusive research careers

When we observe the key success factors identified by Group A and the obstacles identified by Group B, we get the impression of convergence. Figure 32 highlights this coincidence as the two sides of the same coin: positive versus negative dimensions.

Even though it was not mentioned as a key factor, **participating in the discussion on the research careers agenda is a favourable condition for an institutional gender-inclusive culture**. Further evidence of this notion of convergence is provided by the fact that all the RFOs

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in Group A are involved in these discussions as opposed to the majority (seven) of RFOs in Group B, which are not.

Obstacles to the development of gender-inclusive careers (Group B)	Key success factors in the development of gender-inclusive careers (Group A)
Not yet on the national agenda + Still under preliminary debate + Lack of political/societal awareness + Prevalent masculine notions about the research profession	a favourable national political environment of non-discrimination + participation in groups beyond national borders
Lack of a unified understanding of the underlying concepts + Uncertainty about the terminology to be used + Lack of Gender Equality structures + Budgetary constraints	a unit dedicated to this issue in its organisational structure
Lack of gender disaggregated data	statistical data that allows understanding the state of gender equality, implementing adjusted measures and monitoring how it evolves

Figure 32 - ***Obstacles to versus key success factors behind the development of gender-inclusive research careers***

In November 2023, several European university associations published a document welcoming the recent Council Recommendation on Research Careers proposal[32] and adding comments for further improvement. We find in this proposal an idea that is pertinent in the context of these two groups of RFOs, with or without a favourable national political environment:

'Given the voluntary nature of the Council Recommendation, we caution against the risk of further divergence in the career pathway and talent retainment strategies between countries already having mechanisms in place versus countries not implementing the recommendations.'

To counter this risk and mitigate the gap between Groups A and B, we present the suggestions made by the RFOs and collected through the survey.

[32] *Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe*

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Recommendations suggested by RFOs in Groups A and B

Fourteen RFOs from Groups A and B took the opportunity to make some recommendations, based on their experience, for making research careers more inclusive.

First, we highlight four ideas:

1. There is no clear distinction between the nature of the recommendations to promote inclusive research careers made by the RFOs in Group A or B: in general, all the RFOs perceive a need to make continuous improvement[33].
2. Several of these suggestions converge with the key success factors or with the topics discussed in the mentioned forums, while others are new or complementary.
3. The recommendations can be divided into two categories:
   i) recommendations about raising awareness and knowledge about inclusive research careers among all the actors involved (such as researchers, peer reviewers, RFOs, politicians);
   ii) recommendations directly linked to research careers, including recommendations about work-life balance (working conditions).
4. The recommendations directly linked to research careers are identified in the following list in reference to the Research Career 'Value Chain' mentioned above. They tend to be mainly associated with the component 'Career development progression', mainly the issue of research assessment, and with the component 'Recruitment and working conditions', mainly issues of ´work-life balance'.

Second, we list the recommendations, but only the ones that are complementary to the set of key factors identified and the forums already mentioned. The recommendations are:

- ensure ample discussion at the national level showing the consequences of not improving inclusive research careers (Group B);

- raise awareness about the importance of an inclusive culture (Group B), (Career development and progression);

- there is a need for some top-down rules and policies, such as the HE approach of mandatory GEPs (Group B), (Recruitment and working conditions);

- interaction with more advanced RFOs and STI Systems – learning from their experience (Group A);

- work closely and require HE innovation offices and incubators to gender mainstream their admission processes and support system for underrepresented and underinvested groups (Group B) (Recruitment and working conditions);

- there is a need to carry out relevant research on this issue (Group B);

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- conduct training on conscious and unconscious gender bias & raising awareness among those responsible for designing research careers and among RFOs' staff and peer review panel members (Group A), (Career development and progression);

- introduce awareness-raising training for managers, especially those in public administration (Group B);

- carry out bias checks in the documents and procedures of calls and monitor both applications and success rates (Group A);

- make effective change in the evaluation criteria as regards intersectoral mobility (Group A) (Career development and progression);

- introduce a gender mainstreamed assessment process (Group B) (Career development and progression);

- provide clarity on career progression paths and criteria for progression assessment (Group B) (Career development and progression);

- set flexible scientific seniority limits for funding schemes and the extension of ongoing fellowships in the case of pregnancy, military service, long-term illness, or other career interruptions, ensuring equal opportunities between women and men in their access to research careers and promotions (Group A) (Recruitment and working conditions);

- create a national forum for inclusive careers constituted by researchers from all career paths and all career stages (Group A);

- promote a change in the mindset of researchers as regards the career path where they can open up to other alternatives than the traditional ones (Group A);

- promote the empowerment of women in terms of self-confidence, namely by using networking potentialities, impacting their options for STEAM careers, and fighting back against glass ceiling situations (Group A) (Skills);

- challenge and broaden concepts with traditionally masculine connotation such as innovation and entrepreneurship (Group B);

- increase salaries (Group B) (Recruitment and working conditions);

- provide childcare services that would enable a more straightforward return to work (Group B), (Recruitment and working conditions);

- devote more attention to care needs like personal care and elderly care (Group B) (Recruitment and working conditions);

- offer extra support for mobility outside the country for women with children since postdoctoral stays abroad are more difficult for them due to work-life balance issues, and promote equal opportunities between women and men concerning mobility experiences (Group B) (Circulation of talents).

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Research career "value chain"	Recognition and Research Profession	Skills	Recruitment and working conditions	Career development and progression	Circulation of talents
		Impacting women s options for STEM careers/ innovation and entrepreneurship;	Mandatory GEPs and top down rules/ scholarships and maternity / paternity leaves/ care services: child, elderly/ limits for funding schemes and extension (pregnancy; militar; long term illness; access to research careers) / salary gaps/ empowerment of women in terms of self-confidence	Inclusive culture/ training on unconcious gender bias peer review panel members / evaluation criteria in intersectoral mobility / gender mainstreaming assessment / criteria for progression assessment/ non traditional research career paths – opening mindsets;	Intersectional mobility/ networking potentialities/ extra support to mobility
Support Actions	Interaction with more advanced RFOs and STI System/ Creation of a national forum for inclusive careers/ Fighting glass ceiling / wide discussions at the national level on the impacts of non improving research careers/ Innovation offices and incubators to gender mainstream/				

Figure 33 - ***Policy recommendations across RFOs***

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Social Security as a gender equality enabler

In the context of the coverage of social security systems, five RFOs from Group A and two from Group B implemented more favourable regulations or practices than those generally available in the legal system (question 5.13). From Group A, these RFOs are IRC, DFF, Forte, FNRS, and FCT; from Group B, they are FRRB and RCL. The answers are available in Annex IV - Social Security (RFOs).

In brief, these RFOs' measures tend to ensure that being a mother or a father (of a biological or adopted child) does not jeopardise the funding beneficiaries' awards in terms of available funding or the time stipulated to carry out the research. In the latter case, some RFOs add more time to the awards than that spent on parental leaves, as if including time to allow an adaption to a new work-life rhythm. We can also observe the implementation of more flexible seniority limits. Nevertheless, these are not the most common situations.

The answers to question 5.13.2 (*From your organisation's point of view, in which of the above situations does discrimination on gender mainly persist and how?)* highlight that gender discrimination is more likely to persist in the following cases:

- when taking maternity leave, because shared parental leave is rare (in the case of FRRB, for example);
- when taking maternity/paternity leave, because this leave has the potential to negatively impact the dynamics of the team the beneficiary on leave belongs to;
- when taking maternity/paternity leave, because this leave has the potential to negatively impact career progression (e.g., negatively impacting a person's t publication rate).

5.2.5 Deepening the knowledge about Group A

In the previous sections we observed that out of twenty RFOs nearly half (eight) have not yet taken action to address research careers and face complex challenges that are not easily overcome (Group B). Therefore, we further explore the experiences of RFOs that are more advanced in this area (some RFOs in Group A). To this end, we gathered more information from their websites than what is available through the survey. In this way, we were able to obtain a more detailed overview of the practices employed by these organisations (included in Annex V). These practices can inspire and empower any RFOs, regardless of what group they belong to, in the spirit of mutual learning.

We analysed the following websites:

- ✓ Fund for Scientific Research-FNRS (F.R.S. – FNRS) – Belgium FWB
  https://www.frs-fnrs.be/fr/
- ✓ Research Foundation (FWO) – Belgium-Flanders
  https://www.fwo.be/en/the-fwo/research-policy/hr-strategy/gender-equality-plan/
- ✓ Estonian Research Council (ETAG) – Estonia
  https://etag.ee/en/

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- ✓ National Science Centre (NCN) – Poland
  https://www.ncn.gov.pl/en/o-ncn/zadania-ncn
- ✓ Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare (Forte) – Sweden
  https://forte.se/en/about-forte/our-mission/
- ✓ Independent Research Fund Denmark (DFF) – Denmark
  https://dff.dk/en/about-us/strategy-and-policies/equal-opportunities-policy-for-the-independent-research-fund-denmark
- ✓ Irish Research Council (IRC) – Ireland
  https://research.ie/

Below we first list the pivotal insights and highlight some patterns and informal rules that are crucial for designing strategies to promote inclusive research careers. These findings support the observations that emerged as significant from the analysis of the benchmarking survey:

- the need for policies and action plans to address research careers and gender equality;
- promoting gender equality in R&D systems requires time, a long time, and the continuous monitoring of developments, doing so by means of trust statistics and in-depth studies;
- the usefulness of debating and articulating with other national stakeholders;
- essential participation in international groups;
- the vital focus on research assessment processes, with measures beyond the gender distribution of chairs and members of peer review panels; and
- the need for social security measures that effectively support a work-life balance.

Second, we identify some actions to promote inclusive research careers that complement the ones mentioned in the survey. Here we add a new perspective and group the actions into two categories (1 and 2):

1. Measures whose impact is reflected in the RFOs themselves, making these organisations more able to deal with the issue of gender equality in scientific systems:

   - increasing the number of women in several areas (institutional presidency, scientific commissions, research assessment processes);
   - exploring the possibilities of gaining insight into the ethnicity and nationality of the applicants and taking into account relevant legislation and regulations in the field of privacy law and GDPR[34],
   - analysing the gender impact of each new funding instrument or measure before and after implementation;
   - promoting the creation of research careers observatories;
   - monitoring and tracking application and award data broken down into AHSS and STEM, the goal of which is to explore whether different subject areas have different ways of obstructing equality.

2. Measures with an expected positive and direct impact on the careers and lives of researchers:
   - making research careers more attractive through new positions with permanent contracts;
   - designing flexible career paths and promoting the use of narrative CVs;
   - introducing more flexible working conditions;
   - enabling flexibility for dealing with medical and social needs;

[34] General Data Protection Regulation

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- publication of all the RFOs' information in the native language and in English,
- presenting information on research funding calls and contests in an inclusive and gender-neutral manner;
- consideration of a third possibility regarding gender;
- measures to offer postdoctoral researchers support in preparing for a career outside the academic world at the end of their funding for those who want this.

Finally, we map the policies, strategies, and terminology aggregated by the RFOs we explored to better understand what matters most in this context (Figures 33 and 34). Observing them, we conclude that these institutional perspectives about inclusive research careers are primarily supported by the principle of equality (gender equality, gender balance, equal opportunity, and equal access), which is close to the ethical imperative of non-discrimination, with both underlying the policies that have guided the missions and visions of RFOs. The terminology used also points in the same direction.

As Figure 34 shows, for RFOs with more experience of engaging in activities for inclusive research careers, the strategies and policies they already implemented are the most relevant documents and not the GEPs. These strategies and policies have visible impacts on how they manage their funding instruments.

