



INSPIRE

D2.2 Central & East Europe Country Cluster Report

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List of Acronyms

CoP	Community of Practice
EC	European Commission
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
EU	European Union
GE	Gender Equality
GEP	Gender Equality Plan
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and communications technology
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
RFO	Research funding organisation
RPO	Research performing organisation
R&I	Research and Innovation
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics



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1 Introduction

This is one of the four (EU27) country cluster reports which analyse the results of the expert survey conducted by INSPIRE, a Horizon Europe project aimed at building a sustainable centre of excellence on inclusive gender equality in research and innovation (R&I).

INSPIRE survey

The survey involved one expert in each EU27 Member State and provided crucial support to the INSPIRE research programme on structural change towards inclusive gender equality in R&I, through:

- collecting information and analysis on policy developments and research debates at the national level; and
- identifying engaged stakeholders, other potential experts and relevant resources in the country, as well as collecting suggestions to support existing or potential initiatives for developing new communities of practices (CoPs).

The information collected was also meant to be a useful resource for the R&I ecosystem in Europe and beyond, including policy makers, researchers and equality practitioners across Europe,

The survey focused on **structural change towards inclusive gender equality in R&I organisations** in the country, defined as a long-term, sustainable process aimed at building an institutional environment (values, norms, structures and procedures) in which inclusive gender equality is widely discussed and explicitly embraced in organisational and individuals' practices having a demonstrable impact on reducing gender and other axes of inequality and discrimination within the organisation.

A **Gender Equality Plan (GEP)** is an **instrument** to institutionalise a gender equality policy and implement a structural change process. In the survey, GEP was defined according to the eligibility criterion and minimum requirements established by the European Commission to participate in Horizon Europe. Organisations may adopt similar/equivalent instruments to implement structural change or alternative instruments. These **alternative instruments** may focus only on gender or be interventions that fall under the umbrella of Equality, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) policies, or just diversity policies.

The survey addressed **five topics** of interest related to structural change:

- **Initiating change:** How organisations can be encouraged to adopt a gender equality policy (GEPs and equivalent/alternative measures) based on local knowledge, experience and change movements as well as evidence-based tools (e.g., gender equality audit).
- **Sustaining and deepening change:** How organisations can address resistances and sustain and deepen change by building institutional gender competence, dedicating resources and structures, promoting evidence-based measures and broadening the scope of intervention (e.g., integrating sex/gender analysis in curricula or research content; implementing a sexual harassment protocol).



- Adopting an **intersectional approach**: How organisations can move from GEPs and/or EDI interventions to inclusive intersectional GEPs fostering change towards equality.
- Implementing **gendered innovations**: How innovation clusters and private R&I companies can be encouraged to implement gendered innovations - that is to innovate by integrating methods of sex and gender analysis into their R&I products or services, ideally taking into account also other axes of inequality and discrimination.
- **Monitoring inclusive gender equality**: How organisations can support an evidence-based inclusive gender equality by implementing effective monitoring conceptual approaches, tools and indicators - in particular in the four topics identified above (initiating change; sustaining and deepening change; adopting an intersectional approach; implementing gendered innovations).

The survey addressed structural change in **all types of R&I organisations**:

- Research funding organisations (e.g. research Ministries and public bodies funding basic and applied research; innovation agencies; other public and private institutions funding research and/or innovation).
- Research performing organisations:
 - Higher education institutions (public and private)
 - Other public research performing organisations (publicly funded research institutes)
 - R&I companies (e.g., private companies providing R&I products or services)
 - NGOs and other non-profit research performing organisations (e.g., private R&I foundations)

Country cluster report

The comparative analysis of the survey was conducted in four country cluster reports: North West countries, Central West countries, Southern countries and Central East and Eastern countries.

This Central and Eastern Europe country cluster report analyses the results of the survey in eleven countries: **Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.**

The information used to elaborate this report was collated by the following experts:

- Bulgaria Georgi Apostolov
- Croatia Brigita Miloš
- Czechia Jana Dvořáčková
- Estonia Martin Jaigma
- Hungary Beáta Nagy
- Latvia Nina Linde
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¹ The experts from Poland are affiliated to UJ, an institution member of the INSPIRE consortium.



- Romania Monica Stroe
- Slovakia Alexandra Bitušiková
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For further details regarding the methodology followed to collect the information and elaborate this report, please refer to the Methodological Annex.

² The experts from Slovenia are affiliated to ZRC SAZU, an institution member of the INSPIRE consortium.



2 Legal and policy framework

This chapter describes the changes in the legal and policy framework related to gender equality (GE) in Research & Innovation (R&I) in Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia since 2021. This is followed by an overview of intersectional policies existing in the countries, policies on gendered innovation and anti-discrimination legislation, as well as an assessment of the current legal and policy framework in the five thematic areas by national experts.

2.1 Legal Framework

Based on the GEAR tool prepared by August/September 2021, the experts from Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia and Slovakia indicated that there have been no relevant legal changes in the field of gender equality in R&I in their respective countries since 2021. In Croatia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovenia, on the other hand, the experts pointed to relevant legal changes in this area. However, in all the former countries, with the exception of Slovenia (and partly Croatia, where the legal framework provides for greater awareness of gender equality in education), the legal changes are not specific to the R&I sector. According to the reports, the most important legal changes were made in the area of working conditions.

Specifically, the legislative amendments concern measures to ensure work-life balance for employees, such as parental leave and childcare support or remote working or adjustment of working hours (Lithuania, Poland, Romania) and sexual and other harassment and violence (Croatia, Slovenia and Romania). In Poland, the amendments to the Labour Code focus on telework and flexible working hours. These relate directly to care work and work-life balance of employees (including in R&I), as the availability of telework is guaranteed—unless this is not possible—to pregnant employees, employees who are parents of a child under 4 years old, or employees caring for a disabled family member. The legal framework allows flexible working hours for employees caring for a child under 8 years old. The amendment also introduces an additional care leave of 2 days (or 16 hours) per year and an additional care leave (5 days per year) for family medical emergencies. While we can say that the focus on remote working and work-life balance may be the result of the COVID-19 that affected the welfare of the workforce, it is not clear whether such legal changes targeting care and family are also a result of conservative shift and right-wing policies that focus on the reproductive role of women. In Romania and Croatia, legal changes were introduced regarding gender-based violence and sexual harassment. In both countries, these changes affect the R&I as the legal framework is implemented in all public institutions and private companies. In Romania, the amendments require employers to establish a framework for gender mainstreaming and for the prevention of sexual and other forms of harassment. Public institutions are required to draw up and adopt their own internal guidelines setting out the procedure for filing and handling complaints and measures to prevent harassment. In Slovenia, the new Research and Development Activities Act (ZZrID), which came into force in 2022, contains an explicit prohibition of sexual and other harassment in R&I. Another amendment concerns the introduction of equal opportunities in professional development through the adoption and implementation of a programme of measures and reporting on its impact in regular annual



reports (Art. 75). However, it remains undefined how this requirement will be reviewed and how equal opportunities in the institutions will be ensured.

In summary, in more than half of the countries in the Central-East country cluster, no legal changes have been made. However, in other half of the countries, the focus is on harassment, work-life balance and care work, which largely reflects the conservative political shift towards a family as a normative framework based on two genders (a mother and a father). This shift poses a risk that such changes would strengthen traditional gender roles and family-oriented discourses, especially in Poland, Romania and Hungary. The researchers of the “Who cares in Europe” project show the regressive tendency in politics in Europe to view the family largely as a naturalised, static unit that has a socially productive and nationally reproductive function. The narratives are largely part of anti-gender discourses in which women's emancipation and the expansion of LGBTQ+ rights are seen as threats to the restoration of the family (see e.g., Zaharijević 2018; Kubisa and Wojnicka 2019).

2.2 Policy Framework

Regarding the policy framework, experts from all countries reported changes. The majority of countries have adopted or revised gender equality action plans for the period 2021–2023. In Estonia, the Estonia 2021 strategy aims to improve the quality of higher education (HE) by increasing equal opportunities. However, no separate goals related to gender equality have been targeted. In Lithuania, the Action Plan for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2023–2025 was adopted in 2023 to ensure equal opportunities in the areas that were not earlier targeted by the state policy. However, the discourse of the action is very heteronormative as it only includes women and men, and also it has no particular focus on R&I. In 2022, the National Programme for Equal Treatment (2022–2030) was officially launched in Poland. It is envisioned as the continuation of the National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security (2018–2021). Within the eight main priorities, the programme includes specific goals and tasks related to equality in research and development, such as implementing an inclusive approach in education, promoting diversity in the workplace and raising awareness of the existence of discrimination and hate speech in the social sphere. In Czechia, the previous Strategy for Gender Equality in the Czech Republic (2014–2020) has been replaced by the Strategy for Gender Equality in the Czech Republic (2021–2030), which relates more directly to the field of R&I. Chapter 8 is about reducing horizontal and vertical gender segregation (including among students), integrating the gender dimension in teaching and research, and applying a gender perspective in the management of education and research institutions. It also includes support for the implementation of gender equality plans in R&I institutions under the coordination of the Gender Equality Department of the Government Office. In Slovakia, the Slovak government has adopted the “State Strategy for Equality between Women and Men and Equal Opportunities 2021–2027” and the Action Plan 2021, which includes the chapter entitled “Equality between women and men and equal opportunities in Education, Research and Science”. This chapter focuses on combating stereotypes, violence against women and children, support for families and single mothers and sexual harassment, without specific provisions for gender equality in R&I. In Hungary, the Action Plan “Empowering women in Family and Society” (2021–2030) was slightly revised in 2023 to include specific targets for gender equality in areas where women are underrepresented: Decision-making and leadership (including career development), women's presence in STEM and preventing the “leaky



pipeline", employability of women with children under 6, and a focus on digital literacy. In Slovenia, a draft resolution on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2021–2030 was sent to Parliament in 2021, but has not yet been adopted; the new version is still being prepared. New measures envisaged in the proposal refer to increasing women's participation in STEM and reducing gender gaps in digital technologies, reducing sexism and stereotypes, and promoting gender-sensitive language. In addition, during the EU Presidency, the Slovenian government proposed the 2021 Ljubljana Declaration to the European Council of Ministers, which promotes gender equality, but its implementation depends on individual signatories. As higher education and R&I fall under different laws in Slovenia, there are two main policy documents. The policy document directly dealing with R&I is the Resolution on the Strategy for Scientific Research and Innovation in Slovenia 2030, which clearly focuses on gender equality in R&I compared to the previous resolution. The main improvements concern the structural changes, which include: GEP as a binding document, prevention of sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence. An important step is the introduction of gender mainstreaming in the funding and performing research, in awarding and decision-making; in the evaluation of research institutions in the context of institutional funding; the appointment of a panel of experts within the Ministry of Science to identify systemic barriers and assist in the drafting of legal acts and other strategic documents; and the collection of comprehensive gender-disaggregated data as key to effective policy-making and monitoring of the implementation of gender equality measures. In contrast, the new resolution on the National Programme for Higher Education 2030 (ReNPVŠ30) does not explicitly mention gender equality or equal opportunities. In Romania, the Strategy for the Promotion of Equal Opportunities and Treatment of Women and Men and for Combating Domestic Violence (2022–2027) was adopted in 2022. It is the first data-driven gender equality Strategy and it incorporates a gender impact assessment and an intersectional approach as instruments of gender mainstreaming. In relation to R&I, the focus is on gender balance in STEM. In this document, as in the National Strategy for Workforce Employment 2021–2027, another important objective is to reduce gender inequalities in the labour market and increase women's participation in the labour market, including through the collection and use of disaggregated statistical data on wages, as well as measures to reconcile work and family and care work (childcare support measures). Regarding R&I, the main policy changes are presented in the National Strategy for Research, Innovation and Smart Specialisation (2021–2027). The national research organizations should adopt the EU framework of gender equality, without the document elaborating on how this will be done. Another change concerns the funding policy: from 2023, the research team applying for funding must ensure a gender-sensitive approach in the application and the composition of the team. There is a significant lack of legislation and policies in Bulgaria to promote GE in R&I. This is due to the seemingly achieved gender equality, as Bulgaria is one of the leading countries in the EU with a gender balance in the number of researchers (women 53%, men – 47%, including HE). The only time GE is mentioned in the Strategy for the Development of HE in Bulgaria (2021–2030) is in the statement about a relatively balanced share of women researchers in science and ICT. In the area of R&I, apart from equal treatment of women and men and anti-discrimination measures, GE is not further mentioned.

