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**Validated version of the 4 scenarios (M26)**

<b>Deliverable leader:</b>	Yellow Window
<b>Lead Author:</b>	Alain Denis, Vasia Madesi
<b>Contributors:</b>	Aart Kerremans, Agostina Allori, Marina Cacace, Philip De Wulf, Robin De Beelde
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## List of acronyms / abbreviations used in this document

AS	Athena SWAN
CSO	Civil society organisations
D	Deliverable
EC	European Commission
EDI	Equality, diversity and inclusion
EU	European Union
H2020	Horizon 2020
HE	Higher Education
HR	Human Resources
HRS4R	Human Resources Strategy for Researchers
FUOC	Fundacio per la Universitat Oberta de Catalunya
GBV	Gender-based violence
GE	Gender Equality
GECAS	Gender Equality Certification or Award Scheme
GEP	Gender Equality Plan
GES4R	Gender Equality Strategy for Researchers
GM	Gender Mainstreaming
M	Month/Months
MS	Member State(s)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
R&I	Research and innovation
RFO(s)	Research Funding Organization(s)
RPO(s)	Research Performing Organization(s)
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
T	Task
UK	United Kingdom



WLB	Work-life balance
WP(s)	Work Package(s)

## Executive Summary

The CASPER project is expected to produce three scenarios for the development of a Europe-wide Gender Equality Certification or Award Scheme (GECAS) as well as a fourth no-action scenario. This deliverable describes the scenarios selected by the CASPER consortium, reviewed after validation. The first scenario is the creation of a new Europe-wide GECAS. This scenario is the most ambitious. It could achieve higher impacts but also costs more to implement. The second is based on an existing international award scheme, the HRS4R, and is managed by the European Commission. In this second scenario a parallel and complementing scheme would be created (the “GES4R”) covering specifically the gender equality and intersectional aspects not sufficiently included in the HRS4R. Scenario three is the Europeanisation of an existing national scheme, Athena SWAN. This scheme has started an internationalisation process with various countries having adopted a national Athena SWAN scheme, including one EU Member State (Ireland), and other Member States are envisaging to do the same (Denmark, Netherlands). In the fourth scenario, which is a no-action scenario, no Europe-wide scheme would be developed, but it would not be a scenario without any action as the recommendation to the EC would be to stimulate both the creation of new national schemes as well as to enhance the coherence and common standards between national schemes.



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background / Deliverable Description

The CASPER project has been gradually developing potential scenarios for a Europe-wide Gender Equality Certification and/or Award Scheme (GECAS), as well as analysing the feasibility of these scenarios. These scenarios were developed on the basis of a prior analysis of the policy context, of the offer of Certification and Award schemes (CAS) as well as of the demand side, more specifically the experience, needs and attitudes of the research institutions<sup>1</sup>.

The development of the scenarios was done together with stakeholders and experts in a series of ten co-creation workshops that took place over the period of January-February 2021. This led to the emergence of six potential scenarios. An in-depth feasibility analysis of these six potential scenarios was performed by consortium members on the basis of a set of criteria defined for this purpose. This was then enriched by a series of activities with stakeholders to further explore the feasibility of the six initial scenarios: two online forums and three workshops with specific target groups (experts from Member States (MS), Research Funding Organisations (RFOs) and private sector organisations).

The results were used to decide which three scenarios (or more) would be selected (or combined) and taken further to the scenario validation phase of the project. Four of the six scenarios, three action scenarios and one no-action scenario (in the sense that no Europe-wide GECAS would be developed), were selected. This decision was formally confirmed at the CASPER Management Board meeting of 7 May 2021 and was validated with the EC before the launch of the validation phase, as per the agreement made at the project kick-off meeting held in January 2020.

These four scenarios are described in this deliverable after they have gone through the validation phase of the project:

- The first scenario is the creation of a new Europe-wide GECAS. This scenario is the most ambitious. It could also achieve higher impacts but requires more resources to implement.
- The second is based on an existing European award scheme, the HRS4R managed by the European Commission. In this scenario a parallel and complementing scheme would be created (the “GES4R”) to specifically cover the gender equality and intersectional aspects not included in the HRS4R.
- Scenario three is the Europeanisation of an existing national scheme, Athena SWAN. This scheme has already started an internationalisation process with various countries having adopted a national Athena SWAN scheme, including one EU Member State (Ireland), and other Member States are envisaging to do the same.
- In the no-action scenario, no Europe-wide scheme would be developed. However, it would be recommended that the EC will stimulate both the creation of new national schemes as well as enhance the coherence and use of common standards between and by national schemes.

