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European Policy Brief



EQUAL4EUROPE
GENDER EQUALITY PLANS

Evaluation of Methodology and Implementation of the GAT

The Gender Audit Tool was developed and implemented by Nehem as part of the EQUAL4EUROPE project, which was funded under Horizon2020. This Policy Brief will reflect on the ways the methodology and the implementation varied from one another.

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Introduction

The EQUAL4EUROPE project includes the development and implementation of Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) at six European Research Performing Institutions (RPIs) participating in the project. The six partners pertain to the disciplines Art, Humanities, Medicine, Social Sciences, Business & management and Law (AHMSSBL). Independent project partner Nehem, a consultancy company, was appointed Task 7.1 within Work Package 7 which involved developing an *impartial assessment methodology*, to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the GEPs. The impartial assessment methodology developed by Nehem consists of a comprehensive Gender Audit Tool (GAT) and was applied to each GEP and its implementation.

Based on a mixed-methods approach the EQUAL4EUROPE Gender Audit Tool was developed consisting of three modules. The first module that was performed prior to the audit visit was the desk review. The desk review encompassed quantitative data collection and reviewing existing documents (including the GEP, policy documents, quantitative data regarding staff numbers and promotion and other formats and materials as well). The second module, also taking place before the audit visit, was an online questionnaire that was distributed among relevant stakeholders (researchers, teachers and students), inquiring about individual perceptions and experiences regarding gender equality. The third module was executed during the audit visit and consists of key informant interviews applying semi-structured interviewing techniques involving relevant information of institutional procedures pertaining to the gender equality context at the institutions. Participants were chosen among high and middle level management, HR department and a Gender Equality Officer. In addition, the Community of Practice was identified, and relevant representatives of this community within

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an institution were also selected for interviews. Each chosen methodology came with challenges and limitations. For the EQUAL4EUROPE Gender Audit Tool we identified the main challenges and limitations to be data collection and (a lack of) sustainable commitment by high level management of the institutions.

The methodology can be retrieved from the EQUAL4EUROPE project as deliverable 7.1.

Differences in methodology and implementation

As with every plan and method, theory can differ from practice. As too was the case for the application of the Gender Audit Tool during EQUAL4EUROPE. It is important to reflect on these variations between theory and practice in order to: a) reflect upon the findings of the GAT in the most nuanced and objective way possible and b) learn from this implementation of the GAT for possible future applications.

Below, an overview is given of the ways the application of the GAT during the EQUAL4EUROPE project differed from the planned methodology.

Measure in the GAT Methodology	Variation of measure during implementation
Documents for Desk Review that are only available in other languages are to be requested in English or translated.	Documents were requested in English, but if not available, they were not translated and excluded from the analysis.
If there is no standardized structural monitoring system present or implemented during the project, the desk review will include data collection in the format of the GEI (Gender Equality Index) tool from WP2 (D2.1).	All institutions delivered data for desk review, but its source, format and extent differed per institution.
Limitations from D2.3 were used as lessons to develop the GAT and minimize these challenges in the execution of the GAT.	All three limitations (unavailability of data, different ranking systems, different gender pay gap calculations) reappeared.
Nehem will discuss with every institution separately to establish a procedure for the performance of the online questionnaire that fits their regulations and context.	Some institutions did not perform the online questionnaire. Institutions took the lead in determining what data collection was fitting, not Nehem.
When institutions are not able to perform online questionnaires, there is the option of hosting focus groups.	Focus groups were not utilized as a substitute for missing online questionnaires.
The online questionnaire consists of two dozen questions focussed at one of the four stakeholders.	The questions and focus on stakeholders varied per institution. Not all institutions who performed the online questionnaire included all topics and stakeholder groups.
Key Informants for the Interviews will not be selected randomly but must be chosen based on theory or data driven criteria and willingness to participate.	Key Informants for Interviews were suggested by our contact points at the institution. They were often within the

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	preferred ranges of stakeholders, but were not tested on theory or data driven criteria.
Outputs are used as points of reference when monitoring activities.	Due to the time frame of implementation of the GEPs, outputs were often not yet reached whilst efforts were being made. This affected the process of analysis and evaluation.
Outcomes are evaluated based on the four indicator questions by Taplin et al. (2013).	These questions were oftentimes difficult to answer as it differed per desired impact and institution how clearly formulated these parameters were.
Outputs are linked to specific modules in which monitoring and evaluation will take place.	Outputs were evaluated with data from all modules when it was present.
A Five Point Scale will be used to assess results from all three modules in comparison to activities from Impact Pathways.	The Five Point scale was not applied in all modules as analysis often required more nuance and was input dependent. A five point scale was used to assess the progress made on each institution's goals set out in the GEP in their individual institutional reports.

Implications

The ways in which the Audit team deviated from the original methodology can be grouped into three categories with a shared cause of the deviation from the methodology.

- Standardised methodology did not match all contextual circumstances and differences between the participating institutions. Context, organisational as well as national, often required different approaches for each institution in order to maintain the quantity and quality of desired input.
- The actions set forth by the methodology were altered due to constraints in time when performing the planned methodology. The EQUAL4EUROPE project was carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic. This led to some delays in the process of realising the GEPs, and thus in their assessment. The timeframe of when measures were implemented was delayed somewhat relative to where in their progress the Audit team expected to assess the institutions when constituting the methodology.
- Furthermore, measures planned by the institutions in the GEPs were often processes that have a longer trajectory than the end of the project, or the moment of assessment. This meant that upon applying the GAT some measures, outputs and outcomes that the GAT was designed to assess were not (yet) complete. This made the Audit team opt for an eventual five-point scale to determine not if a measure had been implemented but more so what progress had been made with regards to each goal.

In conclusion, institutional context and time were the most influential factors that impacted the implementation of the GAT Methodology in the EQUAL4EUROPE project. It is thus recommended that an Audit team implementing the GAT takes these factors into

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consideration in both planning and adjusting the GAT further towards the targeted institution.

This policy brief is part of the efforts of the EQUAL4EUROPE consortium to reflect on their work and make the work towards the goal of gender equality in higher education more attainable for other institutions alike. Find other complementary policy brief here: