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NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Council

Subject:	Virtual Conference "Deepening the ERA Through Gender Equality" (8-9 July 2021) and Ljubljana Declaration on Gender Equality in Research and Innovation
	- <i>Information from the Presidency</i>

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Presidency with a view to AOB items at the meeting of the Competitiveness Council on 28 September 2021.

Gender Equality in Research and Innovation

Introduction

Over the past 20 years, the European Research Area (ERA) has contributed to major achievements in the area of gender equality in Research and Innovation (R&I).

In the September 2020 Commission Communication "A new ERA for Research and Innovation" (COM/2020/628 final) the Commission introduces a new concept for the ERA, which for gender equality includes most notably the development of inclusive gender equality plans with Member States and stakeholders. Additionally, the Communication noted *“Despite the continuous policy attention to gender equality in R&I, progress has been slow and remains insufficient.”*

Similarly, the December 2020 Council Conclusions on the New European Research Area (13567/20) recalled *“with great concern that there continues to be a major gender imbalance preventing Europe from using the full potential of its R&I system aiming for excellence”* and calls *“on the Commission and Member States for 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”*.

In these Conclusions, the Council highlighted gender equality as a domain requiring priority actions to be developed and implemented through the ERA Policy Agenda and the Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe (Pact for R&I). The Pact for R&I underscores gender equality as a core Union value, and identifies gender equality and equal opportunities as an important element of the common principles and values that act as the foundation for research and innovation in the Union.

In view of the reaffirmed policy focus on gender equality by the Commission and the Council, we must continue and expand these efforts for research and innovation to contribute to the resilience and quality of our democratic institutions, but also sustainability and competitiveness in the EU. This is why we are calling for the prioritisation of gender equality in the New ERA through the Ljubljana Declaration on Gender Equality in Research and Innovation.

Deepening the ERA through Gender Equality Conference – 8-9 July 2021

The Slovenian Presidency co-hosted the Conference “Deepening the ERA through Gender Equality”, with the Horizon 2020 GENDERACTION project.

The Conference provided a platform for Member States, Research Funders, ERA stakeholders and experts to reflect on the recent advances in gender equality at the national and European levels, and emerging needs to be addressed in the new ERA. Discussion centred on key lessons and opportunities for EU policy coordination in gender equality, with a focus on gender equality plans as the main instrument to promote institutional changes.

Keynote addresses were delivered by Minister Kustec and Commissioner Gabriel, followed by panel discussions:

- **New opportunities for equality and inclusion in the ERA** - with Member States representatives
- **Making Gender Equality Plans a reality: ERA Stakeholder perspective** -with stakeholders representatives
- **The role of research funders in promoting gender equality: Achievements and next steps** – with Research Funding Organisation representatives
- **Enabling a just transition – the importance of gender equality in the New ERA** – with current and upcoming TRIO Presidency representatives and the Commission

The Conference concluded with the presentation of the draft Ljubljana Declaration on Gender Equality in Research and Innovation.

Ljubljana Declaration on Gender Equality in Research and Innovation

The Ljubljana Declaration was a collaborative effort of the current and upcoming Trio Presidencies, building on the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. It was developed through a bottom-up process, harnessing experts' views.

The Ljubljana Declaration underlines the importance of upholding the value of gender equality, and being proactive in mainstreaming gender equality across research and innovation, to ensure a just twin transition, triggering new inclusive ways of life for all and new opportunities for jobs and research.

The Declaration presents the following six key priorities and activities for the new ERA:

- Ensure fair, open, inclusive and gender equal career paths in research, and consider intersectional perspectives on gender inequalities;
- Facilitate mutual learning opportunities through form-follows-function robust governance;
- Employ existing and newly developed tools, such as Gender Equality Plans, to facilitate systemic institutional change and remove institutional barriers.
- Address and counteract gender-based violence; including root causes and tackling obsolete power dynamics within research and academia.
- Support active and participative monitoring and evaluation to ensure continuous improvement; and
- Leverage synergies to enhance gender equality achievements within the European Research Area, but also within complementary fields such as the European Higher Education Area, structural funds, innovation, as well as in international cooperation.

At the informal meeting of ministers for research in July 2021, Member States were invited to provide comments on the draft Declaration. A final text was produced through consideration of the received comments and is annexed to this note.



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Slovensko predsedovanje Svetu Evropske unije
Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European UnionANNEX

Ljubljana Declaration *Gender Equality in Research and Innovation*

Core Principles and Priorities

Achieving gender equality is one of the core, **shared values of the new European Research Area (ERA)**. Combatting existing gender inequalities has the full support of the endorsing parties of the Ljubljana Declaration, to ensure that Research and Innovation (R&I) policies on all levels, European, national, and regional, are fair and inclusive in the broadest sense, through open and transparent involvement of all relevant actors.

We reiterate 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. We recognise gender equality as a driver for optimal and sustainable research and technological systems. We therefore must ensure that gender equality and inclusiveness are central to the **Pact for R&I in Europe**, and across its links with complementary European initiatives such as through higher education, innovation ecosystems, international cooperation and Cohesion policy funds.

