



EQUAL4EUROPE

GENDER EQUALITY PLANS

EQUAL4EUROPE

SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

D 7.5

Christophe Terrasse
María Quílez



© Copyright EQUAL4EUROPE Consortium

All rights, amongst which the copyright, on the materials described in this document rest with the original authors of the text, except where referenced. The information provided in this document is confidential for use within the EQUAL4EUROPE consortium only; it is not intended for publication. This document may not be reproduced or brought into circulation without the prior written consent of the authors and Fundación ESADE, as the project coordinator. Without prior permission in writing from the authors and the Fundación ESADE, this document may not be used, in whole or in part, for the lodging of claims, for conducting proceedings, for publicity and/or for the benefit or acquisition in a more general sense.

Legal Disclaimer

The European Commission's support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents, which reflect the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein



CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 DEED

Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 International

PROGRAMME	H2020 SCIENCE WITH AND FOR SOCIETY
GRANT AGREEMENT NUMBER	872499
PROJECT ACRONYM	EQUAL4EUROPE
DOCUMENT	D 7.5
TYPE (DISTRIBUTION LEVEL)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Confidential <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted
DUE DELIVERY DATE	M46
DATE OF DELIVERY	M46
STATUS AND VERSION	V1
NUMBER OF PAGES	21
Work Package / TASK RELATED	T 7.4 BSIS Impact assessment
Work Package / TASK RESPONSIBLE	EFMD
AUTHOR (S)	Christophe Terrasse and María Quílez

DOCUMENT HISTORY

VERS	ISSUE DATE	CONTENT AND CHANGES
1	13/12/2023	First version

DOCUMENT APPROVERS

PARTNER	APPROVER
ESADE	Anna Ginès
ESMT	Karen La Macchia

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	5
1. INTRODUCTION	6
1.1 THE EQUAL4EUROPE PROJECT IN A NUTSHELL	6
1.2 PRESENTATION OF THIS REPORT	7
2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH	8
3. TRANSFERABLE ACTIVITIES	11
3.1 ACTIVITIES TRANSFERABLE TO THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR	12
3.1.1 EQUIPPING EDUCATORS WITH TOOLS TO FOSTER AWARENESS ABOUT GENDER-SENSITIVE PRACTICES IN RESEARCH AND TEACHING	12
3.1.2 EMPLOYING TOOLS FOR BALANCING GENDER AND REGIONAL REPRESENTATION IN EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS	13
3.1.3 HOSTING NETWORKING AND KNOWLEDGE-SHARING ACTIVITIES WITH DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ORGANISATIONS AND PROFESSIONALS IN THE FIELD	14
3.1.4 ESTABLISHMENT OF OBJECTIVE CRITERIA FOR THE PROMOTION OF RESEARCHERS	14
3.2 ACTIVITIES TRANSFERABLE TO OTHER SECTORS	16
3.2.1 ESTABLISHMENT OF ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICIES AND/OR SPECIFIC ROLES/POSITIONS IN THE INSTITUTION DEDICATED TO COMBATING AND PREVENTING ALL TYPES OF HARASSMENT.	16
3.2.2 DEVELOPING CUSTOMISED WORK-LIFE BALANCE PLANS FOR EMPLOYEES WITH ESPECIALLY DEMANDING CARE DUTIES.....	17
3.2.3 ESTABLISHING EQUAL PAY POLICIES.....	18
3.2.4 UTILISING A GENDER EQUALITY DATA COLLECTION TOOL TO MEASURE AND DRIVE IMPROVEMENTS	18
4. CONCLUSION: UNLOCKING IMPACT BEYOND EQUAL4EUROPE	20
5. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	21

FOREWORD

EFMD extends its thanks to all partners of the EQUAL4EUROPE Project for their work. Their contribution has been essential for the selection of activities and the assessment of their external impact.

