



# **EQUAL4EUROPE**

## **GENDER EQUALITY PLANS**

### Gender Inclusive Recruitment & Selection Toolkit for HR Professionals

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## Gender Inclusive Recruitment & Selection Toolkit

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### **Rationale for a gender inclusive recruitment & selection toolkit:**

There is already a lot of knowledge on how to set up policies to foster gender equality in recruitment and selection (R&S). This toolkit\*, which is a product of the Equal4Europe project, draws on some of this existing knowledge. The Equal4Europe consortium consists of six research performing institutions (RPI) with a focus on Arts, Humanities, Medicine, Social Sciences, Business, and Law. The good practices contained in this toolkit are informed by a quantitative and qualitative gender equality assessment of all partner universities, including sixty qualitative interviews with female academics, HR managers, faculty council members, head of departments and head/deans of school. Our assessment has illustrated that women are still underrepresented and men overrepresented across all participating universities, across most career levels and particularly in full professorial positions. A fair and robust R&S process, which complies with current best practice, can aid universities in their ambition to create a gender-balanced and inclusive workforce.

### **The contents of this toolkit:**

In this toolkit we present three steps that we recommend for a gender inclusive R&S process. The three steps are 1) Composing an equitable R&S committee, 2) Standardised and gender inclusive R&S processes, and 3) Evaluation, monitoring and reporting. In addition to the three steps, we provide different tips and tricks for each of the steps, which will help to ensure that R&S processes are gender inclusive. Lastly, we provide 3 further documents in the appendices. The first one can assist in finding the right words for a vacancy text. The second one, the pre-selection form shall be used for the screening process and the third document, the interview form helps conducting interviews in a transparent and structured way.

### **For whom is the toolkit?**

We recommend that R&S committee members and HR professionals consult this toolkit whenever they are involved in R&S process for a vacant position. It is important that all R&S HR and committee members engage in gender reflective practice before and during the R&S process. For example, they should start with reflecting on the gender composition of existing teams and think about what they are looking for in a person to complement their team in terms of skills, educational background, experiences, but also gender and before even writing the vacancy text. Lastly, research has shown that people tend to recruit people who are like themselves, due to unconscious bias. Such biases can have a negative impact on R&S, setting back organisations in creating diverse and inclusive workplaces. R&S HR and committee members need to be aware of this and continuously reflect on their own practice.

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\*This toolkit includes materials from the H2020 GEARING ROLES project (see: <https://gearingroles.eu/wp4/>) and of the Erasmus University, Inclusive Recruitment & Selection Toolkit (see: <https://www.eur.nl/en/media/2021-04-engbrochurewstoolkit21112018en>).



## The three steps of the recruitment and selection process

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### **Step 1: Composing an equitable R&S committee**

*Outcome: Increases the chance you will recruit the best candidate*



### **Step 2: Standardised & gender inclusive R&S processes**

*Outcome: Leads to equal opportunities*



### **Step 3: Evaluation, Monitoring & Reporting**

*Outcome: Ensures improved R&S process in the future, and contributes to improving the search for the best candidate for the next vacant position*



## Step 1. Composing an equitable R&S committee

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### **Tip 1. Compose a gender diverse R&S committee:**

The R&S committee carries collective responsibility for safeguarding that gender diversity in perspectives is carefully considered in the R&S process. Compose a R&S committee that is gender diverse, with a minimum of 40/60 gender diversity ratio, ideally with a 50/50 ratio. This will decrease the chance of unconscious bias in the R&S process and will increase the chance that the best person for the job will be selected. Make sure that committee members are aware that everyone has unconscious bias and that these are discussed in an open and friendly way and make it a requirement that all committee members have attended unconscious bias trainings. For example, the vacancy holder should assign in every selection round one of the selection committee members the role of addressing the importance of collective responsibility in shielding against (unintended) gender bias by raising reflective questions during every step of the process. We recommend inviting an external committee member to the R&S committee. For appointments below full professor, this can be somebody from within the university, but from a different faculty/department. For a full professor appointment this could be an academic expert in the same field of the vacancy, but from another university. Also, make the attendance of the Gender/Diversity Officer(s) mandatory to ensure that existing institutional gender and diversity policies are followed.

