



EQUAL4EUROPE

GENDER EQUALITY PLANS

Report with
recommendations on
improving gender-balance in
decision-making bodies and
actions to be included in the
GEPs

D4.1



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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AHMSSBL	Arts, Humanities, Medicine, Social Sciences, Business and Law
GE	Gender equality
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EFFORTI	Evaluation Framework for Promoting Gender Equality in R&I
EQUAL4EUROPE	Gender Equality Standards for AHMSSBL institutions throughout Europe
FESTA	Female Empowerment in Science and Technology Academia
GEAR	Gender Equality in Academia and Research
GEECCO	Gender Equality in Engineering through Communication and Commitment
INTEGER	Institutional Transformation for Effecting Gender Equality in Research
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-oriented
WP	Work Package

Country abbreviations

AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CY	Cyprus
CZ	Czech Republic
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
EE	Estonia
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FI	Finland
FR	France
HR	Croatia
HU	Hungary
IE	Ireland
IT	Italy
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
LV	Latvia
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SE	Sweden
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
UK	United Kingdom
EU-28	28 EU Member States

INTRODUCTION

Report with recommendations on improving gender-balance in decision-making bodies and actions to be included in the GEPs is a report written under WP4 that deals with gender equality in decision-making. Its findings are drawn from **19 semi-structured interviews with leaders and managers** that the IEDC-Bled School of management core team conducted, as well as from **the document analysis, using the institutional reports from WP2**, where institutions assessed the state of gender equality at their respective institutions, including the gender equality in leadership and decision-making.

The Report is built upon the work previously conducted and elaborated in WP4. It is an outcome of the different, intertwined processes and tasks, anticipated under WP4. These are task 4.1 (To gather best practices, tools and recommendations from previous projects and reports; and to adjust them to AHMSSBL Universities), for which main findings are mostly described in chapter 'Literature and sister projects review'; task 4.2 (Gender Impact Assessment of decision-making bodies), for which findings are mostly described in chapter 'Findings'; and task 4.3 (To develop policy recommendations and set gender targets), mostly elaborated in chapter 'Recommendations for GEPs'.

In line with EQUAL4EUROPE's project objective **O.3, Develop 6 tailored GEPs**, and its second focus, to **address gender imbalances and decision-making processes**, this report is to help partners to include an informed and applicable part on gender equality in decision-making in their Gender Equality Plans and to provide them with a selection of specific actions or strategies that they might want to take.

The European Union addresses the gender-related barriers through the main funding instrument Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, and within the European Research Area in collaboration with member states and research organisations. Gender equality in research and innovation is a priority of the European Research Area (ERA). Under the ERA Communication 2012 framework, the European Commission has set 3 objectives to work with EU countries and foster an institutional change: gender equality in scientific careers, gender balance in decision making, and integration of the gender dimension into the content of research and innovation. Also, from 2022 onwards, GEP will become an eligibility criterion for public bodies, research organisations (both public and private) and higher education organizations (both public and private) that want to apply for funding in Horizon Europe framework. At the level of Horizon Europe there are four mandatory process related GEP requirements (building blocks) as well as the five recommended thematic areas.^{1, 2}

The actions and suggestions listed in this report relate to the recommended area no.2, **Gender equality in leadership in decision-making**. Not obligatory or binding, they are written more in terms of recommendations. However, to comply with the EU standards for Gender Equality Plans, it is highly recommended to include this thematic area, using concrete measures and targets. (Other recommended areas as well as four mandatory process-

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/research_and_innovation/strategy_on_research_and_innovation/documents/ec_rtd_gep-faqs.pdf

² <https://op.europa.eu/en/web/eu-law-and-publications/publication-detail/-/publication/51704c8d-ca5f-11eb-84ce-01aa75ed71a1>

related requirements are presented in *Toolkit for adopting Gender Equality Plans in AHMSSBL research institutions* that was developed under WP6.)

The report is structured as follows: it starts with a review of literature, best practices, recommendations, and tools designed and developed under sister projects that deal with gender equality in decision-making bodies and processes. We continue with the 'Methodology' chapter, where we describe the collection of qualitative and quantitative data, followed by chapter 'Findings'. In the last chapter, we merge the findings from literature and empirical findings, and on that basis, we provide a list of recommendations and gender targets we recommend adopting. The report closes with the conclusion, where we review the main findings from the interviews and document analysis with the explication of some recommendations, best practices and measures we deem most applicable for AHMSSBL institutions.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite increasing efforts in recent decades to improve women's representation in decision-making bodies, women remain underrepresented in positions of power within the EU. The 2015 EIGE study on 'Gender Equality in Power and Decision-Making'³ states that women hold only one in three high-level political decision-making positions.

In the last decade, there has been significant discussion concerning the ascension of a small number of women presidents at prestigious higher education institutions.⁴ EIGE's Report states that in 2010, only a minority of institutions in the tertiary education sector were headed by women, and around a third of their board members were women (2015).

The imbalance in the distribution of power is not only manifested in the unequal access and occupation of decision-making positions for women and men. It is also maintained as deeply embedded social structures, such as the phenomena of the 'glass ceiling'⁵ or 'glass walls',⁶ along with the perpetuation of gendered roles and gender stereotypes, and gendered perceptions of leadership. In addition, institutional factors such as the design of electoral systems, internal policies and practices can either hinder or facilitate women's representation in decision-making.

Therefore, the literature suggest we should address the gender inequality in decision-making as a two-fold problem:

1. We should **improve gender balance in decision-making** by implementing explicit strategies and set gender targets or quotas.
2. We should work on inducing the **change towards transforming the culture, perceptions and behaviours** and to ensure long-term structural change by gender mainstreaming measures, such as awareness raising training initiatives and promoting women in leadership.

There appears to be clear vertical segregation in research and educational institutions. One of the main problems is the 'leaky pipeline', whereby women drop out of scientific careers in disproportionate numbers at every level. Women constitute over half of university graduates, but a pipeline starts to leak at PhD level, with more men receiving a PhD degree on average in the EU. Differences become much more pronounced in the highest positions in academia.

She Figures 2018,⁷ especially the chapter on career advancement and participation in decision-making, provides numerical review of striking imbalances between the number of women and men at the highest levels of academia in the great majority of EU countries. The overall numbers of women and their ratios to those of men in senior

³ Gender equality in power and decision-making, Journalistic Thematic Network, 2016, European Institute for Gender Equality. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/publications/gender-equality-power-and-decision-making-report>.

⁴ Minor, James. (2014). Faculty Diversity and the Traditions of Academic Governance. New Directions for Institutional Research. 2013. 10.1002/ir.20053.

⁵ <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1228>

⁶ <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1229>

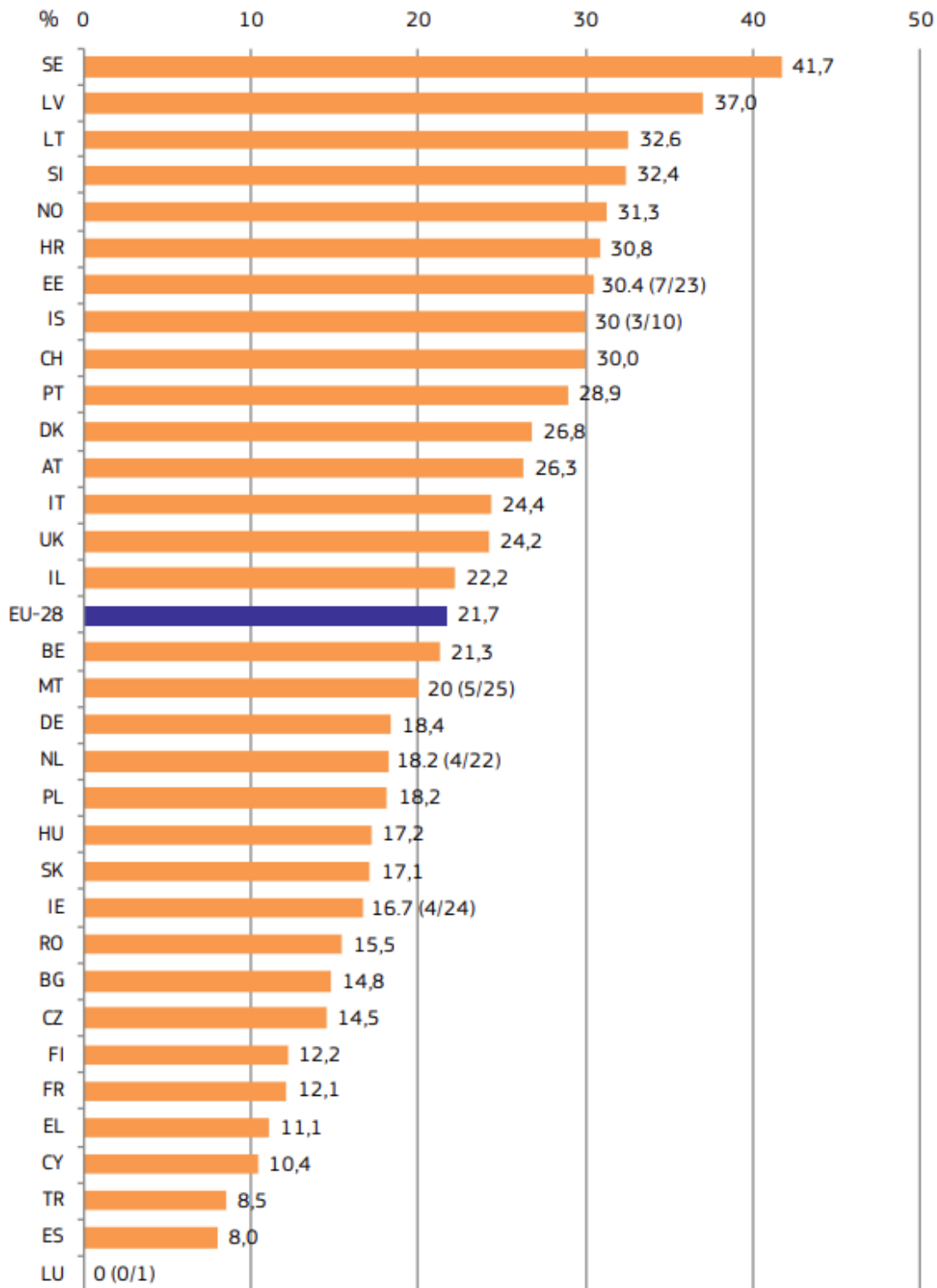
⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/she-figures-2018_en

academic and decision-making positions are much lower than what would be expected given the growing numbers of women among higher education graduates in recent decades.