EFMD wishes to thank ESMT Berlin for the review of this document.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE EQUAL4EUROPE PROJECT IN A NUTSHELL

The EQUAL4EUROPE project is an Horizon 2020-funded project that implemented its activities between January 2020 and December 2023. The consortium consists of:

Six Research Performing Institutions (RPIs):

- ESADE (Spain)
- Comenius University in Bratislava (Slovakia)
- Erasmus University Rotterdam (The Netherlands)
- ESMT BERLIN (Deutschland)
- IEDC – Bled School of Management (Slovenia)
- INSEAD (France)

an international association of universities and business schools and accreditation agency:

- EFMD (Belgium)

a consultancy bureau:

- Nehem (The Netherlands)

With a focus on the faculties of arts, humanities, medicine, social sciences, business, and law (AHMSSBL), the partnership implemented collaborative and institutional activities aimed at:

- removing barriers to the recruitment, retention, and career progression of female researchers
- addressing gender imbalances in decision-making processes
- integrating the gender dimension in research and innovation content

Each of the participating RPIs developed a tailor-made Gender Equality Plan (GEP) based on institution-wide data collection regarding gender imbalances. Sharing inter-partner best practices and those from other similar initiatives supported the development and implementation of the GEPs. During the last year of the project, the partners participated in an in-depth assessment of the impact of the GEPs on their institutions, allowing for the objective monitoring, benchmarking, and quality implementation of the GEPs for the coming years.

In parallel, the consortium organised numerous online and face-to-face workshops to support faculties, HR professionals, researchers, and other academic stakeholders in identifying and addressing gender imbalances at their institutions. EQUAL4EUROPE also established and supported the growth of the Gender Equality & Diversity Officers Network (GE&DO), an online platform to share knowledge and discuss issues of inequality with peers, and launched other initiatives, such as producing the “position paper for the inclusion of gender equality criteria in accreditation procedures” and participating in high-level international events to promote their efforts.

You can find all the results of the project on the [EQUAL4EUROPE website](#) as well as the [CORDIS site](#).

1.2 PRESENTATION OF THIS REPORT

This document examines the potential impact of the EQUAL4EUROPE project beyond the project consortium. The internal impact, which refers to the impact of the project on the research institutions that are part of the project consortium, is described in detail in other deliverables (cf. in particular, deliverable 7.3).

EFMD defined the structure and organization of the task and coordinated with all project partners for the data collection and analysis. As the co-author of the BSIS ¹tool (Business School Impact System), EFMD built on its expertise in impact assessment.

BSIS is widely used in the academic world and was designed to identify, analyse, and quantify the extent and nature of the impact of a business school on its environment (city, region, country, etc., depending on the areas of impact analysed). It is a comprehensive impact measurement system that includes seven dimensions; one of those, societal impact, is particularly relevant for this report.

This dimension includes the essential commitment towards gender equality as part of UNSDG Goal 5, “*Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*”. It recommends implementing explicit gender equality policies and integrating these goals in teaching, research, and the management of schools. It also underlines how imperative it is to incorporate diversity and equal access within all school activities.

The report uses this perspective to identify activities and recommendations of the EQUAL4EU project that can be implemented and have an impact in other settings. In many aspects, it is inspired by the concepts of internal validity (activities suitable for implementation inside the project consortium) and external validity (activities that various different institutions can undertake).

In terms of project management, this deliverable is important for the project exploitation, as it is targeted to external audiences in and outside the higher education environment. It aims to provide inspiration and recommendations on practical, down-to-earth actions and policies, and differentiates between those best suited for adoption within other higher education institutions (HEIs) and those that could be applied in other sectors.



2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

In conformity with the Theory of Change² theoretical framework, we consider internal impact as the benefits that arise from the evolution of the situation in the partners' respective HEIs following implementation of the project's measures. This definition has consistently been in use during the EQUAL4EU project.

We define the project's external impact as the benefits arising from the evolution of the situation among the external stakeholders of the partner institutions.

There is a fundamental distinction to make between the internal and external impacts of an activity, as the external impact is much more difficult to define, assess, and measure. For clarity, we will use a simple example to illustrate the difference between measuring internal and external impact.

The EQUAL4EU project took particular care to involve many stakeholders inside the HEIs. Researchers and faculty are the primary actors and beneficiaries of the project, while the project also aims to affect management, specialised staff, and students. Considering the latter group as an example, the RPIs agreed that promoting gender equality (GE) in the partner institutions is a positive example for students. They will be more aware of the importance of GE and more likely to adopt positive attitudes and consistent behaviours to promote GE in their workplaces. While intuitively attractive, this causal chain is extremely difficult to demonstrate in real life.

