



May 2021

# GENDER EQUALITY PLANS (GEPs)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Which organisations are concerned by the GEP eligibility criterion, and from which countries?

Three [categories of legal entities used in EU programmes](#) are concerned by this requirement:

- public bodies (including e.g. ministries, research funding organisations, municipalities, as well as public-for-profit organisations such as certain museums)
- research organisations (both public and private)
- higher education establishments (both public and private).

Other categories of legal entities, such as private-for-profit organisations, including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs), are not concerned. This requirement concerns legal entities applying as beneficiaries as well as affiliated entities.

Regarding countries, the requirement concerns organisations from EU Member States and Associated Countries. Non-associated third countries are not concerned.

### 2. When will this GEP eligibility criterion be enforced in Horizon Europe?

A transition/grace period will take place during the first year of Horizon Europe: this eligibility criterion does not concern calls for proposals with deadlines in 2021 and will only be enforced as of calls with deadlines in 2022.

Furthermore, for calls with deadlines in 2022 and beyond, once a project proposal is selected for funding following evaluations, consortium partners concerned by the eligibility criterion will have until Grant Agreement signature to confirm they have a GEP in place.

### 3. What are the modalities for a legal entity to declare it has a GEP?

A self-declaration will be requested at proposal stage. It will take the form of an online questionnaire listing the four mandatory process-related GEP requirements (building blocks) as well as the five recommended thematic areas. The questionnaire should be filled by the legal entity's authorised representative (LEAR), only once, in principle, for the duration of the Framework Programme, unless the status of the legal entity changes.

Legal entities are not asked to submit/upload their GEP, only to fill in the questionnaire. Proposal submission templates (application forms) display the GEP questionnaire for information.

For 2021 calls for proposals, although the GEP eligibility criterion is not yet enforced, applicants are still invited to fill in the questionnaire for information and monitoring purposes. In the future, we will include in our participants database whether the organisation has a GEP, so participants do not have to answer the same question in each proposal they submit.

#### **4. How have the mandatory requirements for the GEP been defined by the European Commission?**

The GEP requirements – or building blocks – have been defined building on the experience and knowledge gathered through a large amount of related EU-funded projects and initiatives, and in co-design with a wide array of R&I national and institutional stakeholders and gender equality experts, and are thus the result of a shared consensus on key needed components.

#### **5. What if the mandatory requirements are fulfilled in another type of official document, or through several, separate, official documents?**

If the four mandatory requirements for the GEP are met through another strategic document, such as a development plan or an inclusion or diversity strategy, it can indeed be considered as an equivalent. If all four mandatory requirements for the GEP are effectively covered through different institutional documents endorsed by top management, it can also be considered as being equivalent. In the latter case, we would then recommend that this information be gathered in a specific summary document which would be accessible on the organisation's public website.

#### **6. One of the mandatory requirements is that the GEP be a public document. What about internal-only information, such as budget distribution?**

The Commission does not require that the full GEP or equivalent plan/strategy – including e.g. budgets – becomes publicly available on the organisation's website.

However, what would need to become accessible on the organisation's public/external website, is, at least, a document signed by the top management certifying the existence of a GEP (or related official plan/strategy) which covers the three other mandatory requirements (commitment of dedicated resources and gender expertise to implement the GEP; sex/gender disaggregated data collection and monitoring on personnel and annual reporting based on indicators; awareness raising/trainings on gender equality and unconscious gender biases for staff and decision-makers). This public document should of course comply with the General Data Protection Regulation.

#### **7. If my organisation received the European Commission's HRS4R "HR Excellence in Research" Label, or a national/regional-level certification related to gender equality, can it be considered as the equivalent of a GEP?**

It will be the case only if your organisation's HRS4R Label related action plan, or the action plan associated to the national/regional level certification, fulfils the four process-related mandatory requirements.

## 8. What happens if one consortium partner does not have a GEP at Grant Agreement signature, or if during compliance checks carried out by the Commission it is found out that a Beneficiary does not have a GEP fulfilling the mandatory requirements?

A partner having declared they do not have a GEP cannot participate in a Horizon Europe project. The European Commission will carry out random compliance checks during the course of Horizon Europe. Standard procedures for non-compliance of beneficiaries to Horizon Europe eligibility criteria will then be implemented. In this case, the participation of that beneficiary will be terminated following the standard termination procedures which consists of sending a pre-information letter allowing beneficiaries to send observations prior to the final decision. Costs are eligible up to the termination date. Beneficiary terminations affect one specific beneficiary, not the entire consortium. However, if the beneficiary has a key role in the grant agreement, a beneficiary termination could trigger that the entire project may have to be terminated.

## 9. Does the GEP need to be in English?

No, the GEP can be in the national language(s) used in the organisation.

## 10. Are certain types of projects, or certain parts of Horizon Europe, exempted from the GEP requirement?

No, the GEP is not linked to a specific type of funding instrument or Programme part, but concerns individual organisations applying to any part of Horizon Europe if they belong to the three categories of legal entities specified in Question 1. It is a requirement to be eligible to any funding under Horizon Europe, and includes hosting institutions for ERC and MSCA grants.

## 11. Where can we find examples of GEPs?

The [GEAR Tool](#) provides a step-by-step guide on how to design and implement a GEP, and further examples can be found on the websites of EU-funded projects dedicated to the implementation of gender equality plans in R&I organisations, including:

- GEP implementing projects, such as those listed [here](#)
- Communities of practice on GEPs: [ACT](#)
- Training on GEPs and gender equality issues in R&I: [GE Academy](#)
- Evaluation framework and designing tools for gender equality measures in R&I: [EFFORTI](#)

Additional guidance will also be provided by the European Commission.

Should you have additional questions, you can send them to:

[RTD-HORIZON-EU-GENDER-EQUALITY-PLAN@ec.europa.eu](mailto:RTD-HORIZON-EU-GENDER-EQUALITY-PLAN@ec.europa.eu)

**More info:** [Gender equality in research and innovation](#)

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