The next section, **Chapter 2**, looks at the policy context in which the scenarios would be implemented. This context has changed significantly since the start of the CASPER project due to the inclusion of a new eligibility criterion in the Horizon Europe programme. Applicants from the public sector need to

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<sup>1</sup> Giulia Nason, & Maria Sangiuliano. (2020). Policy Framing Report. Zenodo.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4561607>

Giulia Nason, & Maria Sangiuliano. (2020). State of the Art Analysis: mapping the awarding certification landscape in Higher Education and Research. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4561664>

Charikleia Tzanakou, Shireen Chilcott, Kate Clayton-Hathway, & Anne Laure Humbert. (2020). Key prerequisites for a Europe-wide gender equality scheme. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4428168>





have a Gender Equality Plan (GEP). The most important section of the deliverable is a detailed description of these scenarios (**Chapter 3**). The description is more detailed for scenario 1, as this is a completely new Europe-wide GECAS. **Chapter 4** provides further analysis of the scenarios. This chapter includes a SWOT of each scenario and covers the differences in attractiveness of the scenarios for different regions in Europe. A last section looks into the potential impacts of the different scenarios.

## 1.2 Relation to other deliverables

This deliverable is an update of D5.5 that described the four scenarios prior to the validation phase. It integrates the results from the validation phase to the initial description of the scenarios. The Deliverable is also linked to D6.2 where recommendations on the proposed scenarios are formulated.

There is also a link with D5.6 in which an “impact drivers” model is presented that was further developed and tested in CASPER. This model integrates two prior models used by evaluators of Gender Equality Plans: “impact drivers” and “actor mobilisation”<sup>2</sup>. This new integrated “impact drivers” model is proposed as a core element of scenario 1, the scenario in which a completely new Europe-wide scheme is developed.

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<sup>2</sup> A potential way forward to embed institutional change in a scheme was identified in the use of “impact drivers”, an analytical framework developed to evaluate institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming in general. This impact driver model has been and is being used for the evaluation of institutional change in RPOs (projects LIBRA, Gender-SMART, PRAGES, STAGES and TRIGGER) and has been combined with another model called “actor mobilisation”.



## 2. Policy context

The proposed scenarios have to be interpreted in a broader context. This context has changed significantly since the start of the CASPER project as the European Commission's policies has been adapted with the launch of Horizon Europe. The implications of this change have become gradually more precise as the development of the scenarios for a potential Europe-wide GECAS progressed. The impact that the new policies will have on the behaviour of the different actors from the research and innovation ecosystem is still not completely clear. In this section we briefly present this new policy context. The implications this new policy context has for the different scenarios is covered in Chapter 4.

With the launch of the new Research & Innovation funding programme Horizon Europe<sup>3</sup>, the European Commission has reaffirmed its commitment to gender equality in research and innovation. The legal base of the new programme sets gender equality as a cross-cutting priority and introduces strengthened provisions. Gender equality is promoted by three types of measures in Horizon Europe:

1. Having a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) in place has become an **eligibility criterion for funding** for certain categories of legal entities from EU countries and associated countries;
2. the integration of a gender dimension into research and innovation content is an **award criterion** evaluated under the excellence criterion<sup>4</sup>;
3. gender balance among the personnel named in a proposal is used as a **ranking** criterion to evaluate ex-aequo proposals.

The first of these three measures has a direct impact on the development of a GECAS and therefore on the development of the scenarios. It has been taken into account in all the activities of WP5 that were conducted in the first half of 2021 and the scenarios were developed to ensure that certified organisations would automatically be eligible to participate in Horizon Europe under this criterion. The two other measures are also important for the research stakeholders as they define the chances to get funding. Even if indirect, they are also important for the content of a GECAS, i.e. making sure a GEP has impact and GE is integrated in the institution's policies and can influence the motivation of research actors to invest in obtaining a GE certification.