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COUNTRY	ACRONYM	STRATEGIES / POLICY DOCUMENTS ON GENDER-INCLUSIVE RESEARCH CAREERS AND OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION* **(Inclusive research as an established area at RFOs)**
BE	F.R.S.-FNRS	* Politique de Genre (RapportAnnuel_2021.pdf (frs-fnrs.be)) * Plan d'égalité de genre du FNRS (2022-2025) https://www.frs-fnrs.be/docs/Plan-egalite-genre-FNRS-2022.pdf * Égalité de genre https://www.frs-fnrs.be/fr/genre/99-fr/chercheurs/appels-reglements-docs-resultats/2021-egalite-de-genre * Rapports sur l´état de l'égalité de genre 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020) https://www.frs-fnrs.be/fr/politique-scientifique#genre
BE	FWO	* Equal opportunity policy * Gender Equality Plan * Gender Equality Plan Progress Report 2023 https://www.fwo.be/en/the-fwo/research-policy/hr-strategy/gender-equality-plan/ * Gender and diversity policy
EE	ETAG	* Gender mainstreaming in research https://etag.ee/en/activities/gender-mainstreaming-in-research/ * Gender balance and gender pay gap (statistical analysis) https://www.etag.ee/en/activities/analysis/gender-balance-and-pay-gap/ * Gender Equality Plan of the Estonian Research Council https://www.etag.ee/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Estonian-Research-Council-Gender-Equality-Plan-2021.pdf
PL	NCN	* Gender Equality Plan for the National Science Centre 2022-2025 https://www.ncn.gov.pl/sites/default/files/2022-04/gender-equality-plan-NCN.pdf
SE	Forte	* Forte's Vision and Goals https://forte.se/app/uploads/sites/2/2023/04/fortes-vision-and-goals-ta.pdf
DK	DFF	* Equal opportunities policy https://dff.dk/en/about-us/strategy-and-policies/equal-opportunities-policy-for-the-independent-research-fund-denmark

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IE	IRC	* Gender Strategy and Action Plan https://research.ie/assets/uploads/2022/03/IRCGenderPlan-s.pdf * Bullying, Harassment, and Sexual Harassment Policy https://research.ie/assets/uploads/2021/06/IRC-Bullying-Harassment-and-Sexual_Harassment-Policy_June-2021.pdf * Career Development Policy Statement https://research.ie/assets/uploads/2017/05/IRC-Researcher-Career-Development-Policy-Statement_29Sept2017.pdf * Policy on Leave for Parents & Careers. Maternity, Paternity, Adoptive, Parent's, Parental & Carer's Leave https://research.ie/assets/uploads/2023/03/IRC-Policy-on-Leave-for-Parents-and-Carers_March-2023.pdf

Figure 34 - - ***Research careers – mapping strategies and policies***

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COUNTRY	ACRONYM	TERMINOLOGY (1) / DIMENSION (2) **(Inclusive research careers as an established area at RFOs)**
BE	F.R.S.-FNRS	1) gender equality; gender balance; women/men; inequalities 2) Leadership and decision-making bodies; recruitment and career advancement; organisational culture; balance between personal and professional life; gender-based violence, including sexual harassment.
BE	FWO	1) Equal opportunities; gender equality; gender and diversity; gender vanguard; gender neutral policy (administrative staff) 2) Training; work-life balance and organisational culture, including teleworking, the right to de-connection; gender balance in leadership and decision making, including expert panels and board of trustees; gender equality during recruitment and career development; integration of the dimension of gender into research content; measures against gender-based violence, including sexual violence (employees vs fellowship holders).
EE	ETAG	1) Gender equality; gender mainstreaming; equal treatment 2) Research assessment, panel constitution
PL	NCN	1) Gender equality; principles of equality and diversity; stereotypes; gender balance; gender bias; gender distribution; gender identity; gender-neutral pronouns; gender rights 2) Information and promotion campaigns; application forms; documentation and practice of proposal review; Expert Teams; Award; research assessment
SE	Forte	1) Equality policy; gender equality; sex and gender perspective 2) Research assessment processes
DK	DFF	1) Equal opportunities; equal representation; gender balance; gender distribution; gender perspective; unintended consequences 2) Funding instruments; assessment procedures; RFO membership composition; maternity/paternity leave; family-related absence; assessment initiatives; bias training; gender blinding; gender composition of the scientific field
IE	IRC	1) Equality, diversity and inclusion; gender equality/inequalities; gender parity; gender-proofing; gender bias; sex/gender dimension; gender blinding; non-linear nature of research careers 2) Research assessment processes; career lifecycle; targeting measures and funding, flexibility in research awards

Figure 35 - ***Inclusive research careers – mapping terminology***

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5.3 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES BETWEEN NATIONAL AND RFOs POLICIES

Strategies and policies establish the vision and the comprehensive goals that will guide decision-making across the implementation process. Thus, policies addressed by national authorities – national policies – consist, by nature, of a 'superstructural' element and have an umbrella role. However, the results of the survey show that in some cases, despite the (apparent) absence of national policies, RFOs have defined their own policies or sets of initiatives, and vice versa.

Differences within/between R&I systems, the independence/autonomy of universities and RFOs, diverse levels of institutional pro-activity, or different permeability to European discussions are some of the factors that may explain (apparent) discrepancies between the national and RFO level and between RFOs. Discrepancies can also be explained by the fact that many of the RFOs' policies are formulated as GEPs which have an institutional breadth by definition and should be more bottom up. The fact that ministries and RFOs are not necessarily represented in the GENDERACTIONplus consortium for all countries may be another explanation for the limitations of the study. In these cases, this discrepancy would be due to a lack of information (no reply to the survey) and not necessarily to a lack of policies.

Thus, a first overall inference is that there is no homogeneity in the country landscapes in terms of research career strategies, policies, or measures. As Figure 6 shows, we identified **six groups** of countries.

Figure 36 - ***National and RFOs policies landscape***

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Group 1 Group 2 Group 3 Group 4 Group 5 Group 6

Group 1: Countries with no information on national policies and no RFO policies – Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Italy, Lithuania, Romania, and Turkey.
Group 2: Countries with no national policies but with RFO policies – Poland, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, and Estonia.
Group 3: Countries with no information on national policies but with RFO policies – Malta.
Group 4: Countries with national policies but no RFO policies – Spain.
Group 5: Countries with national policies but no information on RFO policies – Austria, Greece, and Israel.
Group 6: Countries with national and RFO strategies, policies, or measures – Belgium Wallonia, Norway, Portugal, and Sweden.

Note: Belgium FWB/BE FL, Sweden, and Poland have more than 1 RFO; we considered RFO=Y when there is information from at least one RFO

Another overall inference is that national policies do not focus much on research careers, since this subject is still new to policy (in spite of the longstanding European discussion), careers are very broad in scope and entangled with other policies, and it is difficult to define specialised policy just on research careers. For this reason, policies mostly address R&I as a whole, with varying degrees of focus. Some Member States question whether inclusive research careers should be centrally coordinated at all. As regards RFOs, policies are mostly framed as part of their human resources policies, and as such they are more circumscribed and concrete. To a certain extent, RFOs could be considered the liveliest actors on the issue of inclusive research careers compared to national authorities, even though only 11 RFOs out of the 20 we studied have active policies on inclusive research careers in force. It is worth noting that discussions at the European level around the Pact for R&I and the European Policy Agenda priorities have consistently highlighted the relevance of research careers and gender equality. However, structural changes in research careers have to confront the specificities of national (including RFOs') legal frameworks and systemic constraints. As noted above, tangible results are very much in national hands.

Countries have pointed out that at the policy level of both national authorities and RFOs non-discrimination is one of the most frequently used terms, as well as equity-equality. Intersectionality is emerging as a term/issue only at the national policy level.

At the national level, policies mostly concentrate on 'recruitment and working conditions' and on the 'career development and progress' phases of the research career 'value chain'. Some policy documents also approach 'skills' and competences as instrumental to the flexibility of careers, enabling the intersectoral, interdisciplinary, and international mobility and 'circulation of talents'. The terminology used follows this pattern.

Similarly, at the RFO level, 'career development and progression' stands out as a policy focus. , with assessment practices representing the most important issue and lying at the heart of gender-sensitive actions, which are aimed at achieving gender-balanced peer review panels and panel chairs, and training panels and panel chairs on gender bias in evaluation of performance and career evaluation, and in gender bias awareness and skills development. 'The next most common policy focus is 'recruitment and working conditions' centred on concerns around access to employment: diversity and equality of opportunities in recruitment and selection processes.

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Non-discrimination is the most frequent term that appears in the national policies, followed by inclusiveness/inclusion, equity/equality, diversity, and intersectionality, while RFOs' policies are still focused more on equality and equity and just opening up to diversity and inclusiveness. The more common grounds of inequality acknowledged in both national and RFOs' policies are age, disability, and sexual orientation. National policies are more comprehensive in their approach to the complexity of inequality, reflecting broader concerns such as socioeconomic status, gender identity, LGBTQIA+, religion, ethnicity. The most relevant obstacles to the development of national and RFO policies are a 'lack of political/societal awareness', a 'lack of understanding of the underlying concepts' and the issue being 'still under preliminary stage of debate'. Yet, a 'lack of gender [support] structures', of 'gender disaggregated data' and 'not yet on the agenda' are obstacles especially highlighted by RFOs.

As regards social security system coverage, national policies are more comprehensive and include illness - the most common across countries - maternity and parental leaves, retirement, unemployment, work-life balance, and more, while RFOs mainly target maternity/paternity leaves in their policies.

Recommendations are very much focused on the 'recruitment and working conditions' and 'career development and progression' components of the research career value chain, and this is true of the recommendations from both the national authorities and RFOs, as well as measures regarding international mobility.

However, a line could be drawn between more typical national-level measures – such as those dealing with salaries, skills, awareness raising on inclusive culture, gender mainstreaming – and more innovative ones, such as gender budgeting, career tracking observatories, monitoring dropouts from research careers, and defining stages of a professional career.

Likewise, in respect to RFOs' measures, maternity/paternity/parental leaves, scholarships, calls could be considered the more traditional ones, while career breaks, gender-based violence, assessment, and work-life balance are more innovative examples.

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6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 National Authorities

The analysis revealed that there are still no consolidated national policy frameworks for (inclusive) research careers, among countries. The landscape on inclusive research careers is quite heterogeneous across countries, with most of the national strategies and policies that exist tending to address HE and R&I systems each as a whole. They are thus not *specifically focused* on this issue but rather contain *a focus or some focus* on (inclusive) research careers. The contextual factors of HE and R&I systems explain this heterogeneity.

On the other hand, two main components of careers seem to be predominantly addressed: i) 'recruitment' (open and transparent) and 'working conditions' (work-life balance, career breaks and addressing GBV); and ii) 'career development and progression' (assessment, valuing diverse paths, outputs, activities). Social security entitlements and portability are part of these working conditions and are very relevant for multipath careers, but the coverage patterns across countries remain poor and improvements are definitely required. In this respect, the right to social security for PhD students has been discussed in the European fora on research careers[35] as a possible contractual change.

There has also yet to be any clear development as regards the researcher profession itself including from a gender sensitive perspective, as can be seen in Figure 19–Policy Recommendations across Countries and Figure 33 Policy Recommendations across RFOs. A deeper look into the need to revise statutes of academic and research careers is still missing, and existing and new careers still need to be adapted in the direction of greater interoperability - within positions in higher education and research units, in public administration, and in the private sector, and this diversity needs to be valued in the assessment model. It would also be desirable to extend the spectrum of professions beyond full-time researchers to technicians, research managers, science communicators, experts in supervision, mentoring, knowledge valorisation and open science. Interoperability is indeed essential in order for multi-career paths and all kinds of mobility (intersectoral, international) to be equally valued and attractively rewarded – and thus to really boost diversity and inclusion.

New skills and competences, tailored or transferable, were not often approached in national policies as instrumental for career recruitment and development, particularly in the case of post-docs and women, for preparing for independent careers across a widened professional spectrum; there were also references to increasing competences in STEM and in entrepreneurship, where the need for women to catch up is quite acknowledged.

[35] European discussions on the European Framework for Research Careers. Report 'Attractive and Sustainable Research Careers in Portugal and in Europe: a summary of the discussions held in the Lisbon workshop, April 12, 2023', October 2023.

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Also, the balance between temporary and permanent contracts could be further addressed as well as the prevalence of temporary contracts among women. Reducing precariousness and differentiating between early-stage career and established researchers in academic, non-academic, and private sectors are issues that have been addressed, but not necessarily in relation to gender divides.

The overall picture of national policies shows they are still lagging in their approach to the full research career value chain[36], and that deeper collaboration within the GENDERACTIONplus national authorities' community of practice (CoP) is essential. This would be especially useful for creating awareness of the identified obstacles, especially cultural obstacles – such as a 'lack of political and societal awareness' of this issue or it being 'still under preliminary debate' or 'not yet on the national agenda', or even the retrograde 'prevalent masculine notions about the research profession' – which are transversally dealt with by all the country groups, A, B, C and D. To have a better understanding of how to design a research career, and how to integrate inclusiveness into national policies as an intrinsic policy feature, rather than dealing with it in isolation, and to move forward towards an intersectional approach, capacity building is required. Broadly promoting reflection on the subject, involving relevant stakeholders in the R&I and HE systems, including umbrella organisations such as the Coimbra Group[37] are all measures that are likewise of great importance. This reflection on the subject would help to progressively achieve effective impact and get these research career concerns included in NIPs.

In turn, deepening/enlarging the knowledge base on gender equality and on research careers themselves would be very relevant. In fact, collaborations with WP 4 would help in this regard and make it possible to better delineate careers, to identify the responsibilities of national authorities (mostly delegated to RFOs), and to demonstrate reciprocal impact: by promoting training initiatives in content and research in higher education, as part of curricula, developing new skills and new professions.[38] Strengthening the role of science advice for designing inclusive research careers and policy-making is another challenging issue that needs to be addressed in this regard.

According to the D.3.1 – Benchmarking report on gender-based violence (GBV) and SH targeting national authorities and RFOs, none of the 15 countries or regions that participated in the GENDERACTIONplus survey has a national or regional policy to combat GBV in the R&I and HE systems or in RFOs in force. In fact, GBV is only slightly addressed in a few policies, just as recommendations in the national authorities replies and in the replies of a few RFOs (namely FRS-FNRS and FWO in Belgium Wallonia),. Taking into consideration the relevance of the GBV issue for vulnerable groups, such as young people and women, and for mobility (intersectoral and international) in diverse and open careers, addressing GBV is an integral part of creating a safe and inclusive working environment and thus of the working conditions of research careers. A more systematic approach to GBV should be promoted across all actors in the ecosystem, researchers, and research institutions at the European and national/regional levels. Working closely with WP 3 would help to further integrate new policies, target new problems, and identify new risks, and it would emphasise the value of skills, awareness, and knowledge on GBV, particularly concepts targeting the safety of researchers throughout their career.

[36] Section on the Research Career Value Chain.
[37] The Coimbra Group together with Portugal's co-sponsored ERA Policy Agenda, Action 4.
[38] According to the D.4.1 'Benchmarking and assessment report on guidelines for sex/gender analysis'.

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Core inclusive measures that are highlighted at the national level across countries includes measures in support of permanent positions and relating to recruitment challenges for women early career researchers (Norway), **career planning and promoting the attractiveness of research careers particularly for women** (Austria), work-life balance, mobility, productivity criteria, tracking careers and obstacles for women researchers (Belgium Wallonia), recruitment goals on women professors (Sweden), post-doctoral itineraries and opened-ended contracts (Spain), and quotas for the underrepresented gender in HEIs and parity targets across research and academic positions (Portugal). In existing policies, progression has been more closely associated with addressing inequalities in research teams, dealing with gendered hierarchies in research institutions, and addressing the lack of participation of women in positions of responsibility –as well as tackling concerns with assessment (namely gender parity on evaluation panels).

Reflecting the issues under debate, the **type of terminology more commonly use*d*** in the policies are very much anchored to **recruitment and work life-balance and assessment**. A few collected examples include: the compatibility of **childcare with an academic career**, the representation of women and removing obstacles, versatile **assessment** versus strengthening diversity and gender equality, gender balance in **recruitment** patterns, *inequalities* of **recruitment** processes, *balance* **in top academic** positions, gender balance and diversity **assessment processes**, women in innovation and **entrepreneurial skills**.

Concerns about the intersections of gender equality with other grounds of inequality – a key dimension for addressing inequality in all its complexity - are seldom addressed beyond a mere statement as a general principle. In fact, intersectionality is still a concept that is new to the policies, and it appears in the policies of a few countries (Belgium Wallonia, Spain, and to some extent Portugal). Further discussions with experts on intersectionality and with the national authorities CoP would contribute to better knowledge of and familiarity with concepts and terminology and what intersectionality would plainly mean for research careers and an understanding of the ways to conceive and implement multidimensional policies.

Research assessment principles and practices, which are key to the development of inclusive careers, lie at the heart of career progression measures. Recent commitment to CoARA and to its shared direction and principles by supporting entities across the R&I ecosystem is likely to have a significantly impact on more inclusive and diverse research careers. A new paradigm that **values diverse** career paths, profiles, activities, and outputs is likely to entail greater gender equality and inclusiveness. However, available policies do not yet reflect this commitment in a tangible way. Greater engagement with the institutions supporting CoARA and dialogue between countries in the national authorities CoP would be very beneficial. the principles of the **European Charter and Code** should be embedded further in national policies and the roles, responsibilities, and entitlements of researchers, employers and funders should be specified more clearly. This would help to improve legal frameworks at the national level, which is a crucial factor for raising the issue of inclusive research careers/for increasing the inclusiveness of research careers at the national and European levels .

Success and impactful policies require well-established monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and the diverse landscape of monitoring systems reported by countries still reflects a diffuse focus on inclusive research careers, even when well established mechanisms are reported. While safeguarding the specifics of national systems, the development of guidelines and tailored

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progress indicators would recommend a close collaboration with WP 5, which has developed the GENDERACTIONplus domain 'monitoring of ERA actions.'

6.2 Research Funding Organisations

There has been considerable progress on inclusive research careers in recent times, and RFOs have played a key role in this mission. Indeed, RFOs are pursuing this goal at different paces: some are more advanced than others, which are still at a very early stage. There is a convergence between the success factors identified by the former and the obstacles expressed by the latter. Although the direction is clear, there is still a long way to go.

For this concluding section, the segmentation of RFOs into the groups presented in the analysis has been left aside. While this methodology was instrumental and relevant for deepening our knowledge about the studied organisations, it has limitations when it comes to formulating conclusions about RFOs' policies given the potential heterogeneity that exists within each defined group that could not be further studied. Thus, this report ends with a complementary, global, and synthetic approach that takes advantage of the highlights achieved until now.

Based on the recommendations provided by fourteen RFOs, it is evident that they share the imperative of continuously improving the impact of their actions towards inclusiveness in research careers. On this issue, the common feeling is that mutual learning is essential and can be practised mainly by discussing topics and solutions, raising awareness, and articulating action with other relevant stakeholders. It is also necessary to find solutions that make it easier to bring the debates on the research career agenda down to the ground, which means introducing them into the national contexts of RFOs, which are more newcomers to gender equality issues. Thus, a commitment to building capacity, competences, and expertise among all the agents involved in processes related to research careers is crucial. Two kinds of measures need to be considered in this regard: those whose impact is reflected in the RFOs themselves, making these organisations more able to deal with this issue, and those with a positive and direct impact on the careers and lives of researchers.

The success factors identified by the RFOs are crucial elements for continuing to make progress on this very important social issue: participation in national and international discussions on the research careers agenda; participation in international working groups; the production of statistical data that provide insight into the state of gender equality in each country and RFO; and the existence of a unit dedicated to gender in their structures. RFOs should nurture innovative thinking and action through all these means, particularly on the issue of gender equality. Influencing political decision-makers, both in national governments and in international institutions, is a goal that RFOs need to pursue with even more energy and impact.

The RFOs that have not yet taken action towards addressing research careers, and consequently have not designed strategies for inclusiveness face complex challenges. Concretely, two types of obstacles have been identified: those stemming from institutional limitations, such as a lack of resources and competences, and those stemming from cultural and ideological barriers identified in the respective national contexts, such as a lack of awareness on the topic. Even in countries

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with a comprehensive understanding of gender issues, governments have not been able to make enough resources available for this priority. Practical and effective advice emerged out of one recommendation expressed in the survey: the need for top-down European rules and policies that could counteract national resistance or inertia, such as the Horizon Europe eligibility requirement for GEPs. In fact, considering only non-mandatory European directives could potentially increase the gap between different countries, as noted above.

Nevertheless, the problem is not exclusive to the countries that do not have a favourable political environment for non-discrimination and specifically gender discrimination. Every country is susceptible to experiencing a backlash in the future. In political terms, advances are not guaranteed for good, both in national contexts and in international organisations (by effect). Opportunities to build worthy communities of practice, that is, spaces to work together, even with national authorities, and where RFOs feel a thorough sense of belonging and commitment, must be multiplied. Simultaneously, in order to spread awareness and consolidate achievements, we must invest in developing and implementing communication and dissemination strategies, without forgetting citizen engagement and to create virtuous circles.

In conclusion, our findings underscore the importance of viewing institutions as interconnected entities that can influence each other. The focus on gender has been rightly identified as the first step towards fostering more inclusive research careers. Particularly in the last decade, we have witnessed how a collective will has been translated into multiple and impactful actions, but there is still much to do. Moreover, inclusive research careers require that attention be paid to several elements of diversity[39]. Only four RFOs considered other forms of inequality besides gender. The only other ground of inequality that emerges significantly is age, even though the interconnected values of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) underlie the most frequently used terminology, supported by the principle of non-discrimination.

To promote inclusive research careers beyond gender, success factors already identified as connected to gender equality remain adequate. However, a move from a focused point (gender-inclusive research careers) to an unfocused one (inclusive research careers) requires that each RFO design a strategy identifying which elements of equality dimensions are a priority, like a phased plan to achieve maximum diversity. These strategies should be based on the study of national contexts, in particular regarding upstream inequalities, such as the kinds of inequalities experienced within the HE sector, which will likely impact negatively on inclusiveness and diversity in the R&I system. Collaborating with other national players, such as higher education and national statistics departments, could be advantageous. As one possible action, we propose broadening the scope of GEPs towards more inclusiveness and taking advantage of the existing gender equality structures at some RFOs and careers observatories and expanding their scope.

Developing the GEP´s monitoring systems, at the institutional and national levels, allows for a continuous and overarching perspective on their real impact on the systems.

[39] The Practical Guide to Supporting Diversity in Research Environment, published by Science Europe in 2024, identifies multiple elements of diversity: gender, sex if differentiated from gender, gender individual expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability, age, seniority affiliation, geographic representation, socioeconomic background, cultural background, and religion.

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Overall, it seems crucial that there should be more systematic interactions between RFOs and national policies since national strategies and policies establish the vision and the comprehensive goals for the R&I and HE system as a whole and integrate the RFOs' sphere of action into a wider context and global direction.

Importantly, ensuring at the European level and between countries some common standards as regards research careers and inclusiveness will also determine the real capacity for the effective circulation of talent, and international mobility.