The proportion of women among heads of institutions in the higher education sector increased from 20.2 % in 2014 to 21.7 % in 2017. However, the picture is mixed at the national level, where several countries with high proportions experienced a decrease in women heads of institutions. The under-representation of women in leadership positions has broad implications for scientific advancement and for industries with a strong need for a technologically educated workforce.

Figure 1 shows the share of women among heads of higher education institutions. Across the EU, this share was 21.7% in 2017, which is 1.6 percentage points higher than in 2014 (20.2%). In all countries shown in the figure, women make up less than half of the heads of institutions. The countries that came closest to equal representation were Sweden (41.7%), Latvia (37%), Lithuania (32.6%), Slovenia (32.4%), Norway (31.3%), Croatia (30.8%), Estonia (30.4%) and Iceland and Switzerland (30%), i.e. mainly the Nordic, Baltic and Western Balkan countries that have a strong social democratic past or are former socialist states. The lowest proportions (excluding Luxembourg, which has only one HEI) were observed in Spain (8%), Turkey (8.5%), Cyprus (10.4%) and Greece (11.1%).

FIGURE 1 PROPORTION (%) OF WOMEN AMONG HEADS OF INSTITUTIONS IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR (HES), 2017

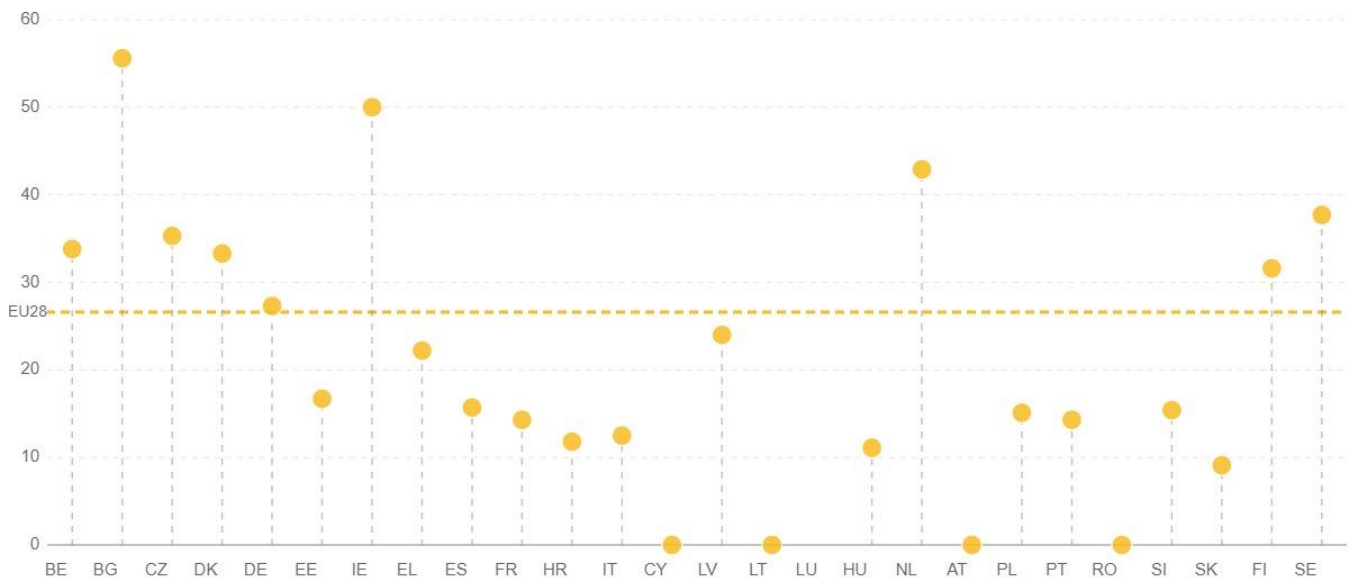


Source: She Figures, 2018.

Notes: Exceptions to the reference year: BE (French speaking community Hautes Écoles): 2013; BE (French speaking community universities), CZ, PT, RO, SI, UK: 2016; CY: Acad. year 2015-2016; Data unavailable for: ME, MK, AL, RS, BA, AM, FO, GE, MD, TN, UA. Others: Data are in headcounts (HC); Data about heads of scientific organisation are not available: BG; Private colleges and other smaller institutions are not included: IE; For proportions based on low numbers of headcounts (i.e., <30), the numerators and denominators are presented in parentheses in the table.

Figure 2 explains that **among the presidents and members of the highest decision-making bodies in National Academies of science in 2021, the EU28 average is only 26.6% women**. At national level, the proportion of women ranges from 55.6% in Bulgaria to 50% in Ireland and 42% in the Netherlands, while four countries (CY, LT, AT and RO) have no female members. Apart from the Netherlands, which is the only one of the six countries participating in the EQUAL4EUROPE project consortium to perform better than the EU28 average, there are 27.3% women among the presidents and members of the highest decision-making bodies in Germany, 15.7% in Spain, 15.4% in Slovenia, 14.3% in France and 9.1% in Slovakia.

FIGURE 2: PRESIDENTS AND MEMBERS OF THE HIGHEST DECISION-MAKING BODY IN NATIONAL ACADEMIES OF SCIENCE, 2021



EIGE's Gender Statistics Database - Indicator: National academies of science: presidents and members of the highest decision-making body
Source: European Institute for Gender Equality.
LAST UPDATE ON: 24.05.2021

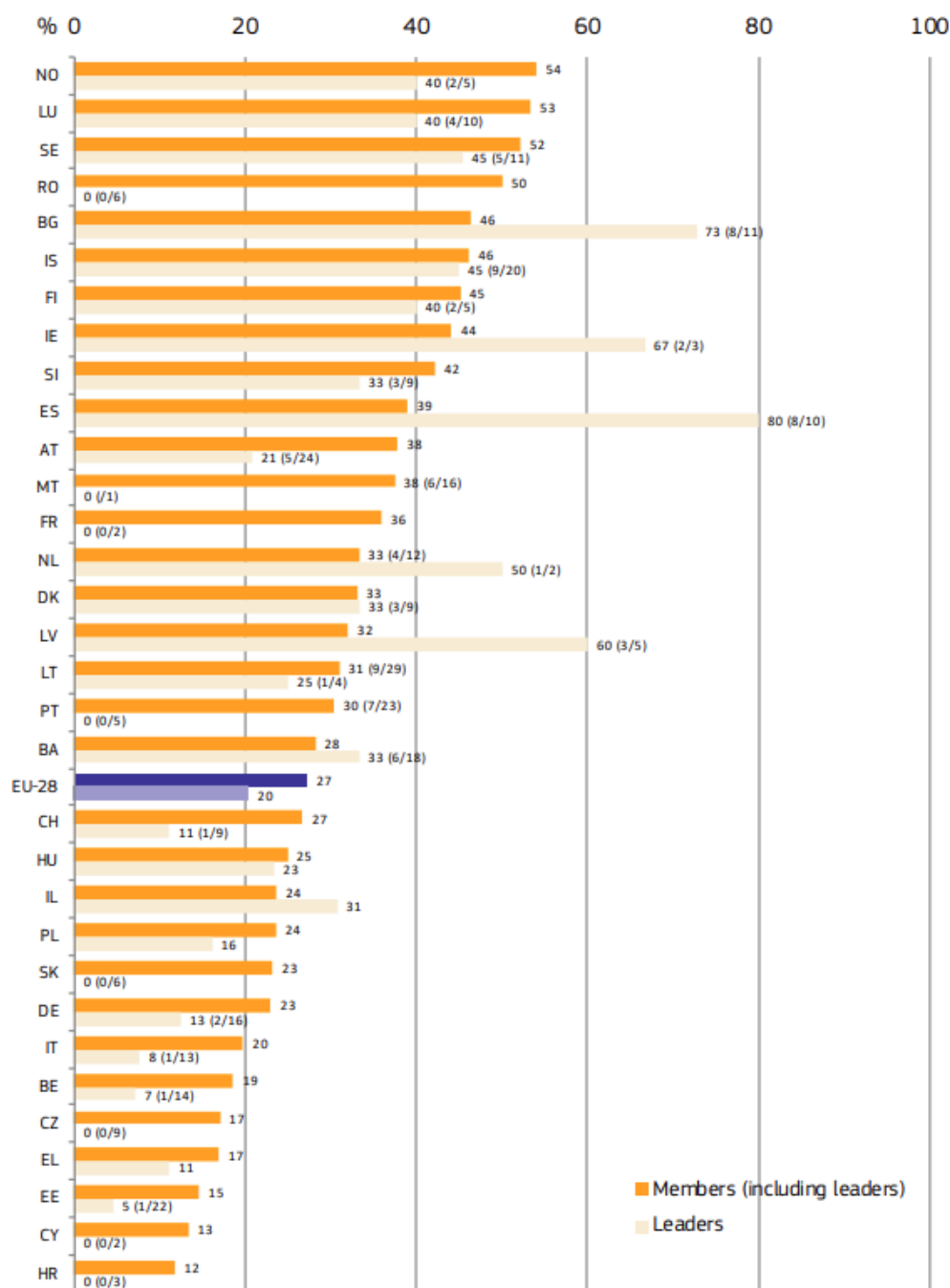
Figure 3 shows that in 2017, **women made up 27 % of board members and leaders in the EU**, such as scientific or R&D commissions, councils, committees, foundations or academic assemblies, which usually hold a significant amount of decision-making power. The respective proportion at the national level ranged from 12 % in Croatia to 54 % in Norway. Furthermore, in nine out of the 32 countries with available data (NO, LU, SE, RO, BG, IS, FI, IE and SI) women constituted at least 40 % of board members.

Women represented 20 % of board leaders in the EU in 2017.⁸ At the national level, the proportion of women among board leaders ranged from 0 % (CZ, FR, HR, CY, MT, PT, RO and SK) up to 73 % in Bulgaria and 80 % in Spain. Seven countries in total (SE, IS, NL, LV, IE, BG and ES) had more than 40 % of women among board leaders. 15

⁸ She figures, 2018, page 130.

countries either have no women or less than 20 % of women (above-mentioned CZ, FR, HR, CY, MT, PT, RO and SK, together with EE, BE, IT, EL, CH, DE and PL).

