

# Raising awareness & challenging stereotypes

## Training senior leaders to promote gender equality

*Gender disparities persist in academia, particularly in senior leadership positions, despite a growing number of women earning PhDs. To address this, MINDtheGEPs offers specialised training for influential roles in decision-making bodies and committees (e.g. Rectors, V-ce Rectors, Chancellors, Deans, V-ce Deans, Directors, administrative and research team leaders, managerial staff at non-academic RPOs).*

*This training aims to raise awareness of gender imbalances, challenge preconceived notions, and explore solutions. It focuses on breaking gender stereotypes in selection processes and addressing unconscious gender biases in evaluating merit and excellence.*

There are different strategies for preparing training for organisational change processes. Bottom-up approaches start from the grassroots of the organisations and move up the management ladder. Top-down approaches target management first and trickles down. Different organisations have different needs. In the case of large and highly hierarchical organisations, like many universities, the top-down option is often more appropriate, as it legitimises the practices and values that the training brings.

Different groups in an organisation have different needs and experiences. Training programmes cannot be static and duplicated across groups. Instead, a holistic approach is required - developing a universal training programme that can be modified for different target audiences to ensure that the training responds to their needs and relates to their experiences.

A final important aspect is the constant availability of training. The goal is not to check a box by training the whole organisation at once. Instead, training should be repeated periodically or be made available on a continuous basis,

so that new people in the organisation, or people who are promoted or change positions, can benefit from it when they can and from a perspective that suits their current perspective.



The European Commission mandates training activities on gender equality in Horizon Europe's eligibility criteria for gender equality plans. Our guidelines align with these requirements, providing support to trainers and academics in promoting gender-balanced solutions across academia.

**Cite as:** Krzemińska, Katarzyna., Migalska, Alexandra., Sekuła, Paulina., Stoecker, Ewa (2024) Raising awareness & challenging stereotypes. Training senior leaders to promote gender equality. Zenodo. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.11082272

## Step 1) Needs analysis

To efficiently target the breaking down of gender stereotypes among people in leadership positions within research and academia, a needs analysis is required.

1. **Define the goals** of the training
2. **Identify the changes** that the training is meant to achieve
3. **Identify critical areas** to target
4. **Map processes and procedures** that can support change
5. **Map potential organisational challenges** and resistance among the staff

## Step 2) Prepare the training

Considering the specific needs mapped in your needs analysis, consider the unique context of your organisation as you prepare the training. MINDtheGEPs training is composed of three modules: evidence of gender gaps, deconstructing unconscious gender biases, and gendering research (i.e. including relevant sex and gender parameters in your work).

The recommendations below can help ensure that the training prepared upholds a high standard.

1. **Choose adequate methodology** that takes into account the institutional context and the assessment of participants' needs.
2. **Prepare high quality content** and materials. Make sure that you include all module topics in the workshop.
3. **Choose a suitable expert trainer**, for example a professional equality trainer.  
*Given the audience of senior researchers and professors in top management, it's advisable to engage external trainers to prevent professional dependencies.*

## Step 3) Promotion & recruitment

Trainings related to gender equality are not always very well attended. A well-planned promotion and recruitment strategy is necessary.

1. **Consider a system of recognition** and incentives such as attendance certificates, credits, or badges.
2. **Ensure support** from top management.
3. **Involve managers and supervisors** and ask them to select employees to attend.
4. **Emphasise the legal obligation** of civil servants to promote gender equality.

## Step 4) Topics to cover during the training

MINDtheGEPs' training modules cover three specific topics, delivered as three different modules/workshops: evidence on gender gaps, deconstructing unconscious gender biases, and gendering research. To adequately meet the challenge of covering these complex topics, we have developed a checklist for what the workshop should offer.

1. **Facts, figures and indicators** on the social and economic situation of men and women in your institution.
2. **Support for self-reflection** and self-awareness.
3. **Help in understanding definitions** of personal and social identity.
4. **Explanations of gender stereotypes**, their origin and functioning.
5. **Creating anti-discriminatory attitudes** and behaviours.
6. **Present the legal context** of gender equality in a comprehensive way.
7. **Help to incorporate gender-linked** considerations and perspectives in their work.
8. **Illustrate the wide and diverse context** of gender equality.

## Step 5) Evaluate the training

Collect feedback from participants on both the trainers' and trainees' experiences of the training. During the evaluation it will be good to verify, accordingly to the set objectives, if a desired outcomes had been achieved, and compare trainers' and trainees' perspectives.

## References

Migalska, Alexandra., Sekuła, Paulina., Stoecker, Ewa., Ní Fhlatharta, Aiofe., & Macmahon, Helena. (2024). [D4.1 - Guidelines on planned actions for recruitment and retention](#). Zenodo. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10491838



MINDtheGEPs (Modifying Institutions by Developing Gender Equality Plans) has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no 101006543. The views and opinions expressed in this policy brief are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.