### **Tip 2. Reflexive practice and unconscious bias in the R&S process:**

Be reflective of your own practise and biases during the R&S process and challenge yourself and others in an open and considerate way. Invest time to learn more about R&S and possible biases that can play a role in the process. Discuss the entire R&S process with the rest of the committee. Everybody appointed to a R&S committee should attend an unconscious bias training before taking up their role as R&S committee member. It essential that all R&S committee members are aware about the underrepresentation of women in research careers and the possible factors behind this. Existing organisational recruitment equality codes concerning R&S should be consulate by everybody appointed to an R&S committee. Universities should also consider introducing and offering a training on gender inclusive R&S to committee members and HR professionals.

### **Tip 3. Involve your HR partner/advisor and Gender/Diversity Officers as consultants:**

Involve your HR advisor as early as possible in the R&S process. They are the experts to consult and can help you to ensure gender inclusive R&S. Submit the vacancy text for a final check to the Gender/Diversity Officer(s) before sending it to HR for publication. Make the attendance of a HR officer mandatory to make sure that the R&S process is following R&S policy and that the selection committee member's opinions are given the same weight (democratic committees).



## Step 2. Standardised and gender inclusive R&S processes

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### Tip 1. Focus on the essential job requirements for your job advert

Women often only apply for a position if they think that they meet all the listed criteria, while men apply even if they only comply with a few requirements. Think critically about the core tasks and competencies needed for the position. The best practice is to reduce the number of tasks, competences, and skills to a maximum of five each, and distinguish between 'must-have' and 'good-to-have'. Including a cumulative list of (unnecessary) requirements, we are potentially not attracting valuable talent. To avoid unconscious gender bias deterring women from applying to your jobs, consider eliminating requirements that are not essential. We moreover recommend developing clear guidelines or templates for advertising positions.

### Tip 2. Create a gender inclusive vacancy text that attracts female talent

By writing a gender inclusive and attractive vacancy text you will expand the pool of female candidates interested in the position. The more gender inclusive your recruitment is, the more likely the vacancy will reach the best candidate irrespective of their gender. Make sure that your vacancy text is written in a gender inclusive tone, since research shows that words more associated with male gender, deter women from applying, while the use of words associated with female gender does not deter any of the genders. For example, make sure that functions are written in a gender-neutral way-such as: secretary (m, f, x). Be aware of existence of 'masculine' and 'feminine' words. See Appendix 1 for a list of 'feminine' and 'masculine' words. Vacancy texts should be worded in a gender-neutral way as far as possible or, if in doubt, contain terms that are associated with the female gender. Using gender neutral language in recruitment has been shown to increase the number of female job applicants. To facilitate the use of neutral language we recommend the following tools:

- *Genderdecoder* from Kat Matfield\*\*. English texts, including vacancies, can be quickly screened for gender-specific language on this website.
- *Textio*\*\*\* detects biases in the vacancy text related to age and gender. This tool is not free of charge but offers a free demo version.

Moreover, to attract female applicants we recommend highlighting in the ad any existing relevant institutional policies such as work-life balance policies, child-care facilities, guidance and career development opportunities, parental leave, personal career budgets and policies against sexism, sexual misconduct, and harassment. Lastly, we recommend including a Gender & Inclusion statement in all the vacancy texts. Example:

*'We aspire to be an equitable and gender inclusive university. We see inclusivity of diverse talent and the diversity of perspectives as the basis of our successes. We provide equal opportunities to all employees and applicants regardless of their gender. We strongly encourage women to apply.'*

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\*\*<http://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com>; \*\*\* <https://textio.com/products/tone/>

### Tip 3. Include the starting salary in the vacancy advert



It is recommended to include the starting salary in the vacancy advert, so that salary is not determined on a one-to-one negotiation. In salary negotiations, women often ask for less than they are worth and get less as a result. Establishing the starting salary in the vacancy text can help narrowing existing gender pay gaps.

Involve your HR partner/advisor in determining the job offer to ensure that it is consistent with other similar functions in the department. They can provide advice on determining the salary based on a grading tool and they can assist during the meeting when job offer negotiations take place.

**Tip 4. Distribute/advertise the vacancy widely among different channels and different groups:**

Different approaches are necessary to reach different target groups, such as women. Use specialized channels to spread the vacancy text and reach out to Gender/Diversity Officers with a request to share the vacancy within their faculty and network. In addition to traditional channels, advertise vacancies on social media. For example, advertise via specific existing internal and external women's networks and approach women directly via LinkedIn or request women within our organization to post the vacancy within their (personal) networks.