FIGURE 3 PROPORTION (%) OF WOMEN ON BOARDS, MEMBERS AND LEADERS, 2017



Source: She Figures, 2018.

Notes: Exceptions to the reference year: AT (CLIF - Jury): 2013; BG (Bilateral Cooperation), CY (CySC), LV, LT (Research Council of Lithuania), AT (Austrian Science Board, FWF - Managing Director): 2014; DE (DFG - Senate), IE, IL (GIF, ISF): 2016; Data unavailable for: UK, AL, MK, ME, RS, TR, MD, FO, UA, TN, GE, AM. Others: Data are in headcounts (HC); Break in time series: BA: 2017. For proportions based on low numbers of headcounts (i.e., <30), the numerators and denominators are presented in parentheses in the table.

To accelerate the pace of change, several scientific institutions have adopted various measures to achieve improvement, such as Gender Equality Plans, leadership training, implicit bias training and similar, but to date, these interventions have not led to significant increase in the presence of women in senior decision-making positions (She figures, 2018: 129) and the relative level of gender equality remains high. Various bodies and research organisations have introduced gender quotas aimed at different stages of the academic career (some are listed below), while the EU Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, Carlos Moedas, called for quotas for senior positions in universities and science laboratories in September 2018 (She figures, 2018: 129).

Statutory quotas or targets for HEI governing bodies exist in the following countries:⁹

- In Austria, the amendment to the University Act (2002), which came into force in 2009, introduced a 40% quota for all university boards and committees.
- In Belgium, the Flemish government (regional level) has introduced quotas of 33 % in all decision-making bodies of three universities (Hasselt University, University of Antwerp, and Ghent University).
- In France, a law passed in 2013 introduced gender parity in universities, both in governance and in governing bodies.
- In Ireland, the Universities Act 1997 (Article 10) states that "In exercising its functions ... the Governing Body shall ensure that each sex is represented on the Governing Body in accordance with such gender balance as may from time to time be determined or approved by the Minister".
- In the Netherlands, the government set a target of at least 15% female professors in Dutch universities in 2010.
- In Poland, a recent amendment to the Higher Education Act recommends greater involvement of women in Central Council higher education and a 30% quota for women on the Polish Accreditation Committee.
- In Sweden, the government has set targets for the proportion of women among newly recruited professors for 34 universities and polytechnics in 2012-2015. Such targets have been in place since 1997, apart from an interruption between 2009 and 2011.

Even though there is a consensus in the literature that recognizes the successful implementation of targets and/or quotas being linked to institutional change, some question the assumption that 'descriptive gender equality' leads to improved 'substantive gender equality'. Wroblewski (2019), for example, notes that there is an implicit assumption 'that an increased 'participation of the underrepresented sex will initiate cultural or structural change'. Wroblewski challenges this assumption, stating that the 'extent to which the participation of women in higher education management also leads to structural and cultural changes is essentially a matter of chance' (2019, 171). Similarly, Clavero and Galligan (2021) argue that initiatives that see gender differences as beneficial for the organization indeed bring more women in already established gendered power structure, but do not question the power structure itself. Clavero and Galligan continue that "[a]ctions based on this premise can hinder transformative politics, insofar as efficiency-oriented reforms may protect the status quo from meaningful challenge'. (Clavero and Galligan, 2021: 1119).

⁹ EIGE. 'Gender Equality in Power and Decision-Making Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States'. Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union: European Institute for Gender Equality, 2015. <https://eige.europa.eu/rdc/eige-publications/gender-equality-power-and-decision-making-report>.

In addition, therefore, it is suggested that, as well as improving gender balance in decision-making bodies and positions, we also need to introduce structural or institutional change by gender mainstreaming practices, which need to be embedded in the structure of all decision-making bodies, regardless of the gender of their members. This can be addressed through awareness-raising, training initiatives and the promotion of female leaders, as well as by improving academic opportunities for women and, consequently, their opportunities to obtain relevant leadership qualifications where various form of support such as mentoring may again be beneficial.

Currently, a number of measures in the EU Research and Innovation Programme support gender mainstreaming:¹⁰

- All Horizon 2020 advisory groups have a target of 50% for the underrepresented gender in expert groups and evaluation panels.
- Applicants for EU funding are encouraged to promote gender balance at all levels in their teams and management structures.
- Gender balance in research teams will be considered when ranking proposals with equal evaluation scores.
- When signing a grant agreement, beneficiaries must commit to promoting equal opportunities between women and men in the implementation of the project, as well as ensuring gender balance at all staff levels, including supervisory and management levels.
- GEP will be an eligibility criterion from 2022 for public institutions, research organisations (both public and private) and higher education institutions (both public and private) wishing to apply for funding under Horizon Europe. At the Horizon Europe level, there are four mandatory process related GEP requirements (building blocks) and the five recommended topic areas, among which is also gender equality in decision-making.

In addition, some European countries have taken measures and initiatives to improve equal opportunities in the last decade:¹¹

- Austria provides universities with additional funding for each newly appointed female professor.
- The Danish Council for independent research has funded 16 research projects led by women. This initiative has increased the number of women professors and permanent researchers.
- The Academy of Finland has asked scientific research councils to follow the principle of gender balance when nominating candidates for Academy-funded research positions.
- In Germany, the Federal Ministry for Education and Research introduced a professorship programme for highly qualified women in 2007 to increase the number of female professors at German universities. The programme has currently reached 260 professorships.
- In the Netherlands, the LNVH is a network of Dutch women professors representing all disciplines and universities. It advocates for adequate representation of women in academia.
- In Sweden, some universities support women approaching professorships by providing additional research time to qualify for promotion.

¹⁰ EIGE. 'Gender Equality in Power and Decision-Making Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States'. Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union: European Institute for Gender Equality, 2015. <https://eige.europa.eu/rdc/eige-publications/gender-equality-power-and-decision-making-report>.

¹¹ Ibid.

- In United Kingdom, the Equality Challenge Unit advocates for equality and diversity of staff and students in higher education.
- There are private programmes to promote women in science, such as the L'Oreal-Unesco grants, which support the work of leading women scientists.

More particular examples on how to tackle gender parity in decision-making bodies and how to induce the change towards structural gender equality and changing power structures can be found in the chapter 'Recommendations for GEP' below.

2. METHODOLOGY

In the following chapter we provide technical information on the qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches behind the research. We describe the methodology, the process of the study and some challenges. Our main objective was to assess the state of gender equality in decision-making bodies, processes, and organizational structures in the six participating research institutions. We relied on the analysis of documents and contributions from Final Assessment Reports, written by all six participating institutions in the framework of WP2, and on conducting interviews with managers and staff of the relevant management levels.

2.1 GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF DECISION-MAKING BODIES

The EIGE' Gender mainstreaming toolkit¹² states that gender impact assessment is an ex-ante evaluation, analysis or assessment of a law, policy or program that enables a pre-emptive determination of how likely it is that a particular decision will have negative consequences for gender equality. The central question of gender impact assessment is: **does a law, policy or program reduce, maintain, or increase gender inequalities between women and men?**

The EIGE tool goes on to say that "**apart from avoiding negative impacts, gender impact assessment can also be used in a more transformative way as a tool for defining gender equality objectives** and formulating policy to proactively promote gender equality". Within this framework, we have also applied gender impact assessment of the decision-making bodies.

The gender impact assessment we conducted on decision-making bodies therefore served as the basis for developing the recommendations, proposed objectives and gender targets for six AHMSSBL institutions. Improving gender equality in decision-making requires identifying gender gaps and understanding gender inequalities. Based on this, the most appropriate priorities can be set and target groups reached while maximizing opportunities to achieve expected goals.

Below is a description of the two methodological approaches we adopted, including some of the challenges and adjustments we faced in carrying out the methodological process.

The discovery processes used in both the document analysis and the interviews focused on the following themes:

- (selection) procedures,
- organizational culture,
- unconscious bias,
- resistance,
- work demands and

¹² EIGE, Gender impact assessment. Gender mainstreaming Toolkit. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2017. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gender-impact-assessment/what-gender-impact-assessment>

- work-life balance (also related to the changed work situation due to the Covid-19 pandemics).

Specific organizational structures and practices were assessed in terms of how they support, or hinder gender equality and were contrasted with the processes that determine and inform promotion or appointment to the various decision-making bodies and positions.

2.1.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Participants

The consortium decided that since it was specific leadership positions and ranks that we wanted to interview, the institutions themselves should contact their leaders in advance based on the guidelines provided by the IEDC about the positions and ranks that were being considered. Therefore, leaders and other senior managers were informed of the potential interview and have already confirmed participation with the respective core E4E project teams at their facility. Once confirmed, participants received an official invitation explaining the project in more detail and a Calendly link to book an appointment for an interview. Once the participant booked an appointment, they received an Outlook invitation with a Zoom link. However, given the number of interviews from management positions of the other institutions, we estimate that this does not impose a relevant limitation to the analysis of the results.

Interview process

IEDC developed an interview protocol and questionnaires with the input and feedback from partners in order to interview leadership and relevant levels of management staff. The protocol went through several rounds of revisions with other project partners.

The interviews were carried out between April and July 2021. We have interviewed 19 people of the following positions:

- Deans,
- Associate deans,
- Heads of departments,
- representatives from professional service management,
- employee representative.

Altogether, we have interviewed 11 men and 8 women from the leadership and decision-making positions.

All interviews were conducted in English, and were recorded and transcribed. The interviews lasted between 90 and 120 minutes.

The concrete methodology to conduct interviews and the questionnaires were developed by IEDC with the support of RSM and other partner institutions. The protocol considered the slight deviations and differences of different types of leadership positions, such as executive managers, heads of academic departments and heads of

administrative departments. While it was originally planned to conduct the interviews face-to-face, due to the covid-19 pandemic restrictions, the questionnaires and protocol were adjusted to best fit the online environment.

The Covid-19 pandemic has posed an unprecedented challenge for in-person interviews, thus we had to redesign the methodology and shift to online interviews. We found there were several challenges and disadvantages, but there were also some advantages to it. The disadvantages we faced with were connected to the logistical issues of using online software platforms, such as unstable internet connection, some intermittent or scattered voices and vague or muffled messages. In such cases, the repetitive apology and consistent inquiry due to poor internet quality made some interviews emotionally exhausting. There was also a dilemma of an interviewee not turning on the camera, which led to a feeling of distance or talking to a void. In general, in online setting, it is harder to build up trust due to the lack of human presence. Body language and eye contact is lost – and with it multifaceted and nuanced understandings is limited.

