



GERG

THE EUROPEAN GAS
RESEARCH GROUP

Gender Equality Plan (GEP) 2022-2027

October 2022

Contact address: Robert Judd, GERG Secretary General – robertjudd@gerg.eu

Table of contents

| | |
|---|----|
| 1. Introduction..... | 3 |
| 2. About GERG..... | 5 |
| 3. The importance of gender equality in R&I activities..... | 6 |
| 4. Work-life balance and organisational culture..... | 7 |
| 5. Gender balance in leadership and decision-making..... | 8 |
| 6. Gender equality in recruitment and career progression..... | 9 |
| 7. Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content..... | 10 |
| 8. Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment..... | 11 |

1. Introduction

Even though it is now obvious that the lifestyle of most people cannot be confined to watertight compartments, the labor market still favors men over women. In fact, both women and men express the need for a greater balance between work and family life, despite the fact that policies aimed at accomplishing this continue to be primarily directed at women. Policymakers have increased the impact of equal opportunity legislation as a result of their inability to change the status of women (and, by extension, men).

Society's structures and practices, as well as relationships between women and men, needed to be drastically changed in order to eliminate the deep and frequently hidden causes of inequality. This tool has been designated as the gender mainstreaming approach.

Gender mainstreaming has long been the primary European strategy for advancing gender equality. It is a well-known systemic approach that entails incorporating a gender perspective into the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of European policies, implementing measures, and expenditure programs with the intention of promoting equality between men and women and combating discrimination.

The goal of gender mainstreaming is to make policies capable of taking into account gender differences, which are the fundamental differences within our society because they cut across all others (disability, age, religion, or ethnicity). It therefore starts from an awareness that social reality is more complex than what is usually considered and attempts to offer a more faithful representation of it by accounting for differences in men's and women's behavior and uses this representation as a starting point for all policies with the aim of transforming institutional and social structures and organizations in the direction of greater equity for men and women. However, while gender mainstreaming represents an unprecedented opportunity to promote and adopt an inclusive approach, nevertheless, the lack of specific actions, targets, and objectives must be taken into account, which has led to the lack of a concrete strategy to achieve true gender equality.

The Gender Equality Plan (GEP) aims precisely to obviate these criticisms by presenting itself as a set of well-defined strategies and practices that can give meaning to the most abstract intentions, and that can operationalize and implement gender mainstreaming. The GEP is a European measure aimed at promoting gender equality in the work environment.

It is crucial that particular instruments are created and put into use to ensure equal starting positions in order to ensure equal chances and end discrimination regarding gender, but also age, race, religion, and disability.

The European Commission now primarily promotes gender equality plans, in order to influence systematic institutional change through the identification of strategies for institutional leadership, human resource development, institutional governance, research funding allocation, decision-making and program development¹.

Regulatory basis for Gender Equality Plan

The European Union has made gender equality a core value that is reflected in its fundamental legal and instruments.

Article 2 TEU recalls the fundamental values on which the Union is founded, within a society characterized by non-discrimination, as well as equality between women and men.

Article 8 TFEU explicitly states that the Union's actions should aim to eliminate inequalities, as well as to promote equality, between men and women (gender mainstreaming).

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in addition to prohibiting any form of discrimination based on sex, race, color or ethnic or social origin, genetic characteristics, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership in a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation (Article 21), expressly stipulates in Article 23 that equality between men and women must be ensured in all fields, including in employment, work and pay.

¹ See <https://www.ingenere.it/articoli/un-piano-per-parita-gender-equality-plans>

2. About GERG

Le Groupe Européen de Recherches Gazières (GERG, or the European Gas Research Group) is a not-for-profit international association, whose aim is to develop, together with its member organisations, innovative solutions to place the gas infrastructures at the center of the energy transition.

GERG was created in 1961 when the European Community's gas sector decided to join forces to encourage research and innovation in the gas supply chain. Over the years, GERG has steadily expanded, broadening its basic goals and growing in membership.

Given the particular time of profound transformation of European and global energy systems, GERG identifies develops its projects with a view to a low-carbon future while maintaining competitiveness and energy security.