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8. ANNEXES

ANNEX I - Reclassification and clustering of the Groups of Countries

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COUNTRY ACRONYM	STRATEGIES / POLICY DOCUMENTS / POLICIES INITIATIVES ON GENDER INCLUSIVE RESEARCH CAREERS	SELF CLASSIFICATION	RE-CLASSIFICATION	GROUP
	DESIGNATION	***QUESTIONS 6.1 / 6.2 / 6.2.1/ 6.2.2***		
AUSTRIA/ AT	RTI Strategy 2030- Strategy for Research Technology and Innovation of the Austrian Federal Government, objective 3	6.1=Y / 6.2=Y /6.2.2=N	6.1=Y / 6.2 =N / 6.2.1=Y / 6.2.2=N	**B**
	This Strategy is **not dedicated** to research careers, but is more broadly conceived and deals with a topic on gender equality.			
BELGIUM / BE- FWB	Plan Droit des Femmes /Women's Rights Plan 2020-2024	6.1=Y / 6.2=Y / /6.2.2=Y	6.1=Y / 6.2 =N / /6.2.1=Y / 6.2.2=Y	**B**
	This strategy is **not dedicated** to research careers, but is more broadly conceived and deals with a topic on gender equality, , on women´s rights and intersecting research careers.			
	Observatoire de la Recherche et des Carrrieres Scientifiques /FNRS /Observatory of Research and Scientific Careers	6.1=Y / 6.2=Y / 6.2.2=Y		**A**
	The Observatoire is dedicated to research careers, and has a focus on gender and a national scope			
BELGIUM / BE-FL		6,1= N		**D**
CROATIA / HR	*"Young Researchers' Career Development Project"*	6.1= Y /6.2 = N/ 6.2.1 = Y / 6.2.2= Y	6.1 = Y / 6.2= N	**D**
	The goal of the "Young Researchers' Career Development Project" is to develop an integral and stable programme of funding for **young researchers** at the doctoral and post-doctoral levels. This programme finances the development **of the scientific careers of young researchers**,and strives for continuous education and exchange of knowledge with the ultimate aim of creating a network of scientists whose skills can compete in the international scientific community. As such it is not a national policy and was reclassified under Chater 5.2 – RFO´s Policies -			
DENMARK / DK	No strategy was identified	6.1 = Y/ 6.2.= N/ 6.2.1= N / 6.2.2= N	6.1.= Y / 6.2.= N / 6.2.1= N / 6.2.2 = N	**C**
CHECK REP / CZ		6.1= N		**D**
IRELAND/ IE		6.1 = N		**D**

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GREECE / EL	No specific strategy/policy, only some policy measures on research careers identified National Strategy for Research 2015-2020 (Priority 4)- National RoadMap for the ERA http://www.gsrt.gr/News/Files/New1234/Greek%20ERA%20Strategy%20EN.pdf	6.1= Y / 6.2 =Y / 6.2.2= Y	6.1 / 6.2 =N /6.2.1=Y/	B
	Greece did not report a policy document and respective link. However further desk research revealed that there are national polices for the R&I and HE systems in place, and not only very general non-discrimination and GE policies, with some focus on the participation of women in positions of responsibility and in committees and on support training women in leadership and management			
ISRAEL / IL	Program Senior Leadership Development in Higher Education https://leadershipinacademia.com/en/	6.1=Y / 6.2=Y / /6.2.2=N	6.1= Y/ 6.2= N / 6.2.1.= N	C
	Not clearly addressing gender equality (gender balance within participants) and focused on one aspect of careers- leadership			
	Gender Fairness Plan to Increase representation of Women among Academic Staff Members Under Council for Higher Education (CHE) and Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC)	New	6.1 = Y/ 6.2= Y	A
	Multiyear plan for the higher education system – key objective – promotion of women in academia, with a focus on senior faculty members (2018-2022)- action to break down the cultural, social and organizational barriers that prevent women from moving to the next level and moving up the academic ladder. Annual gender report; special budget for activity on gender fairness; annual incentives (prizes of excellence); scholarships for outstanding women post-doctoral students; competitive budgets for solutions for recruitment and promotion of women faculty members;,			
Lithuania / LT	Career Development, Mobility and Networking opportunities	6.1= N / 6.2.= N / 6.2.1 = Y	6.1= Y / 6.2= N/ / 6.2.1= N	D
	Providing support for doctoral **students and *Early Career Researchers*** *through the Council's* **Postdoctoral** *Fellowship and Ph.D. support schemes. Thia is the most popular funding scheme for the first-stage (young researchers)* It is not a national policy and was reclassified under Chater 5.2 – RFO´s Policies -			
	WOMEN Go TECH – Empowering Talents to Discover Tech	New	6.1.= Y / 6.2.= Y	A
	Mentorship and consultation programme run by professionals, **working on gender equality** in tech initiated in 2016 by the **Agency for Science, Innovation and Technology (MITA)**			
	Young Academia	New	6.1= Y / 6.2 = N	C

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	The Young Academy of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences -brings together **young scientists** who are active, have achieved outstanding scientific results and are promising, and are developing activities in science and innovation in the country. It promotes their creative, scientific and expert activities, and represents the interests of **young scientists in Lithuania, provides** opinion **on Lithuanian science policy issues,and facilitates the pursuit of academic careers**			
NORWAY / NO	Strategy for the recruitment and career development of young researchers	6.1 =Y / 6.2 =Y	6.1=Y / 6.2= Y=Y/ 6.2.2=Y	**A**
	This strategy is dedicated to the research careers of young researchers, with a focus on gender			
	NOR-CAM - A toolbox for recognition and rewards in academic careers	6.1 =Y / 6.2 =Y	(6.1=Y / 6.2= Y)	**A**
	This is **not a national authority policy**, but rather a national toolbox developed by Universities Norway. It is recommended and voluntary and, national in scope. This toolboxdeals with recognition and rewards – and as such address a very important part of the career *value chain*, assessment – with a focus on gender. Complementary policy			
POLAND / PL	No strategy was identified	6.1 = Y/ 6.2.= N / 6.2.1= N/ 6.2.2= n		**C**
PORTUGAL / PT	ENIND - National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2018-2030 - Portugal + Equal, Council of Ministers Resolution 61/208, May 21,/ Estrategia Nacional para a Igualdade e Não Discriminação 2018-2030 - Portugal + Igual /	6.1=Y / 6.2=Y	6.1 = Y / 6.2.=N / 6.2.1=Y	**B**
	This strategy is a **broadly conceived policy on gender equality and women's** rights across society anddoes not specifically address the R&I system, but addresses intersecting research careers and inclusion with respect to;: • women **in the management and governance bodies** of HEIS (43% 2017 to 50% 2030; • **women researchers with R&D activities** (43% 2017 to 50% 2030) • **associate professors, principal coordinators and full professors** (30% 2016 to 50% 2030) • the feminization of higher educations degrees in ICT (18,5% 2015 to 33,3% 2030) • sensitizing HEIs to **integrating the gender perspective** and **gender stereotype deconstruction** in graduates and master degrees. Since this is not a strategy dedicated to the R&I system, we considered as determinants the Laws on Careers. So all in all, PT will be classified as Cluster B			**B**
SWEDEN / SE	Gender Equality Policy in Sweeden - A Feminist Government	6.1=Y / 6.2=Y /6.2.2=N	6.1=Y/6.2 =N/ 6.2.1= Y/ 6.2.2 =Y	**B**
	This policy is not dedicated to Research Careers with a topic on gender, but more broadly conceived with some insight on inclusive aspects			

Figure 37 - ***A list of policies and identified Groups of Countries, with re-classification rationales***

6.1 Are there national strategies/policies/policy measures in place, specifically focused on research careers in higher education and research and innovation institutions in your country?
6.2 Do these national strategies/policies/policy instruments promote gender equality?
6.2.1 If no, is the topic of inclusive research careers addressed in more broadly conceived national policies or strategies for the higher education and research institutions (e.g., strategic plans, national research and innovation policies etc.)?

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6.2.2 Do these strategies/policies/policy instruments also include intersections of gender equality with other grounds of inequality and power relations?

COUNTRY ACRONYM	LAWS ON GENDER INCLUSIVE RESEARCH CAREERS	SELF CLASSIFICATION	RE-CLASSIFICATION	GROUP
	DESIGNATION	***QUESTIONS 6.1 / 6.2 / 6.2.1/ 6.2.2***		
GREECE / EL	Law - L. 4604/2019 Official Gazette A 50/26-03-2019,			**D**
	A very general Law, not focused on the R&I system			
PORTUGAL /PT	Decree Law 112/2021, on the regime for promotion to intermediate and top categories of higher education teaching careers and scientific research careers, (2021) Decree Law 124/99, on the Statute of Research Careers, amended by the a new statute of research careers (Minister Council, (2023) Law 26/2019, Balanced representation regime for men and women in leadership positions in PA, including public HEIs (March 2019).	6.1=Y / 6.2=Y /6.2.2=N 6.1. / 6.2=N 6.2.1= Y	6.1=Y / 6.2 =N	**C** **B**
	Decree Law 112, dedicated to research and teaching careers in HE, with some focus on gender (gender balanced representation in panels, following Law 26/2019, March Law 26/2019 is not dedicated to research careers with a topic on gender, but is more broadly conceived across all sectors of PA, including HEIs, and deals with segment of careers (leadership positions). Decree Law 124/99, dedicated to research careers, and revised in 2023,does not address gender equality. These laws, being specifically on research careers, are not clearly addressing the inclusive aspects of careers, in spite of the concern about balanced panels.			
SPAIN / ES	Law 17/2022 that modifies the Law 14/2011 of Science, Technology and Innovation / Ley 17/2022, de 5 de septiembre, por la que se modifica la Ley 14/2011, de 1 de junio, de la Ciencia, la Tecnología y la Innovación.	6.1=Y / 6.2=Y / /6.2.2=Y	6.1=Y / 6.2 =N /6.2.1=Y / 6.2.2=Y	**B**
	Programs to support progress in women´s research careers safeguarding equality and preventing dropouts; mechanisms to evaluate and follow up on the implementation and gender impact of the measures and instruments; measures for women´s innovative entrepreneurship; measures to integrate intersectionality in the design of policies for gender equality in science and innovation […,][40] .			

Figure 38 - ***A list of laws and identified Groups of Countries, with re-classification rationales***

[40] Programas para apoyar el progreso de las mujeres en la carrera de investigación en condiciones de igualdad para evitar el abandono ; Mecanismos de seguimiento periódico para evaluar el grado de ejecución y el impacto de género de las medidas e instrumentos implementados; Medidas para emprendimiento innovador de las Mujeres; Medidas para integrar la interseccionalidad tanto en el diseño de las políticas de igualdad de género en la ciencia y la innovación como en el contenido de la investigación y en la transferencia del conocimiento

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ANNEX II– A mapping of strategies / policy documents on Gender Inclusive Research Careers and other sources of information, and the most commonly used terminology

STRATEGIES, POLICIES AND POLICY MEASURES

GROUP A

COUNTRY ACRONYM	STRATEGIES / POLICY DOCUMENTS ON GENDER INCLUSIVE RESEARCH CAREERS AND OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION	TERMINOLOGY	RESEARCH CAREER VALUE CHAIN
	GROUP A		
BE- Belgium (FWB)	Plan Droit des Femmes /Women's Rights Plan 2020-2024	/reconciliation of private and professional life / rebalancing participation / professional integration / representation of women & removing obstacles /mobility / productivity criteria *gender equality*	Recruitment and working conditions Career development and progress
	Observatoire de la Recherche et des Carrrières Scientifiques /FNRS /Observatory of Research and Scientific Careers	definition of position taking/ balanced participation / academic research careers/ recruitment *equality between men and women* /	Recruitment and working conditions

Figure 39 - ***A list of strategies, policies and policy measures and terminology - Belgium***

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COUNTRY ACRONYM	STRATEGIES / POLICY DOCUMENTS ON GENDER INCLUSIVE RESEARCH CAREERS AND OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION	TERMINOLOGY	RESEARCH CAREER VALUE CHAIN
	GROUP A		
NORWAY / NO	Strategy for the recruitment and career development of young researchers	minimum period for postdoctoral position / positions: senior lecturer, lecturer and specialist candidate / international definition or unitary use of ”postdoctoral fellow” competences and skills / flexibility / breadth of competences & long-term competence and recruitment needs / professionally specialised / recruitment and competence policy working conditions transparency and recruitment culture / competition /power structures / lack of career guidance/ opportunities / lack of competences in HR Management / postdoctoral programs / uncertain career prospects /instable career paths / career barriers / tenured research and teaching positions / tenure track position / extended / temporary contracts / temporary employment / permanent positions / versus independent researcher profile / postdoctoral precariat / recruitment and competence policy / unemployment / research as time limited projects / impact in long-term and pioneering research projects / competitive salaries / salary ranges	Recognition of research profession Skills Recruitment and working conditions