However, there are also advantages to the online interviewing. The individuals were stuck at home and eager for conversation, they had a more flexible schedule. When it came to the covid-19 related questions they were delighted to share pandemic experience or complain about the pandemic; or, on the other hand, some were more upfront in sharing their stories since they were not in the office or in institutional setting. Additionally, the interviews were conducted via Zoom, as this platform provides the option of recording and automatic transcribing of the recordings. We also estimate that people became more comfortable around online video-call platforms which made people less prone to initial awkwardness that interviewees sometimes experience when recording is started in a face-to-face environment.

Analysis of interview data

The process of data analysis took place in three main phases. In the first phase, the interview transcripts were analysed. The IEDC core team established a scheme of initial codes based on a previously debated consensus. These codes were then used to code the interviews, with additional codes added as needed, particularly in relation to perceptions and experiences. In the second phase, we conducted analysis on a school-by-school basis. We identified similarities and differences between interviewees who came from the same school to build up a picture of the main themes, group categories and draw out relationships or overarching patterns between them. This was particularly important for the identification of the gaps and advantages that were commonly mentioned, while also considering specific variations. In the third phase, we conducted an inter-institutional and a cross-institutional analysis, considering the different national geopolitical backgrounds, the positioning of the institutions and the academic environment, as well as the structure of academic promotion and decision-making that were nationally specific.

Ethics

The participating institutions adhered to the international, EU and national regulations for ethics and data protection in research, involving human subjects.¹³ The various institutional review boards also approved an informed consent form.

In analysing the qualitative and quantitative data, the research team decided not to simultaneously publish the ranks of the individuals and the names of the institutions to ensure the confidentiality of the research participants, as the leadership positions interviewed were held by a specific individual. In addition, some of the schools have very small numbers of staff, let alone female staff, especially in senior ranks. Disclosure of the institution, such as citations for the semi-structured interview analysis, could have led to the identification of specific interviewee. To avoid this and to ensure their anonymity, the interview analysis provided below is a thematic analysis with occasional explanations of the advantages and disadvantages that a particular school might have.

2.1.2 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Based on the guidelines developed in WP2, participating RPIs collected relevant data on the gender composition of decision-making bodies for later analysis. The RPIs provided the figures and information in their final reports explaining the composition of the decision-making bodies.

The preliminary analysis was already carried out by WP2, where schools' compositions in terms of gender equality were assessed and compared. The tables presented in the chapter 'Findings' below are therefore the product of WP2 work. The IEDC team conducted a further analysis and the impact assessment of the DMBs.

For decision-making bodies and processes in all participating institutions, we conducted the gender impact assessment, which we have summarized in the 'Findings' chapter. Additionally, we have added a review of the SMART objectives and areas of recommendation that deal with decision-making that institutions involved in their final reports. The empirical data we collected in this report, the assessment and the definition of strengths and weaknesses at the general and institutional level, served as a basis for us to develop the Recommendations to be included in the GEPs.

¹³ These include, for example, the Declaration of Helsinki, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and Directive 95/46/ EC on the use of personal data (as of 25 May 2018, the EU General Data Protection Regulation or GDPR).

3. FINDINGS

The main results of the qualitative and quantitative analysis are presented below. The analysis is organized thematically, and some institutional explanations are provided, but not in the sense of identifying specific individuals from a particular institution. The core team agreed that thematic analysis was therefore most appropriate to avoid any disclosure of information and to ensure the anonymity of interviewees.

The 19 interviews were conducted with leadership and management staff from five consortium institutions by two IEDC persons and the transcripts of the interviews were analysed by three persons. We proceeded using the coding method for qualitative methodology, observing each school specifically and identifying inter- and intra-institutional patterns.

There are **three main common findings**:

- There is a **general underrepresentation of women in leadership positions**.
- There have been **improvements over the last two decades**.
- There is a **discrepancy between existing rules and policies and their implementation and exercise** (linked to the phenomenon of gender fatigue).

Some **general observations** we assessed were:

- There are **differences in the perception of equality achieved between women and men**. Men are less sensitive to the problem, while women are more critical. Women see gender equality as a problem that is far from being achieved; they also identify systemic problems behind gender inequality. Some men were somewhat reluctant to answer these questions, stating that they did not see a difference between women and men. They reiterated that they themselves did not care whether a person was a woman or a man, and that they supposedly did not pay attention to gender in promotions and opportunities.
- There are **differences in perceptions between individuals who come from the academic core/faculty and professional service management**. The latter believe there is a greater problem with promotion opportunities for women precisely because women are more represented in professional service management, where promotion opportunities are scarcer.
- **More men than women see no gender issues and put all their faith in resolving inequality issues through meritocracy, performance orientation and transparency**.
- There are **differences in perception between higher and lower positions**. The former come to the interview to defend their school and present it in the best possible light, while the latter are more eager to recount their experiences.

- **The terms gender equality and diversity are often interchanged.** Interviewees note that other types of inequalities can be even more problematic in any school.
- There are **national differences in how much gender equality is talked about.** Some face more difficult challenges (e.g. financial pressures also linked to the very existence of the school, which push interest in gender equality and diversity issues into the background), for others gender equality is deeply embedded in their core values.
- **Representatives from majority of the participating institutions, especially those in higher positions, noted that they have difficulties in hiring women.** They often explain this by saying there are less women applying to academic (especially higher ranking) positions. The problem of over-burdening of women or even tokenization was mentioned frequently as a result of imbalance.
- **People from top positions had very few ideas on how they themselves could support and promote gender equality within their institutions.**
- In most of the participating institutions, there are **various activities and initiatives to promote gender equality**, but most of them are very narrow in scope and focus mainly on reconciling work and family life.

3.1 SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

In this chapter, the findings obtained from the interviews are described. The results of the document analysis are described further below, in chapter 3.2. The general findings that emerge from the interview data and the reports are described in the chapter 'Conclusion'.

To illustrate the overall picture of some of the questions we asked during the interview, here are some examples we used in the interview guides. All three interview guides can be found in Appendices I, II and III, along with the consent form in Annex VI. As mentioned earlier, the interview guides differed depending on the profile and rank of the interviewee, but the topics were generally similar.

- *What is the organisational culture at your school like? Is the organisational culture inclusive for women, does it support gender equality? Is the organisational culture gender sensitive?*
- *Do you know of the concept unconscious bias? Do you think this topic needs to be addressed? And if so how?*
- *In your view, do you think that there are differences in career aspiration among women and men?*
- *Do you think that your current organisational culture is hindering women in their career progression at your school? If not, how do you explain the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in your institution?*
- *Do you think that women in leadership position are perceived differently than men? If yes, how? Are there attitudes different toward men and women in leadership positions?*

- *Would you say women and men are equally represented at your school at all levels? e.g. leadership positions and decision-making bodies?*
- *If no, why do you think that this is the case?*
- *Is the recruitment process of leadership position and decision-making bodies transparent?*
- *Is your workload allocation system transparent? (teaching, research, admin)*
- *Have you observed any differences between career paths for female and male academics in your school?*
- *How do you think one can explain the under representation of women being full professors at you school?*
- *Did you have any trainings about in gender equality and unconscious bias?*
- *Do you think diversity/gender equality is relevant for your school?*
- *Is your school or the university in general collecting data and recording sex-disaggregated data?*
- *Is the institution promoting gender equality beyond what is legally required?*
- *Are there any organizational structures and formal or informal practices supporting or hindering increased gender equality?*
- *Who are the main drivers for gender equality in the organisation?*
- *Do the head of departments and employees accept and approve these GE practices and see the value of using this practice?*
- *Did you notice any institutional resistance to promoting gender equality in the organisations? If so, can you tell me more about it.*
- *Are there initiatives that you plan/working on to implement to improve gender equality in your school?*
- *Do you think your career would have been different, or it would progress differently in any way if you were of a different gender?*
- *Did you at any point in your life or career had to deal with negative gender related stereotypes?*
- *In your opinion, what can you or someone else in a management position do to improve the situation in terms of gender equality?*
- *Do you think that women in leadership positions are more likely than men to help or assist other women - i.e. in overcoming the obstacles that they themselves might have encountered in the past (as women)?*
- *How has Covid-19 affected your work?*
- *Were there any challenges related to Covid-19 at your institution that needed your leadership?*
- *Were there any particular challenges for female academics related to Covid-19 and how did you address those?*

The following is an overview of the main categories and themes raised in the interviews. As mentioned above, a thematically compiled and presented overview proved to be the most efficient way to comply with anonymity criteria and to protect participants from possible identification.

Organizational Culture

Interviewees stated that the organizational culture was generally female friendly. Some also stated that the national environment or institutional inclination towards women's empowerment or gender equality in academia has already been a long process dating back to policy initiatives in history or civil movements.

Some explain that there **is a problem of cultural slowness**, where change is accepted but it takes time to be implemented and entrenched. In this case, according to the interviewees, the inertia of gender equality advocates is crucial, both formally and informally, and this plays a major role in the possibility of change and its long-term impact.

The interviewees mentioned that there are **different types of managers, with male characteristics being more valued in the management world** so far. These, in line with the traditional male gender role, are more task-oriented, dynamic, controlling, and strategic, while the traditional female style, which is more associated with empathy and patience, is less valued. In addition, interviewees say that stereotypically masculine characteristics are associated with leadership and managerial skills.

Meritocracy versus gender equality is a very divided topic. Most interviews addressed this issue, mentioning how to achieve greater gender balance without diminishing the importance of people's merit. In addition, affirmative action and quotas are often thought to militate against merit-based recruitment and appointment, with resistance stemming from the argument connected to academic freedom and the pursuit of academic excellence.

We asked interviewees a question about how they perceive **organizational structures and practices** at their institution in relation to gender equality. They rated the structures and practices on a broader scale according to the extent to which they support or hinder gender equality. They also related this to the processes that determine and inform promotion or appointment to the various decision-making bodies and positions. In this sense, we found that there are large differences between organizations conducting research in different countries.

However, one commonality is that **women do more administrative work** and are more burdened with internal work for the organization, while men are more likely to work in areas where they can bring in more revenue and more money from outside. Therefore, their kind of work is also more appreciated and valued.