The need to reduce emissions from the power sector, whether for power generation, heating, or transportation, as well as the need to actively work with renewables to increase the efficiency of our low-carbon energy supply, are challenges in today's energy sector.

GERG aims to make sure that Europe's energy revolution upholds the continent's energy security and competitiveness while offering the most affordable route to a sustainable future. Our members identify the most critical challenges in each significant area of the gas sector, and they work together to provide R&D to solve these problems.

In terms of structure, GERG consists of:

- The Board, which is responsible for setting the strategic directions of the Group;
- The Secretariat, which is responsible for promoting gas research to relevant EU organizations and maintaining links with other organizations in the field worldwide;
- Members of GERG, who actively support the scope and objectives of GERG;
- Friends of GERG, who comprise organizations that cannot become full Members of GERG.

GERG identifies the most relevant issues in each of the major areas of the gas industry, today and for the future, and together provides high-quality R&D to address these challenges. There are five strategic areas on which research and projects focus: hydrogen, biomethane, methane emissions, LNG, and infrastructure and end uses.

3. The importance of gender equality in R&I activities

A major goal of EU gender equality policy is to advance gender equality in research and innovation. One of the aims for the European Research Area is gender equality and gender "mainstreaming," or the use of a gender viewpoint in the creation and assessment of policies, in academic research.

The current situation in the EU shows that genuine gender equality is still a long way off. Only about one third of researchers in the EU are women, despite the fact that their numbers have grown more rapidly than men's during the previous few years. Women are even less represented as they advance academically, particularly in ICT (Information and communications technology) and STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics).

According to the *She Figures 2021*, women outnumber males as undergraduate and graduate students (54%) and graduates (59%), and there is nearly a gender balance at the PhD level (48%). But there are still differences amongst the study fields. For example, women still represent less than a quarter of doctoral graduates in the ICT field (22%).

In addition, the percentage of women researchers is only about 33%. Women continue to be underrepresented at the highest levels of academia, where they make up around one-quarter of full professorship posts (26%). In addition, women are underrepresented among self-employed professionals in the fields of science, engineering, and ICT (25%) and are less likely to be employed as scientists and engineers (41%) than men.

For this reason, one of the major challenges GERG aims to address concerns the implementation of the number of women in the research and innovation sector: gender

equality ensures the existence of democratic and equal societies, bringing benefits to the research and innovation sectors as well.

GERG has dedicated resources and supported research initiatives that contemplate gender equality but also the broader dimension of social discrimination: indeed, our goal is to promote the participation of women in research and innovation projects and to expand gender equality policies to include possible other grounds for discrimination based on race, age disability and sexual orientation.

4. Work-life balance and organisational culture

The first of the five thematic areas our Gender Equality Plan focuses on concerns the need to develop a culture based on work-life balance, based on respect and diversity.

With this purpose, we intend to provide space for a culture that is open to dialogue, communication, discussion, reflection on possible failures and starting points for improvement and achievement, but also recognition of the successes and commitment of our workers.

These intentions require an inescapable respect for the person, as well as a necessary separation between that person and the work actions that are carried out, as a worker: therein lies the separation of private and work life.

GERG attaches fundamental importance to respect for diversity, arising from any factor attentive to the person, his or her work, academic and personal background, diversity of thought and ideas, in order to improve optimal strategies and solutions, through a continued exchange and dialogue among its employees.

In terms of work life, GERG gives flexibility to the schedules of its collaborators, also allowing telecommuting for at least 2-3 days a week, so that an appropriate organization between work and private and family life can be made possible. Thanks to these actions, it is possible to give men and women an equal role in family life indiscriminately.

GERG then aims to promote the use of leave for family reasons, treatment and wellness programs, as well as absence for reasons related to pregnancy or maternity, in order not to prevent, or not to make it more difficult for its employees to undergo health care or treatment; the same flexibility must be provided, equally for men and women, for training and professional development opportunities.

5. Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

The issue of women's underrepresentation in decision-making is huge and complex. It must be seen in the context of several policy initiatives aiming at enhancing gender equality. Indeed, men occupy the vast majority of leadership positions, still being considered "*gatekeepers*" of positions of power; on the other side, as one moves up the academic ladder, the representation of women, particularly in academia and research, falls until there is a very small proportion of women in leadership roles on boards, committees, and in positions of authority at institutions.

Regardless of the gender of the members, decision-making bodies need to incorporate gender knowledge and expertise.

Gender equality in decision-making looks with particular attention to an equality of knowledge, as well as a necessary level of knowledge and insight directed at the creation and evaluation of projects in the context of submitted proposals. In order to achieve greater equality in decision-making processes, it is imperative that the selection of experts be made without any discrimination, but solely on the basis of their expertise and availability.

However, so far there has been an underrepresentation of the female gender as experts in specific areas and fields of research. For this reason, GERG is committed to supporting specific training with the goal of achieving equal opportunities to take part in expert juries. At the same time, continuous evaluation and analysis is important in order to monitor progress toward gender equality and publicly reported results.

When elections are held at Board level, GERG issues a recommendation to members to take into account gender equality, and aim for a balanced number of positions in decision-making roles and organizational positions.

Equal opportunity is synonymous with fair assessments; in reality, a gender equality ²⁷⁰⁰¹.

6. Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

Despite the overcoming of explicit and normatively sanctioned inequalities, in fact, there still remains a disparity in terms of income, recruitment and career progression.

In particular, it is the industrial sector where we still find the greatest discrimination in terms of gender: in fact within it the pay gap to the detriment of women reaches 20 percent, while in services the gap stops at 10 percent.

The recruitment stage as well as promotion and career progression should be established and followed by fair, ethical and transparent principles.

The recruitment stage should target an equitable number of men and women within GERG, possibly reviving the publicizing of open positions if there is not an equitable number of women and men to have applied for a specific job position.

The recruitment process itself should take into account the challenges or obstacles that are specific to men and women, such as any career breaks and deducting leave periods when evaluating research performance; additionally, nontraditional career paths should be given appropriate value, such as obtaining specific types of training, unusual degrees, and unique work experience.

The promotion of gender equality in recruitment and career advancement should be done in conjunction with other strategies that address the strategy's other thematic areas, such as those that address equal opportunities in decision-making processes or strategies that support work-life balance and work organization. These strategies must ensure that gender

² See <https://www.genderportal.eu/blog/gender-equality-decision-making-ri-and-he>

equality in recruitment and career advancement is promoted, taking these other thematic areas into consideration.

Regarding equal pay, GERG ensures equal pay for men and women for similar work performed.

7. Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content

The persistent underrepresentation of women in research employees and the lack of professional profiles in R&I sectors are both caused by the gender wage gap.

To implement women's participation into researching and teaching content, GERG aims to incentivize research in science, encouraging them to perform complex tasks and demonstrating how women are a very important resource in the field of energy transition and sustainability.

GERG's focus on opening up academia and research to women also involves increased funding of projects involving them, while any research and academic opportunity projects that would have a negative impact on gender equality, and neglect the role of women in that field, will be excluded.

GERG also aims to create spaces for discussion and reflection, regarding the role of women in scientific research and, in particular, energy development, and to devote a space on how gender equality is essential for a sustainable future.

8. Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

Gender-based violence in the workplace is a widespread problem in European countries today.

In this regard, GERG is ready to offer training activities for countering gender violence, as well as social work and psychological support services, in case employees feel endangered.

Therefore, GERG is committed to providing policies and programs addressing domestic violence, as well as to disclose and eliminate unsafe working conditions in the workplace, particularly in cases of suspected adverse effects on the health of women, including reproductive health. This is done in order to outlaw and prevent all forms of gender-based violence and harassment in the workplace, including verbal and physical assault.

Finally, it is essential to take steps to raise awareness of the need to prevent gender-based violence, as well as to ensure services are available for survivors. GERG aims to include information on how survivors can access justice through formal and informal justice mechanisms.

Signature

Murès Zarea, GERG President



Version presented, discussed and approved at the Board meeting held on October 28, 2022