In summary, the number of policy changes has been quite high in the region in the last 2 years. However, some limitations need to be noted, in particular the fact that these changes concern the area of R&I in a lesser extent. In the case the changes target R&I, they are related



to STEM or narrowing the gender gap in digital skills. In some countries, policy changes, concern the development and adoption of GEPs (Croatia), ensuring gender/sex disaggregated data collection and introducing changes in national funding programmes to make (Slovenia and Romania). Finally, in Slovakia and Bulgaria, there are no regulations specifically related to gender equality in R&I. In these two countries there is a lack of policy measures (and thus policy changes) with regard to GE in R&I. As in the case of the legal changes, the rhetoric of policy documents and proposed measures are largely heteronormative: the rhetoric of “equality between women and men” is interchanged with the framework of “equal opportunities/equal treatment” (Poland) or “gender equality” (Czechia). Hungary and Slovakia put a special emphasis on women and family, which can be seen as a result of the retraditionalisation tendencies. The experts’ analysis shows that Bulgaria is a special case in this matter: the Constitutional Court has declared that the Istanbul Convention contradicts the Bulgarian Constitution and the Parliament has refused to ratify it. As a result of such a political decision and surrounding political climate, the term “gender” acquired a very negative connotation, as referring only to LGBT+ and the promotion of homosexual relations. This results with the public climate that any GE-related policies are dismissed as “gender ideology.”

What concerns the focus on **an intersectional approach**, in the Central-East country cluster, there are no policies that target this topic. However, anti-discrimination policies are mentioned in Lithuania and Slovenia. In Lithuania, the problem of social exclusion and potential discrimination based on gender, social status, age, disability, language, origin, race, nationality, citizenship, beliefs or opinions, sexual orientation, ethnicity, faith, health or other grounds is recognised and addressed in the Programme of the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic (2021–2030). There is no evidence of an intersectional approach related to R&I. Similarly, in Slovenia there is no specific policy that explicitly promotes an intersectional approach to gender equality policies in R&I. However, there is a public body – Advocate of the Principle of Equality – which acts as a kind of ombudsman as well as being involved in promoting gender equality policies in different areas of society, including in R&I. It provides support in cases of exclusion and discrimination based on gender, nationality, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation). In addition, the Student Status Act (ZUPŠ-1, May 2022), which complements the Higher Education Act (ZVis, in force since 1994), explicitly guarantees equal treatment in education “irrespective of nationality, racial or ethnic origin, national and social origin, gender, health, disability, religion or belief, age, sexual orientation, marital status, wealth or other personal circumstances.” **In conclusion**, in most countries the legal and policy framework regarding intersectionality can be considered non-existent, with the exception of Slovenia and Lithuania, where we can track only the mention of intersectionality in relation to discrimination in the legal documents, including those dealing with R&I.

For **R&I policies in private companies** the experts could not give an assessment due to lack of relevant data. Only three expert reports confirm the existence of R&I policies in the private sector: Estonia, Croatia and Romania. In Estonia, the “Estonian Research and Development, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Strategy 2021–2035,” which is part of the Estonia 2035 strategy, aims to reduce the gender pay gap and gender segregation in all HE and RPOs. In Croatia, there exists a policy document entitled Women’s Empowerment Principles, aimed at promoting gender equality and empowering women in business, signed by private companies in the field of R&I. In addition, there is an award mechanism for private R&I companies in the field of GE. In Romania, the research funding programmes in the National Plan for Research,



Development and Innovation (2022–2027) include a recommendation to integrate a gender dimension in research in the case of both public and private institutions.

In general, there is a lack of information, knowledge and data in regards to gender equality in private R&I institutions. Experts could not provide more substantial assessment, which may be due to the fact that the private companies in the area of R&I are fragmented and operate beyond the larger system of public R&Is. The potential reason for this is that private R&I is still not particularly strong, as higher education and research are still predominantly publicly owned probably due to the legacy of state or social ownership that was prevalent during the socialist period.

2.3 Legal Prohibition of Discrimination

In all countries of the Central East cluster, the Constitution and the various laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin, race, colour, gender, language, origin, religion, political or other opinion, age, health condition and disability or sexual orientation, education, financial or social status, marital and family status or on other grounds. National anti-discrimination laws are adopted in the respective countries in accordance with EU directives and EU human rights standards. There is also the institution of the Ombudsperson in the Equal Opportunities Office, which ensures that anti-discrimination legislation is implemented. While the main grounds of discrimination are covered in all countries, not all laws include discrimination on the grounds of trade union membership.

From a country-specific perspective, in Estonia, the Gender Equality Act prevents discrimination on the grounds of gender, pregnancy and childbirth, parenthood, performance of family obligations and other circumstances related to gender (e.g., being transgender). In the course of EU accession preparations and negotiations, Croatia has aligned its obligations with European human rights and anti-discrimination standards. As in other European countries, special attention is paid to the problems of racial, ethnic and gender discrimination and to combating them and protecting the rights of victims. In Hungary, the special Equal Treatment and Promotion of Equal Opportunities Act (ETA) of 2003 legally prevents discrimination on the basis of 19 categories. In addition, the general anti-discrimination clause of the Hungarian Fundamental Law was adopted in 2011. Hungary has also ratified the main international anti-discrimination instruments, albeit with some exceptions such as Protocol No. 12 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Protocol on Collective Complaints to the Revised European Social Charter. In Bulgaria, the main anti-discrimination law is the Protection Against Discrimination Act (PADA) of 2004. PADA prohibits and defines direct and indirect discrimination, multiple discrimination, including discrimination by association and by presumption. In Czechia, there is no strict definition of the specific grounds of discrimination, with the exception of disability, which is explicitly defined as a physical, sensory, mental, psychological or other impairment that limits or may limit the right to equal treatment. Moreover, multiple discrimination is not explicitly targeted within the scope of the Anti-discrimination Act (victims cannot claim discrimination on multiple grounds). In Romania, HIV-positive status is also mentioned as a ground for discrimination, while in Lithuania the national anti-discrimination law consists of two main legal acts: the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (adopted in 1998) and the Law on Equal Treatment



(adopted in 2003). In Slovenia, the main anti-discrimination laws prohibit discrimination on the grounds of gender, language, gender identity or gender expression, social status, economic situation and education, and all the main laws contain a general clause on 'other personal characteristics' (which may include health status, nationality, pregnancy, parenthood and marital status). Regarding marital status, the new amendment to the Family Code (from May 2023) makes heterosexual and homosexual married couples, couples in a civil partnership or de facto couples (people who state that they live together as a couple) fully equal in law. Indirect discrimination is only permitted if such a provision, criterion or practise is objectively justified by a legitimate objective and the means of achieving that objective are appropriate and necessary. A distinctive feature compared to other countries is the role of Advocate of the Principle of Equality who carries out independent investigation and report on the particular personal circumstances (gender, nationality, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation). The report is used to make recommendations to state authorities, local authorities, public bodies, employers and other bodies. In Poland, although the Constitution prohibits discrimination under the Law on Equal Treatment, the system is not uniform. For example, the scope of protection in the area of social security and access to services is broader than in the areas of education and health (in the latter, gender is not a protected characteristic). Under the scope of protection adapted by the Polish Criminal Code, a hate crime is recognised as an attack based on nationality, ethnicity, race or faith, but not on sexual orientation or gender. In Latvia, the Education Law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, colour, age, disability, political, religious or other opinion, national or social origin, financial or marital status, sexual orientation or other factors.

Overall, all countries surveyed in this cluster, according to the experts, have been unable to put in place an adequate legal and policy framework that would directly address the area of R&I. More than half of the countries report no legal development in the area of gender equality in the last two years, while in the rest of countries the changes do not concern R&I. In terms of policy changes, the focus is on gender-based violence and family- and care-related policies. Slovakia and Bulgaria seem to stand out on most issues, as their legal and policy frameworks are rated as inadequate by the experts. No country has an adequate framework in relation to the intersectional approach, which seems to be the weakest aspect in the legal and policy frameworks. The only exceptions are Lithuania and Slovenia, where the intersectional approach is mentioned in policy documents. As far as anti-discrimination is concerned, most of the legal provisions date back to before 2010, which proves that legal changes were introduced as the part of “external” factors—enforced by the EU as the part of the accession process. The legal and policy framework for private companies is not yet sufficiently researched, so experts cannot provide an informed assessment. As far as differences between geographical areas are concerned, there are no significant differences between the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) and the Central and South-Eastern European countries.

An overall assessment of the current national legal and policy framework situation in the eleven countries is given in Table 1. The table shows how national experts assessed whether current legal and political framework is adequate to foster or sustain significant advances in the field of (inclusive) gender equality in R&I organisations. The possible answers ranged in from highly adequate to highly insufficient.



Table 1. Assessment of national legal and political framework, by topic

Country	Initiating change	Sustaining and deepening change	Adopting an intersectional approach	Implementing gendered innovations	Monitoring inclusive gender equality
Bulgaria	Insufficient	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient
Croatia	Insufficient	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient	Insufficient	Highly insufficient
Czechia	Adequate	Insufficient	Highly insufficient	Adequate	Insufficient
Estonia	Adequate	Adequate	Insufficient	Insufficient	Adequate
Hungary	n.a.	Insufficient	Highly insufficient	n.a.	n.a.
Latvia	Insufficient	Insufficient	Highly insufficient	Insufficient	Highly insufficient
Lithuania	Adequate	Insufficient	Highly insufficient	Insufficient	Highly insufficient
Poland	Insufficient	Insufficient	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient	Insufficient
Romania	Adequate	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient
Slovakia	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient
Slovenia	Adequate	Insufficient	Insufficient	Highly insufficient	Adequate



3 Structural Change

This chapter is based on the responses and literature that the national experts were asked to provide in order to give an insight into structural change regarding GE in R&I in their respective countries.

3.1 Literature Review

All national experts were asked to select the most relevant literature about structural change towards (inclusive) gender equality in R&I organisations in their country: at least 5 publications – out of which at least 3 should be in the local language, while giving priority to the most recent publications (published in the last 5 years). Both academic literature and other types of publications could be included.

Here we will discuss the main features of the identified literature, which has been examined in-depth in the report created for the INSPIRE project: “D2.1 KSH2 Report: Initiating Change Beyond the Centre. A Literature Review of Gender Equality Plans in Research Organisations across Europe” (Krzaklewska et al. 2023). For this report, the team from ZRC SAZU (Iva Kosmos, Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc and Tjaša Cankar)³ examined literature suggested by the national experts from EU27 Member States that fall into the group of “Widening countries”, as the literature review was conducted with purpose to provide the INSPIRE Knowledge & Support Hub (KSH) “Widening Participation” with the relevant background for its work. The term “Widening countries” refers to a group of countries that are evaluated as less advanced in R&I (European Commission 2023) or, in other terms, the countries with low participation rates in FP7 and H2020 projects (European Research Executive Agency n.d.). Among the EU27 Member States, these are countries clustered as Central & Eastern Europe within the INSPIRE project (Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia) and four countries (Cyprus, Greece, Malta, and Portugal) that belong to the Southern Europe country cluster in INSPIRE D2.2. Therefore, in the sub-section of this document – D2.2 Central & East Europe Country Cluster Report – we are summarising only those findings of the D2.1 KSH2 Report that relate to the countries of the East Europe while excluding those from the South.

The answers of the national experts show that the number of publications has been increasing over the years, and the largest proportion of the sources were published in 2022 (bearing in mind that the survey was finalised in June 2023). This indicates the growing interest in the analysis of these processes as institutions take steps to introduce gender equality plans, also as a result from making GEPs an eligibility criterion for all public institutions who want to participate in Horizon Europe programmes from 2022 onwards (Krzaklewska et al. 2023, 14).

Concerning the outlet of the publications, the journal articles constitute almost the half of the literature selected by the national experts, and reports are second most prominent type of publications. This “indicates that important information from the field might be disseminated via grey rather than scholarly literature” in this group of countries (ibid, 22). While journal articles were predominant, they mostly dealt with practical issues rather than theoretical

³ Here we acknowledge help of Sara Krulc who was intern at the ZRC SAZU in July-August 2023.



considerations or more critical approaches, further indicating grey literature as an important source of knowledge on the field (ibid, 63).

All collected publications are listed in the Annex (Table B), clustered by countries and put in alphabetical order. Each reference is given a unique code (based on the country acronym) and this code is used for marking what topic(s) are covered in a particular publication, and which type of organisation the reference relates to (see Table 2). The marking was made on the basis of reading the English abstract of each publication. The same reference can refer to more than one topic and/or more than one type of R&I organisation. The overview of the topics and type of organisation covered in each publication is presented in the Table 2 and are discussed further below.

Table 2. Selected literature by country, topic and type of R&I organisation					
Topic	Research funding organisations	Higher education institutions	Other public research performing organisations	Private companies working on R&I	Non-profit research performing organisations
Initiating change	BG3, CZ2, HR6	BG3, BG6, BG7, BG10, CZ1, CZ3, CZ4, CZ5, CZ6, EE2, EE3, EE4, HR1, HR7, HU2, LT1, LT2, LT5, LT6, LT8, LT9, LT11, LV7, PL2, PL6, PL9, RO4, RO6, RO10, RO11, RO13, SK3, SK4, SK5, SI1, SI2, SI3, SI7	BG3, BG7, CZ3, CZ4, CZ5, CZ6, EE3, EE4, HR1, HU2, LT1, LT2, LT5, LT6, PL9, RO6, RO10, RO13, SK4, SK5, SI1, SI7, SI9	HR1, HR5, PL4, PL9, RO10, RO13	RO10
Sustaining and deepening change	LT10	HU1, HU3, HU4, HU5, EE5, LT3, LT6, LT7, LT9, LT10, LT12, LV7, PL3, PL5, PL6, PL9, RO1, SK1, SI1, SI5, SI7	HU1, HU3, HU4, HU5, EE5, LT6, LT7, LT10, LT12, PL3, PL5, PL9, SI1, SI4, SI5, SI7, SI8	HR5, HU5, LT10, PL1, PL4, PL9	HU1, HU3, HU4, LT10
Adopting an intersectional approach		HR4, HU5, RO1	HU5, SI8	HU5, LV6, PL1, PL10, RO8	
Implementing gendered innovations	LT10	LT3, LT10, PL2	LT10	LT10, PL7, PL8	LT10
Monitoring inclusive gender equality	LT6	BG5, LT6, SK6	LT6, SK6	RO7	

The literature identified by the experts in all countries abundantly covers the topic of initiating change and sustaining and deepening change with most publications focusing on the implementations of the GE measures in higher education and other public research performing institutions (see Table 2). Other topics are covered in significantly lesser amount.



The publications on monitoring inclusive gender equality mostly deal with annual data monitoring and reporting. The topic of adopting intersectional approach is not exhaustively developed as such in the literature, but the selected publications discuss issue of diversity in context of gender equality and examine deeper some specific grounds of discrimination in connection with gender inequality (such as sexual orientation). However, we could esteem that this topic generally remains unaddressed or under-addressed, which is also the assessment of national experts (see Table 4 below). The same could be stated regarding implementing gendered innovations, with an exception of few studies that mention this topic in HE institutions and private companies working in R&I. The type of organisations that are least covered are research funding institutions and NGOs and other non-profit research performing organisations.

As described in the INSPIRE D2.1 KSH2 Report, the publications that discuss GEP as a mechanism predominantly deal with the creation and development of GEP rather than its implementation and monitoring (Krzaklewska et al. 2023, 62). Most countries have just recently started to introduce GEP and have neither a long history of working on GEP nor the research on their effectiveness. They are often not grounded in the previous institutional policies or measures, but mostly follow blueprint of EU projects. There is a noticeable focus on “safer areas” of implementing GE such as WLB, and distinctive lack of developed measures in more “complicated” GE measures, such as sexual harassment. Gender dimension in research and teaching is less pronounced in GEPs. Similarly, the intersectional approach is barely included in GEPs (ibid).

Significant portion of the literature selected by the national experts did not relate directly to the issue of institutional change fostering gender equality in R&I organisations, but rather discussed other topics relating to GE issues relevant for understanding social, cultural, political and economic context of the countries in question (see Table 3). This literature provides basic data on increasing participation of women in academia across different countries (Krzaklewska et al. 2023, 52). Results mostly underline that share of educated women equals men, nevertheless women are still largely absent from STEM and leadership positions in general. Vertical and horizontal segregation including gender pay gap are also widely covered. Literature from Central and Eastern Europe also underlines that participation of women and other indicators relevant for GE are comparable with European trends, and sometimes better, especially in Slovenia, Estonia, Hungary and Lithuania. Exception is literature from Czechia which reports on low proportion of women researchers (ibid). Furthermore, the selected literature offers analysis of the structural conditions for academic progress and excellence through a gender perspective. It points that the seemingly neutral structural conditions for achieving science excellence and career progress, are in fact conformed to male habitus, particularly on the issues related to international networking, travelling or stay abroad, and continuous publishing track (ibid, 53).

Among the publications not directly addressing the issue of institutional change in R&I sector, many discuss political atmosphere of respective countries as being “anti-gender” (meaning inclined against gender equality). This literature examines negative attitudes towards the term “gender” and what is negatively perceived as “gender ideology”, which are relevant factors hindering the institutionalisation of gender equality policies in general (see Table 3). This recurring topic within the literature selected by the national experts is discussed in detail in



INSPIRE project Deliverable 2.1 KSH2 Report, in the sections written by the ZRC SAZU team (Krzaklewska et al 2023, 53 – 54, 59, 61).

Table 3. Selected literature which is not directly addressing institutional change towards gender equality in R&I organisations

Topic	Literature not addressing institutional change towards gender equality in R&I organisations
Negative attitudes towards “gender”	BG1, BG2, BG4, BG9, BG11, LV2, RO2, RO5
Other topics	BG8, BG12, HR3, HR8, EE1, EE6, LT4, LV1, LV3, LV4, LV5, RO3, RO9, RO12, SK2, SI6

The degree of sufficiency of the current knowledge base on structural change towards (inclusive) gender equality in R&I organisations for each of the five topics in the eleven countries is assessed by the national experts as outlined in Table 4. The table shows how national experts assessed whether current knowledge base on structural change in R&I organisations in the country is adequate to support significant evidence-based advances in the field of inclusive gender equality in R&I organisations. The possible answers ranged in from highly adequate to highly insufficient.

Table 4. Assessment of current knowledge in the country, by topic

Country	Initiating change	Sustaining and deepening change	Adopting an intersectional approach	Implementing gendered innovations	Monitoring inclusive gender equality
Bulgaria	Insufficient	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient
Croatia	Insufficient	Insufficient	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient	Insufficient
Czechia	Highly adequate	Insufficient	Highly insufficient	Insufficient	Insufficient
Estonia	Highly adequate	Insufficient	Insufficient	Insufficient	Insufficient
Hungary	n.a.	Highly adequate	Highly insufficient	Highly adequate	Insufficient
Latvia	Insufficient	Insufficient	Highly insufficient	Insufficient	Highly insufficient
Lithuania	Insufficient	Insufficient	Insufficient	Insufficient	Insufficient
Poland	Insufficient	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient	Insufficient	Insufficient
Romania	Insufficient	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient	Insufficient
Slovakia	Insufficient	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient
Slovenia	Highly adequate	Insufficient	Insufficient	Highly insufficient	Highly insufficient

It should be noted that some of the assessments of the national experts (as presented in Table 4) do not fully conflate with the evaluation of topic coverage by countries conducted by the ZRC SAZU team on the basis of the suggested literature (as presented in Table 2). This should not come as surprise as both tables present results which are prone to subjective



understanding of each topic and different benchmarks different researchers apply to estimate existing knowledge base.

3.2 Initiating change

Degree of uptake of GEPs

This section provides the analysis on the degree of institutionalisation of GE and implementing structural change through the use of GEPs or alternative instruments to assure change in the field of GE. The analysis is made by the type of organization: Research funding organizations (RFO), Higher education institutions (HE), Research performing organizations (RPO), private companies and non-profit NGOs.

RFOs – The experts from five countries out of eleven declared that most of RFOs have GEPs (Estonia, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia and Poland), while in Chechia, Lithuania and Latvia – some RFOs have GEPs. In Croatia, Bulgaria and Slovakia GEPs are least developed and institutionalised among RFOs.

The situation is much better for **HE institutions**, as most of them have GEPs in all of the countries.

RPOs are slightly a different case, as in seven countries (Hungary, Chechia, Romania, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Poland) most of RPOs have GEPs, in tree countries some have GEPs (Bulgaria, Latvia, Estonia), while Croatia is the only country where a few or none of the RPOs have GEPs.

For **private companies**, and **NGOs** and other non-profit organizations, the experts were often unable to give an answer as they reported a lack of reliable information. From the data they provided, we can say that private organisations are more advanced in implementing GEPs, particularly in Romania, where most of them have GEPs, while in Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovakia, Latvia some have GEPs and in Croatia, Bulgaria, Czechia and Slovenia – a few or none have GEPs.

In regards to the **NGOs**, experts from five countries (Estonia, Croatia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Poland) reported a lack of reliable information. No national expert reported that that most or many NGOs have GEPs, leading to the conclusion that the GEP is not widespread mechanism in this type of organisations. Experts from Czechia, Romania, Slovakia and Latvia indicated that few or no NGOs have GEP. In Hungary and Slovenia, the situation is slightly better than in other countries, as some of NGOs have GEPs.

A collected overview of the prevalence of GEPs in the five different types of organisations is given in Table 5.



Table 5. Degree of uptake of GEPs by type of R&I organisation

Country	Research funding organisations	Higher education institutions	Other public research performing organisations	Private companies working on R&I	Non-profit research performing organisations
Bulgaria	A few have GEPs	Most have GEPs	Some have GEPs	A few have GEPs	n.a.
Croatia	A few have GEPs	Most have GEPs	A few have GEPs	A few have GEPs	n.a.
Czechia	Some have GEPs	Most have GEPs	Most have GEPs	A few have GEPs	A few have GEPs
Estonia	Most have GEPs	Most have GEPs	Some have GEPs	Some have GEPs	n.a.
Hungary	Most have GEPs	Most have GEPs	Most have GEPs	Some have GEPs	Some have GEPs
Latvia	Some have GEPs	Most have GEPs	Some have GEPs	Some have GEPs	A few have GEPs
Lithuania	Some have GEPs	Most have GEPs	Most have GEPs	Some have GEPs	n.a.
Poland	Most have GEPs	Most have GEPs	Most have GEPs	n.a.	n.a.
Romania	Most have GEPs	Most have GEPs	Most have GEPs	n.a.	A few have GEPs
Slovakia	A few have GEPs	Most have GEPs	Most have GEPs	Some have GEPs	A few have GEPs
Slovenia	Most have GEPs	Most have GEPs	Most have GEPs	A few have GEPs	Some have GEPs

Stakeholders for GEP development

The most significant top-down incentive across different types of organisations is a new eligibility criterion in the form of the requirement to have GEP in place when applying for Horizon Europe funds. This is particularly the case in the countries that do not have adequate legal and policy frameworks, thus, the external EC requirement, EU projects and international cooperation are the main facilitators (e.g., Bulgaria, Slovakia, Czechia, and Latvia). As an illustration, only in one year about fifteen universities (out of 52) and a number of Institutes of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences as well as other RPOs developed and adopted their GEPs. Experts report that the setback of the development and adoption of GEPs under the pressure, which resulted in a lack of substantial understanding of the measures and needs of each particular national and institutional context.

Regarding specific trends, in Croatia the importance of GEP and GE activities is mainly limited to the fields where women are underrepresented, especially in the STEM field. Similarly, in Lithuania, the focus is on the organisational culture and the promotion of women's participation and advancement in STEM (Šidlauskienė and Butašova 2013, p. 66). In Hungary, the expert reported a lack of positive change in the field of GE, with the consequence that GEPs are not widespread (Tardos and Paksi 2021). GE is promoted mainly within the discourses, initiatives and policies related to family and care, as a result of the conservative politics (Striebing et al. 2020, 8). In Bulgaria, the institutionalisation of GEP as the mechanism for GE is developing



slowly, relying on the small teams, departments or other parts of institutions, and is highly fragmented and temporary. In Czechia, due to the pressure of eligibility criteria, several institutions have adopted GEP, but only half of them meet all the mandatory requirements set by the European Commission, due to a lack of understanding of the topic (Donovalová and Tenglerová 2023, 9). It is interesting that in Romania, there is a network that brings together both public and private R&I organisations, which stands out from other countries in the cluster where private organisations are largely separated. The institutionalisation of gender studies programmes and curricula has been an important support to the positive trends in GE in Romania (Tăriceanu 2022). In Slovenia, the importance of intersectional approach is emphasised, as well as the focus on both genders and different groups of academic staff (including administrative staff) in adopting and implementing the GEP and changing the organisational culture (Mihajlović Trbovc et al. 2022). In Poland, the experts emphasised the importance of a bottom-up and inclusive approach (by involving different staff members) in the development of GEPs as a way of tailoring GE measures to needs and problems specific to the institutions. In both Slovenia and Poland, there is an emphasis on a need to create a wider network of actors (CoPs) working together for the change in the area of GE, as working on this topic often requires external support or support from the institutional peers. In Latvia, a lack of focus on discrimination and inequality is noted by the expert. However, the positive aspect is the internationalisation of labour market, which fosters diversity management. The most important need is to continue with the activities related to the Istanbul Convention in the areas of sexual, physical, emotional, financial violence and health.

Newcomers in relation to implementing GEPs

All of five types of organizations in the cluster countries just recently start to implement GEPs. In almost all of the countries, RFO are newcomers that have no widespread systematic development and adoption of GEPs (exactly in eight of them; Estonia, Bulgaria, Chechia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland, Lithuania and Latvia). Only in Croatia and Romania they are not newcomers, while in Hungary the expert could not give an assessment. HEIs are newcomers in most of the countries (10 out of 11), namely in Estonia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Czechia, Romania, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland, Latvia. Hungary stands here as an exception. RPOs are newcomers in 9 out of 11 countries: Estonia, Hungary, Czechia, Romania, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland and Latvia. This data is in line with the situation presented above on the level of development of GEPs, where the HEIs are the most involved in initiating change while RPOs right after them. The experts could not always report about the situation in private companies and NGO organizations (Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Chechia, Romania, Latvia, Hungary). From the scarce data provided, the private companies are considered newcomers in Estonia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Slovenia while NGOs are newcomers in Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia.

In general, GEP is a new tool in the Central East Country Cluster and organisations do not have much experience with it. In accordance to the expert's report, Croatia is the only exception among all countries in the cluster, where RPO, private companies and NGOs are not newcomers. In Bulgaria, Slovakia and Slovenia all types of organisations are considered as newcomers in the national experts' reports. This confirms Slovakia and Bulgaria as two countries that are not introducing GE policies in the field of R&I. To quote the expert from Bulgaria, "developing and implementing GEP is something entirely new for the research



community in the country. There is no any essential reference or specifically elaborated requirements regarding GE in their rules, procedures, etc.”

In most countries, the newcomer status, especially in HEIs and among RPOs is due to the fact that before the GEP became an eligibility criterion in the Horizon Europe, only a few organisations had GEPs or other policies directed at gender equality. Experts reported that in the period after August/September 2021, the number of GEPs in R&I organisations increased significantly. Consequently, most of the GEPs were adopted in 2021 and 2022. For example, in Croatia, the number of organisations (regardless of a type) who adopted GEPs increased from a few to more than ten. In the majority of countries, this happened mainly in HEIs and RPOs participating in the EU-funded structural change projects. However, the case of Bulgaria reveals that such a way of developing and implementing GEPs could be largely seen as fulfilling the formal obligation and in result lacking a substantial systemic approach to GE. This reflects a risk that the GEPs could be developed in haste and without a thorough need-analysis. The processes of developing and implementing GEPs in the private sector are very heterogeneous, since private companies are not part of the centralised system of public R&I organisations. The experts warned that there is a risk that development and implementation of GEP in this sector could be driven by profit rather than value of equality.

Table 6. Type of organisations as ‘newcomer’ implementing GEPs

Country	Research funding organisations	Higher education institutions	Other public research performing organisations	Private companies working on R&I	Non-profit research performing organisations
Bulgaria	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Croatia	No	Yes	No	No	No
Czechia	Yes	Yes	Yes	n.a.	n.a.
Estonia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	n.a.
Hungary	n.a.	No	Yes	n.a.	Yes
Latvia	No	Yes	Yes	n.a.	n.a.
Lithuania	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	n.a.
Poland	Yes	Yes	Yes	n.a.	n.a.
Romania	No	Yes	Yes	n.a.	n.a.
Slovakia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Slovenia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Alternative instruments to GEPs

In the majority of the countries, in all the types of organisations, **alternative instruments are not widespread**. The relative exception are the private companies in which international involvement/headquarters tend to adopt "Diversity, inclusion and equity/equality" strategies that serve as an alternative GE instruments. In terms of countries, the relative exceptions are Latvia (for HEIs, private companies), Romania (HEIs, private companies) and Hungary (RFOs, private companies). When looking at the type of alternative instruments, there are the university constitution, code of ethics, and diversity and inclusion plans. In Hungary, such plan



concerns the alternative instruments that target scholars who are on parental leave through rising the age limit for application for funds or through providing special publication grants.

Main barriers and facilitators for initiating change

The main barriers and facilitators for initiating change are presented in this section across the different types of R&I organisations.

RFOs – The national experts reported the main barriers to initiating change in RFOs in their respective countries. The most frequently mentioned barriers are: 1) a lack of awareness of the importance of GE, 2) lack of knowledge and absence of experts on gender equality and structural change within the organisation 3) lack of systemic approach 4) lack of initiative on the stakeholders, 5) lack of interest of the top management 6) regulations related to GE that are not binding or regulations that are not explicit enough 7) lack of official commitment by decision-makers, 8) lack of human and financial resources, including financial support from the state 9) lack of gender audit. In regards to the respective countries, a more specific case is Hungary. Due to the profound conservative backlash, gender-related education had been removed from the curricula while gender equality movements silenced in the public and political arena. The expert from Poland pointed to a lack of collecting gender-disaggregated data at the organizational level. Bulgaria and Slovakia stand out for the lack of sufficiently supportive legal and policy framework. In Czechia and Estonia, despite the existence of a policy framework, there is a lack of the actual support for GE agenda in practice. In Bulgaria, Slovakia and Poland, experts indicated the negative public representation of the so-called gender-discourse and the political mobilisation against the so-called gender ideology. The expert from Slovenia also referred to the current socio-historical context, where the focus on gender equality is perceived as a matter of trend or fashion.

The main facilitators for initiating change in RFOs are, first and foremost, supportive national legal and policy frameworks, in particular the GEP eligibility criterion for EU funding. This is followed by a strong commitment from top management and the push from gender experts within organisation. National experts also identified peer pressure as an important facilitator. Other funding mechanisms that support GE, such as research award initiatives like those of Avon's and L'Oréal's could also act as facilitators. Individual engagement was also ranked highly as a key facilitator due to the lack of systemic approach. It is interesting to note that the same factors and actors can be simultaneously perceived as barriers and facilitators, in particular the commitment of top management or pressure from actors in academic community. In Slovakia and Romania, and partly in Latvia, experts report a lack of adequate legal and policy frameworks, while in Hungary and Bulgaria experts highlight the political pressure against "gender ideology." Facilitators are mainly external, first and foremost GE criterion for EU funding.

HEIs – the main barriers for initiating change are similar to RFOs, but with some differences. They were again ranked by us according to their frequency in the experts' reports and their relevance. The most important barriers were a lack of awareness and understanding of gender equality issues and a lack or absence of financial support for the introduction of GE measures. They also pointed to a lack of systemic approach in developing and adopting GE measures, which results also from a lack of resources and capacities in terms of expertise, overwork of teaching and administrative staffs, and a care labour. Another important set of barriers relates



to institutional characteristics and include complex administrative system, rigid vertical hierarchies, systemic inertia and a lack of commitment on the part of the mid-managers and senior academic staff. A particular obstacle to change is the lack of mandatory measures by the governing bodies, evaluations and sanctions for non-compliance with GE regulations. Another problem is the discourse of meritocracy, which assumes that HEIs are gender-neutral organisations, especially in the case of the institutions with high number of female employees. The expert from Romania emphasised the need for a better definition of terminology related to GE and missing mandatory actions in the internal procedures, as well as a lack of sex/gender disaggregated data collection as an institutional practice. In Slovakia, the lack of gender-related expert knowledge was highlighted. In Slovenia and Czechia, the initiating changes in the field of GE is often perceived as the pressure "from above."

The main facilitators are similar to those for RFOs. Primary, the supportive national legal and policy framework, in particular GEP eligibility criterion for EU funds, is the most mentioned factor by national experts. Experience from the EU projects and international GE communities is listed as second. However, the main difference to the RFOs is the importance of enthusiastic staff at different levels of the R&I organisations (senior management, administrative staff, teaching staff). In particular, the younger generations of academic staff and students (especially in regards to actions around sexual harassment and gender-based violence) are seen as important facilitators. Experts also mentioned the importance of COPs and other networks in initiating change. This was particularly the case in Bulgaria, where the expert noted the importance of external factors – strong international academic and research networks and initiatives on GE, the presence of GE experts within the networks and a strong support from colleagues from more advanced countries.

RPOs – Main barriers are almost the same as in the HEIs, with the small exceptions. For example, in Czechia, compared to HEIs, RPOs are less targeted by the public policy framework, which means a less state-funded support and consequently, a lack of experts in GE and the number of staff dealing with this issue. In Poland, the small size of the research performing organisations can be a barrier. In Slovenia, additional barrier is the economic austerity, an inability to reconcile work and private life and institutional focus on competition in achieving the scientific excellence.

Main facilitators are almost the same as for HEIs, stressing a supportive legal and policy framework to initiate change and in the recent years, GEP as the eligibility criterion for the EU fundings. In Poland, being a small size organisation is also a positive circumstance, due to the relatively simple decision-making structure compared to the larger systems such as universities. The expert from Hungary noted a lack of basic information on facilitators in the case of RPOs. However, this is not an isolated case, as the majority of the experts either simply replicated the answers they gave for HEIs or reported a lack of knowledge about the situation in the RPOs.

PRIVATE COMPANIES – As these organisations are more heterogeneous, the main barriers relate to the lack of a legal and policy framework that encourages the implementation of GE measures and, as a result, a general lack of interest in GE issues. In addition, there is a lack of external pressure and mandatory measures, which, similarly, creates an urgency to develop GE measures. The experts also reported a lack of gender expertise in the organisations and a lack of resources allocated to ensure GE objectives in the small and medium-sized R&I



companies. There is also a lack of systematic monitoring of gender equality, which often results in the declarative dedication to gender inclusivity that masks the resistance and persistence of gender stereotypes.

Main facilitators are clear regulations and structural support. The more specific facilitators are the H&R departments and top management due to the international structure of the corporative organisations. Another facilitator is the importance of GE for the company's public image and the peer pressure from other companies. As the Bulgarian case shows, there could be a transfer knowledge between public and private organisations, since, especially in the case STEM, academic staff are often employed in both types of organizations (private and public).

NGOs – In most of the countries, experts reported that the main barrier is no formal incentive to initiate change in the area of GE. The main problem is often an undefined formal position of NGOs within the research ecosystem. As they are usually small organizations, they suffer from a constant lack of stable funding to support their work and a lack of structural capacity and resources, as well as the precarity of staff.

As for other types of organisations, experts indicated stable public funding and mandatory GEP as the main facilitators. However, the difference in the case of NGOs is their openness to the international funding and more visible peer pressure. The important drivers for change are the NGOs specialising in the GE issues, although, as expert from Bulgaria indicated, there are just a few NGOs active in the field of R&I.

3.3 Sustaining Change

Stakeholders for and against sustaining change

The national experts provided the assessment of the stakeholders acting for and against structural change in their countries. The similarity across countries and types of organisations is a visible reliance on the individual efforts, either by managerial staff or researchers themselves, mainly gender scholars and GE officers. State institutions, such as ministries and state bodies are relatively rarely mentioned as actors of structural change, but the institutional bodies as stakeholders for the change are noted in Romania, Slovenia, Latvia and Lithuania. A notable exception is Romania, where the Executive Unit for the Financing of Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation (UEFISCDI) is the leading stakeholder for initiating and sustaining change in the field of GE. In terms of the main actors against structural change, the highest ranked are the conservative political parties and public actors, which does not provide a condition for working toward structural change in the field of GE. The most often mentioned stakeholders against structural change are senior academics and senior managers, and sometimes even policy makers.

In terms of country-specific stakeholders, in Estonia, for RFOs, HEIs and RPOs, the main stakeholders for structural change are the people and bodies (mainly HR offices) engaged in the field of GE, such as gender studies' researchers and scholars. Senior academics and senior managers are the stakeholders that stand against structural change. There are no explicit stakeholders mentioned in relation to private organisations and NGOs.



In Croatia, the actors supporting structural change are, similarly, the institutions and communities working on GE issues, but also trusted politicians and scientific community. In the HEIs, student organizations are an important stakeholder for structural change. In private organisations, employees can be both important stakeholders for and against structural change. Traditional business interest groups act against structural change. In the case of NGOs, in management may be people working for and against structural change.

As in the other countries in this cluster, the main stakeholders for the structural change in Hungary are gender scholars and researchers, especially young researchers. Political parties and top management are two actors that resist structural change.

In Bulgaria, in RFO and HEIs, the main stakeholders supporting structural change are policy makers, researchers, students and local communities, but also professional associations and trade unions. For RPOs, they also include clients of research services, industries and national economies. For the private organisations and NGOs, their owners, partners, employees and clients. The same stakeholders, however, can also work against structural change. In the RPOs, it is the researchers from specialised or prestigious STEM fields who oppose structural change. Regardless of the type of organization, nationalist political parties and homophobic and radical movements are the leading stakeholders against the change.

In contrast to other countries in Czechia and Lithuania, the main actors are the institutional bodies: the Centre for Gender and Science (Czechia) and the Office of Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson (Lithuania). In Czechia, the stakeholders acting for change in RFOs are the mid- managers, internal staff working with proposal evaluators and the applicants themselves, while for the HEIs and RFOs, the policy makers and organisations offering expert support in the field of the GE. The main stakeholders against structural change are the senior academics, top and mid-managers in the organisations. Lithuania is a unique case, as there are no stakeholders who would openly oppose the structural change in the R&I sector. However, the conservative politics promoted by certain NGOs and political figures are important stakeholders against the change.

In regards to the RFO, in Romania there are no stakeholders against structural change while the main stakeholder for the change comes from the RFO itself. The situation is different in the HEIs and RPOs, where change is driven by the bottom-up pressure from students and junior staff, as well as actors involved in the EU cooperation, and the social movements in the field of GE. Structural change is opposed by top management and administrative staff, the former because of the rigid hierarchies and the later because of a workload, and consequently, a lack of initiative. Another important factor is the conservative turn of the main political parties, in particular the appointment of top management by the governing parties. In private companies and NGOs, international partners are the main proponents of change, while top management and administrative staff are the main opponents.

In Slovakia, the situation is quite similar across the organisations: for RFOs, HEIs and RPOs, the European Commission and gender experts are the main stakeholders for structural change while in private companies and NGOs it is the international headquarters. Regardless of the organization type, the policy makers, top managements, senior researchers and the conservative political parties oppose to change.



In Slovenia, for RFOs, HEIs and RPOs, the main stakeholder for change is the Commission for Equal Opportunities in Science, an advisory body to the Ministry of Science. In HEIs, however, there are also student activist organisations, while in the case of RPOs it is gender scholars. In the RFOs, the systemic inertia of the top management structures, but also the right-wing personnel and political priorities stand against structural change. In HEIs and RPOs, the opponents of structural change are senior researchers or senior members of academic staff, who tend to protect their positions. In the case of the private companies, women-related initiatives and associations (particularly in STEM) are the main proponents of change, while the opponents are the associations of employers of Slovenia that prioritises profit and advocate legal interpretations that prevent greater inclusiveness. In the context of NGOs, the strongest initiatives for structural change in GE are activist organisations, especially feminist initiatives. Against the structural change are some Catholic Church-related organisations/NGOs and right-wing political actors that oppose gender equality and LGBTIQ rights, using the discourse of “gender ideology”.

The situation with regards to the stakeholders against structural change in Poland is similar, these being right-wing NGOs regardless of the type of organisation. In the case of private companies, top and mid-managers are indicated as additional stakeholders against structural change. As far as for the stakeholders that support change, those are mainly GE experts and practitioners. Administrative staff engaged in GE topics in the case of RFOs, trade unions and students' bodies for HEIs while the GE bodies in the case of RPOs are additional actors for change. In private companies, the top management can be both a stakeholder for and against structural change, while the employee networks and international boards support the change.

In Latvia, as the main stakeholders are listed the institutional bodies: Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia, Ministry of Science and Education of Latvia, European Commission (for RFOs), Gender Studies Institute of the University of Latvia (for HEIs) and Institute of Economics of the Latvian Academy of Sciences (EQUALS-EU project) (for RPOs). Stakeholders against change are political parties, policy makers, top management and employees who lack understanding of the importance of GE. As for the private companies, GE research institutes are important for structural change, while for NGOs, the social movements and activists. Top management is against structural change in private companies, while NGOs face societal pressure against change.

Impact of socio-cultural, political and economic contexts on institutionalisation of GE in R&I

The proposed literature on the socio-cultural, political, and economic contexts that impact the institutionalization of GE in R&I in the Central and East country cluster focuses mostly on barriers and much less on facilitators, as described in INSPIRE D2.1 KSH2 Report (Krzaklewska et al. 2023, 49). These hindering factors are (1) negative connotations associated with the term ‘gender’ within local politics (so called “anti-gender ideology”); (2) cuts in research funding and low awareness of gender related issues among the policy-makers; (3) institutional culture that unfavourably perceives institutionalisation of GE policies; (4) neoliberal turn in academia, which fosters precarious working conditions producing gendered inequalities; (5) traditional and conservative gender norms and unequal distribution of reproductive and care-work” (Krzaklewska et al. 2023, 56). While supportive factors are rarely explored, there are a couple of articles (from Slovenia and Hungary) highlighting as positive



the historical legacy of the socialist structural and employment conditions that enabled traditionally high female participation in labour market and academia in these countries (such as such as paid parental leave, affordable public nurseries, and kindergartens). Another article from Hungary reports also on current policies and structural conditions, which support female participation in academia, although they stem from politics and policies, which are ideologically opposed to the concept of GE. These are current family friendly governmental policies, such as work-life balance measures and conditions enabling flexible career trajectories.

Main practical lessons and good practices

Practical lessons from GE interventions in the countries of Central and East Europe show that the most successful practices of institutionalisation stem from EU funded projects and putting GEP as the eligibility criteria for Horizon Europe funding, which helped build local expertise and tools. The pitfalls of sharp increase in GEPs across the region are lack of quality in such institutionalisation efforts, lack of genuine institutional (and national-level) commitment and lack of true understanding of the sources of gendered inequalities. Therefore, the concrete practical lessons from the literature suggested by the national experts point to importance of: (1) gaining wide consent of public opinion and institutional stakeholders, including both academic and supportive staff as well as students; (2) adjusting GE measure to particular institutional culture in order to change it from within; and (3) relying on cooperation of activist change-agents in form of communities of practices (CoPs). The literature suggested by the national experts maps the need for following GE measures to be further developed within the local context: (1) tools for gender-sensitive databases and data-gathering tools to be used in designing GEPs; (2) measures relating to sexual harassment; (3) different management models in order to ensure commitment to GE institutionalisation; (4) applying intersectionality through a prism of organisational positionality rather than identity; and (5) developing measures for including gender dimension in the content of research (Krzaklewska et al. 2023, 57).

Main barriers and facilitators for sustaining change

The main barriers and facilitators for sustaining change are presented across the types of R&I organisations:

RFOs – In terms of the main barriers to sustaining change, experts identified a lack of legally binding instruments, resources, competence, structural support and expertise. Most importantly, a lack of interest by top management, a lack of adequate competence and a general absence of experts, a weak knowledge on gender equality, as well as the absence of regular monitoring and external evaluations of gender equality achievements. The Slovenian expert also asserted a problem of change of government, which always leads to a shift in priorities and changing in the institution's leadership. In the same vein, Bulgarian expert pointed to a lack of political will to introduce GE dimension into national policies on research funding. Czechia and Slovakia stand out as sustain the change is still not on their agenda. In the case of Poland, experts reported a lack of adequate data to assess the main barriers for sustaining change for RFOs.



The main facilitators are supportive national legal and policy frameworks. Although national gender equality policy is weak, it is indicated by the experts as an important facilitator. EU policies and measures are identified as the most important facilitator. Apart from this, pressure from the academic community and international cooperation (in Bulgaria, Romania, Czechia); where collaboration within the international team helps to consolidate change.

HEIs – Experts reported that the main barriers are largely similar to those of RFOs: a lack of resources (financial or in personnel), inadequate structure of gender equality measures in relation to the needs of the institution (balancing student, teacher, administrative, managerial perspective). In addition, experts pointed out gender fatigue due to the workload of gender equality officers/practitioners, and the lack of legally binding instruments. Specifically, for HEIs is that sustaining change depends on the individual efforts and small groups, usually within EU projects (or teams, departments, faculties but never the whole institution) or other sporadic initiatives. Often the barrier is just a declarative support to the GEP eligibility criterion and other EU policies on GE without real engagement with the actual needs within the organisation. In newcomers' context, such as Bulgaria and Czechia, there is a lack of critical mass of people, institutions, initiatives, networks and support (including from the government and other public institutions) and resistance of the staff. In Romania, the expert reported a backlash in relation to gender equality with a public research sector being dominated by the patriarchal values.

Main facilitators are similar to those for RFOs – the supportive legal and policy framework. External support in the shape of Horizon Europe GEP eligibility criterion is an important tool to sustain initiatives, programmes and achievements. Participation in EU projects is also highly valued as it allows the national experts to gain GE experience through the exchange with the international colleagues. Mutual cooperation between HEIs is also an important facilitator, as it contributes to the institutionalization of GE-related practice.

RPOs – The majority of experts reported that the main barriers are similar to those in HEIs: a lack of legal framework and resources, work overload for leading actors in GE. For the newcomers (Bulgaria, Czechia, Slovakia), these are resistance from staff and management, a lack of resources and a low level of expertise in GE. The experts also noted the lack of a unified strategy for GE, as RPOs are often small units with diffused responsibility and fragmentation and no unified framework to sustain change. An additional barrier is the dependence on EU-funded projects, which does not allow for the long-term sustainability of structural change. In the case of Poland and Slovenia, experts also pointed out that without financial support there is no interest in sustaining change. The expert from Bulgaria also noted a lack of a strategic policies and adequate measures at the national level, as well as deficiencies in the regulatory framework, which perpetuate a low remuneration and social status of researchers, and limited participation in European programmes.

Main facilitators for sustaining change in RPOs are similar to those of HEIs: mandatory GEP and participation in relevant national and international networks, peer pressure from other RPOs. Experts also highlighted the importance of a bottom-up approach to GEPs and of involving staff and the entire academic community in the process of developing a GEP. Sharing good practises through different networks is evaluated as important. Some of the experts also did not mention any explicit facilitators or they lacked data.



PRIVATE COMPANIES – Experts identified many barriers, that are ranked here in terms of their importance: 1) Lack of an adequate legal and policy framework. In particular, a lack of legally binding instruments; 2) Inadequate financial framework and the problem of investment or profitability (initial costs, business organisation, etc.); 3) Lack of adequate staff and expertise as a result of a limited interest in keeping GE on the agenda; 4) Lack of interest from top management; 5) Lack of studies on the positive aspects of GE in the private companies, lack of adequate consulting services and poor cooperation between science and business; 6) Gendered market division and traditional understanding of gender roles. Experts occasionally reported a lack of data and lack of any audit/monitoring of the advancement of GE. In Romania, the expert referred to the patriarchal culture that influences companies' commitment to GE.

Main facilitators are: adequate national legal and policy framework, financial and other resources to support GE sustainability, and tax reduction (or other awards) for gender-responsible companies. An advantage of private R&I is the flexibility in searching for sustainable models due to the client-oriented and entrepreneurial approach. Training and participation in the wider networks of public and private HEIs and RPOs is also an important facilitator. Experts from Czechia and Slovenia also emphasised the changes in the labour market policies. In Romania, the GE and diversity record is an important part of building the public image and perception of a company, which can be a motivation for the management to sustain the change in this field.

As far as **NGOs** are concerned, there are several barriers: the most important is a lack of adequate legal and policy framework, but above all the lack of financial means, which is the strongest obstacle to keeping the topic on the agenda. Similar to RPOs, there is also the problem of dependence on projects, donors and diverse stakeholders, and the precarity of staff and staff turnover.

Participation in national and international networks and initiatives, together with relevant HEIs and RPOs are main facilitators. NGOs are often characterised as the type of organisation characterised by an inherent commitment to social change and activism. The most important thing, however, is that GE becomes the subject of project calls. This would allow the more focus on the gender budgeting within the institution, monitoring of progress and gender/sex disaggregated data. Some experts emphasised a lack of adequate data to assess the situation with regard to NGOs.

3.4 Intersectionality

Main barriers and facilitators for adopting an intersectional approach

The main barriers and facilitators for adopting an intersectional approach are presented in this section across the different types of R&I organisations.

RFOs – For this type of organisation, a lack of awareness of the topic of intersectionality is the most frequently cited barrier by the national experts. The second barrier is a lack of a detailed preliminary analysis to understand the needs and build policies on the prior knowledge. In some countries, the experts reported the political leadership and political climate that also led to resistance from management and administration. In particular, the conservative and right-



wing parties and radical movements against minorities and vulnerable categories were indicated in Romania and the understanding of the term “gender” as referring only to LGBT+ in Bulgaria.

Several experts indicated that there are no explicit facilitators in terms of RFOs. Others confirm the key role of legally binding measures that include an intersectional approach and the strengthening of expertise as the important facilitators. Other potential facilitators mentioned are: top management and bottom-up pressure from younger researchers and an external support in terms of the availability of sufficient of good examples in other countries. In Romania, the expert noted the importance of the appropriate knowledge to make staff more willing to create a broader platform of R&I organisations to promote an intersectional approach. Expert from Lithuania asserted that previous organisational activities related to minority issues (e.g. working with disability issues) can strengthen the intersectional approach.

HEIs – The main barriers identified by the experts were a total lack of knowledge and expertise on the topic of intersectionality. This led to a lack of institutional instruments, protocols and examples of good practice. The absence of structural support also means a lack of resources and staff to participate in the creation and implementation of intersectional measures. As for the specific cases, the language and terminology are indicated by the experts as important barriers. In Romania, there is a lack of appropriate terminology related to the intersectional approach. In Slovenia, the discrimination towards non-Slovenian language speakers can be an important barrier. Another barrier is the lack of social awareness of the intersection of GE with traditionally-recognised categories of vulnerability (e.g. Roma, lower social strata, chronically ill).

As in the case of HEIs, several experts did not identify any explicit facilitators. The potential facilitators are initiative and support from senior management, involvement of relevant experts, an emphasis on monitoring, and the peer pressure from other HEIs. Experts emphasised a bottom-up facilitators, in particular pressure from students and junior staff, who tend to be more aware of intersectionality and are more motivated to facilitate change. The expert from Poland noted the role of internationalisation in raising awareness and sensitivity to this topic by employing more staff from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

RPOs – Several experts confirmed that the situation is the same as for HEIs in terms of the main barriers. The difference is that RPOs are usually specialised units that are independent, and this makes it difficult to create a common platform for the intersectional approach. Other barriers include a lack of interest, capacity, resources and expertise.

The main facilitators are also similar to HEIs, but several experts also confirmed that there are no explicit facilitators. Collaboration with the HEIs and other bigger “systems”, transfer of expertise and mutual support would be a particularly fruitful way of facilitating change.

PRIVATE COMPANIES – Lack of structural support and resources and absence of experts are identified as the main barriers. However, experts pointed out the specificity of private sector and the lack of information to assess the main barriers and facilitators.



Main facilitators: While the majority of the experts did not see explicit facilitators due to the lack of adequate legal instruments and lack of awareness, they also emphasised the role of top management and top-down approach, in particular, the globalised corporate culture of multinational companies that are open to diversity.

NGO – As in the case of private companies, several experts reported a lack of information to provide information about NGOs. The remaining experts noted no awareness and lack of interest in intersectionality as the main barriers. Another barrier is a lack of sufficient expertise and resources due to the project-based funding policies.

There are no specific facilitators identified by the experts. Potential facilitators could be participation in EU projects and external consultants. In Slovenia, some NGOs are the leading actors in providing knowledge on the intersectional approach, so they can play a more prominent role in the R&I sector in general.

In sum, there are no policies that build on an intersectional approach in the Central and East country cluster. However, in Lithuania and Slovenia, anti-discrimination measures are mentioned as the important channels for initiating change in this field of inclusive GE. The experts noted the minimal focus on and not enough knowledge of an intersectional approach. The main barriers are the rise of the right-wing politics, conservative backlash (Romania, Bulgaria), a lack of political support, for example, for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention (Latvia). For newcomers, the main barrier is a lack of awareness of the intersectional approach and, consequently, a critical lack of knowledge, resources and experts, thus of a know-how to develop and implement more sustainable initiatives and measures. Experts emphasise the importance of knowledge transfer and best practices from the more experienced institutions and other contexts. The issue of a lack of adequate terminology in local languages and the national language politics also stands out. Experts indicated the lack of adequate terminology, the problems with gender-sensitive language or the discrimination on the basis of language, as the important barriers to the implementation of an intersectional approach. The only exception is Romania, where the RFO is ready to adopt the intersectional approach. In regards to this, there is no particular difference between different types of R&I organisations. In terms of facilitators, researchers of younger generations are seen as important agents of change. There is more general view among the experts that the private companies can more easily apply the intersectional approach due to the international profile and diversity management.

3.5 Gendered innovations

The majority of experts reported a lack of relevant data to answer to this question and that, consequently, they did not report on advances in regards to gendered innovation. This topic does not seem to be relevant and addressed in the Central East country cluster. However, the private companies in Hungary, Latvia and Czechia have developed some initiatives. These are either multinational companies in the telecommunications or technology sector that occupy advanced positions in the market (in Hungary and Latvia). The visible exception is Romania, where advancement is fostered by the CoP that is formed in the private sector within the Diversity Charter or the Deloitte SheXO Club, which actively work toward inclusion and diversity. However, the discourse they use to promote GE is very neoliberal and profit-driven. Another obstacle to full understanding and implementing gendered innovation, as the Slovenian report describes, is the misunderstanding of the concept itself. It is usually



understood as increasing the proportion of women employed in the innovation sector and equating “gendered innovation” only with the innovation in STEM.

3.6 Data monitoring

In the majority of the countries there is no significant advancement in data collection and monitoring of change in R&I organizations. There is also a lack of relevant publications on this topic, as this is a relatively new field (as reported in [Latvia](#), [Estonia](#), [Croatia](#), [Bulgaria](#), [Czechia](#), [Poland](#)). However, due to the EU eligibility criterion and the rapid increase of number of GEPs, the collection and monitoring of gender-disaggregated data can be expected to become more present activity, as it is foreseen as an activity within GEP. For this reason, at this point, it is difficult to assess the current situation in monitoring, as the main results are to be expected in the coming years. Short-term data collection and monitoring of change has been usually been done through the EU-funded projects.

As for some specificities, in [Czechia](#), there is a considerable effort to introduce monitoring through an annual monitoring template to be filled in by, among others the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, other ministries, research funders, the Czech Academy of Sciences. In [Slovakia](#), since 2021, R&I has started to pay attention to the data collection and monitoring change. In [Hungary](#), [Romania](#), and [Slovenia](#), experts pointed out to limited efforts to collect gender-disaggregated data, in particular, they underlined that there is no systematically organised monitoring of the changes in R&I organisations at national level. The notable exception is [Lithuania](#), where the recent advance concerning data collection and monitoring change is reported. The requirement for “open organisational data” includes the collection of gender-disaggregated data on the monthly salaries (also in R&I) and required that these are published. There is also an impact of the EC requirement to publish gender-disaggregated data, which has been implemented by several HEIs in the Central East country cluster. In [Slovenia](#), the main change in this area has recently been brought about by EC measures mentioned above and the new national legislation, which requires from R&I to report on advances in the area of GE, and that is also part of the evaluation of academic institutions for the national funding. In Poland, RFOs, through the National Science Centre, has started to collect data on the gender distribution of applicants, winners of awards, and expert panels.



4 R&I Organisations

This cluster includes 898 higher education institutions, 4,468 public research performing organizations, and 19,030 private R&I enterprises. Numbers per countries are listed in table below.

Country	# HEIs	# Public RPOs	# R&I companies (estimation)
Bulgaria	51	17	100
Croatia	48	33	2000
Czechia	58	78	2772
Estonia	18	20	6
Hungary	63	3683	2305
Latvia	52	53	1533
Lithuania	18	16	356
Poland	426	239	5743
Romania	87	263	600
Slovakia	34	47	900
Slovenia	43	19	2715

The majority of higher education institutions are in Poland, with the fewest in Lithuania and Estonia. Surprisingly, Poland has significantly higher number of HEIs in comparison to other countries in this cluster. Some countries indicate that there are both public and private higher education institutions and universities. While most countries indicate that there are more public than private higher education institutions in their countries, this is not the case in Poland and Czechia.

The majority of public RPOs are in Hungary, with the fewest in Lithuania. Surprisingly, Hungary has significantly more RPOs as the other countries in this cluster. It is important to note that most did not include countries the number of HIEDs when listing RPOs, but some countries indicate that they did include them (Romania, Lithuania).

Most companies in the R&I private sector are located in Poland, and least in Estonia. It is interesting to note that Poland has four times more companies in the R&I private sector than other countries in this cluster on average. Of the three types of R&I organizations, countries note that reliable data on the number of companies in the R&I private sector is the most difficult to find and verify, as different sources provide different results. There are several reasons for this, such as the lack of standardized definitions, different sources using different criteria and definitions of what constitutes an R&I company, different data sources, and diverse methodological approaches to calculating the number of companies. Countries cite various types of methodological approaches, including calculating the appropriate percentages based on data from the articles, providing statistics on the number of researchers in the country - in public and private organizations, subtracting the number of state-owned enterprises from the total number of businesses, or searching various databases using the keywords such as “institutes” or “scientific research centre”.



When asked to indicate the name of 2-5 companies in the R&I private sector in their countries, all indicated two or more companies, while two countries indicated five companies (Slovenia and Latvia) and three indicated four companies (Hungary, Romania and Poland).

5 Engaged stakeholders

5.1 Policymakers

Policy makers from this region are most engaged in three topics: initiating change, sustaining and deepening change, and monitoring inclusive gender equality. They are less engaged in the topic of adopting an intersectional approach and only few are engaged in implementing gendered innovations.

In Lithuania, no policy makers are engaged in structural change toward inclusive gender equality. In Hungary, only one expert was mentioned as engaged in the topic of initiating change. In Czechia and Romania, only two experts are listed, however, there is one expert in each of these two countries that is engaged in all five topics.

5.2 Research Funding Organisations

RFOs in this region are mostly engaged in topics of initiating change and deepening and sustaining change, and least engaged in implementing gendered innovations and adopting an intersectional approach. Romania and Slovakia listed the existence of one RFO engaged in structural change, while Hungary, Lithuania, Czechia listed two. Bulgaria listed three RFOs, which all deal with all five topics. Besides these three, there are four RFOs, one from Romania, one from Czechia and two from Latvia that have expertise in all five topics. Those RFOs that have expertise in monitoring inclusive gender equality, also have expertise in initiating, and deepening and sustaining change.

5.3 Research Performing Organisations

RPOs in this region are mostly universities and other public research performing organizations. There are only two private companies listed. The RPOs mentioned are mostly engaged in initiating change and monitoring inclusive gender equality and least involved in implementing gendered innovations. For Bulgaria and Latvia only two RPOs were mentioned and they are engaged in structural change towards gender equality. Most diverse expertise covering several topics have RPOs listed for Croatia and Czechia.

Otherwise, among all engaged stakeholders, RPOs have the most diverse expertise in general. In fact, six countries out of eleven, noted that there is at least one RPO that has expertise in all five topics, with Bulgaria and Latvia having two RPOs that have expertise in all five topics and Czechia, Romania, Croatia and Slovenia having one.



5.4 Communities of Practice

The four countries have highly engaged existing networks and / or associations, some of which are centrally placed and affiliated with strong organisations with a considerable reach of influence. These indicate interest and engagement across all five topics, with an overall emphasis on sustaining and initiating change and somewhat less on the other three topics.

Associations, networks, and CoPs in this region are mostly active in the area of initiating change and least active in the areas of adopting an intersectional approach and implementing gendered innovations. The experts from Bulgaria and Lithuania only listed one entity that is involved in the structural change towards gender equality, and experts from Hungary and Czechia only two. However, the Bulgarian Higher Education and Science Syndicate, a branch of the Bulgarian Trade Union, which is the only organisation mentioned, is an expert in all five topics. Croatia claims that all three listed entities have expertise in all five topics. Besides Croatia, there are five more entities that have expertise in all five topics: two in Romania, and one each in Slovakia, Czechia and the aforementioned Bulgaria.

Suggestions to support Communities of Practice

National experts suggested potential CoPs that would be suitable to be supported by the INSPIRE project. For the topic of initiating change, 7 potential CoPs were listed, gathering organisations from 5 different countries; for the topic of sustaining and deepening change, 6 potential CoPs were listed, gathering organisations from 6 countries; and for the topic of implementing gendered innovations, 5 potential CoPs were listed. The fewest potential CoPs are related to the topic of monitoring inclusive gender equality. In most cases these are nation-wide networks of GE practitioners.

A nation-wide potential CoP that covers largest number of topics is the network (Community of Change) led by the Centre for Gender and Science, Czech Academy of Sciences, which also leads the Gender in RDI within CZARMA working group (Czech Association of Research Managers and Administrators). This network is involved in topics: initiating change, sustaining and deepening change, and adopting an intersectional approach.

Some regional CoPs are covering several themes, among them one is already existing as a CoP, and two are project consortiums that are potential candidates for a CoP:

- GEinCEE, a CoP established as a part of ACT project, gathering institutions from Poland and several other countries, is involved in topics: sustaining and deepening change, adopting an intersectional approach, and monitoring inclusive gender equality.
- EQUALS EU (Europe's Regional Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age, <https://equals-eu.org>), a Horizon Europe project involving institutions (one from Latvia) and Europe-wide associations, is involved in topics: initiating change, adopting an intersectional approach, and monitoring inclusive gender equality.
- SPEAR (<https://gender-spear.eu/>), a Horizon Europe project involving HEIs (two from Bulgaria) that already developed GEPs. Two Bulgarian consortium partners are developing nation-wide network, which is involved in all topics: initiating change, sustaining and deepening change, adopting an intersectional approach, implementing gendered innovations, and monitoring inclusive gender equality.



Not all national experts could propose CoP for all topics, which indicates that the field is far from saturated with such initiatives. It seems that not all national experts completely understood the concept of a community of practice, as they suggested singular organisations rather than group of organisations (i.e. association, network) as potential CoPs. Some experts indicated that there are potential CoPs, without providing information on them.

6 Training Resources

In all countries in this cluster, there are additional training resources in English that are not included in the GE Academy Training Repository or Inventory or the GEAR tool.

The topics they cover are the following:

- Guides for research stakeholders, implementing good practise and context-specific approaches
- Guides to prepare for training, workshops and/or research
- Guides to support universities to go beyond the formal adoption of a gender equality plan
- Toolkit to improve gender-sensitive PhD supervision for supervisors
- Toolbox for creating gender-sensitive exhibits
- Training resources and guidance to promote the commercial growth and social impact of women-led start-ups.

While the majority of experts understood the question on training resources to mean that there are materials and guides to help organize and deliver training, Hungary understood the question to describe community resources, such as networks that support GE initiatives, and indicated that there is an informal working group that supports those responsible for creating and implementing gender equality plans at universities and research institutions. Similarly, Czechia mentions that there is a Centre for Gender and Science, which has produced many materials in English and Czech and provided most of the training.

In all countries in this cluster, the experts indicated at least one training resource in the local language.

The topics they cover are the following:

- Manual for Gender Mainstreaming in general and also specifically in higher education
- Train the Trainer in Gender Equality and Active Citizenship
- Guides with instructions, advice and practical recommendations for initiating changes for gender equality in a higher education or research institution (and for implementing gender equality plans)
- Guide to preventing sexual harassment in the workplace
- Guide to introducing a gender-sensitive approach to research and teaching.

In Hungary, there are some experts who are engaged with the particular initiatives within the institutions, but these are not structured, long-term planned trainings, but rather one-time



events held to fulfil one of the requirements (specific objective) of the institution's GEP. Lithuania mentions the platform for trainings offered by the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson on various topics, such as ABC on equality and non-discrimination for employees, ABC on equality and non-discrimination for employers, integration of the equality aspect in public services, guidelines for employers on the implementation of gender equality in the work environment, guidelines for equal opportunities plans.

7 Conclusions

We can conclude that the legal and policy framework in the Central East Country Cluster is inadequate. An increasing focus on work-life balance and care labour and gender-based violence is significant, but there is a risk that such improvements are a result of the shift toward the right-wing, family-oriented discourses, particularly in Poland, Romania and Hungary. The majority of the policy documents still keep a focus on heteronormative approach, with “women” and “men” as the main categories. However, there is a gradual shift towards the discourses of “gender equality” and “diversity.” In the majority of the countries, the legal and policy framework related to intersectionality can be considered as non-existent. There is a general lack of awareness of the importance of this topic and a lack of knowledge about intersectionality. In some countries, the conservative and radical right movements are actively working against minorities and vulnerable categories (Romania), while several experts reported on language-related issues and the lack of adequate terminology or, as in the case of Bulgaria, the misunderstanding of the term “gender” as referring only to LGBT+.

In terms of GE measures in R&I organisations, the major structural change has occurred in the last two years, due to the pressure of the EU eligibility criteria for the Horizon 2020 programme. In particular, HEIs and RPOs are witnessing the rapid increase in development and adoption of GEPs in the period from 2021-2023. RFOs are still less active in this respect. The “external” pressure proves to be the main facilitator for initiating change, but the development and adoption of GEPs under pressure has resulted in a lack of adjusting the measures to the needs of each particular national and institutional context. For this reason, there is a risk that GEPs will be adopted only declaratively, without an in-depth analysis of the needs and consequent steps towards structural change that would result in actual improvement of GE. With regards to the R&I policies in private companies, the experts could not provide a more elaborated assessment due to the lack of relevant data, which can be attributed to the fact that the higher education and research are still predominantly in the public ownership, probably due to the legacy of state or social ownership that prevailed in this region. The visible exception in this sense is Romania, where an integrate approach is taken: public and private R&I organisations form the network and collaborated on the issues of GE.

The majority of experts asserted that there has not been no relevant advance in data collection and monitoring change in R&I organisations. There is also a lack of relevant publications on this (Estonia, Croatia, Bulgaria). However, due to the EU eligibility criterion and the rapid increase in the number of developed and adopted GEPs, the collection and monitoring of gender-disaggregated data can be expected, as it is envisioned as an activity within GEPs. Therefore, the main results in this area are to be expected in the coming years. The topic of gendered innovation does not seem to be relevant and addressed in this country cluster. In



general, gendered innovation is understood as related exclusively to STEM field, which is quite limiting.

The lessons learned from the experts' reports are that the strong external support in the form of EU supportive policies through participation in international academic and research networks and initiatives on GE is the key facilitator, but can also be a barrier due to the lack of engagement with the actual needs in the particular national and organisational contexts – especially in terms of sustaining change. The volatile political and economic situation is also a reason for some countries to delay GE policies or to perceive them as issues of “lesser” importance. However, training and participation in the wider networks of public and private organizations, both within the national context and internationally is essential for initiating, sustaining and monitoring change in the field of GE.

Across the four countries, the emphasis is on initiating (except for Sweden) and sustaining and deepening change, with less on monitoring or adopting an intersectional approach. The two most underdeveloped topics are intersectional approaches and gendered innovation (in general) but in separate and distinct ways. Intersectionality is increasingly recognised as an important (new) area to integrate in order to achieve equality, diversity and inclusion, even if knowledge and examples are still scarce and the practice is imbued with insecurity and unclarity concerning ethical considerations. Irish and Swedish authorities, HEIs and some RFOs have taken initial steps to adopt intersectional approaches that in different ways may prove to be promising, but these are still at most gender and one other dimension and otherwise, where given due consideration, grounds for discrimination are primarily treated separately and not in combination (i.e., an additive approach). Legal and policy frameworks are overall inadequate and there is in general insufficient data, knowledge and hardly any practice examples. Furthermore, no real and practicable requirements are implemented (except to some degree in Ireland) and even where there is extensive legislation, practice is inadequate for the task, so it seems there is a fair share of ‘fumbling in the dark’.

Gendered innovations, in contrast, are in many cases not even understood as a systematic endeavour to take gender and other specific social categorisations into account in research, education and innovation content (e.g., data, methodology, design, execution, impact) in order to qualify and ensure applicability to the entire demography. Instead, it is often misunderstood as an issue of representation and equal access, and while these are important equality aspects, this erroneous conceptualisation of gendered innovations hampers systematic knowledge generation, awareness and recognition of the importance of gendered innovation. This is reflected in the very scant engagement in this topic across the four countries – and again here Sweden and Ireland are most advanced, for instance through RFO requirements implemented. There may be signs that some sectors (e.g., IT and Health), and some private companies are beginning to orient themselves to these perspectives, and this is largely due to a bottom-up demand and ever-so-slowly growing public recognition, due to popular dissemination and the wake of #metoo movements in Sweden, Finland and Denmark. The EU GEP requirement, matched with some Swedish and Irish RFO requirements, could initiate a systematic approach, fostering an evolving understanding, recognition, and practice.

Data collection and monitoring is likewise most advanced, systematic, comprehensive and embedded across the sectors in Ireland and Sweden, allowing for national and inter-institutional benchmarking and the growth of a body of knowledge to track and monitor



progress. As already mentioned, both Sweden and Ireland are gradually including data on additional discrimination factors. In Sweden, ensuring cross-coordination between gender and equal opportunities within their organisation, and, in Ireland, including race/ethnicity data in mandatory data collection and monitoring. Finland has the longest trajectory in data collection, even so, this is indicated as being focused more on collection than on systematic monitoring. It is also the case in Denmark, where data collection has only really been systematically implemented in preparation for the HEU GEP requirement, but a growing recognition and burgeoning practice is currently under way. Neither Finland nor Denmark therefore boasts the possibility for benchmarking. Across the types of organisations, in all four countries, HEIs, closely followed by RFOs, have the most advanced data collection and monitoring and are most comprehensively documented and subject to legislation, while NGOs are least so. Public and private RPOs along with NGOs and other non-profit organisations are to a much larger degree diversified and legal frameworks are perceived as not applicable. In general, inclusive gender equality efforts would benefit greatly from advancing this topic – most in Denmark and Finland, but also in Ireland and Sweden. Thus, continuous efforts are required to address challenges, improve data collection, ensure data transparency and accessibility, set standards, foster inclusivity (e.g., by providing disaggregated data in different social categories), data monitoring and expand monitoring efforts to include a broader range of organisations within the R&I sector across countries.

As for the uptake of GEP – or, especially in the case of Sweden, equivalent measures – HEIs and RFOs in Ireland and Sweden are well advanced and can no longer be defined as newcomers. While Finland has strong feminist movements and longstanding gender equality traditions and practices and has made considerable advances, GEPs seem to be somewhat less advanced and comprehensively embedded in comparison with Sweden, and even if most HEIs and RFOs have GEPs (and have had so for a while), all other Finnish organisations are defined as relative newcomers to GEP-efforts. In Denmark, the implementation of GEPs in HEIs and other organisations is a direct result of the HEU GEP requirement, and thus all Danish types of organisations are newcomers to GEP-work – and much more pronounced than in any of the other three countries in the cluster. However, there is evidence of a surge in interest, understanding and engagement in the work from a growing body of practitioners in the sector. The prevalence of GEPs grows scarcer in public and private RPOs in all four countries and it is difficult to obtain information about the prevalence of GEPs in NGOs and other non-profit RPOs.

In conclusion, one of the most striking characteristics of the Northwest country cluster is the fact that even if this cluster counts some of the most comprehensively advanced contexts for gender equality efforts at all levels in the world – Ireland and Sweden – these advanced practices coexist with urgent and perpetual needs for promotion, argumentation, awareness raising, education, training, capacity building, definition and upholding of legislative and policy requirements, continuous focus and handling of implicit and explicit resistance and backsliding. Even if this urgency and pressure here can seem less than in other contexts, and the road paved to some extent, it is still as real and pressing as in less advanced countries and contexts. One obvious conclusion from this is that advancement towards inclusive gender equality is not synonymous with a once-and-for-all elimination of the problem of inequality/ies. Instead, the spectrum between ignorance, blindness and resistance to inequality, on the one hand, and comprehensive and effective enlightened practices growing ever larger and more differentiated, on the other hand. This growth occurs alongside the development of a more



nuanced and high-quality knowledge base and an increasingly competent group of engaged actors. Therefore, it is important to remain vigilant and aware, as the threat of backsliding always persists.



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Annex

Table A

The list of legal and policy documents

Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Equality between Women and Men Act, Bulgarian Parliament (2016). • Ministry of Education and Science, Republic of Bulgaria. National strategy for development of scientific research in the republic of Bulgaria 2017 – 2030 (Better science for better Bulgaria). 4. Policies, actions and measures for their implementation. Journal – Electrotechnica & Electronica (E+E), Vol. 52 (9-10), 2017, pp. 35-49, ISSN: 0861-4717 (Print), 2603-5421 (Online). • National Strategies for Promotion of GE - 2016–2020 and a new one for 2021-2027 (adopted in 2016 and 2020).
Czechia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office of the Government of the Czech Republic. 2021, Gender Equality Strategy for 2021–2030 (in Czech: Strategie rovnosti žen a mužů na léta 2021–2030), replacing a previous Strategy for Equality of Women and Men in the Czech Republic 2014-2020. • The National Research, Development and Innovation Policy of the Czech Republic 2021+ (Národní politika výzkumu, vývoje a inovací České republiky 2021+). • The Plan for Supporting Gender Equality 2021–2024 of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.
Estonia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Estonia 2035" - a national long-term development strategy (2021)
Croatia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government of the Republic of Croatia, National Plan for Gender Equality for the period until 2027, March 2023, https://ravnopravnost.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti/NPRS%2027%20APRS%202024//Nacionalni%20plan%20za%20ravnopravnost%20spolova,%20za%20razdoblje%20do%202027..pdf. • Action plan for the implementation of National Plan for Gender Equality until 2024, https://ravnopravnost.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti/NPRS%2027%20APRS%202024//Akcijski%20plan%20za%20ravnopravnost%20spolova%20za%20razdoblje%20do%202024..pdf. • GEP – Institute for Social Research in Zagreb (https://wwwadmin.idi.hr/uploads/IDIZ_Plan_rodne_ravnopravnosti_GEP_2436b76b36.pdf). • GEP – Institute "Ruđer Bošković" (https://www.irb.hr/content/search?selector=on&searchText=ravnopravnost+spolova&searchSort=score). • GEP – Institute for Medical Research and Occupational Health (https://www.imi.hr/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Plan-rodne-ravnopravnosti.pdf).



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● GEP – Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries (https://acta.izor.hr/wp/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Plan-rodne-ravnopravnosti-IZOR.pdf). ● GEP – Institute for Anthropological Research (https://inantro.hr/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Plan-rodne-ravnopravnosti-2021-23_HR.pdf). ● GEP – Croatian Geological Survey (https://www.hgi-cgs.hr/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Plan-rodne-ravnopravnosti.pdf). ● GEP – The University of Split (https://www.ffst.unist.hr/download/repository/Plan_rodne_ravnopravnosti_UNIST-1.pdf). ● GEP – Juraj Dobrila University of Pula (https://www.unipu.hr/download/repository/Plan_rodne_ravnopravnosti_UNIPU_2023_web%5B1%5D.pdf). ● GEP – The University of Osijek (https://www.ffos.unios.hr/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Plan-rodne-ravnopravnosti-Sveuc.-u-Osijeku-HRV.pdf). ● GEP – The University of Zadar (https://www.unizd.hr/Portals/0/doc/doc_pdf_dokumenti/strategije/Plan%20ravnopravnosti%20spolova%20-%20Senat%20-%20veljaca%202022.pdf?ver=6Z0SRXVXs6I%3D). ● GEP – University North (https://www.unin.hr/wp-content/uploads/Plan-rodne-ravnopravnosti.pdf). ● GEP – University of Dubrovnik (https://www.unidu.hr/wp-content/plugins/quaroscope/download.php?file=29675). ● GEP – Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb (https://www.ufzq.unizg.hr/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Plan-spolne-ravnopravnosti-UF-a_12-2021.pdf). ● GEP – Faculty of Civil Engineering in Zagreb (https://www.grad.unizg.hr/images/50012344/Plan%20rodne%20ravnopravnosti.pdf), ● GEP – Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing in Zagreb (https://www.fer.unizg.hr/ravnopravnost/obavijesti?@=2ukho). ● University of Rijeka, Guidelines for gender sensitive communication. ● University of Rijeka, Guidelines for prevention and action in case of sexual harassment. ● Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing in Zagreb, podcast Women in Engineering, https://www.ieee.hr/ieeesection/interesne_skupine/wie#.
Hungary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Action Plan "Empowering women in family and society" (2021–2030), https://kormany.hu/dokumentumtar?search=A%20n%C5%91k%20sze%20rep%C3%A9nek%20er%C5%91s%C3%ADt%C3%A9se%20a%20csatl%C3%A1dban%20%C3%A9s%20a%20t%C3%A1rsadalomban&limit_rows_on_page=8&limit_page=0.
Lithuania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Child Rights Protection Basis Law, Art. 1.18.4 amendment No. XIV-1033 21-04-2022, effective since 01-01-2023. ● Labour Code, Art. 133 amendment No. XIV-1189 of 28-06-2022 ● The Action Plan for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2023-2025.



Poland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Polish National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security 2018–2021. • National Programme for Equal Treatment for the years 2022–2030, July 2022.
Romania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardised Guide regarding Sex-based Harassment and Moral Harassment in the Workplace, Governmental Decision, April 2023. • Governmental Emergency Governance 137/2000 for the prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination. • Law 202/2002 on the equal opportunities and equal treatment between women and men. • Law 167/2020, provisions on moral harassment in the workplace. • Strategy for the promotion of equal opportunities and equal treatment between women and men and the combating of domestic violence 2022–2027, 2022. • The National Strategy for the Occupation of the Labour Force 2021–2027. • The National Strategy for Research, Innovation and Intelligent Specialisation 2021–2027.
Slovakia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Strategy for Equality between Women and Men and Equal Opportunities 2021–2027. • Department of Equality between Women and Men and Equal Opportunities, Action Plan for the State Strategy for Equality between Women and Men and Equal Opportunities 2021–2027.
Slovenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and Development Activity Act, Article 4, (http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO3387). • Scientific Research and Innovation Activities Act, http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO7733). • The Student Status Act, ZUPŠ-1, May 2022, http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO8435 supplements the Higher Education Act (ZVis, in force since 1994) (http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO172). • Resolution on the National Program for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2021–2030, https://e-uprava.gov.si/drzava-in-druzba/e-demokracija/predlogi-predpisov/predlog-predpisa.html?id=12389. • Resolution on the National Program for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2021–2030 - motion for consideration. • Resolution on the Slovenian Scientific Research and Innovation Strategy 2030, http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=RESO133. • Resolution on National programme of higher education 2030, http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=RESO139. • Higher Education Act, ZVis, in force since 1994, http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO172.



Table B

The list of references provided by all national experts in the country cluster Central & East Europe

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Croatia	
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<p>Pološki Vokić, Nina, Alka Obadić, and Dubravka Sinčić Ćorić. 2019. <i>Gender Equality in the Workplace</i>. Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-18861-0.</p>	HR6
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<p>Šćulac-Glavan, Daria. 2022. "Razvoj i provedba Plana rodne ravnopravnosti – sjajan primjer sa Sveučilišta u Rijeci" [Development and Implementation of the Gender Equality Plan – A Great Example of the University of Rijeka]. http://projekti.hr/hr/novost/blog/razvoj-i-provedba-plana-rodne-ravnopravnosti-sjajan-primjer-sa-sveucilista-u-rijeci.</p>	HR8
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<p>Donovalová, Anna, and Hana Tenglerová. 2022b. "Implementace genderové dimenze v obsahu výzkumu (Materiál pro Pracovní skupinu pro rovnost žen a mužů RVVI)." Praha: Národní kontaktní centrum – gender a věda, Sociologický ústav, AV ČR, v.v.i. https://stratin.tc.cas.cz/vystupy/2022/M4/Implementace%20genderov%C3%A9%20dimenze%20v%20obsahu%20v%C3%BDzkumu.pdf.</p>	CZ2
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