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	Strategy for the recruitment and career development of young researchers (cont)	assessment and reward system / DORA[41]/ versatile assessment versus strengthening *diversity and gender equality* / excessive focus on competition / use of the positions of researchers nationally and internationally/ career choices / multiscale nature of policies / complex regulatory landscape / international dimension of research career (immigrants and emigrants) / *gender balance* on recruitment patterns / *inequalities* of recruitment processes / *balance* in top academic positions /	Career development and progression Circulation of talents
NORWAY / NO	NOR-CAM - A toolbox for recognition and rewards in academic careers	breadth of competences job vacancy announcement / /assessment / research quality and academic careers / quantitative metrics /system framework: quality and excellence / /balance quantitative and qualitative / multiple competences / multiple results/ activities / open science principles / transparent assessment / visibility of merit / /automatic CV system engaging internationally *gender balance and diversity assessment processes* /	Skills Recruitment and working conditions Career development and progression Circulation of talents

Figure 40 - ***A list of strategies, policies and policy measures and terminology - Norway***

[41] San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment

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GROUP B

COUNTRY ACRONYM	STRATEGIES / POLICY DOCUMENTS ON GENDER INCLUSIVE RESEARCH CAREERS AND OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION	TERMINOLOGY	RESEARCH CAREER VALUE CHAIN
	GROUP B		
AUSTRIA/ AT	RTI Strategy 2030- Strategy for Research Technology and Innovation of the Austrian Federal Government, objective 3	talents and skills / transferability in educational institutions / entrepreneurial careers / mobility / business sector / career planning / attractiveness of research careers/ *gender equality and diversity/ equal opportunity /*	Skills / Career Development and progression
	The whole Austrian University Development Plan 2022-2027, Vienna, December 2019, updated with Annex 1 according to § 12b Abs. 3 UG, in October 2020	research environment / employment / attractive career / permanent- temporary contracts / working conditions / career concepts / career model / permeability of career paths / graduates career & career planning / career monitoring research culture /integrative culture/ selection process /interdisciplinarity open research *gender equality / gender and diversity*	Recruitment and working conditions Career development and progression
	University Development Plan, 2019	career holders/ career stages career concepts / career development /career model / tenure track / career breaks /returns to work /dual career service / interdisciplinarity /young talent /care obligations / *gender / gender balance /disability*	Recognition of research profession Recruitment and working conditions

Figure 41 - ***A list of strategies, policies, and policy measures and terminology - Austria***

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COUNTRY ACRONYM	STRATEGIES / POLICY DOCUMENTS ON GENDER INCLUSIVE RESEARCH CAREERS AND OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION	TERMINOLOGY	RESEARCH CAREER VALUE CHAIN
	GROUP B		
GREECE / EL	National Strategy for Research 2015-2020 (Priority 4, ERA RoadMap)	minimum representation/ women in leadership and management/ *inequalities in research teams / gender hierarchies*	Career development and progression

Figure 42 – *A list of strategies, policies and policy measures and terminology - Greece*

COUNTRY ACRONYM	STRATEGIES / POLICY DOCUMENTS ON GENDER INCLUSIVE RESEARCH CAREERS AND OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION	TERMINOLOGY	RESEARCH CAREER VALUE CHAIN
	GROUP B		
SPAIN / ES	Estrategia Espanõla de Ciencia, Tecnologia y Inovacion	/ mobility / opportunities / scientific itinerary / technological itinerary / tenure track / *gender balance / gender perspective*	Recruitment and working conditions

Figure 43 - *A list of strategies, policies and policy measures and terminology - Spain*

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COUNTRY ACRONYM	STRATEGIES / POLICY DOCUMENTS ON GENDER INCLUSIVE RESEARCH CAREERS AND OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION	TERMINOLOGY	RESEARCH CAREER VALUE CHAIN
	GROUP B		
ISRAEL / IL	Program Senior Leadership Development in Higher Education	management skills/ leadership skills / leadership culture/ academic leadership/ leadership state of mind /	Skills
	Gender Fairness Plan to Increase representation of Women among Academic Staff Members	recruitment / promotion of women / representation of women / senior academic staff /decision makers/ senior academic officers/ representation in types of engineering/ role and expectations of women / home- life and academic career / academic careers / barriers self assessment /	Recruitment and working conditions Career developmen t and progression

Figure 44 - ***A list of strategies, policies, and policy measures and terminology - Israel***

COUNTRY ACRONYM	STRATEGIES / POLICY DOCUMENTS ON GENDER INCLUSIVE RESEARCH CAREERS AND OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION	TERMINOLOGY	RESEARCH CAREER VALUE CHAIN
	GROUP B		
PORTUGAL / PT	ENIND – Estrategia Nacional para a Igualdade e Não Discriminação 2018-2030 – Portugal + Igual / National Strategy for Equality and Non Discrimination 2018-2030 – Portugal + Equal, Council of Ministers Resolution 61/208, may 21,	*equality/ non discrimination / balanced participation / women and men equality perspective / **intersectional** advanced education and training*	
	Revamped ENIND – Action Plans – Period 2023-2026	*multidisciplinary knowledge on women and men / effective equality/*	Targets on Career developmen t& progression

Figure 45 - ***A list of strategies, policies, and policy measures and terminology – Portugal***

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COUNTRY ACRONYM	STRATEGIES / POLICY DOCUMENTS ON GENDER INCLUSIVE RESEARCH CAREERS AND OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION	TERMINOLOGY	RESEARCH CAREER VALUE CHAIN
	GROUP B		
SWEDEN / SE	Gender Equality policy in Sweeden – A feminist Government (2024) https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/510011/IPOL_STU(2015)510011_EN.pdf (2015)	/ parental benefit /unpaid housework /care work / / pay gap/ part time work *gender equality/ gender mainstreaming / gender parity / gender neutral*	Recruitment and working conditions

Figure 46 - *A list of strategies, policies, and policy measures and terminology - Sweden*

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COUNTRY ACRONYM	LAWS ON GENDER INCLUSIVE RESEARCH CAREERS AND OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION	TERMINOLOGY	RESEARCH CAREER VALUE CHAIN
	GROUP B		
AUSTRIA / AT	Federal Act on Equal Treatment in the Federal Government	career advancement / claim for compensation / salary /working conditions / open ended employment relationship / impairment *equal treatment principle /under representation /disadvantages*	Recruitment and working conditions Diffuse - General focus on labour market, not R&I system
	Entire legislation for Universities of Applied Sciences Act, version of 11/11/2022, Federal Law on Universities of Applied Sciences	*gender equitable /gender equality / nondiscrimination principle*	Diffuse- Gender focus in R&I system, but no focus on careers -
	Entire legislation for Universities Act 2002, version of 11/11/2022, Federal Law on the Organization of Universities and their Studies (University Law 2002 – UG),	compatibility childcare academic career / career models / permanent employment /social permeability / managerial positions *gender equitable* / advancement of women /	Recruitment and working conditions Diffuse- Gender focus in R&I system, scattered focus on inclusive research careers
ISRAEL/ IL	Law on Equal Opportunities at Work, 1988	employment / working conditions / reservation of rights (pregnancy; childbirth, breastfeeding; fertility): **parental rights/parental leave**; right in parentage / daycare services *professional training / education / severance pay / retirement* *equal pay law / nondiscrimination /masculine and feminine language job promotion /;*	Recruitment and working conditions Diffuse - General focus on labor market, not R&I system

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PORTUGAL /PT	Decree Law 112/2021, on the regime for promotion to intermediate and top categories of higher education teaching careers and scientific research careers (2021)	career recruitment / career progression / career statute/ contracts (openended) /merit assessment / *gender balance / gender representation in panels*	Career recruitment Career development and progression
	Decree Law 124/99, on the Statute of Research Careers,revised by the a new statute of research careers (Minister Council, (2023)	--	
	Law 26 2019, Balanced representation regime for men and women in leadership positions in PA, including public HEIs, (March 2019)	*balanced representation / minimum threshold*	measure on representation, broader than the R&I and HE systems
SPAIN / ES	Law 17/2022 that modifies the Law 14/2011 of Science, Technology and Innovation / Ley 17/2022, de 5 de septiembre, por la que se modifica la Ley 14/2011, de 1 de junio, de la Ciencia, la Tecnología y la Innovación.	/information/ training/ advice /mentorship / personnel capacitation / support networks / conciliation / mobility / awareness / integration /traditional roles career development research personnel / scientific management horizontal career / horizontal and vertical promotion /dual approach / permanent contracts / attraction of women to technology, engineering and innovation / dropouts / principles for balanced composition and progress[42] /assessment /unconscious biases /recognition /prestige / *effective equality /inclusive / diverse & direct and indirect discrimination & equalitarian environment &* ***/intersectionality*** / /gender impact /gender biases	Recruitment and working conditions. Career development and progression
SWEDEN/ SE	Swedish Higher Education Act	*Equality between women and men*	
	Higer Education Ordinance	*Gender equality / gender equal representation /*	

Figure 47 - ***A list of laws and terminology - Austria, Israel, Portugal, Spain, Sweden***

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COUNTRY ACRONYM	GENERAL LAW ON GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSIVENESS AND OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION	TERMINOLOGY	RESEARCH CAREER VALUE CHAIN
	GROUP D		
GREECE / EL	Law - L. 4604/2019 Official Gazette A 50/26-03-2019,	*inclusive /neutral language /gender equality promotion / promoting gender equality / gender mainstreaming /participation of women in higher positions and committees /training in leadership and management/*	Diffuse- Gender focus in R&I system, scattered focus on inclusive research careers

Figure 48 - ***A list of laws and terminology - Greece***

[42] " *igualdad efectiva, inclusivo, diverso, abandono, información, formación, asesoramiento, mentoría, establecimiento de redes de apoyo, conciliation, movilidad, conscienciacion, integracion, superacion de los roles tradicionales, impacto de genero, sesgos de genero, reconocimiento, prestigio, entornos laborales igualitarios, diversos e inclusivos, microcomportaminetos, no discriminacion direta e indireta en la contratacion y el desarrollo de la carrera , interseccionalidad, de formación, asesoramiento y capacitación, personal investigador, personal de gestión científica, y personal evaluador, sesgos inconscientes, incluidos los sesgos de género, carrera horizontal, promoción vertical y horizontal, abordaje dual, atraccion de talento femenino, en areas de ciencia, tecnologia, ingenieria y la innovacion; retencion e apoyo al desarrollo para que no abandonen la carrera científica profesional; principios de composicion equilibrada; progreso en la carrera"*

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ANNEX III- Case studies and good practices

Case studies and good practices

PL: The government's programme "**Baby at university**" ("Maluch na uczelni") was a programme for the development **of childcare institutions for children up to the age of three**. It was intended to be an **incentive for universities** to create **family-friendly conditions** and to make it easier to combine **study and work with childcare**. Children of students, doctoral students and university staff can benefit from **professional childcare**. Thanks to the programme, more than 1,400 childcare places for the youngest have been created at **43 public and non-public universities** across **Poland** (for instance: University of Warsaw, Polish-Japanese Academy of Information Technology, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin).

LT: Ministry of Education and Science of Lithuania issued an alteration of **The Law on Higher Education and Research** (Article 66 (7) and 66 (4) - if a **request** by a member of the teaching or research staff is made, **the period of pregnancy, birth, and childcare leave can** be **excluded** from the **regulated time frame in which the minimal qualifying requirements should be met**. The **tenure can be extended** for the time of **leave as well**. The target group for this measure is not only one university but rather researchers nationwide.

EL: Integration **of a modern culture** which may be change **possible conventional perceptions**.

Improvement **of research activity's quality** by creating **interdisciplinary research groups** and **promoting gender balance in them**.

S**trengthening of public bodies' excellence** by **encouraging the work of women** in **its human resources** (researchers, technical or administrative staff).

Decision-making should be done with the participation of more women in these processes, ensuring diversity of opinion.

The **limitation of brain drain** and the **attraction of highly qualified women from abroad**.