Gender equal representation and access to decision-making processes

All respondents indicate that their schools have male-dominated leadership. Additionally, within all schools, except for UNIBA representatives, it is mainly men who occupy higher academic positions as heads and full professors. In UNIBA's Faculty of Arts, where social sciences and humanities are taught, the gender balance in professorships is more balanced, which is consistent with findings in the literature that women are more likely to

be equal to men in academic advancement in social sciences and humanities, since they are more associated with stereotypical female roles.

Interviewees pointed out that **women are unequally distributed not only in the ranks but also in the research areas**, which they related to the problem that the pool of potential leaders is also very unequal, as leaders are selected from certain strategic areas. Some interviewees noted that the different achievements of women in research are not appreciated to the same extent as those of men. This leads to unequal career progression between the genders, which in turn leads to less access to leadership positions and decision-making processes.

Pay gap

Interviewees indicated that **disparities in salaries were evident**. Some schools have taken action to address the pay gap and others have spoken about it. At this point, some of the respondents expressed some resistance to taking action at the institutional level, as they considered the unequal pay to be a problem of the national labour market and not of the institution. They also believe that all problems should be solved at the national level and that changes should be implemented at the national level as well.

While unequal pay was mentioned as a problem in most interviews, we found that salary inequalities were more problematic in institutions where interviewees spoke of less transparent salary policies and especially where they described salary as a subject of individual negotiation.

(Selection) procedure

The selection process for the various decision-making bodies is transparent in some schools and not in others. In some, it is the case that once you reach a certain position, you automatically sit on a certain decision-making body, while in others the filling of such positions is less transparent. Some respondents mentioned the so-called 'grey area', a term they use to describe non-transparent subjective internal decision-making, where they also feel that gender equality is not sufficiently considered.

Some also indicated that **gender parity policies place a burden on women in senior positions**, as the low number of women in decision-making positions means that they have to take up positions in different decision-making bodies, leading to them being overburdened with tasks. Some interviewees therefore estimated that mechanisms to promote women in decision-making positions are better suited if there are generally more women in decision-making bodies and at higher hierarchical levels.

Unconscious bias

The majority of respondents were aware of the concept of unconscious bias, and they also believed it to be present in their schools. They related this to the fact that unconscious bias is a part of everyone and that everyone makes biased decisions (to a greater or lesser extent) all the time.

Most interviewees think that unconscious bias could be further addressed in **unconscious bias training**, since it would ultimately lead to significant reductions of gender bias in leadership and decision-making. Some have already participated in similar training and some found it useful, while others believe that further action would be needed. A significant majority of interviewees were not able to identify any unconscious bias or gender sensitivity trainings offered at their institution, but some believe that the institution would pay for such trainings if individual employees would request it.

Perceptions and differences in aspirations and opportunities

When asked if they observed any differences in the career aspirations of women and men, interviewees did not see or outline any significant differences. Only some male interviewees mentioned that some women may be slightly less career oriented. On the other hand, some interviewees mentioned that **men become more vocal when negotiating positions or their salary, while women tend to wait for the right opportunity**. In some cases, some of the interviewees who were previously in the role of supervisor had to personally contact the female applicant to encourage her to apply or ask for the promotion, while they did not have such experiences with men.

Some interviewees who had previously been in the role of an employer looking for an employee pointed to the fact that there were more male applications than female applications when they advertised a vacancy. Some explained that women were less likely to apply for senior positions or were reluctant to apply for decision-making positions because it was a position in a male-dominated environment. Some mentioned that this could also be related to the fact that these male-dominated contexts are still dominated by decisions made in informal networks or within the 'old boys club', to which mainly men have (informal) access. These informal structures continue to play a role in selection procedures, as men are more likely to be encouraged to apply and to be selected.

Another explanation given by some interviewees was that while there are no differences in aspirations for decision-making positions between women and men, there are differences in opportunities. Here, the lack of opportunities was not mentioned as something that could be tangibly assessed, but as something related to the difficulties in balancing work and family life, where parenting and caring roles in particular are more burdensome and limiting for women than for men. Women employers are disproportionately more burdened with parenting and caring responsibilities than men, according to respondents. While management and higher decision-making positions are considered very demanding and time-consuming, requiring flexibility and readiness at all times, women who are also parents are less likely to apply for such positions because they are more burdened by their parenting roles than

male parents. Interviewees noted that this was particularly evident during Covid-19, when women had to take on another role, that of teaching their children from home.

Resistances

There was no major resistance expressed by respondents to the implementation of equality actions or policies. However, there was some overt ones.

The most obvious resistance to affirmative action expressed by respondents was based on the fear that it would target meritocracy. In this sense, when quotas were mentioned (we did not ask respondents specifically about them, but they mentioned them themselves), interviewees were very polarized in their opinions. Some thought they were a good practice to address structural inequalities, others saw them as a stepping stone that should be complemented by other mechanisms and thought they should eventually be abolished, and some rejected them because they believed that a person should be selected on the basis of their abilities rather than their gender. The latter group also stated that quotas are not good mechanisms because they initially cause backlash.

In this sense, respondents mentioned other approaches that they considered more successful than quotas, namely mentoring female researchers and being role models for female academics. Respondents justified their opposition to the introduction of quotas not because they were opposed to quotas per se, but because of the potential backlash quotas would cause among other staff at their institutions. Other mechanisms, such as mentoring or role modelling approach, were therefore more supported by interviewees. However, interviewees did not express their support to these other mechanisms in the sense that they would be more successful than quotas, but rather that they would be more accepted by the institution because they would not directly target the decision-making process and would not 'force' the institution to include more people on governing bodies.

Another overt resistance emerged in some interviews, as some interviewees believed that it takes time to achieve gender equality and that it is (or has already been) achieved naturally and without further action. Some also believe that discrimination is a thing of the past that does not need to be explored further.

Some participants felt that general initiatives and mechanisms to promote gender equality in research and science are too specific or narrow in scope, or are not articulated clearly enough, and were therefore reluctant to endorse them.

Some stated that gender inequality was not the most problematic phenomenon of inequality and that it should be linked to racial inequality or even extended to intersectionality, inclusion, and diversity. Some felt that it is not enough to talk about gender inequality, that it is too negative to just mention the barriers and discrimination that some groups face. Instead, they said, we should be more positive and talk in a more 'productive' sense, which they explained by seeing how different people bring different perspectives to the table.

Work-life balance

Work-life balance was particularly mentioned in relation to the changes in working conditions and hours due to the Covid-19 pandemics. Respondents mentioned that they have noticed that parents, especially women, are disproportionately more affected by the crisis, making it harder for them to achieve work-life balance. Some respondents felt that this imbalance was cultural, while others believed it was self-imposed.

When mentioning the tenure-track system and the tough and competitive criteria that candidates must meet, some agreed that it is more difficult for women to achieve because the first academic positions/ranks are processed during times when people usually start their families and have children. As women are more burdened by motherhood and housework, this affects their ability to compete with men.

There are difficulties in balancing work and home life when one is in a leadership position. The long hours and heavy workload expected of people discourage many from even considering such a position. And because work-life balance is more difficult for women, respondents said, this leads to a greater gender imbalance in top positions.

3.2 GENDER IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF DECISION-MAKING BODIES

The omission of this chapter in the public version of the document has been done to uphold anonymity and confidentiality.

3.2.1 GENDER COMPOSITION OF DECISION-MAKING BODIES

The omission of this chapter in the public version of the document has been done to uphold anonymity and confidentiality.

3.3 INSTITUTIONS' MEASURES AND INITIATIVES TO ENHANCE GENDER EQUALITY IN LEADERSHIP

The omission of this chapter in the public version of the document has been done to uphold anonymity and confidentiality.

3.4 DECISION-MAKING RELATED SMART OBJECTIVES AND AREAS OF INTERVENTION

The omission of this chapter in the public version of the document has been done to uphold anonymity and confidentiality.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GEPS

The recommendations follow the institutional reports from WP2, where institutions identified which decision-making areas should be improved or strengthened, but additionally provide some more ideas for actions and measures the institutions might want to take.

Common goals regarding gender equality in decision-making and leadership therefore are:

- To encourage equal representation and participation in leadership and decision making.
- To direct the transformation of the organizational structures and culture towards gender equality in leadership and decision-making.

How can we approach this?

- By identifying the gender gaps in decision-making bodies and processes.
- By looking at previous experiences and provide best practices and tools that already exist.
- By exchanging knowledge and experience among gender equality plan's implementing leaders by attending workshops, pairing events, training initiatives or organize engagement sessions.
- By promoting gender sensitive decision-making and leadership.

Included are also two tables with relevant resources for GEP implementors that focus on gender equality in decision-making. They can help with identifying possible strategies, objectives, and actions that institutions could implement, or some inspiration sources that have been identified as effective.

4.1 IMPROVING GENDER BALANCE IN DECISION-MAKING

The institution's leadership and its decision-making bodies must be gender-balanced for the organisation to truly live up to its values. Women and men should have equal access to and participation in informal and formal leadership and decision-making. Decision-making itself needs to be gender sensitive (or gender equitable) as it should consider gender differences and promote gender equality.

Gender balance in leadership and decision-making positions is a key concern at the EU level. The Council Conclusions on Advancing gender equality in the European Research Area (adopted in December 2015) invited competent authorities to set up guiding targets, e.g., quantitative targets, for better gender balance in decision-making bodies, including senior scientific and administrative bodies, recruitment and promotion committees, and evaluation panels. Research funding and performing organisations were encouraged to achieve these targets by 2020.¹⁴

In terms of improving the gender balance every institution needs to:

- Increase women's representation gender parity with the aim of reaching the critical mass (40%)

¹⁴ EIGE. GEAR action toolbox. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gear/action-toolbox>

- Guarantee equal access to the positions with most power in decision-making.

Among H2020 gender equality projects and internal frameworks of other European higher education institutions the following **best practices, tools and recommendations aimed at addressing gender imbalances in decision-making bodies and processes in AHMSSBL research institutions** are identified.

4.1.1 IMPROVING WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN DECISION-MAKING BODIES

1. EIGE's tool on Gender Mainstreaming reports on some of the best practises and success stories¹⁵ about improving women's representation in decision-making bodies and reaching gender parity. Among them is the positive impact of the EU-funded INTEGER project in improving gender equality in decision-making bodies at Siauliai University (LT).¹⁶ The impact of the INTEGER project has been significantly positive, with female representation on the University's Council reaching 36.3% in 2014, compared to no women in 2011. The EIGE's description provides a list of the actions taken in Siauliai University to achieve this goal, including searching for women candidates from SU's representatives, lobbying and recruiting; directly supporting women in designing their election campaigns and advising the University Lawyer on possible ways to increase women's representation on the Council. Further ideas can also be found in the section on outcomes and lessons learned. Finally, the effort to increase gender equality in decision-making bodies is also described on Siauliai University through a [YouTube video](#).

Further reading: [Presentation](#) by Virginija Sidlauskienė at Learning and Dissemination Seminar on Promoting Gender Equality in Research and Higher Education Institutions.

2. Gender balance in the election procedure: EIGE's tool also exemplifies the new election procedure for the Board of Ghent University (Belgium),¹⁷ which requires that faculties nominate at least one male and one female candidate for the elections. If the elections have an unbalanced gender result (the minimum balance of 40/60 is not met), the candidate with the fewest votes from the overrepresented gender (compared to other faculties) must give way to the candidate from the faculty of the other gender with the highest number of votes. Although it sparked some resistances, the new process paved the way for significant change: As a result of the 2014 election, the Board now has a 50/50 composition. It was no longer necessary to take affirmative action to elect a female representative, and the reformed election attracted the most voters in the university's history.

Further reading: [Presentation](#) by Tine Brouckaert at Learning and Dissemination Seminar on Promoting Gender Equality in Research and Higher Education Institutions.

3. Obtaining gender balance in decision-making bodies through increased academic and leadership qualifications:

¹⁵ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/good-practices>

¹⁶ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/good-practices/lithuania/council-election-strategy-siauliai-university-council-election>

¹⁷ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/good-practices/belgium/new-election-procedure-board-ghent-university>

The impact story, developed as part of the EFFORTI project, demonstrates two ways to increase female qualifications and obtain balance in decision-making positions in academia: through increased opportunities for **international research mobility** for women and through **leadership training programmes**.¹⁸ While international exchange supports female researchers to stay at foreign private or public sector research environments, often seen as a prerequisite for a career as a researcher and ultimately as a leader within academia or in research organisations, leadership training programme targets organizational and hidden structural gender barriers and as such helps to increase awareness and knowledge about organizational barriers to achieve gender equality. Hereby, the interventions increase women’s visibility as role models, increase organisational gender awareness, influences positively the productivity of female researchers, and rebalances power in research organisations. The impact story includes the evaluation of the objectives and outcomes.

Gender Initiative for Excellence – GENIE¹⁹ (Chalmers University of Technology of Gothenburg) is a long-term programme aimed at implementing concrete changes in academic culture, systems, and processes. Holding the final goal of increasing the proportion of women professors from 17% today to 40% by 2029, it proposes a combination of bottom-up and top-down efforts to redress gender inequality and set up tailor-made activities for each department. Through such actions, the programme intends to also remove obstacles that hamper women's careers and create working environments that are diverse and inclusive and support excellence in research and teaching. Priorities such as the direct recruitment of top female researchers are part of the strategic plan, as well as the incorporation of gender aspects into all statistics and a broader sharing of data concerning pay and qualifications in promotions at the institution.

TABLE 1: RELEVANT RESOURCES FOR GEP IMPLEMENTORS ON IMPROVING GENDER EQUALITY IN DECISION-MAKING BODIES

Sister project / Inspiring practice	Area
Case study: Belgian academia	Implementing gender quotas in academia: a practice lens
Charter for more women in management at University of Copenhagen	Enhancing women’s participation in management and research
EIGE’s tool on gender mainstreaming	Improving women's representation in decision-making bodies and reaching gender parity
Election procedure for the Board of Ghent University	Gender balance in the election procedure
Gender Initiative for Excellence – GENIE	Bottom-up and top-down efforts to redress gender inequality and set up tailor-made activities
Gearing Roles: Best practices report	Inspiring practices for promoting leadership in higher education and initiatives and programs to foster female leadership

¹⁸ <https://efforti.eu/sites/default/files/2019-11/Impact%20Story%20Obtaining%20gender%20balance%20in%20decision-making%20positions.pdf>

¹⁹ <http://www.chalmers.se/en/about-chalmers/Chalmers-for-a-sustainable-future/initiatives-for-gender-equality/gender-initiative-for-excellence/Pages/default.aspx>

4.2 TRANSFORMING THE CULTURE, PERCEPTIONS AND BEHAVIOURS IN ACADEMIC ORGANIZATIONS

Building open, collaborative working relationships and a culture of respect helps create a work environment in which everyone can have confidence. At the same time, it pays to support and encourage women to apply for decision-making positions throughout their careers.

When top management explicitly supports gender equality, the issue gains legitimacy and everyone can feel safe to raise gender issues when decisions need to be made.

In order to transform the culture, we need to:

- Tackle norms and values regulating the processes of control and decision-making,
- Transform traditional gender roles (when men are leaders, women are followers).
- Transform the informal decision-making and meeting culture and communication,
- Engage leadership in gender equality activities.

4.2.1 PROMOTING AND FOSTERING FEMALE LEADERSHIP WITH TRAINING AND OTHER INITIATIVES

1. **The EU-funded project Gearing Roles** has developed a Best Practices Report²⁰ that identifies several inspiring practices for promoting leadership in higher education, as well as initiatives and programs to foster female leadership. The majority of the practices presented in the report relate to Affirmative Action's/Direct Support and Leadership Development programs, followed by various forms of leadership training projects, awareness raising, networks and networking platforms to promote women academics and women leaders.

2. **AcademiaNet, Database of women scientists**²¹ is a tool that helps decision makers find proven female experts. Currently the world's largest database of women scientists, AcademiaNet offers numerous profiles of excellent female academics from all disciplines, making them more visible and accessible. Initially featuring profiles of German-speaking female academics, the portal was gradually internationalised and expanded and now contains information in both German and English. Since 2012, the portal has developed into a European database for those looking for suitable female candidates for influential academic and scientific positions, as well as for conference organisers and head-hunters of keynote speakers.

3. **Advance HE**²² is a company aimed at improving the management, governance, and leadership skills of existing and future higher education leaders in the UK. It promotes research and practical initiatives on equality in the academic sector and, based on the analysis of the unequal status of women and men in academic positions, positive actions have been taken to address this imbalance in staff recruitment, selection, and promotion processes. Among others, actions involve the possibility of appointing women over men in tie-break situations where there is an underrepresentation of women, as well as measures to avoid the distinction between male and female candidates

²⁰ <https://gearingroles.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/D5.1.-Best-Practices-Report.pdf>

²¹ <https://www.academia-net.org/project/>

²² <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/>

in interviews. Moreover, also aimed at addressing the gender imbalance in higher education institutions, formal mentoring programmes have been implemented to support the progress of women's careers in the sector.

4. Gender Integrated Leadership Programme²³

In 2004, Lund University (Sweden) launched a programme for gender-integrated leadership (AKKA). In this programme, leadership is understood as something that can be learned and developed, focusing on the competencies of the individual competences, rather than on personal characteristics. The AKKA programme aims to increase knowledge and awareness of gender equality and provide methods and tools for structural change to achieve sustainable gender equality. From 2004 to 2014, five AKKA programmes were offered to 150 senior scientists (37 of them men) in Lund University (Sweden). The programme runs for one year with monthly meetings. Over the years, AKKA has increased the number of women in leadership positions, contributed to increased visibility of women as potential leaders, increased the willingness of both women and men to take up leadership positions, raised awareness of gender equality among female and male academic leaders, promoted networking and collaboration within the university, increased knowledge of university policies and activities, developed tools for dealing with resistance to gender equality issues and for change management, helped to highlight discrimination, and developed concrete change projects.

Further reading:

- [Report](#) from the project 'Core values work at Lund University' by Tomas Brage and Inger Lövkrona,
- [Presentation](#) by Inger Lövkrona at Learning and Dissemination Seminar on Promoting Gender Equality in Research and Higher Education Institutions.

4.2.2 GENDERING DECISION-MAKING AND IMPROVING COMMUNICATION PROCESSES AND INFORMAL DECISION MAKING

1. The EU-funded project FESTA aims at **increasing transparency and inclusivity in the informal decision-making and communication processes** in the research units and at enabling/creating an enduring transformation of the organisational culture favouring a more active participation of women in all the decision-making and communication processes. FESTA developed three reports: (i) Methodologies and measures for analysing informal decision-making and communication processes,²⁴ (ii) Guidelines for designing and implementing changes in informal decision-making and communication processes to improve transparency and inclusivity,²⁵ and (iii) Report on Improving Meeting Cultures.²⁶

The project focused on how positional power and decision-making areas are structured in organizations. Reports were drawn on documentary evidence and interviews with decision-makers and committee members in various

²³ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gear/examples/akka>

²⁴ https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/festa_methodologies_measures_analysis_informal_decision-making_communication.pdf

²⁵ <https://www.festa-europa.eu/sites/festa-europa.eu/files/WP4.2%20Deliverable%204.4.pdf>

²⁶ <https://www.festa-europa.eu/sites/festa-europa.eu/files/Deliverable%206.2%20Meeting%20cultures.pdf>

institutions to show how organizations' practices of decision-making and communication mask the exercise of power and contribute to gender inequality. Recommendations are made that address structural and cultural issues to enable greater transparency and accountability in decision-making and communication processes and to advance gender equality. These recommendations relate to structural changes, such as the establishment of an independent gender equality committee with top-level support, and to cultural changes, such as the introduction of regular meetings between management and staff to share information. The project also aims to supporting women to participate fully in the decision-making process, e.g., by introducing/improving training for women in leadership and decision-making.

2. Best practice for making the meeting culture gender sensitive and gender aware²⁷

Improving the meeting culture: Uppsala University developed a methodology for improving meeting culture. The objectives of the task included exploring and developing ways of structuring and managing meetings based on collaboration, negotiation, room and respect for diversity and equal voice, as well as inclusive, transparent and participative processes that may challenge and compete with existing academic meeting cultures and norms. Additionally, managers gender-sensitive facilitators' guide for meeting practices was integrated in the leadership programme.

4.2.3 ENHANCING LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT IN GENDER EQUALITY ACTIVITIES

In order for gender equality to be structurally embedded in the organisation, it is necessary that the widest possible range of stakeholders be receptive to this change. Therefore, to make gender equality work effectively, it is crucial to engage with these stakeholders both vertically and horizontally. However, in order to increase the legitimacy of the measures, it is important to have the support and explicit backing of the top level of the organisation from the outset.