**Tip 5. Use scoring when selecting CVs and conducting interviews**

We recommend using blind CVs when selecting candidates for interviews. To help you examine CVs and motivation letters in a structured manner, use a scoring system. Consult Appendix 2 for the pre-selection phase and Appendix 3 for the selection phase to objectively evaluate competence/job requirements per candidate (see Appendix 3). The evaluation forms the basis for an objective comparison between the candidates. These forms can also be used to provide an insight into the decisions to the applicant and to evaluate and reflect on the selection process. A method to objectively assess the candidates is to use a check before and after an interview: a) Beforehand: Make a list of what you are looking for; b) Afterwards: Score interviews and check whether you have judged on facts and not on intuition.

**Tip 6. Ensure a gender diverse applicant pool:**

While recruiting, monitor the gender diversity of your applicant pool. Check whether there are sufficient female applicants, compared to men. The shortlist should be gender-balanced, aim for an 50/50 ratio of female and male applicants. If during the recruitment phase you realise that female applicants are missing, or have not been reached sufficiently, intensify the recruitment by approaching women more actively or by prolonging the application period.

**Tip 7. Conduct a standardised interview:**

Use the STARR method to conduct structured interviews so that each candidate has the same amount of time (per question), gets the same open questions, and is assessed in the same objective way. Many employers use the STARR method during job interviews, which involves questions focused on behaviour. The rationale behind the STARR method is that behaviour



displayed in the past gives a good indication of how someone will behave in the future. The basis of STARR is a set of questions:

S: What was the situation?

T: What was your task?

A: What actions did you take, what did you do?

R: What was the result, what happened?

R: What did you learn (reflection)?

Additionally, use work samples, which measure job skills required for the function and have good predictive validity. For example, ask the candidates to prepare a lecture if it concerns a teaching position, or to write a policy proposal if it concerns policy advisory function. Lastly, do not ask personal questions about family, family planning, pregnancy, and work-life balance intentions.

### **Tip 8. Select the best candidate by using objective criteria:**

Objective selection criteria are hard job requirements. These are transparent and give little room to unconscious gender biases. Examples are minimum number of years of work experience, years of teaching experience, and management tasks. Subjective (soft) job requirements, such as a strong (leadership) vision, organizational sensitivity, creativity, high ambition level and excellent (international) reputation, are flexible and context dependent. As a result, their interpretation is less objective and unconscious gender biases can play a greater role. When creating a short list of candidates try to use objective, rather than subjective criteria.



### **Tips for the role of gender in the R&S process**

Be aware of the role that gender can play in how persons present themselves:

- Women are more likely to mention successes as a group effort and men as their own merits. Keep in mind that the actual process of arriving at success may not be different. It is just described in different terms.
- Stating one's ambition might generally come out easier for men, while women might be more modest about it.
- Research shows that gender may influence the extent to which one will negotiate salary conditions. As a vacancy holder, do not be influenced by it. Decide your salary conditions based on similar functions within the department beforehand and do not succumb due to the negotiation style.
- The route women take to receive their highest level of obtained education, might be non-linear, same as their overall CV, which does not make them less suitable for a job.
- The time it takes to obtain a degree does not say everything. Some women need to support and financially contribute to family life even while studying.
- Careers of women are sometimes not linear, due to family or caring responsibilities.



## Step 3. Evaluate, Monitor & Report

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### **Tip 1. Reflect on gender diversity during the R&S decision-making process:**

The committee carries collective responsibility for safeguarding that gender diversity in perspectives is carefully considered in the R&S decision-making process. One of the (voting) members is assigned the responsibility of addressing the importance of collective responsibility for gender diversity throughout the R&S process and shielding against (unintended) bias in the procedure by raising reflective questions in every step of the decision-making process. One of the committee members should document the gender diversity deliberations that take place during the decision-making process, which allows evaluation during the R&S process, instead of a purely retrospective review.

### **Tip 2. Reflective practice in the R&S process:**

Reflective practice is the foundation of professional development; it makes meaning from experience and transforms insights into practical strategies. As such, we recommend that the R&S committee critically evaluates the entire selection process for each vacancy and shares lessons learned with the HR advisor. The committee should discuss with each other the extent to which they managed to remain objective in the process. Additionally, we recommend establishing feedback mechanisms about the recruitment process for all candidates which can help identify any practices hampering gender equality.