The requirement to have a GEP in place applies to public bodies, research organisations or higher education establishments (including private research organisations and higher education establishments), but it does not apply to other categories of legal entities (such as private for-profit and not-for-profit organisations, including SMEs, non-governmental or civil society organisations<sup>5</sup>). The criterion will apply for the calls with proposal submission deadlines in 2022 onwards. Participants do not need to have a GEP in place when submitting the proposal, but they need one at the time of signing the Grant Agreement. The expectation is that the exception made for companies, NGOs and CSO will be dropped mid-term of the Horizon Europe programme.

To fulfil the eligibility criterion, the GEP has to include a number of process and content-related components<sup>6</sup>. At the level of processes (mandatory) the "building blocks" are:

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<sup>3</sup> This section is based on official documents of the EC, on slides used in presentations by staff of the EC and for the description of the GEP on a document published by the NCP network in their April issue ([available here](#)).

<sup>4</sup> The integration of gender dimension into research and innovation content is a requirement by default, unless the topic description in the work programme explicitly specifies otherwise in which case it will not be evaluated.

<sup>5</sup> See: Horizon Europe, GEPs: *Frequently Asked Questions*, available [here](#).

<sup>6</sup> More information and reference documents can be found via this [link](#).



1. **Publicity:** a formal document signed by the top management, published on the institution's website and widely disseminated within the institution.
2. **Dedicated resources:** committing resources and gender expertise to implement it. Earmarked funding should be available for staff positions such as Equality Officers or Gender Equality Teams, or organisations may reserve the working hours of existing staff (academic, management, HR) for equality work.
3. **Data collection and monitoring:** disaggregated sex/gender data on personnel across all staff categories (and students for the establishments where this applies), and annual reporting on gender imbalances based on the indicators; including a comprehensive evaluation approach.
4. **Capacity building actions:** awareness raising and training on gender equality and unconscious gender bias for staff and decision-makers; information and dissemination material, workshops or working groups dedicated to specific topics.

Content-wise, these are the recommended areas to be covered by GEPs:

1. **Work-life balance and organisational culture.** Examples: parental leave policies, flexible working arrangements.
2. **Gender balance in leadership and decision-making.** Examples: introducing gender quotas for evaluation panels or decision-making bodies.
3. **Gender equality in recruitment and career progression.** Examples: unconscious bias training for HR managers, inclusive language for job vacancies, fair evaluation for employees.
4. **Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content.** Examples: ensure gender balance at all stages of the research; consider gender in the research design (e.g. sex disaggregated, fieldwork, ...); ensure gender dimension is integrated in teaching material.
5. **Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment.** Examples: having in place a code of conduct or an intervention protocol in case of complaints, regular monitoring by establishing prevalence.

The EC also introduced the concept of “inclusiveness”<sup>7</sup> of the GEPs, which is defined as:

- Intersectionality: covering not only sex/gender but also other grounds of discrimination that intersect with sex/gender. This is an important, even if expected, shift as it is a recognition of other sex/gender categories beyond the binary. It is also a recognition of the heterogeneity within groups on the basis of other factors of inequalities, including those recognised as grounds of discrimination.
- Sectorial inclusiveness: this type of inclusiveness means that the EC seeks to extend the promotion of GE through the introduction of GEPs beyond the (public) research sector. Even if this is not the case from the start of Horizon Europe as described above, the GEP eligibility criterion can be expected to become valid for all participants to the programme before the end of the programme. This is important for both the for-profit sector (large enterprises, research start-ups and SMEs in general) and the not-for-profit sector (NGOs, CSO like associations and other not-for-profit legal entities).
- Geographic inclusiveness: the ambition of the EC is to reduce the differences between Member States and regions when it comes to gender equality. This ambition of convergence is an essential part of the process of Gender Mainstreaming which seeks to level countries to the higher levels, reducing gender gaps between countries.

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<sup>7</sup> This is an interpretation of the authors as the definition of “inclusive GEPs” used by the EC is rather vague.