BE-FWB: Chapter 4 of the following document : https://www.ares-ac.be/images/Femmes_sciences/Rapport-interinstutionnel-sur-l-etat-de-l-egalite-de-genre-2018-2019.pdf

DK: Examples of national events in the past ten years are:

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Danish National Research Foundation, annual meetings 2014 (Getting all Talents in Play) and 2018 (Diversity and Excellence in Recruitment and Career Development) https://dg.dk/om-fonden/publikationer/andre-publikationer/

Gender Diversity Roundtable https://www.genderdiversity.dk/: Universities are Key to Unlocking Diversity in Denmark https://www.genderdiversity.dk/_files/ugd/a7c19d_4c611167d96e42ceb6ab3a0027dd3963.pdf

(Boston Consulting Group report), 2017

Innovation Fund Denmark (with McKinsey & Company): 2018: Report and conference on Bridging the Talent Gap in Denmark – insights from female representation in STEM https://innovationsfonden.dk/sites/default/files/2018-10/gender-diversity-in-denmark_web_3_small_0.pdf

The Danish Council for Research and Innovation Policy,

- Report (with Damvad Analytics) 2018 : report on the Academic career paths: https://ufm.dk/forskning-og-innovation/rad-og-udvalg/danmarks-forsknings-og-innovationspolitiske-rad/publikationer/publikationer-fra-danmarks-forsknings-og-innovationspolitiske-rad/videnskabeligt-personales-karriereveje9b284352666340db9a17940829a0bd5d

- Report: Careers in research, 2019 (in Danish) https://ufm.dk/publikationer/2019/DFiRr_karriereforskningen.pdf

- Memorandum: Recruitment patterns at Danish Universities, 2019 (in Danish) https://ufm.dk/forskning-og-innovation/rad-og-udvalg/danmarks-forsknings-og-innovationspolitiske-rad/publikationer/artikler/bilag-3-rekrutteringsmonstre-pa-de-danske-universiteter-dfir-notat.pdf

Independent Research Fund Denmark:

- Report 2013: Gender and Research in the Independent Research Fund Denmark https://dff.dk/aktuelt/publikationer/kon-og-forskning-i-det-frie-forskningsrad,- Analysis 2021: Diversity in research and research funding (in Danish) https://dff.dk/aktuelt/publikationer/analyserapport-diversitet-i-forskning-og-forskningsfinansiering

Data on recruitment and population of Academic staff is collected from all universities annually. This data is also the foundation for data used in SHE figures. Before 2017, this data was irregularly made available in national reports. From 2017 and onwards, this has been formalized and is in principle issued annually in a report on Men and Women at Danish Universities, 'Talentbarometret', which has been published 2017, 2018, and 2019. https://ufm.dk/publikationer/publikationer/?SearchableText=talentb

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ANNEX IV– Social Security: answers to questions 5.13 and 5.13.1

Question 5.13
In the context of the social security system coverage, has your organisation implemented more favourable regulations or practices than the ones generally available/applied in the legal system (Labour Code)? Types of researcher positions - permanent or temporary – and PhD students with fellowships are to be considered.

Question 5.13.1
If yes, please explain how, having in mind the following situations (illness, unemployment, work-life balance, maternity and parental leave / support - e.g., length and allowance during the leave, retirement, other - please describe).

IRC

The IRC's parents leave policy covers all postgraduate and postdoctoral awardees of the IRC. It also encompasses principal investigator awardees of the IRC where the awardee's salary is partly or wholly funded by the IRC under the award, and all team members funded through such project awards. In the case of salaried employees who are entitled to state supports for maternity, paternity or adoptive leave the IRC will provide additional funds to top-up the state benefits to the level of their salary at the time leave was taken. In the case of postgraduate students or salaried employees who have not reached the minimum social protection payments necessary to qualify for state benefits, the IRC will pay the full salary or stipend costs for the duration of the approved leave, The award duration will also be extended by the amount of leave taken.
In relation of retired staff the IRC has a Policy for Emeritus/'Retired' Academic Staff Members which permits such individuals to apply for IRC funding provided they have the support of the host institution.

DFF

For the funding instruments that have fixed criteria for maximum PhD age, DFF gives consideration to leaves of absence such as maternity/paternity/parental leave, illness, bereavement or family care leave (as well as military service, humanitarian aid work, and in some cases, clinical stays). For applicants who have been on maternity/paternity leave after obtaining their PhD, the actual number of weeks of leave, multiplied by 2, will be deducted from the applicant's PhD age. The period of maternity/paternity leave, including exact starting and ending dates, must be stated in the candidate's CV. However, the maximum amount of weeks that can be deducted are 52 weeks times two per maternity/paternity leave.

Forte

There is a time limit for when you are eligible to apply for a Forte postdoc grant after you have obtained you doctoral degree. Time spent being on parental leave can, however, be excluded when assessing this criterion, e.g. you should not be disadvantaged for using the legal right to be on parental leave.

FNRS

Social security cover for researchers is the same for everyone in terms of sickness and disability insurance, holiday entitlement, unemployment benefit, pension entitlement and other social benefits covered (parental leave, maternity leave, birth leave....).

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In the event of maternity leave, birth leave for the co-parent or adoption leave, the research mandate is suspended during the maternity leave (automatic)/birth or adoption leave (on request) and the mandate is extended for the duration of this suspension.
In addition, the FNRS grants the researcher on maternity leave, birth leave for the co-parent or adoption leave, a supplement to the mutual insurance company allowance to compensate for the loss of income and guarantee the monthly income.

FCT

"Measures developed by FCT only have a discretionary positive impact on beneficiaries (researchers - permanent or temporary – and PhD students with fellowships) concerning work-life balance and maternity and parental leave dispositions. As regards illness, unemployment and retirement, general Social Security regulation is applied.
FCT scholars keep the full amount of the studentship along the whole period in parental leave–while Social Security System (SSS) reimbursements reflect the effective levels of discounts of scholars to SSS, and thereby tend to be lower. As such this is a positive incentive/support to more gender balanced research environment, in the first moment because, women use more often this mechanism, in particular regarding pregnancy and maternity duties. On the other hand, because men can also use, the parental leaves on the same level playing ground, sharing the parental responsibility in a more balanced way.
In more detail: Current legal framework – the general Labor Code (Article 35 to 65) and the specific Regulations, namely the FCT Research Fellowship Holder Statute (the article 9, point 1, subparagraph f), allow for the suspension of the activity of a Fellowship in multiple situations, and in particular when parental duties are at stake. Research Fellowship Holder Statute sets a more favorable picture, going beyond the Labor Code, while further stating the possibility of restarting the work and the project time count after the interruption. Article 9, point 6: when the suspension of activities on the account of parental motives takes place, the payment of the fellowship may be maintained by the project /or by the R&D Funding Agency (FCT) during the corresponding period (while not having any payment by other applicable subsidies, as Social Security), and re start the project time count in the first working day of activity of the fellowship after the interruption. This means that, once the fellowship holder choses to be granted by the fellowship (and not by social security subsidies or alike), the respective payment must be maintained for the corresponding additional time."

FRRB

In FRRB Calls for Proposals we support the applications of female researchers (e.g.., compulsory minimum number of women PIs in collaborative projects, requesting the submission of a GEP together with the applications, including in FRRB Calls for Proposals specific measures for maternity/paternity leave).

RCL

RCL giving the same term for Post Doc student (women's and men's) the same period of time for taking care of child.

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ANNEX V– Additional information about FNRS, FWO, ETAG, NCN, Forte, DFF and IRC

Fund for Scientific Research-FNRS (F.R.S. – FNRS) – Belgium FWB

https://www.frs-fnrs.be/fr/

- This RFO already has a long track record in supporting researchers' careers.

For nearly 95 years, the Fund for Scientific Research-FNRS, has been a central player in fundamental research in Belgium, more precisely in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. Based on the sole criterion of scientific excellence, support financing of the FNRS is carried out in several ways: temporary or permanent remuneration of researchers, funding research teams, equipment financing, participation in international networks and programs, the allocation of scholarships and credit promoting scientific exchanges, and the awarding of scientific prizes. The FNRS is also responsible for promoting European research and innovation programs among researchers.

One of the missions of FNRS is just funding researchers at different stages of their careers, promoting the development of all fields of science. More recently, as an example, one of the measures from the FNRS Strategic plan to 2015-2019 (PHARE II) is the implementation of 10 new qualified researcher positions (permanent contracts) created for more career prospects for the brightest young researchers. Following up on a more recent concern, in the PHARE 20.25 is registered the intention to set up a mentoring program which the objective is to offer postdoctoral researchers support in preparing for a career outside the academic world at the end of their funding. Nonetheless, in 2018, under the responsibility of the FNRS, we can see the creation of the Observatoire de la Recherche et des Carrrières Scientifiques (Research and scientific Careers Observatory).

One of the missions of this Observatory is give particular attention to the various obstacles linked to research careers: stereotypes and discrimination linked to gender, constraints linked to international mobility requirements, impact of the pressure to publish at an early stage of the career, etc. The results of surveys and analyses are systematically published on the site (translated from French).

- Regarding the issue of gender in research, the FNRS has paid particular attention to this issue for several years. This organisation recognizes that the equality between women and men is difficult to achieve in a short period of time. It appears fundamental all the related activities and measures developed by FNRS, structured within a real gender equality policy, are made more visible and, above all, are reflected both in strategic and operational levels. This results in several measures like as:

- the constitution of an internal Gender Working Group, in October 2021.
- the development of a FNRS gender equality plan (2022-2025), as requested by the European Commission, which therefore represents a great opportunity to highlight what already exists and develop new areas of intervention,
- the production of annual reports on the state of gender equality at the FNRS, since 2015. The production of studies and statistics allow the highlight of a situation unfavourable to a category of people and, by extension, may lead to a pertinent change in the rules and better gender equality. As an employer, FNRS attaches particular importance to the working conditions of researchers, so that women, just like men, can achieve their full potential in terms of careers. In 2020, FNRS employs nearly 1700 researchers who work within the six universities of the FWB.

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- the participation in several collective actions, like the *Comité Femmes et Sciences* (Women and Science Committee, FWB scope), the *Comité des Personnes de Contact Genre* (Gender Contact Persons Committee, FWB scope), the reseau Gender-net-Plus (Gender-net-Plus network; European scope), GA+ (European scope), Women in Digital, Academia-Net (European scope).
- at the internal level the implementation of regulatory measures so that women benefit from the same chances that men, particularly, following maternity and, in the event of harassment or gender-related violence, are effectively protected.

- For instance, in the Rapport annuel 2021 (Annual report 2021), we can observe points where the issues research careers and gender are clearly articulated. The ninth point of the respective index, in an overall of ten, is gender policy. However, this issue is called for other precedent sections. In the 4.1 section - Research Assessment, the first references to gender policy appear. The FNRS and its *Comité d'Accompagnement* (COMA) have been made aware of issues of gender balance within the scientific commissions (CS) and strives to increase the representation of women at the level of CS members and presidency. The proportion of women among CS members increased from 16.2% in 2015 to 42.3% at the start of 2022.

- However, it is in the GEP of FNRS where the need to include women in research careers is more visible. About the issue 'Gender equality in recruitment and advancement career', the main dimensions of the actions to be developed are that:

- increasing the number of women evaluators involved in the research assessment processes under the responsibility of FNRS,
- training evaluators of funding applications on unconscious gender bias,
- ensuring equal opportunities between women and men in access to research careers and in the following promotions, taking into account the starting pool,
- ensuring equal opportunities between women and men with regard to mobility experiences

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Research Foundation (FWO) – Belgium-Flanders

https://www.fwo.be/en/the-fwo/research-policy/hr-strategy/gender-equality-plan/

The Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO) attaches great importance to the creation of equal opportunities for all researchers relying on the FWO for the funding of their research. This is reflected in an equal opportunity policy that covers different areas of interest, including gender equality. Gender equality is a fundamental value that benefits research and development (R&D) by improving its quality and relevance, attracting and retaining more talents and ensuring that everyone can fully realise their potential.

