



## **Inclusive Gender Equality as a Sustainable Priority in European Research and Innovation**

An open letter to Ekaterina Zaharieva, Commissioner for Start-ups, Research and Innovation

Dear Commissioner Zaharieva,

We, the undersigned individuals and organisations, are writing to urge you to continue the prioritisation of gender equality in research and innovation as you begin your term as Commissioner for Start-ups, Research and Innovation. As we look ahead to the ERA Policy Agenda 2025–2027 and the negotiations for Framework Programme 10, it is crucial that gender equality remains a central and enduring focus to ensure a future of research and innovation in Europe that attracts and retains diverse talent, promoting a sustainable and competitive Research & Innovation landscape.

In the past four years, we have seen significant advancements toward embedding gender equality in R&I at both the Commission and Member State levels, as well as directly within research and higher education institutions. A critical development has been the introduction of Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) as a requirement for accessing EU research funding under Horizon Europe. These GEPs have proven to be powerful tools for driving institutional change, addressing gender-based violence and promoting inclusiveness in research and innovation, especially at a time when European values, including gender equality, are facing growing challenges.

It is essential that this momentum continues and that these achievements are expanded in the upcoming ERA Policy Agenda 2025-2027 and especially in the next Framework Programme. We call on you to build on the progress made by taking a lead on the following:

In relation to **the Gender Equality Plans**, it is vital to

- **Ensure permanence and sustainability:** Establish GEPs as a permanent and sustainable element in the European research and innovation ecosystem by maintaining them as an eligibility criterion in Framework Programme 10.
- **Enhance inclusiveness and intersectionality:** Improve intersectionality and inclusiveness by ensuring funding for the inclusion of minoritised groups and for intersectionality-focused research topics, implementing intersectional

data collection and analysis, and establishing an intersectionality working group.

- **Mandate thematic areas:** Make the five currently recommended thematic areas of GEPs mandatory.
- **Reinforce monitoring and evaluation of inclusive GEPs:** Ensure proper monitoring of the GEP eligibility criterion to avoid window dressing and lead efforts with Member States to implement a monitoring and evaluation system for inclusive GEPs.

In relation to **combatting gender-based violence in research and innovation**, it is vital to

- **Advance the Zero-Tolerance Code of Conduct:** Require that research and higher education institutions applying for EU funding for mobility, as well as study and research programmes, have procedures and designated staff to address gender-based violence, ensuring shared protections and support services for all researchers and students in the EU. To achieve this, close cooperation across the European Research Area and European Higher Education Area will be of essence.

In relation to **integrating the gender dimension in research and innovation**, it is vital to

- **Require inclusive gender analysis in R&I:** Mandate that applicants for EU funding under the new Framework Programme integrate inclusive gender analysis in R&I proposals, with an explanation required if this analysis is not relevant to the research project.
- **Report research results:** Especially ensure that gender-disaggregated research results are reported, as a way to foster openness of research and its relevance to all Europeans.

These measures are essential for the ability of European R&I to provide attractive research careers, harness the high educational potential of new generations of researchers— particularly women and other marginalised groups—and advance international collaboration that promotes EU values and principles.

This is a critical moment to demonstrate that inclusive gender equality in R&I is not a temporary policy objective for one policy term, but a lasting commitment that will drive meaningful change. We rely on your leadership on this vital issue and stand ready to support your efforts.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned Research Community