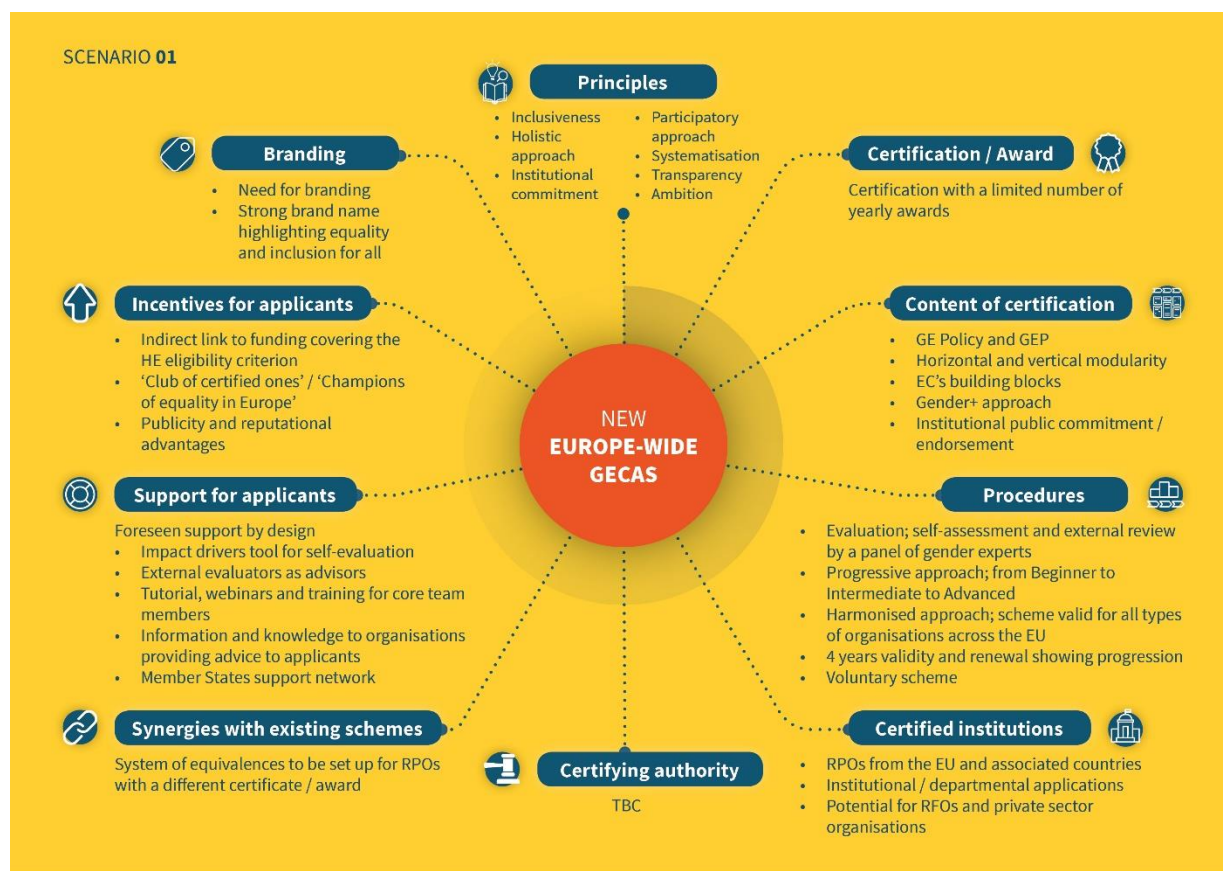
The concept of inclusiveness will be further developed by the (to be funded) Centre of Excellence. More information about the Centre of Excellence and the work programme could be found here:

<https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/horizon-widera-2021-era-01-80> (last access: 22/02/2022)



### 3. Description of four (3 + no action) scenarios

#### 3.1. Scenario 1: New Europe-wide GECAS (EUQUAL)



##### 3.1.1. Principles

The principles below were originally developed during ten workshops with various stakeholders carried out between January and February 2021 (reported in Deliverable 5.2) as a set of principles that could be used as a guide of a new Europe-wide GECAS. They were later further fine-tuned through additional workshops and validation activities.

**Inclusiveness:** a new Europe-wide GECAS should address the needs and include the perspectives of all the stakeholders of the RPOs (scholars, staff and students; including temporary ones) at different levels (disciplines, institutions and countries). It should address disadvantaged/marginalised groups, allowing openness to other inequalities beyond gender through a Gender+ approach.

**Holistic approach:** the new Europe-wide GECAS would seek to promote a coherent and harmonised plan and encourage applicants to develop actions in the different thematic areas as well as mandatory processes outlined by the EC. The rationale behind a holistic approach is that organisations need advancement on all thematic areas before the change can be "institutionalised" and sustainable over time. For example, a policy that would focus only on work-life balance or gender-based violence would not correspond to this holistic principle, as no advancement would be achieved in other areas such as leadership or recruitment.