Measuring external impact presents the following challenges:

1/ Ensuring a reliable data collection

Situations within partner institutions can easily be observed and the institutions can collect reliable data to estimate the internal impact. The observation perimeter is well-defined, data already exist and have been collected during the project, and information sources are available and within easy reach, as they are mostly employees and direct stakeholders of the project.

When attempting to measure external impact, the number of stakeholders is virtually limitless, as it affects society as a whole as well as individuals and organizations. Taking our basic example of students and alumni in their workplaces as an illustration, the diversity of the professional careers embraced by students means that the observation field is exceedingly wide and requires unrealistic means to survey in the framework of a project. Conducting such a survey would need a nationwide effort.

2/ Ensuring a controlled experimentation and using established causalities

To a certain extent, the changes inside the RPIs can be traced and related to the project results, as each institution can be considered a controlled environment. This paves the way for identifying causalities between the project activities and the changes they facilitated in the institution.

This is not the same for external impact, where one deals with multiple factors and complex links, and it is often impossible to prove causalities.



Demonstrating that the changes in the consortium universities are responsible for the changes in the society is unrealistic, as one would have to deal with relationships such as moderating effects or mediating effects, and in the worst case consider any changes as merely concomitance, i.e. parallel evolution without any causal relationships.

Taking again our example of students as an illustration, one has to acknowledge that the (potential) improvement of GE in companies is impossible to attribute exclusively to the influence of alumni, as many other personal, organisational, and/or contextual factors may interact to explain the evolution. It is impossible to demonstrate direct causality, and thus also infeasible to estimate impact.

3/ Realistic time horizon

While many of the results of the project can bring rapid changes with immediately observable impact inside the institutions, this is not the case in the external environment. The changes inside the partner institutions require time before they could potentially produce effects outside of the consortium. The RPIs see indications that awareness of GE in companies could increase thanks to the project. It is indeed logical to assume that students will develop a greater understanding and commitment to the importance of GE, which in turn could affect the way they plan their professional careers. Additionally, once they enter their professional lives, alumni could incorporate this commitment into the way they work.

However, one needs to be aware that these evolutions can only occur after a delayed timeframe, after students graduate, find employment, and in many cases, reach a level of seniority that allows them to influence their companies' practices. Here again, an evaluation of the external impact of the project is impossible to achieve during its lifetime.

All these aspects mean that at the time of preparing the external impact assessment, what the project can realistically deliver is a compendium of hypothetical effects that may or may not verify themselves in the midterm or distant future. While interesting regarding prospective thinking, an assessment of this kind would only exhibit low validity and very limited applicability.

In order to overcome these obstacles, partners decided to shift the methodological positioning driving the document. Rather than speculating on potential effects, they decided to shift their angle of analysis. Partners identified the activities at each institution that carried the most important results and proven impacts.

Starting from these observations, the partners assessed their external validity in the sense of their potential applications in other settings, adopting a two-step "same cause, same effects" approach.

This approach presents the following advantages:

- **Empirical basis:** it relies on existing data and measures, providing an empirical and concrete foundation for analysis.
- **Internal consistency:** selecting activities that demonstrated an impact inside the partner institutions promotes a consistency between the internal and external impact evaluation.

- **Practical application:** it focuses on real-world applicability, which can be particularly useful for other institutions looking to implement GEPs.
- **Resource efficiency:** It optimises the use of the existing resources in terms of time, expertise, and data, making it more practical in some situations as compared to the large and exploratory data collection necessitated by the theory of change.

It also avoids the speculative nature of the theory of change, as evaluating the potential external impact of the project in a three- to five-year horizon necessarily involves some speculation, which limits the reliability and credibility of the results.

Step 1. Activity selection

Each consortium partner identified activities and measures that it implemented during the project and that carried observable and proven effects. The selected activities had to demonstrate the following characteristics:

- activity was introduced in the framework and as a result of the project EQUAL4EU and was already functioning in the institution (no provisional or future activities)
- the activity proved efficient and effective, and its impact on the institution has been measured and validated by the partner
- the activity is related to one of the three categories listed by the BSIS model:
 - design and introduction of explicit GE policies
 - integration of GE in teaching and/or research and/or management of the school
 - promotion of compulsory goals for diversity and equal access within all the school's activities

Step 2. Activity impact evaluation

The next step was to evaluate to what extent these activities could be replicated in other environments and whether they could produce similar effects. It was left to the partners to evaluate their replicability and to advise on the potential environments that could adopt them.