The key to engaging stakeholders from the top in working towards structural change for gender equality is to create a sense of ownership. It is critical that they are aware of the gender equality goals and initiatives being taken. Therefore, internal communication and visibility are crucial.

Internal legitimacy can be achieved by gaining external support through alliances with stakeholders outside the organisation. For example, think of research institutions with an excellent reputation in gender equality, internationally recognised gender equality experts or participation in an EU-funded project on structural change.

It is crucial that some of the leaders become 'change agents'. Some inspiration on that can be found in a [Video](#), which is a recording of the conference that Gearing Roles project organized on topic Gender and Leadership in Higher Education and Research: Institutional Challenges and Resistances. To sum, the role of change agents, while conducting structural change, is to support the transformation and adaptation of the structures of organizations.

²⁷<https://gender-spear.eu/blog/post/40/how-to-gender-mainstream-and-enhance-the-quality-of-decision-making-processes-experiences-from-uppsala-university>

Their commitment, their willingness to take extra step is key to successful and long-term effective implementation of actions.

Some other motivational resources:

- A [presentation](#) by Evanthia K. Schmidt, Aarhus University (Denmark), about engaging leadership in gender equality initiatives (presented at the STAGES final conference on 3 December 2015). This presentation contains concrete suggestions learnt from the experience of the EU-funded structural change project STAGES on how to better involve leadership in gender equality.
- A [short video](#) from the StratEGIC toolkit with testimonials about working for change at multiple institutional levels.
- INTEGER project's [checklist](#) with suggestions for engaging with key stakeholders.

HeForShe: Toolbox: Leadership Engagement on Gender Equality.²⁸ HeForShe project developed a toolbox on how to organize a session to explore how leadership can support women to advance in the workplace and how to set an example so that both female and male employees are valued, deserving of equal pay and of family-supportive workplace policies. Toolbox offers guidelines for the organizers, for the facilitators of the session, provides some examples of questions for the discussion, some concluding remarks and a template for the pre-questionnaire to be given to the participants. The aim of the session is enhancing an understanding of the benefits of gender equality among the leaders and help them understand what they can do in their own position as leaders to influence change, and to develop a clearer vision on how they can contribute to achieving gender equality.

4.2.4 OVERCOMING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

In addressing the enhancing gender equality in leadership and decision-making, it is important to discuss strategies for tackling bias and resistances. The paramount question here is especially relating to the merit-based processes: **'why gender equality should matter to meritocracy and academic excellence'**.

Meritocracy and gender equality should not be opposed. A gender-biased notion of meritocracy, by which individuals with different circumstances are expected to take a same path towards leadership, is the problem to be tackled. Even more, this should be done for the sake of actual meritocracy and excellence, not based on the reproduction of privileges.

Meritocracy in itself is not an objective system per se, it can be biased. Its effects on women have been described through metaphors, pointing out different conditions (not merits) for accessing leadership, sticky floors, glass ceilings and glass walls. Women applying to leadership positions face the dual effect of horizontal and vertical segregation.

More explanation on how to recognize and tackle unconscious bias is provided in this [video](#).

²⁸ https://www.heforshe.org/sites/default/files/2018-10/toolbox_tool1_v2.pdf

TABLE 2: RELEVANT RESOURCES FOR GEP IMPLEMENTORS ON TRANSFORMING THE CULTURE, PERCEPTIONS AND BEHAVIOURS IN ACADEMIC ORGANIZATIONS

Sister project / Inspiring practice	Area
AcademiaNet	Database of women scientists, programme to foster female leadership
Advance HE	Fostering female leadership
EFFORTI Impact story	Obtaining gender balance in decision-making bodies through increased academic and leadership qualifications
FESTA	Methodologies and measures for analysing informal decision-making and communication processes
FESTA	Guidelines for designing and implementing changes in informal decision-making and communication processes to improve transparency and inclusivity
FESTA	Improving meeting culture
Gearing Roles & GE Academy	Webinar: Overcoming bias and resistances: Exploring Challenges to Gender Equality in Leadership and Decision-Making
Gender equality Academy	Webinar: Gender bias in academic recruitment and promotion: recognizing and overcoming it
HeForShe toolkit	Enhancing leadership engagement in gender equality activities
Uppsala university	Best practice for making the meeting culture gender sensitive and gender aware

4.3 WHICH TOOLS AND BEST PRACTICES ARE BEST FOR AHMSSBL INSTITUTIONS

Above we have presented several possible approaches that we consider useful in AHMSSBL institutions. The list is not exhaustive, and several more interesting initiatives and recommendations were identified through our research. The ones presented were selected these based on a review of documents, institutional reports and interview analysis. At this stage, we are not deliberately suggesting that these specific initiatives be undertaken, nor are we identifying individual approaches for individual institutions, as we believe that the recommendations and practices will be incorporated after the GEP is adopted and implementation of policies begins. Since we cannot predict the future and the institutions themselves know best what skills, knowledge, capabilities and human capital are available to them, they can and must decide for themselves which initiatives and recommendations are best for them.

Because the project focuses on AHMSSBL institutions, we need to highlight those best practices or recommendations that are most appropriate given the unique characteristics of these institutions and show notable differences when compared to STEM universities. The gaps that exist specifically for AHMSSBL institutions and practices that are best to overcome them are as follows:

1. There is gender equality among undergraduate and graduate students. Therefore, it is **not about attracting women/girls to study these disciplines but encouraging them to pursue a career in research and academia in general.**

2. There is gender imbalance in the members and chairpersons of decision-making bodies in AHMSSBL institutions. There is a need to **increase the number of women on these boards and to encourage them to take up such positions. Attention has to be dedicated towards increasing the visibility of women as potential leaders, increasing the willingness of women to take up leadership positions, and improving their leadership skills through training and various opportunities.**

3. Representation is one thing, but culture change and true inclusion is more than just that. While business schools have focused on balancing their student body, there has been noticeably less progress on faculty, visiting professors, and guest lecturers, which arguably has an even greater impact on what is taught, researched, and prioritized. Most schools have seen minimal increases in the number of female faculty, and the case studies used to teach MBA students about business predominantly feature men.

Rather than simply focusing efforts on requiring men to volunteer to be "allies" for women, **gender balance should be viewed as a business imperative that requires specific management skills. Gender balancing business should be seen as a management competency that needs to be taught - to both men and women.** Instead of offering only the "fix-the-women" approaches,²⁹ we should complement them with a series of "women in leadership" programs that complement the management education offered.

4. Business and management education is still seen as a "man's world" and we should work to change that view. The culture and teaching in business schools has not kept pace and there is still a gender imbalance in faculty, guest speakers and case studies. Now that women are almost equally represented among students, we should also **focus on the types of leaders and leadership styles that should reflect the student body.** It is important for both men and women to see **diverse leaders and leadership styles**, otherwise they will not be prepared for the future. So far, female students have not been exposed to enough successful female leaders and male students have not been exposed to enough leadership styles that are different from their own.

5. Because informal structures play a role in selection procedures and the way decisions are made, men are more likely to be encouraged to advance their careers in informal networks and within the culture of the "old boys club". We should therefore seek to change such biased organizational practices and the organizational culture itself. Instead of reinforcing the old stereotype that women simply lack confidence and negotiation skills, business schools should help them build and develop them. In addition to business education for women, we should also **consider improving the role model approach, encouraging them to build professional networks, and providing them with**

²⁹ The "fix-the-women" approach targets organizational inequalities through an understanding of socialized differences between women and men. It is based on political thoughts on liberal individualism and posits that women are actually less well-equipped than men to compete for positions and take on, for example, leadership roles. The actions developed within this kind of theoretical framework only target women and intend to empower women and strengthen their position in the organization by equipping them with appropriate skills, competence, and networks. Women are thus supposed to learn how to compete with men and "play the game better" (Ely, Robin J., and Debra E. Meyerson. 2000. Theories of gender in organizations: A new approach to organizational analysis and change. *Research in Organizational Behaviour* 22: 103–51).

leadership training, as this is crucial to helping women advance their careers. Role models are especially important for students and young professionals who are just starting to build their careers.

6. There are gendered paths in career choices and there is gender segregation in the labour market, both horizontally and vertically. Gender roles and their holders are very visible in everyday contexts and gender stereotypes emerge in response to observing women and men in different social roles and in role-bound activities related to career choices. As for administrative staff and faculty, the former is much more feminised, and that is one of the reasons why they are devalued and why there are fewer opportunities for promotion and generally less satisfaction with the work environment. **There is a need to highlight the value of all ranks and all positions in AHMSSBL institutions and create opportunities for career advancement for all.**

7. There are typical qualities associated with the typical manager. Business and management are associated with a male person, and masculine characteristics are attributed to the roles within these segments. Furthermore, management subjects are not only classified as masculine, but also associated with a number of attributes commonly associated with masculinity, such as being hard, complex, based on thinking rather than feelings. Therefore, **perceptions of what typical managers look and behave like and what values they share needs to be changed, while also confronting and changing the masculine and male-centric organizational culture.**

8. **Robust work-life balance policies** are essential to address the multi-layered gender inequalities and pay gap, so that women - who disproportionately provide care to their families - are not unfairly disadvantaged when they take time off to address care needs. **Access to paid sick days and a comprehensive paid family and medical leave program** are just two of the essential policies that would help minimize job losses and ensure better economic security. Business schools should ensure that they have a pay parity clause and do not differentiate pay by gender. The gender pay gap is not only complex and nuanced, but also persistent. To address the gender pay gap, women need updated, comprehensive **equal pay legislation** that strengthens existing protections and further combats discriminatory practices.

On the question of whether some of the initiatives and recommendations presented above work or not, we can say that the literature and the reviews of practices suggest that setting quotas or gender targets is not enough without setting contextual and process-related targets linked to changing culture, perception and behaviour towards greater gender equality. They do bring about institutional change, but only for a short time and without sustaining it. Gender targets are therefore necessary, but only if they are complemented by intentions and actions aimed at changing the organizational culture.

In terms of recommendations for individual institutions, we can only point to the gaps that the institutions themselves have identified or that we have identified in the interviews with the managers of these institutions. It is important that the institutions themselves are aware of their own gaps and their disadvantaged areas and, on the other hand, have a valuable resource in form of good practices and recommendations to address them, which we have provided in this report.