### **Tip 3. Policy development:**

We encourage faculties/departments to create and implement a professorial policy that outlines transparent and gender-balanced R&S procedures, with the aim to provide clarity and accountability for how promising scholarly female talent is selected. Such policy should include procedures that encourage and recognise gender diversity in teams and academic profiles, and that rewards academic leadership that strengthens gender-balanced team performance. The R&S policy should be setting out clear procedures and practices for all types of positions. Have a published a version of your policy online.

### **Tip 4. Evaluate, monitor, and report the R&S procedures annually:**

Sex disaggregated data is essential to monitor progress on gender equality in R&S and plan correction measures. We recommend evaluating and monitoring (E&M) the R&S process annually by creating an E&M framework. Ask HR to provide a yearly monitor on whom has joined and left your faculty/department in the previous year and why and share an [anonymized] overview of lessons learned. Evaluate if there is an increase of in women joining your faculty/department and on which levels they have joined. Also evaluate if new hires are still with the organisation or have left. And if they have left, why and if this is gender related. The evaluation should focus on the effectiveness of the R&S procedure in reaching gender diversity in faculties/ departments. Findings should be reported annually and shared with the Executive Board to determine whether and how appointment processes might be improved.



## Appendix 1: The Use of Words

Research shows that words that are generally considered feminine do not deter any of the genders, whereas words that are generally considered masculine, deter women from applying.

Words that are generally considered feminine	Words that are generally considered masculine
Kind, thoughtful / caring, understanding, helpful, polite, willing (willingness), modest, committed, reliable, flexible / accommodating, communal, communicative, cooperative, creative, honest, emotional, empathy / empathic, enthusiastic, feminine, sensitive, sociable, affectionate, humane, interdependent, interpersonal, customer friendly, loyal, compassionate, human, meticulous / precise, submissive, open, orderly, pleasant, social, support / supportive, quiet / withdrawn, sympathetic, dedicated, versatile, responsible, connecting/ connected, kinship, flattering, docile, friendly, cheerful, warm, gentle, careful	Active, aggressive, analytical, assertive, athletic, autonomous, adventurous, determine (d), decisive, bluffing / bragging, chemical, commercial, competent, competitive, expert, direct, goal-oriented, purposeful, effective, dominant, energetic, fanatic, driven, eager / greedy, tall, obstinate, handy, hierarchical, impulsive, individual, individualistic, industrial, ingenious, innovative, stubborn / star, strength, critical, leader / leadership, logical, masculine, opinion, courage, courageous, ruthless / reckless, objective, independent, enterprising, practice-oriented, principled, professional, result-oriented, quick, solid, strong, stress-resistant, superior, technical, leading, challenging, hostile, persevering, self-reliant, self-managing, self-assured, self-sufficient

Source: Direction's research Inclusive Recruitment and selection (2016) p 18/19, Vervecken, Verwijvel, Gijbels & Van den Bossche, P. (2015), Pennebaker, Booth & Francis (2007) and Erasmus University, Inclusive Recruitment & Selection Toolkit (<https://www.eur.nl/en/media/2021-04-engbrochurewstoolkit21112018en>)



## Appendix 2: Pre-Selection Form

Template for determining the applicants for the first selection round. The applicants with the highest score will be invited for the interview. Feel free to adjust the column names depending on the function criteria.

Requirements [to be filled in per vacancy]

<b>Level of education:</b>	
<b>Relevant years of work experience:</b>	
<b>[Core competency for the job]:</b>	

Candidate	Appropriate education level Yes=1 No=0	Relevant years of work experience Yes=1 No=0	[fill in core requirement skill here]	[fill in core requirement skill here]	[fill in core requirement skill here]	Total score
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
...						

Source: Erasmus University, Inclusive Recruitment & Selection Toolkit (<https://www.eur.nl/en/media/2021-04-engbrochurewstoolkit21112018en>)




## Appendix 3: Interview Form

<b>Name of candidate:</b>	
<b>Evaluated by:</b>	
<b>Position applied for:</b>	

To evaluate fill out the form by using: 1-5 (5 being the highest score) Depending on the vacancy, topics may vary. Feel free to adjust the form.

<b>Motivation:</b>	<b>Score</b>

<b>Core competences (STARR methodology):</b>	<b>Score</b>
[fill in]:	

<b>Final judgment</b>	<b>Total score</b>

<b>Motivation final judgment:</b>
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