This two-step assessment identified nine transferable activities with high impact potential.

This report groups them into two categories. The first presents activities that could be applied in other HEIs. They are linked to many aspects of academic life and of a more limited use for other types of organisations.

The second group includes activities whose replication can be conducted both inside and outside the world of higher education, for example, in other organisations, administrations, and/or companies.

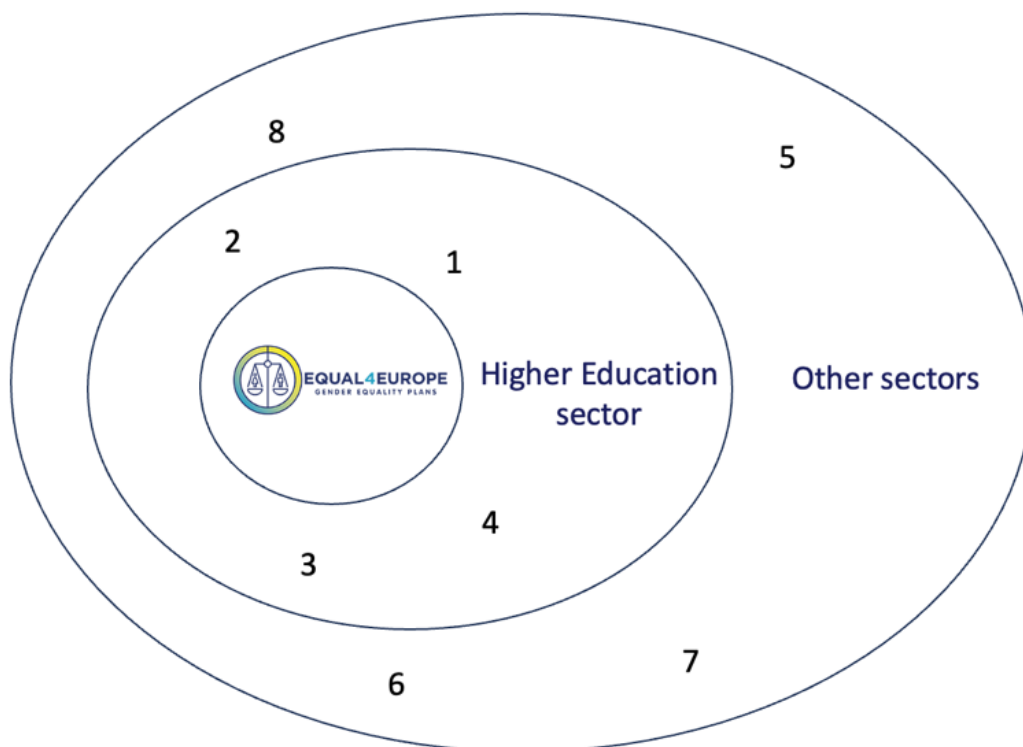
3. TRANSFERABLE ACTIVITIES

The following table outlines the activities that have been chosen by EQUAL4EUROPE partners as they demonstrated impact. The analysis of these activities allowed to group them in two categories:

Table 1. Best practices in gender equality

Transferable to other higher education actors	Additionally transferable to other sectors
1. Equipping educators with tools to foster awareness about gender-sensitive practices in research and teaching.	5. Establishment of anti-harassment policies and/or specific roles/positions in the institution dedicated to combating and preventing all types of harassment.
2. Employing tools for balancing gender and regional representation in educational materials.	6. Developing customised work-life balance plans for employees with especially demanding care duties.
3. Hosting networking and knowledge-sharing activities with diversity and inclusion organisations and professionals in the field.	7. Establishing equal pay policies.
4. Establishment of objective criteria for the promotion of researchers.	8. Utilising a gender equality data collection tool to measure and drive improvements.

Figure 1. Gender equality transferable activities



3.1 ACTIVITIES TRANSFERABLE TO THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

Four activities encompass different aspects of academic life and functions of higher education institutions: research, teaching, production of pedagogical supports and materials, and institutional life. They also carry an impact on the main stakeholders of the institutions, namely management, faculty, staff, and students.

3.1.1 EQUIPPING EDUCATORS WITH TOOLS TO FOSTER AWARENESS ABOUT GENDER-SENSITIVE PRACTICES IN RESEARCH AND TEACHING

To promote gender sensitivity, the institution developed a training course for faculty and researchers. Its goal is to guide them to integrate gender perspectives into their research and teaching. It identifies **good practices** for incorporating gender considerations into research and provides tools such as **checklists for gender-sensitive research and teaching**.

Training faculty, researchers, and PhD students to integrate gender perspectives in research and teaching promotes their awareness, develops their practical skills, and challenges their biases. Issues such as **institutional policies, strategies for recognizing and addressing biases in research and teaching, and methods for integrating gender considerations into research design and teaching techniques** were included in the course.

Tailoring the training to the specific needs and context of the institution is essential to ensure its effectiveness. Additionally, **periodic follow-ups** can enhance its long-term impact.

The institution could **integrate these trainings into its offer of workshops and online education**. They could be offered to the general public or realized in partnership with interested private/public education institutions.

The institution could also organize "train-the-trainer" sessions to support departments and faculties in delivering the same training. The session could provide practical examples and tips on how to structure the course and work with case studies.

Identification and exchange of **good practices with real-world examples and guidance** on integrating gender considerations into research and teaching could inspire faculty, researchers, and PhD students to adopt gender-sensitive approaches and contribute to advancing gender equality in the research community.

The identified good practices could be **collected in the form of short case studies**.

To empower faculty, researchers, and PhD students who may have little prior knowledge of integrating gender dimensions, **simple checklists** that enable them to reflect on their research or teaching from a gender perspective could be provided to them.

[EQUAL4EUROPE's Checklist for Gender-Sensitive Research](#) is a useful tool for incorporating the gender dimension effectively in research. Furthermore, [EQUAL4EUROPE's Checklist for Gender-Sensitive Teaching](#) can assist faculty in fostering gender sensitivity within their teaching practices.

The **expected impact** of these activities involves creating a more aware, inclusive, and equitable academic environment that reflects a commitment to gender sensitivity and contributes to positive societal change.

3.1.2 EMPLOYING TOOLS FOR BALANCING GENDER AND REGIONAL REPRESENTATION IN EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

To foster a more inclusive learning environment, the institution promotes the use of **educational materials that reflect a range of gender identities and regional perspectives.**

This inclusivity ensures that all students feel represented and that the content is relevant to their diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, understanding different regional viewpoints and acknowledging gender diversity contributes to the **development of well-rounded individuals ready to engage with a diverse global community.**

In their workplaces, most alumni will interact daily with people whose gender differs from their own, and many will work with people from regions other than their own. If the school's course materials and discussions integrate gender and regional dimensions, **alumni will acquire knowledge and tools such as guidelines, training programs, and review mechanisms, and can apply them in their future organizations.**

These tools could make alumni more likely to:

- Competently **address biases** when they notice them in interactions or systems in their workplaces.
- Actively **establish policies and processes** that advance equitable access to opportunities.
- **Create value and improve performance** in their organizations, as shown through financial results, innovation, talent retention and development, and other measures.

To address educational disparities and promote diversity, equity, and global awareness in higher education, professors could re-evaluate their chosen case studies. They might consider using **course materials whose diversity of characters' identities and regions mirrors the diversity typically observed in an average degree program class.**

Some **tools/actions** that educators could use to balance the gender and regional representation in those materials are:

- a **diverse curriculum design** with inclusive content incorporating examples, case studies, and research findings from different regions
- implementation of a **review process and monitoring system** to track and report on the teaching materials assessing their gender and regional inclusivity
- implementation of **feedback mechanisms** on the educational materials by individuals from various genders and regions
- establishment of close **cooperation with resource libraries** to collaboratively develop a showcase of educational materials from various regions and authors
- establishment of **institutional policies** that emphasize the importance of gender and regional representation in educational materials

The **expected impact** of these activities goes beyond the institution, influencing societal perceptions and norms. This commitment to diversity and global awareness addresses systemic biases, shaping graduates who are equipped to navigate and contribute to a more inclusive and interconnected society.

3.1.3 HOSTING NETWORKING AND KNOWLEDGE-SHARING ACTIVITIES WITH DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ORGANISATIONS AND PROFESSIONALS IN THE FIELD

To establish a cross-departmental network, the institution organizes **networking events that bring together experts and researchers specializing in diversity and inclusion**. These gatherings provide a platform for sharing insights and experiences related to gender, diversity, and inclusion issues. This connection results in a more extensive pool of resources and perspectives, thereby amplifying the advantages derived from collaboration across different departments.

These activities address crucial needs, from **learning and professional growth to finding diverse talent and fostering cultural understanding**. By bringing people together, these gatherings play a key role in **making the institutions more inclusive and welcoming**. In addition, these networking activities **could bridge different disciplines and seniorities**, overcoming any 'islands' that may exist within the institution.

In addition, networking activities often address the need for motivation and inspiration by **providing opportunities to connect with successful role models, share success stories, and renew a sense of purpose and commitment**.

The events can be organized in a formal manner, but **also in an informal way, such as inviting researchers from different faculties and diversity and inclusion experts from inside or outside the institution for lunches**. To facilitate discussions, agendas could be prepared and shared with attendees in advance.

The promotion of these activities is crucial to reaching the widest audience possible, so collaborating closely with the communications and HR departments is advisable. Personal invitations can also be effective.

The expected impact of these networking activities is both intra- and inter-institutional. They bridge communication gaps between departments, faculties, top-level management, professional services, and researchers, establishing a foundation for enhanced collaboration within and beyond the fields of gender equality, diversity, and inclusion.

3.1.4 ESTABLISHMENT OF OBJECTIVE CRITERIA FOR THE PROMOTION OF RESEARCHERS

The institution has adopted a **policy for promoting researchers** to the further career stages of Associate and Full Professor **based on objective criteria**. These include having a minimum academic career (5 years for Associate Professor and 10 years for Full Professor), having a corresponding accreditation from a public agency, and having a minimum of five relevant scientific contributions. Furthermore, **promotions shall be approved through a specific proceeding and by promotion committees** that include experienced faculty members.

A fair and robust promotion process can aid universities in their ambition to create a gender-balanced and inclusive workforce, if it complies with current best practices and ensures that promotions are granted on the basis of "true merit" according to the criteria established by the promotion policy.

The institution could arrange **professional courses and training sessions tailored for top management**, with dedicated sessions addressing the implementation of a procedure to ensure objective promotions. These training opportunities for senior leaders both contribute to their professional development and serve as a strategic approach to extend the influence and effectiveness of this initiative, promoting fair advancements at the top levels of the organization.

The **expected impact** of introducing and promoting objective criteria for researchers' promotions is to guarantee the institution's excellence in both overall and scientific quality. Additionally, it aims to prevent biases in the promotion process, including those related to gender.

3.2 ACTIVITIES TRANSFERABLE TO OTHER SECTORS

This section describes activities with the potential for transfer to not only other higher education institutions but also to various other settings, including corporate environments, administrations, and public or private organizations. Although certain characteristics of these activities may necessitate adaptation to suit the context and specificities of each institution, they could be effectively transferred to generate similar effects and impact.

3.2.1 ESTABLISHMENT OF ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICIES AND/OR SPECIFIC ROLES/POSITIONS IN THE INSTITUTION DEDICATED TO COMBATING AND PREVENTING ALL TYPES OF HARASSMENT.

To safeguard the well-being of its employees, the institution established an **Anti-Harassment Policy**. This policy comprises a **set of guidelines designed to handle cases of harassment** within the institution. It establishes a **framework for defining and identifying harassment from various perspectives**, including legal, administrative, and practical considerations.

The policy also provides current **information on contact points that members can reach out to in case of harassment**. Additionally, it incorporates **training sessions aimed at facilitating the effective implementation** of the Anti-Harassment policy throughout the institution.

The Anti-Harassment Policy aims to provide a safe and reliable framework to identify and report harassment. It is tailored to be **appropriate for student, staff, and faculty bodies**, and is therefore expected to improve all individuals' well-being on a daily basis. On a broader level, the establishment of this policy shows **that the institution as a whole is committed to addressing issues of harassment**, providing individuals with a safe working and studying environment.

When developing the policy, **certain components requiring expertise beyond the institution's capabilities** such as legal requirements, training development, etc. **may be delegated/outsourced to external experts/entities**. **Collaborating with other institutions** to collect insight on their own best practices is also advisable.

Once it is created, it is crucial to **familiarize everyone in the institution with the policy** to secure its endorsement from all members. **For students**, this entails introducing it early, such as **during orientation weeks**.

As the Anti-Harassment Policy rolls out, it is expected that it will **facilitate the reporting of harassment cases and provide effective means to support complainants**. On a longer timeframe, it is expected to encourage a proactive culture that aims to prevent harassment and is based on principles of respect and consent. Finally, if peer institutions implement strong Anti-Harassment Policies, this could encourage other institutions to develop their own.

While the presence of **roles specifically dedicated to combating and preventing harassment** is relatively common in large international companies, it is a relatively new concept in the education sector.

To meet this challenge, the institution has introduced **the role of a 'Trusted Person'** as part of its institutional policy to combat sexual harassment.

That position was introduced to **provide employees and students with support in reporting sexual harassment cases**. Trusted persons can help the reporting person by discussing their situation with them discreetly, mediating necessary psychological and legal assistance, explaining the available options, reporting the case officially, and/or accompanying them in front of faculty/university bodies during the investigation process.

It is recommended that **the Trusted Person operates within a different faculty than the 'Trustee'** to prevent any potential conflict of interest.

The implementation of this new role could also **enhance the visibility of existing policies and available measures in the institution**.

The **responsibilities and comprehensive details of the Trusted Person's role** should be communicated through the institution's communication channels, **available in both the local language and English** (for foreign staff and students), as well as **integrated into the awareness-raising activities** of the institution.

The expected impact of implementing this role is to establish a safer working and study environment, encouraging individuals to report incidents of sexual harassment or other forms of harassing behaviours without fear. This initiative aims to increase visibility of the issue of sexual harassment and enhance employees' understanding of actions they can take when confronted with such behaviour.

3.2.2 DEVELOPING CUSTOMISED WORK-LIFE BALANCE PLANS FOR EMPLOYEES WITH ESPECIALLY DEMANDING CARE DUTIES

In demanding and profit-oriented work environments, unforeseen caregiving responsibilities can significantly influence the career progression of individuals. They may find themselves compelled to relinquish leadership roles and managerial responsibilities to fulfil their caregiving commitments. To better reconcile these dual needs, the institution has devised **a work-life balance plan specifically tailored for employees with particularly demanding caregiving duties**. This initiative aims to provide **greater flexibility in addressing these specific caregiving responsibilities without compromising the ability to maintain relevant job responsibilities**.

Employees whose partner and/or child(ren) have a certified disability (33% or more for children, 50% or more for partners) can balance their work and family commitments by:

- working from home for up to three days a week, for employees whose tasks do not require their presence on site
- reducing their working day by up to 10%, without affecting gross annual pay
- adopting flexible entry- and exit-time, if compatible with their tasks

To be eligible, staff must have a full-time, open-ended contract and have worked for the institution for at least a year.

This measure **allows people with caring duties (the majority of whom are usually women, as confirmed by the latest Gender Equality Survey carried out at the institution) to better balance family and work commitments.**

To advocate for these plans, the institution could **incorporate a session into professional courses and training for top management.** This session would offer **additional information on work-life balance measures,** emphasizing their positive effects on workers' well-being, productivity, and overall business performance.

The **expected impact** is a reduction on barriers for career progression of people dealing with particularly demanding care duties, as well as an improvement of their general work-life balance and job-related well-being.