The evaluation of the listed practices will and can only take place after the institutions have implemented them as part of their Gender Equality Plans. Evaluation of these tools will only be possible through their practical application. Since we are pioneers in the field of gender equality plans in AHMSSBL institutions, we cannot say in advance whether certain practices will work or not. However, we can say that the initiatives developed under the GEP implementing sister projects have proven to be successful as they are specifically tailored to the decision-making area of the RFOs and RPOs. Below is a list of measures and good practices developed under GEP implementation projects and under H2020.

TABLE 3: RELEVANT RESOURCES DEVELOPED UNDER H2020 GEP IMPLEMENTING PROJECTS

GEP implementing project	Area
Gearing Roles	Inspiring practices for promoting leadership in higher education and initiatives and programs to foster female leadership
EFFORTI	Obtaining gender balance in decision-making bodies through increased academic and leadership qualifications
FESTA	Methodologies and measures for analysing informal decision-making and communication processes
FESTA	Guidelines for designing and implementing changes in informal decision-making and communication processes to improve transparency and inclusivity
FESTA	Improving meeting culture
Gearing Roles & GE Academy	Webinar: Overcoming bias and resistances: Exploring Challenges to Gender Equality in Leadership and Decision-Making
Gender equality Academy	Webinar: Gender bias in academic recruitment and promotion: recognizing and overcoming it

Below is a table with some concrete examples of the inclusion of equality objectives regarding decision-making. The table consists of three columns, including dimensions, planned actions and measures, to illustrate how the dimensions can be translated into actions and what they entail. Institutions might find these examples useful and adapt them to their own context.

TABLE 4: EXAMPLES OF DIMENSIONS, PLANNED ACTIONS AND MEASURES REGARDING GENDER EQUALITY IN DECISION-MAKING

DIMENSION	ACTION PLANNED	MEASURE
Equality of women and men in leadership positions	Review good practices on gender equality in leadership and decision-making	Document published on the institution's website

	Develop guidelines for gender balance in leadership and decision-making bodies	(Published) Guidelines for gender balance in leadership and decision-making bodies
	Identify gender imbalances in governance bodies	Improved gender balance in governing bodies
	Encourage new appointments to decision making bodies to achieve a better gender balance	80% of committees consist of at least 40% women
	Increase gender balance in decision-making bodies	Decision-making bodies consisted of and are chaired by 40% women
Policies and practices operating at management and leadership levels	Develop the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) and present the needs, benefits and feasibility of the plan to the senior decision-makers	At least 60% of senior decision-makers attend the presentation
	Include the clause on gender equality in the Mission statement	Institution's mission statement with emphasis on gender equality
	Publicly commit to gender equality (dean or senior leaders)	Endorsement of gender equality and GE objectives by the Dean at the public event
	Promote a gender and diversity policy	Appointment of gender equality and diversity officer
	Create a web page dedicated to gender equality	Establishment of website or subsection on gender equality
	Strengthen gender equality awareness in the organisation	Public engagement and mobilization of top leaders Regular monitoring and communication to senior management on gender equality
	Improve institutional competencies in gender equality	Conducted workshops and training on gender and diversity
	Training on barriers to gender equality and diversity	Conducted workshops on unconscious bias and barriers to gender equality for top leaders
	Address gender pay gap	Measure the pay gap (conduct a gender audit) and analyse the contributing factors

5. CONCLUSION

Despite increasing efforts in recent decades to improve women's representation in decision-making bodies, women remain underrepresented in positions of power throughout the EU. The 2015 EIGE study on 'Gender Equality in Power and Decision-Making' states that only one in three high-level political decision-making positions is held by women. In the EU, women made up 20% of chief executives in 2017, while in this consortium of six institutions, women made up 18% of chief executives.

In order to make an informed assessment of the gender impact of decision-making bodies and processes in the six participating institutions, IEDC conducted a document analysis by reviewing the institutional reports produced as part of Work Package 2 and the comparative report produced by ESMT as part of WP2 and the section on decision-making bodies contained therein. Quantitative data was supplemented with qualitative data by conducting 19 interviews with leadership and management staff from the consortium institutions. By combining the findings from the qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches, we were able to identify three main findings that apply to all schools:

- There is a **general underrepresentation of women in leadership positions**.
- There have been **improvements over the last two decades**.
- There is a **discrepancy between existing rules and policies and their implementation and exercise** (linked to the phenomenon of gender fatigue).

In the interviews, we further elaborated on some qualitative observations, which can be summarized as follows:

- There are **differences in the perception of achieved gender equality between women and men**. Men are less sensitive to the problem, while women are more critical.
- There are **differences in perceptions between individuals who come from the academic core/faculty and professional service management**. The latter believe there is a greater problem with promotion opportunities for women precisely because women are more represented in professional service management, where promotion opportunities are scarcer.
- **More men than women see no gender issues and put all their faith in resolving inequality issues through meritocracy, performance orientation and transparency**.
- There are **differences in perception between higher and lower positions**. The former come to the interview to defend their school and present it in the best possible light, while the latter are more eager to recount their experiences.
- **The terms gender equality and diversity are often interchanged**. Interviewees note that other types of inequalities can be even more problematic in any school.

- There are **national differences in how much gender equality is talked about**. Some face more difficult challenges (e.g. financial pressures also linked to the very existence of the school, which push interest in gender equality and diversity issues into the background), for others gender equality is deeply embedded in their core values.
- **Representatives from majority of the participating institutions, especially those in higher positions, noted that they have difficulties in hiring women**. They often explain this by saying there are less women applying to academic (especially higher ranking) positions. The problem of over-burdening of women or even tokenization was mentioned frequently as a result of imbalance.
- **People from top positions had very few ideas on how they themselves could support and promote gender equality within their institutions**.
- In most of the participating institutions, there are **various activities and initiatives to promote gender equality**, but most of them are very narrow in scope and focus mainly on reconciling work and family life.

In developing the recommendations, we have taken into account that gender equality has progressed at different rates in different schools. However, in reviewing the areas of the recommendations that institutions identified as important and in need of attention, and the SMART objectives they aim to achieve through the EQUAL4EUROPE project activities, we found that all institutions aim to achieve a more balanced gender balance within decision-making bodies. Some have already set gender specific targets and some have linked the improvement of gender balance in decision-making bodies to changes in the approach to leadership in order to change the organizational culture and organize leadership training.

Given that the lack of female representation in business and management education is a reflection of wider structural inequalities in society, business schools need to do more to ensure gender parity.

We conclude that gender inequality in the workplace is not only a moral and social issue, but also a critical economic challenge for the future. While the reasons for inequality are rooted in a complicated set of political, cultural and economic factors, it is important that every woman has the opportunity to make it to the top in her chosen profession.

However, while the increase in the number of women is a great achievement as such, the advancement in culture and teaching at business schools has not kept pace and there is still a gender imbalance in lecturers, guest speakers and visiting professors. Schools should therefore aim to not only increase the number of female students in business education, but also to develop role models, provide leadership training for women and encourage them to build professional networks. We believe these organizational and structural steps are essential to promote women's careers and leadership.

In addition, given that women are now equally represented among business and management education students, business schools should focus more on the types of leadership and leadership styles they teach them. They should pursue the idea that achieving and facilitating gender balance in business is a management skill that needs to be taught to both men and women.

We recognize that setting quotas and gender targets can help improve gender parity in decision-making bodies, address the electoral system, set a minimum representation of women (or both genders) in boardrooms, and overcome not only horizontal but also vertical segregation. However, these measures, without broader action, are not effective in the long run because they do not eliminate the unequal power structures between the sexes, which are still present.

We suggest some recommendations on how to overcome them:

1. There is gender imbalance in the members and chairpersons of decision-making bodies in AHMSSBL institutions. There is a need to **increase the number of women on these boards and to encourage them to take up such positions.**
2. There is gender equality among undergraduate and graduate students. Therefore, it is **not about attracting women/girls to study these disciplines but encouraging them to pursue a career in research and academia in general.**
3. Most schools have seen minimal increases in the number of female faculty, visiting professors, and guest lecturers and the case studies used to teach MBA students about business predominantly feature men. Rather than simply focusing efforts on requiring men to volunteer to be "allies" for women, **gender balance should be viewed as a business imperative that requires specific management skills. Gender balancing business should be seen as a management competency that needs to be taught - to both men and women.**
4. Business and management education is still seen as a "man's world" and we should work to change that view. The culture and teaching in business schools has not kept pace and there is still a gender imbalance in faculty, guest speakers and case studies. Now that women are almost equally represented among students, we should also focus on the types of leaders and leadership styles that should reflect the student body. It is important for both men and women to see diverse leaders and leadership styles.
5. Men are more likely to be encouraged to advance their careers in informal networks and within the culture of the "old boys club". We should therefore seek to change such biased organizational practices and the organizational culture itself. We should **consider improving the role model approach, encouraging them to build professional networks, and providing them with leadership training,** as this is crucial to helping women advance their careers. Role models are especially important for students and young professionals who are just starting to build their careers.

6. There are gendered paths in career choices and there is gender segregation in the labour market, both horizontally and vertically. As for administrative staff and faculty, the former is much more feminised, and that is one of the reasons why they are devalued and why there are fewer opportunities for promotion and generally less satisfaction with the work environment. **There is a need to highlight the value of all ranks and all positions in AHMSSBL institutions and create opportunities for career advancement for all.**

7. There are typical qualities associated with the typical manager. Business and management are associated with a male person, and masculine characteristics are attributed to the roles within these segments. Therefore, **perceptions of what typical managers look and behave like and what values they share needs to be changed, while also confronting and changing the masculine and male-centric organizational culture.**

8. **Robust work-life balance policies** are essential to address the multi-layered gender inequalities and pay gap, so that women - who disproportionately provide care to their families - are not unfairly disadvantaged when they take time off to address care needs. **Access to paid sick days and a comprehensive paid family and medical leave program** and **equal pay legislation** strengthen existing protections and further combats discriminatory practices.

Some schools are facing the phenomenon of gender fatigue, as the policies and initiatives currently implemented have become blunt and no longer serve their purpose in their full capacity. It is therefore important not only to enforce quotas or gender targets, but also to complement this with organizational changes towards more gender equitable structures, practices and behaviours.

There is an urgent need to draw attention to women as competent leaders, which will lead to women being recruited, nominated and appointed to these positions in greater numbers. But there is also a need to raise awareness and teach the skills associated with progressive leadership styles that address and facilitate gender equality while reaping the benefits that diversity brings to work, institutions, and society as a whole.

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