

Gender equality officer

Job description

This document is an outcome of the task 6.2 of the Equal4Europe project and is meant as a guide for the project partners to decide on how to create the position of Gender Equality Officer (GEO) at their institution. Document should not be treated as the list of obligatory tasks that must be performed by GEOs at all partner institutions. Instead, it provides broad overview of activities that are linked to GEO role at different Higher Education institution across Europe and, in this sense, offers recommendations and suggestions on what should be considered when designing the GEO's position and what can be included in the job description for this position.

Title modalities:

Higher Education institutions use number of different job titles to identify the work role responsible for different aspects of promoting gender equality. These titles reflect varieties in the scope of tasks and responsibilities related to the role, national specifics, legislative requirements as well as understanding the concept of gender equality itself and in the wider context of diversity in its multiple forms. The most common job titles include:

- Gender equality officer (mostly used by German public universities that are legally required to create such positions)
- Equality officer
- Gender and Equality officer
- Diversity officer (US based institutions)
- Equality and Diversity officer (used especially by UK based institutions that are members of ATHENA Swan charter)¹
- Anti-discrimination officer
- Women's representative
- Equality, diversity and inclusion officer
- Equality and diversity advisor
- Family support officer

Scope of tasks and responsibilities:

As in the case of the job titles the scope of tasks and responsibilities for the work roles in charge of promoting gender equality differ depending on both external (as mentioned above) and institutional factors. The most common modalities in the scope include:

- GEO as an institutional coordinator of strategies related to promoting gender equality: This include drafting the institutional strategies and negotiating them with members of management, coordinating different actors and units involved in promoting gender equality, participating in management meetings and committees, and ensuring the overall visibility of the topic. Other activities might include preparation of trainings on GE for different target groups, maintaining the information sources on the topic and disseminating them, etc.

¹ See: <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan-charter>

- GEO as a champion/ambassador of gender equality at the institution: In some cases, the role of the GEO is limited to acting as a gate keeper and champion for the topic and providing strategic back-up to other members of organisation involved in developing and implementing gender equalities strategies.
- GEO as an expert and strategic advisor on GE issues: GEO are often responsible for monitoring the state of GE at the institution, analysing existing policies, implementing surveys, assessing impact of different measures and advising management and other actor on gender related issues.
- GEO as an advisor and person of trust for employees and students: at some institutions GEO are involved in direct support provided to employees and students helping them to tackle different challenges that might include e. g. assistance with child care arrangements, finding a mentor, etc.

Who are GEO and what qualification is required from them?

Required qualification and experience level depend on what is the expected scope of tasks and responsibilities as well as on the complexity and size of institution and availability of other human resources to support implementation of GE strategies.

In general, the requirement is the background in, or experience with gender and/or diversity studies and knowledge of the key concepts and methods related to it. In some cases, such background is, however not required, e. g. when the GEO is expected to act mostly as an ambassador for the topic. In such cases the GEO might rather be an experienced person with good position within the institution and scientific community having access to management.

Examples of qualification requirement might include:

- Obtained a degree in social sciences or humanities.
- Received training and/or has experience in gender equality or diversity work.
- Has previous experience in conducting research on gender issues.
- Has experience with mediation/facilitation.
- For the positions covering more managerial and coordination tasks experience with managing people and/or projects might also be necessary.

How is the GEO appointed?

There are in principle two main ways, in which GEOs are appointed:

- GEO as an elected office – at some institutions and especially in case when GEO has the strategic level responsibilities the post is filled by the person elected by the respective decision-making body of the institution.
- GEO as professional job position – the position is filled in through the regular recruitment process (according to the institutional rules).

Where is the GEO position located?

The examples of organisational units at which GEO officers are located include:

- Dedicated gender equality or diversity units, where GEO usually acts as a coordinator.
- Project offices (especially in cases where gender equality strategies are implemented through EU funded projects)

- HR departments (especially in cases where the focus of GEO is on professional development of women or work-life balance policies)
- Centres for academic advising and psychological counselling (especially in cases where GEO is engaged in advising people encountering sexual harassment or discrimination).

GEO is not always a full-time role. Depending on the scope of activities it might also be linked to other positions within the organisation.

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The position of GEO is created with an aim to support systematic organisational and cultural change fostering gender equality at higher education institutions. The main role of GEO is to coordinate and support various activities in the areas of gender equality and encourage values of equality and diversity within their organisation. The following list includes the overview of GEO's main tasks and responsibilities. Please note that this list summarises the most common activities identified across different job descriptions. However, the actual scope of tasks and responsibilities depends on the institution and other factors mentioned above and does not have to include all the tasks listed below.

Analytical and monitoring tasks:

- Monitoring current legislation relating to equality and anti-discrimination.
- Analysing statistics relating to equality and researching best practice within other organisations.
- Supporting data collection process, e. g. defining suitable indicators.
- Producing surveys and reports on equality and diversity aspects related to the organisation.
- Monitoring and assessing the organisation's equality and diversity policies (including the implementation of the Gender Equality Plan).
- Writing annual reports on the gender equality and actions taken.

Providing strategic advice and conceptual tasks:

- Advising the university management regarding the gender equality strategy and its implementation.
- Developing organisation's equality and diversity policies, in line with changing legislation and best practices.
- Participating in the development of (general) institutional strategic documents, suggesting gender and equality related KPIs to be included in the action plans.
- Initiating new gender equality measures and projects.
- Supporting audit and accreditation processes in matters related to gender equality.
- Acting as an advocate for and presenting the needs of members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Coordination and facilitation tasks:

- Coordinating preparation and implementation of institutional Gender Equality Plan.
- Coordinating activities related to supporting gender equality across different organisational parts and units.
- Identifying potential collaborators/contact points within different organisational units and

facilitating their communication.

Supporting recruitment and promotional processes:

- Promoting gender-sensitive organizational culture and staffing policy.
- Advising colleagues who are involved in the recruitment process (members of committees).
- Participating in staff appointment procedures and interviews.
- Monitoring the staffing procedures for academic employees.
- Providing individual counselling for female applicants.

Supporting career development of female researchers:

- Initiating and running mentoring programmes for female researchers.
- Tracking and disseminating information about professional training and career development opportunities for female researchers.
- Creating networking opportunities for female researchers.
- Providing career advice to female researchers.

Counselling and advice:

- Offering support for staff and students regarding work-life balance.
- Acting as a person of trust for female students, researchers and members who are asking for support and advice.
- Providing confidential advice and counselling in cases of sexual harassment and discrimination.
- Offering step-by-step support when going through a grievance procedure.
- Cooperating with the existing counselling networks (psychosocial counselling, staff council, student services).

Training and capacity building:

- Developing guidelines on integrating gender dimension into various areas and processes (research, teaching, recruitment, promotion etc.).
- Organizing and/or running training sessions and workshops on different aspect of gender equality for students/faculty and staff.
- Building and supporting a multidisciplinary community of researchers working on gender topics within the institution.

Communication and awareness raising:

- Initiating and supporting the internal and external communication regarding gender equality.
- Checking promotional materials produced by the organisation to ensure diversity is reflected in examples and illustrations.
- Forwarding of information on gender-relevant topics and events (newsletter, setting up information page etc.).
- Planning and implementation of events to promote gender equality, e. g. discussions, workshops, seminars.



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