3.2.3 ESTABLISHING EQUAL PAY POLICIES

In line with its national legislation, the institution ensures **legal protection of equal pay for all employees,** regardless of gender, **through the implementation of equal pay policies.**

Implementing equal pay policies **is crucial for gender equality** as it:

- ensures fair compensation
- promotes economic empowerment for women
- tackles workplace discrimination
- attracts diverse talent
- enhances employee morale
- ensures legal compliance
- demonstrates social responsibility
- contributes to closing the gender pay gap

To acquaint employees with their right to equal pay irrespective of gender, the institution arranges **staff meetings and professional development trainings.** During these sessions, Human Resources professionals provide insights into the institutional and national structures, processes, and regulations. Additionally, as **part of the onboarding process,** the institution informs new employees about their right to equal pay.

The expected impact is that employers will comply with equal pay legislation, and employees will be more aware of their right to equal pay. These efforts aim to minimize the gender pay gap across all sectors of employment and contribute to improving the national gender pay gap.

3.2.4 UTILISING A GENDER EQUALITY DATA COLLECTION TOOL TO MEASURE AND DRIVE IMPROVEMENTS

While many institutions are demonstrating a growing commitment to gender equality, measuring progress in this area can be challenging. Moreover, the multifaceted nature of gender inequality complicates leaders' efforts to identify the most pressing challenges within their own institutions. To address this, the institution has developed a **gender equality data collection tool.**

The tool is designed **to evaluate pertinent factors and set a benchmark for monitoring and assessing progress towards gender equality** within the institution. It was developed by **selecting key gender equality indicators and monitoring them regularly**. It aims to facilitate the regular **collection of quantitative, sex-disaggregated data** across all areas of an institution. This data collection tool is **applicable across all departments** of an institution.

To ensure the **relevance** of a gender equality data collection tool **in a specific sector**, it is essential to **conduct research on how gender equality is effectively conceptualized within that sector**. This research process can be enhanced by collaborating with other entities in the sector.

Once the gender equality **indicators** have been collated, these **need to be discussed with relevant stakeholders**, since all parties have a different conception of gender equality, all of which need to be integrated. The **anonymity of the data collected** should be ensured, and GDPR/legal departments should be involved.

The **expected impact** is a more informed, accountable, and inclusive institution that actively works towards gender equality, leveraging data-driven insights to shape policies, programs, and practices.

4. CONCLUSION: UNLOCKING IMPACT BEYOND EQUAL4EUROPE

This report highlights the challenges and pitfalls in assessing external impact, ranging from stakeholder diversity to the variety of causal relationships. To overcome the limitations of the Theory of Change, it proposes a pragmatic approach using empirical evidence and real-world applicability.

The consortium focused on existing activities with proven impacts within the partner institutions. This "same cause, same effects" approach offered empirical grounding, comparative analysis, practical application, and resource efficiency.

Nine high-impact activities emerged from this selection process, categorized into those transferable to the higher education sector and those applicable beyond. From fostering awareness about gender-sensitive practices to establishing anti-harassment policies, these activities present recommendations for promoting GE both within the academic community and within other organizations, administrations, companies, and society at large.

The activities provide a practical roadmap, demystifying the path towards gender equality. By showcasing tangible measures with proven impacts, the EQUAL4EU project can inspire institutions and organizations outside the HE spectrum to take actionable steps. The emphasis on networking, criteria for promotion, and data-driven decision-making underscores the relevance of these strategies across sectors.

Gender equality is an ongoing commitment, not a one-time achievement. As initiatives affect and influence the professional lives of faculty, HE professionals, students, and alumni, the full impact of the EQUAL4EU project will unfold over time. This necessitates a long-term perspective and the recognition that change requires patience and persistence.

This document highlights that promoting gender equality goes beyond standalone policies; it necessitates integrating gender equality into an institution's organizational culture, teaching, research, and management aspects.

As a final word, the authors wish to underline that fostering gender equality is a collective responsibility that extends beyond the limits of any individual project. It is a journey that requires continuous vigilance, adaptation, and a shared commitment to building a more equitable and inclusive society. We hope that the EQUAL4EUROPE results will bear an impact both within its partners' walls as well as in other organizations and communities.

5. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

¹ <https://www.efmdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/Process-Guidelines-mars-2023-1.pdf>

² For a detailed presentation of the fundamentals of ToC, please refer to Connell, J. P., Kubisch, A. C., Schorr, L. B., & Weiss, C. H. (Eds.). (1995). *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives: Concepts, Methods, and Contexts*. Aspen Institute.