- Equal opportunity policy

The sole selection criterion is the outstanding quality of researcher and research proposal, regardless of scientific discipline, host institution, gender, nationality, ethnicity, or political or religious beliefs. The FWO attaches great importance to the creation of equal opportunities for all researchers relying on the FWO for the funding of their research. This is reflected in an equal opportunity policy that covers different areas of interest.

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All information is published both in Dutch and in English so that all relevant information is also accessible to foreign language speakers. To avoid any discrimination based on age, the FWO uses relative scientific seniority (the number of years of research experience) as an eligibility requirement for fellowship and research project applications. This allows for a more correct evaluation of researchers whose careers have been temporarily interrupted. Furthermore, the FWO does not impose a nationality requirement. In the e-portal, there is not only a male (M) and female (F) but also a gender neutral (X) check box. This has been done in response to changing social needs.

The FWO oversees the composition of the expert panels for the evaluation of project proposals and fellowship applications. As a rule, the FWO strives to achieve a diverse composition of the expert panels [in terms of gender, foreign institution, non-academic organisation, etc.]. More specifically in terms of gender, the FWO endeavours to ensure that no more than two-thirds of the members of its expert panels are of the same gender […] *panel members are made aware of unconscious biases in evaluating project and fellowship applications* […] *Besides informing the panel members, it is also important to continuously analyse the evaluation procedures and monitor the success rates.*

For ongoing fellowships and projects (FWO fellowship holders), family-friendly provisions and flexible working conditions should help to better balance the gender mix and stem the outflow of female (postdoctoral) researchers leaving the academic sector (the so-called 'leaky pipeline'). The FWO provides, among other things, the necessary flexibility for dealing with medical and social needs. Thus, for example, all fellows, both at predoctoral and postdoctoral level, receive a bench fee to pay for the costs of their own research. Where necessary, researchers can use this bench fee to pay for medical support in overcoming physical disabilities or functional impairments. The FWO also makes it possible to move up the seniority limits by one year for each pregnancy and to extend an ongoing fellowship one-time by one year in case of a pregnancy during that fellowship. This possibility exists for both PhD and postdoctoral fellows.

Every FWO fellowship holder can spend up to 20 percent of the available time on activities other than the actual PhD or postdoctoral research, so long as they contribute to the researcher's development. Examples are activities in the context of the doctoral training, academic education or service provision or an internship at an external organisation.

Postdoctoral researchers, in particular, have the opportunity to suspend their fellowship to enable them to take up a remunerated full-time research fellowship or grant at a university, a scientific institute, within a company or organisation.

In an international context, the FWO regularly accepts requests to participate in studies on equal opportunity in academia and attends scientific congresses and symposiums to keep abreast of current trends and best practices.

The FWO is a member of the following organisations which are committed to promoting equal opportunity in the academic community: Gender and Diversity Working Group of Science Europe, AcademiaNet, European Platform of Women Scientists.

As a Member of the European Commission's HR Strategy Group, the FWO has elaborated a strategy to promote research careers in Flanders. On the basis of this strategy, the European Commission awarded the FWO with the 'HR excellence in research' label in 2010, thereby recognising the efforts by the FWO to maximise career opportunities for researchers.

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The FWO also conducts a gender-neutral policy for its administrative staff by applying a neutral job classification system and providing detailed job descriptions and profiles based on the provisions of the Flemish government. The FWO has classified the jobs into levels, assigning a salary scale and a functional career to each job. A functional career plans future salary scales based on seniority within a given job. This is done for each job, so that the remuneration for a given job is the same regardless of the gender of the job holder. In addition, the FWO pays attention to a balanced gender distribution within the different job levels, resulting in a sound gender balance.

- Monitoring

The FWO reports both internally and externally on applications, awards and success rates of predoctoral and postdoctoral fellowships, travel grants and fundamental research projects by gender of the (lead) applicant. In addition to the traditional male (M) and female (F) options, the FWO has included a gender neutral (X) option in line with current societal attitudes towards gender division. For fellowships, there is also limited reporting on the applicant's nationality (Belgian, belonging to the EEA, not belonging to the EEA).

The FWO is exploring the possibilities of gaining an insight into the ethnicity/nationality of the applicants, taking into account relevant legislation and regulations in the field of privacy law, GDPR, etc.

- Crucial aspects

The FWO recognized as crucial the following aspects of its action:

- monitoring gender aspects in funding applications, and maintaining vigilance, despite the progress being made,
- training initiatives on gender and diversity to policy officers, to be updated about new developments (workshops, conferences, etc.),
- training initiatives on gender and diversity to panel members through a set of instructional videos, that are elaborated on writing evaluation reports, the role of rapporteur, preparation for the pre-selection and panel meeting, and the dangers of unconscious bias. Planning the future, the possibility of designating a gender vanguard by panel should be explored.
- *FWO sets high requirements for the supervisors of its PhD fellows or postdoctoral researchers. These requirements are explicitly described in the 'profile of the good supervisor' and state, among other things, that the supervisor must create and maintain a safe environment for the proper functioning of the researchers.*

Estonian Research Council (ETAG) – Estonia

https://etag.ee/en/

- Gender Equality Plan (GEP) of the Estonian Research Council (ETAG)

The current state of gender equality in Estonian research has not reached the equality of men and women in terms of their position and opportunities. Regarding the scope of research career, there exist a great gender imbalance across academic positions, but also the proportion of women in the decision-making bodies regarding research policy is modest, and considerably more men apply for and receive research grants than women.

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The aim of the Estonian Research Council is to promote the attention to the aspects of gender in all its activities, without compromising on competence and quality, and contributing to promoting gender equality in the Estonian research landscape. *Research will benefit the society the most if the background of the specialists involved in conducting and supporting research is as diverse as possible.* For this purpose, the GEP was defined with two main goals:

- to ensure equal opportunities for all researchers, irrespective of gender (as well as sexual orientation, nationality, age, and other characteristics),
- to guarantee a supportive work environment for the employees of the Council.

From the GEP, a plan designed for the period 2022-2027, we focus on measures that can have an impact in terms of research career:

- adhering to the principles of equal treatment of all people, refraining from any form of discrimination based on gender (also from indirect discrimination, which occurs when seemingly neutral rules give an advantage to some researchers or target groups). Among other things, by paying particular attention to the impact that being on parental leave, or on military service, has on one's research career.

- improving gender balance among the applicants and recipients of research grants, awards, and funding by:

  - presenting the information regarding research funding calls and contests in an inclusive and gender-neutral manner,
  - monitoring the gender distribution among the applicants and recipients of research grants, awards, and funding,
  - presenting gender-disaggregated data of the applicants and recipients of research grants, awards, and funding on the website of the Council,
  - monitoring the success rates of men and women applicants,
  - drawing the attention of the decision-makers to possible unconscious bias and to the importance of considering the aspects of gender,
  - emphasising the issue of gender imbalance among the applicants and recipients of research grants, awards, and funding, during information days and other meetings with the target groups and their representatives,

- improving gender balance and raising gender awareness among the members of the evaluation panels, in order to make fair and inclusive decisions by:

  - considering the representation of the underrepresented gender of at least 40% to be a good gender balance,
  - in case of research fields dominated by one gender, the underrepresented gender has to be, if at all possible, represented in the decision-making body in the same proportion as it is in the general population of that particular research field,
  - paying more attention to gender when searching for the experts,
  - preferring a candidate of underrepresented gender if the candidates are of equal standing.

The Department of R&D Analysis (analyys@etag.ee) is responsible for executing and monitoring the GEP. The responsibility of promoting gender equality is shared by all of the departments of the Council. Specific activities for achieving the set objectives and the employees responsible for them shall be

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stipulated in the annual action plans of the Council. Meeting the set objectives will be covered in the annual reports.

It is worth noting that the ETAG ordered a survey from the Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS), resulting in an in-depth study, published in 2021 with the title "Gender equality in Estonian research – current situation and ways of improving.

National Science Centre (NCN) – Poland

https://www.ncn.gov.pl/en/o-ncn/zadania-ncn

The NCN is a government agency, supervised by the Ministry of Education and Science, set up in 2011 to support basic research in Poland.

The NCN funds projects in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Life Sciences and Physical Sciences and Engineering. The NCN launches funding schemes dedicated to researchers at different stages of their career.

One of the priorities of the Centre is to support and develop the scientific careers of pre-doctoral and doctoral researchers about to embark on a career in research. The Award of the National Science Centre, established by the NCN Council in 2013, shows how important this aspect really is: *it is a distinction for young researchers up to the age of 40 for significant achievements in basic research carried out in Poland*.

Before GEP was adopted, *in early 2019, the NCN took a stand on the issue of equal access to research funds and committed itself to continue its efforts to ensure gender equality and diversity in science.*

In 2021, NCN conducted a survey on men and women in science, which report was published in February 2022. The report indicates that men and women apply for research funding for very similar reasons. The dominant factors include a desire to develop their research, continue projects, and advance in their careers. However, women are much more likely to doubt their chances of success in securing research funds. Critical of their own research record and doubtful of their odds of success, they frequently decide not to respond to domestic and international calls at all. Women are also more likely to say they feel their research institution has failed to support them in the application process, as well as report not having adequate information about the calls.

More often than men, female respondents also say they struggle to strike a work and family balance and report feelings of remorse for neglecting their families. Both men and women express equal interest in taking on the role of a principal investigator under a research project. However, men are more likely than women to opt for the role of contractor in order to avoid the administrative burdens associated with the former status. The survey also featured questions about working under the COVID-19 pandemic and the experiences of male and female respondents in their work environment. The report will be the subject of further analysis and reflection so as to guide future actions at the NCN.

Associated with its 10th anniversary (2021), NCN sets out a set of priorities for future actions. *We are committed to high quality and do our utmost to make sure that our grants go to the best researchers and the most important projects, regardless of other factors, such as geography. One of our priorities is to develop international cooperation to effectively support research conducted by Polish teams together with foreign partners and contribute to strengthening the importance of Polish research in the world. To*

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level the playing field, we have introduced special regulations to support gender equality in research. We also take an active interest in promoting and introducing open access to science in Europe. These statements reveal a concern with scientific quality articulated with inclusiveness guidelines, namely gender equality in research and open access to science.

In "Facts and figures" about funding, we can see reflected the same inclusiveness priorities already mentioned here. The structure of this section is: early-stage researchers, grant geography, equal access to funding, NCN experts, NCN budget.

More related to gender is the topic "equal access to funding" with the following information:

- NCN has consistently prioritised equal access to research funding for men and women,
- NCN adopted a new NCN Gender Equality Plan in 2022,
- NCN publish regular data on women's participation in NCN-funded projects.

- Analysing the *Gender Equality Plan for the National Science Centre 2022-2025*

The "Gender Equality Plan for the National Science Centre 2022-2025" was developed in response to the Horizon Europe (HE) Framework Programme for 2021-2027, which sets actions aimed at ensuring gender equality in research and innovation as a cross-cutting priority.

The mission of the National Science Centre, as an executive agency established to support basic research, is to enhance research quality and efficiency through a competitive grant system and strengthen the importance of Polish science in the international arena. This mission is to be accomplished by funding research projects and activities through a system of calls for proposals. The portfolio of the NCN features calls targeted at researchers at all levels, regardless of age, seniority, and affiliation.

Since the agency holds up the diversity of perspectives and experiences as a value that fosters the growth of science, its practices attract researchers from a wide range of social groups; the NCN actively supports gender equality at Polish academic centres and joins dedicated international initiatives. Levelling the playing field for applying for NCN funds and prioritising the criterion of research excellence in the peer review process is the main principle that has guided the NCN ever since its foundation.

The NCN has met the CE's requirements for effective gender equality plans by:

- *involving a wide group of NCN employees and NCN Council members in the development and implementation of the Plan,*
- *designing tailored solutions, especially to support the principle of gender equality in basic research funding, which respect its mission, goals, tasks and context,*
- *focusing not only on procedural and institutional solutions but also areas of implicit bias, as well as shaping attitudes by improving the knowledge about gender equality [= training?],*
- *creating a model for institutional change, which involves diagnosing and assessing NCN practices and procedures, identifying the areas that require reform, setting goals and selecting the means to achieve them, as well as defining the best indicators to monitor their progress,*
- *supporting a process of continual change toward greater gender equality by monitoring the progress in achieving the goals set in the Plan.*

This GEP has two dimensions:

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- NCN as employer (employees): *NCN wants to protect its employees against discrimination, unequal treatment, and mobbing,*
- gender equality in basic research funding.