It is encouraging that in recent years, many Member States and Associated Countries have adopted laws, policies and strategies to achieve sustainable institutional change driving gender equality, inclusion and diversity. However, a gap persists between the adoption of policies and strategies and their implementation at institutional level. This is mainly due to an ongoing reproduction of outdated gender norms, unfair hierarchies and power structures, a limited prevalence of gendered knowledge and a lack of available resources to implement measures on combatting existing gender inequalities.

We need to join forces to strengthen the commitment of Member States and other countries to the implementation of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the new European Research Area and to outline the priority areas to be addressed to foster an inclusive European Research Area for all.

We are committed to the following priorities and activities to ensure all are equally able to participate in the delivery of high-quality R&I to address our greatest challenges:

- Ensure fair, open, inclusive and gender equal career paths in research, and consider intersectional perspectives on gender inequalities;
- Facilitate mutual learning opportunities through form-follows-function robust governance;
- Employ existing and newly developed tools, such as Gender Equality Plans, to facilitate systemic institutional change and remove institutional barriers;
- Address and counteract gender-based violence;
- Support active monitoring and evaluation to ensure continuous improvement; and
- Leverage synergies to enhance gender equality achievements within the European Research Area, but also within complementary fields such as the European Higher Education Area, Cohesion policy funds, innovation ecosystems, as well as in international cooperation.

The need to fully acknowledge gender mainstreaming as a horizontal principle underpins these priorities and activities. Gender equality, together with inclusiveness, social inclusion and diversity, is intrinsic to the shared value of democracy – **a crosscutting issue for the whole of society**. Gender equality contributes to the **integrity and societal responsibility of research**, leveraging scientific and technological quality to higher standards, namely through the gender dimension in research and innovation. Through the new European Research Area, and the forthcoming **Pact for R&I in Europe**, we must provide a structure to address gender equality as a horizontal issue, mainstreaming gender across priorities and facilitating policy coordination, exchange and mutual learning.

**Inclusive research career paths**

Fair, open, equal and inclusive career paths are essential in the pursuit to mainstream gender equality in research. Through increased understanding of inequalities in career paths, such as by improving our knowledge of intersectionality and of the impact of unconscious bias on research careers, we can foster a balanced flow of talents, assuring career access and progression. Deepening our understanding will enable us to reduce career precarity, address work-life balance issues, improve early career conditions, stimulate intersectoral mobility, foster meritocracy, and adapt systems of remuneration, social security and pensions to non-linear careers. We recognize these as relevant concerns, pivotal to a sustained gender equality path, and thus mainstreaming gender.

Form-follows-function governance and mutual learning

Mutual learning can accelerate the pace of gender mainstreaming across the EU and broader Europe, through stimulating exchange of best practice and lessons learnt at policy and institutional levels. Mutual learning not only relies on policies but also on a European Research Area governance structure that will enhance stakeholder engagement, with the Commission, national authorities, Research Funding Organisations, Research Performing Organisations and their umbrella organisations, gender equality experts and practitioners and their networks at EU as well as national levels, civil society organisations and of course citizens. Furthermore, European Research Area governance can facilitate gender mainstreaming through aiming to achieve gender balance and the inclusion of gender expertise in its structures.

We must continue policy coordination, networking and exchange on inclusive gender equality policy in research and innovation through the new European Research Area governance framework, interfacing with the Commission. Existing evidence shows that disparities among Member States remain. Therefore, a dedicated platform involving national and Commission representatives and increased cooperation with other European Research Area stakeholders, most notably with the umbrella organisations, should be an important part of the new European Research Area governance.

Gender Equality Plans for sustainable and inclusive institutional changes

Together with wider policies aimed at providing researchers with attractive and sustainable careers and working conditions, and making brain circulation a reality, promoting institutional change through Gender Equality Plans is among the most transformative policy developments to achieve long-term, sustainable advancement towards gender equality in R&I. To achieve meaningful policy coordination it is essential we develop a common understanding of Gender Equality Plans as a policy instrument, to support institutions in the development and implementation, while recognising the need for flexibility in the concrete instruments used at national level and the self-responsibility and autonomy of the institutions.

As the Gender Equality Plans approach is embedded in the new European Research Area, support and resources for their development and implementation are needed at all levels. This is particularly crucial in countries where the institutions are currently without a Gender Equality Plans requirement, to ensure those institutions are ready for the new Horizon Europe eligibility criterion. We recommend the Plans are tied to the policy coordination mechanism to be established for the Pact on R&I as well as to a dedicated EU network on their implementation, supported by the Commission, Member States and other countries. Such an endeavour, for example, could be linked to a European certification scheme for gender equality to ensure commensurability by building a common framework that recognises national differences.

Improved capability and capacity for developing, implementing and monitoring Gender Equality Plans should be supported, for example through specialised European training for R&I sector



civil servants and for Higher Education Institutions and Research Funding Organisations leaders and managers, through which we can build communities of competence and practice.

Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence in higher education and research, including sexual harassment, is a serious and under-recognised issue with severe negative impacts on study and career outcomes in research and higher education. A cohesive infrastructure and procedures for preventing and tackling gender-based violence and harassment in academia in the Member States and other countries are missing.

There is a prominent lack of relevant policies, legislation/regulations, responsible authorities, gender-based violence/sexual harassment experts, gender-sensitive protocols and reporting procedures and up-to-date prevalence data. To this end, we welcome that gender-based violence is included as part of data collection practices for She Figures, and as a thematic area to be addressed in Gender Equality Plans. Furthermore, we recognise there is need for additional policy coordination and action from Research Funding Organisations, Research Performing Organisations and other relevant stakeholders in the European Research Area.

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of gender equality policies has received less attention than policy design, and this may be one of the reasons why progress has been slower than it should. We underscore the need to develop tools for the monitoring and evaluation of national gender equality policies in R&I and gender equality actions, including Gender Equality Plans. Such tools are essential to evaluate actions aimed at achieving institutional change, collect information on Gender Equality Plans uptake rates at national level, and consider intersectional data. Indicators and measurable goals need to be established to assess progress in achieving gender mainstreaming as a strategy.

Sex and/or gender disaggregated data should be the default for reporting and monitoring in the European Research Area especially with respect to European Research Area careers, mobility and brain circulation. Where possible, gender statistics should be broken down by the intersection of gender with additional conditions of vulnerability or marginalisation, developing, as needed, new indicators for monitoring in the context of intersectionality, expanding on the pioneering work of She Figures. Gender equality should also be an important element of new European Research Area reporting, to monitor progress towards the European Research Area Policy Agenda objectives at national and Union level.

Importance of synergies

Through leveraging synergies and stimulating mutual learning, gender equality can be mainstreamed. The European Research Area has the opportunity to influence the European Higher Education Area and Cohesion policy, as well as international cooperation achieved through the EU Global Approach. International cooperation, one of the cornerstones of EU R&I efforts, allows for benefitting from strategic technological areas and critical infrastructures, and learning from experiences of the implementation of gender equality policies for institutional reform.

We must do better to integrate core European values and principles, including research integrity, gender equality and academic freedom, in international Science, Technology and Innovation cooperation actions and instruments. Equal, full access of all researchers to broad international networking, mobility and cooperation in frontier research, in innovation initiatives and multilateral research alliances is key for achieving gender equality, and delivering Agenda 2030's Sustainable Development Goal 5 (as well as other relevant Sustainable Development Goals).

More Cohesion policy funding could be used by Member States to support Research Funding Organisations and Research Performing Organisations in advancing gender equality actions



in R&I, and specifically support them by funding institutional audits, developing and implementing Gender Equality Plans or funding gender research.

We underscore the need for further intertwined relations between education and research, mutually and continually nurturing excellence, and ensuring they are less prone to unconscious bias. To this end, all human capital in R&I must be nurtured to join and be retained in the workforce, and supported in their career path progression, through joint actions of the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area.

Intertwined relations across the whole R&I ecosystem are integral in acting as main drivers for a European way of life. We underline the importance of gender sensitive policies and synergies with gender equality in the innovation sector and gender-responsive innovation. Through these measures we can enable an increased involvement of researchers and innovators of all genders in knowledge transfer processes, effectively affirming their role as drivers of innovation that are responsive to and inclusive of the needs of all segments of society. In this context, we also underline the importance to strengthen the participation of all genders in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics fields.

Conclusions - Research and Innovation for a just transition in Europe

Through gender mainstreaming, we enhance European resilience globally, especially in a post-pandemic world. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the fragility of gender equality gains, with adverse effects hitting women disproportionately, threatening to erode the advances of recent years. Assessment of the impact of COVID-19-careers of researchers of all genders is essential and it is vital that the resulting policy solutions include gendered and intersectional analyses as a default. This is essential to combat the economic downturn and increased poverty within Member States, broader Europe and globally, making sure resources are distributed in a gender equitable and inclusive manner.

Through the European Semester and the Recovery and Resilience Facility, Member States should ensure fair and equitable reforms and investments to counteract the negative gendered impacts on women and other underrepresented groups. Public research, and publicly-funded private companies, in all disciplines should therefore be required to address the gender dimension whether concerned with health, socio-economic inequality or development of technologies and applications.

Embedding these practices, we can achieve our stated goals and ensure Europe and the new European Research Area are best placed to be proactive with emerging issues. We commit to addressing the challenges of the digital and green twin transition in a gender equal and inclusive manner, to ensure this transition is also just, triggering new inclusive ways of life for all, and new opportunity for jobs and for research. There is a broad change on the competences profile required by the digital and green society. We should strive to put in place gender sensitive policies so that gendered competence gaps may not damage the fruits of a just transition and allow all researchers to fully reach their potential, without leaving anyone behind.

We are committed to achieving these goals, leveraging the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and the Gender Action Plan III. We will work together with stakeholders in setting ambitious targets and goals to support the advancement of gender equality in the new European Research Area.

[The following parties have endorsed the Ljubljana Declaration on Gender Equality in Research and Innovation:]