Regarding the second dimension (researchers and their careers), the relevant for the analyses of this section of GA+ survey, the agency announces regular calls under which it finances research fellowships, activities and projects. It is in this context that several measures for gender equality have been taken. We identify them bellow:

- NCN decided to extend the period under NCN calls to include possible career breaks: long-term sick leave, long-term rehabilitation leave, and parental leave. Adding career breaks also extends the period in which the required research record may be produced, as well as the period of eligibility for postdocs and senior researcher positions.
- To support researchers who have had to put their research careers on hold due to external factors (such as e.g. the COVID-19 pandemic), NCN proposal form includes a questionnaire concerning the research record of the principal investigator, which includes elements of a narrative CV in a section devoted to the main research achievement and makes it possible to list other important achievements in science.
- The main objective of the calls designated MINIATURA is to provide financial support for research that will lay the foundations for a future research project. Applicants may receive funds for a task that takes up to 12 months to complete. MINIATURA provides people who have not previously won any grants a chance to start out on their own research. It also offers funding opportunities to those who transition back to work after a longer hiatus.
- In the case of research projects, *the duration of the project, for instance, can be extended with the permission of the host institution's director for up to 12 months from its initial end date (e.g. for health, family or personal reasons). Final reports must be submitted to the NCN by the host institution's director and the principal investigator within 60 days from the end date of the project. In justified cases, related e.g. to the family situation or personal affairs of the principal investigator, the NCN may agree to extend the deadline for the final report.*
- *Both the documentation and the practice of peer review in the evaluation of research proposals submitted to the NCN are informed by the principle of gender equality. An important role in this respect is played by NCN Discipline Coordinators, whose tasks include e.g. checking individual assessments for any discriminatory content.*
    - *In their assessments, our experts are expected to place an emphasis on research excellence and avoid any reference to the age, nationality, gender, or private affairs of the applicant.*
    - *The assessment of the research record must always account for career breaks; the research record of each principal investigator is evaluated individually, based on data included in the proposal and the current career level.*
    - *Regarding NCN panels, the remote session model may encourage female researchers to join in the activities of Expert Teams. The NCN works to increase female representation in the role of Team's Chair.*
- *Information about the participation of men and women in NCN calls is published in the "Annual Reports" and "Call Statistics", published every year in printed and online versions.*
- NCN is a stakeholder in several international projects promoting gender equality, like AcademiaNet and GRANteD.

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Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare (Forte) – Sweden

https://forte.se/en/about-forte/our-mission/

Forte is a government agency under the Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. On behalf of the government, this RFO promotes and supports basic and needs-driven research within working life, social and public health.

This support ranges from individual project grants to larger efforts to build world-class research environments. Forte also works actively to stimulate international research collaborations, both within the EU and worldwide.

Forte's work is consistently linked to parliamentary goals and strategies, such as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the public health and gender equality policy goals.

Forte's vision and goals is a document that describes the vision and the goals of this RFO and, by the way, indicate the strategic focus of Forte's activities. It is intended to guide Forte's work on setting priorities in future initiatives and forms the basis for the annual planning of activities.

The vision of this organisation is that: *The research that Forte funds today forms the scientific basis for the more equitable and socially sustainable society of tomorrow.* Three objectives are stated: 1) *Forte initiates and funds research that makes a difference for society and people's lives*; 2) *Forte initiates and funds research of high scientific quality*; and 3) *Forte is actively involved in national and global knowledge building.*

The issue of Gender is one focus of the activity, mirrored in second mentioned goal, that is, in the commitment with high scientific quality. This goal is broken down in seven aspects, two of them (thus regarding research assessment and content of science) directly grounded on gender equality principles:

- *Forte's assessment processes are transparent, gender-equal, legally sound and continuously developed based on the national and international current state of knowledge.*
- *The research Forte funds has a sex and gender perspective whenever relevant.*

From this "short" document (in size only), what we can extract most directly linked to inclusive research careers is under the first goal above mentioned, which emphasizes we need science that makes a difference for society and people's lives. Of the five aspects into which this is subdivided, we focus on the following, given that more diversity implies research careers more inclusive:

- *Forte encourages a diversity of research and researchers by offering various types of calls for proposals and types of grants.*

Regarding Assessment

An important condition for objectivity in the assessment process is gender equality. No applicant or application should be assessed differently based on gender or other factors that are not included in the assessment criteria.

Knowledge in gender equality issues is important when appointing our review panels. When appointing a review panel, we strive for a distribution of competencies and qualifications. We also aim for neither women nor men to make up less than 40 percent of the members within each panel. We work actively

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to ensure that our panels do not maintain existing disadvantageous or discriminatory structures regarding power, participation and influence in academic contexts.

Everyone who participates in our review panels receives a detailed information material that describes Forte's mission, the current call, the review process step by step and the assessment criteria. The material also includes information on potential pitfalls of a gender equal review process and how to work practically to avoid them.

The review panel's assignment includes following up the proposed grant rate for women and men based on number of applications. Larger disparities need to be discussed and justified. In the event of an equal assessment between applications, the panel has a mandate to promote the underrepresented gender.

Independent Research Fund Denmark (DFF) – Denmark

https://dff.dk/en/about-us/strategy-and-policies/equal-opportunities-policy-for-the-independent-research-fund-denmark

The DFF example shows how implementing a policy can take so long to obtain satisfactory results, but we need more information than that collected by the survey to consolidate this awareness. DFF adopted the Equal opportunities policy ten years ago (October 2013) and this concern extends from the 1st stage of the career to the top. The objective goes beyond equal opportunities, more precisely it is identified with equal representation. The idea of an inclusive career (from a gender perspective) is always implicit, even if not expressly named, to benefit the versatility of research in Denmark.

Even so, the gender balance in the Danish world of research is uneven when compared with other EU countries or with other Scandinavian countries. According with the website of DFF, women account for a third of both applications and grants, and in proportion to the number of applications, women have the same success rate as men. This balance corresponds to the gender balance in Danish research environments. However, the number of female research falls the higher if we get on the position ladder. In Danish universities in 2020, 24% of professors were female, 34% of associate professors were female and 43% of lecturers were female.

To avoid barriers, structures and careers paths which will inadvertently favour male researchers, the DFF wants to focus on how both genders can obtain not just equal opportunities, but also a more equal representation within all levels. Evaluating existing initiatives, and monitoring the evolution of gender equality, are crucial for preparing new initiatives and contribute to the success of the policy. DFF processes and assessment criteria do not have unintended consequences for neither men nor women.

DFF intends to take a number of specific actions to increase the attention to and potentially contribute to eliminating the uneven gender distribution in Danish research.

- In connection with preparation of new initiatives, such as establishment of new methods, new guidelines, etc., the importance of the initiative for the conditions for men and women shall always be examined prior to decision-making.
- In connection with evaluation of existing initiatives, the importance of the initiative in question for the conditions for women and men shall always be included in the evaluation.
- All applications for grants for major research projects shall account for gender distribution in the group of researchers to be established. The gender distribution is not included as an assessment

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criterion, but the account is meant to create awareness with the project manager about the gender problem and therefore more awareness of the favourable effects of a broader composition in researcher groups.

- In connection with applications for funding instruments with a maximum PhD age, Independent Research Fund Denmark shall compensate for maternity/paternity leave and family-related absence with a factor 2 in relation to the actual absence.
- Independent Research Fund Denmark will study how other international research councils consider maternity/paternity leave when assessing application to find models that further promote equal opportunities ~~further~~.
- Additionally, Independent Research Fund Denmark will map initiatives and experiences on equal opportunities from other research funding institutions – including assessment initiatives, bias training and gender blinding – as well as the effects of these.
- Once yearly, the fund will compile a special statistical recording to follow the progress of these goals:
    - That the gender composition among applicants to Independent Research Fund Denmark's funding instruments approximately reflects the gender composition of the scientific field.
    - That women and men have approximately the same success rate when applying for instruments relative to the share each gender make of the total applicant pool.

Irish Research Council (IRC) – Ireland

https://research.ie/

On its website, the IRC systematise its activities on eight topics:

- fund excellent research across all disciplines,

- cultivate Ireland's success in European Funding,

- provide access to research infrastructures,

- support early-stage researchers,

- communicate the value of research,

- catalyse research addressing the grand societal challenges,

- support equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI),

- commend the Irish Research Council Award each year, one of the reasons for fostering a positive academic culture based on equality, inclusivity, and respect.

The reference to EDI appears in this short presentation two times, meaning the importance put by IRC on the issue of inclusivity.

The IRC published its first Gender Strategy and Action Plan in 2013, ten years ago. It focused on two main issues: addressing gender equality in research careers and promoting the inclusion of the sex/gender dimension in research. The first issue confirms that our choice to place IRC in Group A of

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respondents was correct: IRC has a policy addressing research careers in higher education and research institution (5.2) that promotes gender equality (5.4).

Since 2013, the IRC has embedded four main actions relating to gender equality:

- gender-proofing of assessment processes for evaluation to mitigate any gender bias in the assessment of excellence, whether conscious or unconscious,

- integration of the sex/gender dimension in research proposals,

- collaboration with other Irish research funding agencies,

- involvement in the European programmes GENDER-NET and GENDER-NET Plus.

In 2020, the IRC commissioned two institutions to review the IRC Gender Strategy and Action Plan and assess the impact of these gender-related policies and practices. In conclusion, the measures introduced contributed to ameliorating disparities in success rates for women. The report nonetheless identified continuing challenges, particularly the fact that gender parity in awards does not prevail across the career lifecycle, as the proportion of applications from women starts to decline as early as the postdoctoral research stage. As a request of the review, the IRC must continue to tackle issues related to career leave and responsibilities and adapt them to the often non-linear nature of research careers, especially for women.

The review presents a set of fourteen recommendations that are very useful for this analysis. Firstly, we cannot have other relevant information about IRC through the survey due to its routing format (notably the 'no' given to question 5.4). Secondly, although these recommendations focus on the Irish context, some bring to all RFOs new challenges not yet spoken about here, for example, the balance between AHSS and STEM, so critical to the RFOs that have the mission to fund all disciplines. Following, we transcript eight of them, which are noteworthy and interesting for our topic. These are:

- The falling proportion of applications from women for postdoctoral awards should be further investigated and monitored.

- Monitor and track application and award data broken down into AHSS and STEM closely to identify any disparities, which should then be further investigated recognising that different subject areas tend to have different obstructions to equality.

- Look to enhance the IRC offer around mid (and potentially also later-stage research careers), particularly in AHSS subject areas where fewer other funders operate in Ireland.

- Review all IRC awards to ensure that they are designed in ways which support applicants who have not been able to prioritise their research for any reason (e.g. maternity, illness, taking on other responsibilities in their institution such as pastoral care). Consider how awards might be designed to support all points of entry and re-entry into research to ensure that it allows for those taking non-linear routes through their research career.

- Develop a clear strategy for mid- and late-career awards. Decide precisely who they are targeted at, which career-related challenges are they designed to recognise and overcome (e.g. non-linear research careers) and how each award contributes to equality and diversity.

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- In recognition that the IRC seeks to reach beyond gender when addressing equality and diversity challenges, consideration should be given of how to evolve the IRC strategy to capture broader diversity and intersectionality issues […].

- Find ways to provide financial support for postgraduate students during maternity or other leave, as well as using position as funder to encourage universities to be flexible in maternity or other leave periods for research students, rather than requiring alignment with academic terms.

- Work with Irish Government, other higher education funders and higher education institutions in Ireland to roll out an approach which enhances flexibility in research funding and timetables in order to reduce disadvantage experienced by those who take (voluntary or involuntary) breaks.

The information collected on the IRC website confirms the correctness of the decision to place this RFO in Group A.

Get in touch with us!

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