**Institutional commitment:** the new Europe-wide GECAS aims at supporting and driving institutional change. Support from management is required. Middle management accountability for GE issues, work climate/culture and team climate/spirit are also needed. Next to the top-down engagement,



support of bottom-up initiatives by the GECAS's application procedures needs to ensure that the process uses actors at all levels and that (the required) internal expertise is capitalised on.

**Participatory approach:** it is expected that the GEPs, policies and actions to be certified in the new Europe-wide GECAS are developed using participatory approaches. As explained in the GEAR tool, different and separate dynamic workshops can be considered with senior management and leadership team, human resources and communication staff, teaching and/or research staff, students, among others. This can be done using participatory or co-creation techniques.

*“A participatory approach will help defining meaningful measures to the actors involved, while respecting the organisational culture. It will boost the actors' willingness to implement the measures set out in the Gender Equality Plan” (Gear Tool).*

**Systematisation:** a standardised assessment system with clear structure and processes, providing a framework, concrete tools and performance indicators that go beyond the very strict notion of excellence will be used in the new Europe-wide GECAS. The approach could capitalise on the experience of gender auditing and diagnosing in Europe, providing a framework for both basic and more advanced/intermediate GE work, a catalogue of good practice and knowhow to build GE capacity.

**Transparency:** this systematic approach of the new Europe-wide GECAS will need to be transparent, easy to understand, fair and credible. Transparency is at the core of its governance system.

**Ambition:** the ambition for the Europe-wide GECAS would be to become a benchmark for better science through gender equality. It could be open to the overall research and innovation community: not only the more advanced will be able to be certified, but all organisations that have the ambition to pursue institutional change, even if they are only starters in this process.

### 3.1.2. Certification or award system?

This scenario is conceived mainly as a certification. As explained in [Deliverable 4.3](#):

*“Throughout the CASPER project, a more fine-tuned understanding has been developed as to which terminology to use and when.*

*‘Certification’ assesses the process of structural change, and the developmental work associated with it. It also allows for the establishment of a possible link with the new requirement to have a Gender Equality Plan in place as eligibility criterion for future access to EU funding. As such, certification assesses the intention to improve and advance through progressive approaches and renewals/re-audits and is therefore ongoing.*

*In contrast, an ‘award’ refers to a point in time at which a token of recognition is obtained to recognise achievements in the process of structural gender change or in relation to specific actions. An ‘award’ can be a one-off, while certification and awards can be subject to renewal. It can also apply to gender equality in general, or instead focus on selected aspects of the gender change process. In a few cases, existing certification schemes were combined with one-off awards”<sup>8</sup>.*

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<sup>8</sup> Charikleia Tzanakou, Shireen Chilcott, Kate Clayton-Hathway, & Anne Laure Humbert. (2020). Key prerequisites for a Europe-wide gender equality scheme. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4428168> Chapter 2, Page 9.



Therefore, this scenario will primarily be understood as a certification. However, a limited number of awards are envisioned each year. A prize organised by the European Commission, called “EU Award for (Academic) Gender Equality Champions”, will be awarded annually to up to four academic or research organisations. These awards will be based on a review of the certified institutions to enable the creation of a European community of academic and research champions in institutional transformation towards inclusive gender equality and strengthen the inclusiveness and connectivity objectives under the new European Research Area. The categories will be two: organisations that have demonstrated the most progress in the implementation of their GEP and its achieved results; and organisations that have developed the most innovative inclusive GEP addressing intersections with other social categories such as ethnicity, social origin, sexual orientation and gender identity (LGBTI+) or disability. The contestants will have to provide proof of eligibility and a written presentation of their achievements, as well as support their applications with a link to a video. Eligible applications will be evaluated by a Jury consisting of a group of independent experts, with expertise on gender equality plan implementation and intersectional approaches in research and higher education institutions, appointed by the Commission. The specific rules of the contest will be published each year by the European Commission. The expected results include boosting public awareness of the importance of addressing gender equality in academic and research organisations through institutional change, incentivising a high degree of commitment to the implementation of inclusive GEPs, and creating a community of champions inspiring other academic and research organisations to become gender equality champions themselves.

### 3.1.3. Content of the certification

#### **GE Policy and GE Plan are being certified:**

The certification covers the GE policy of the organisation, whether or not these policies have been expressed in a GEP. As a GEP is now an eligibility criterion, the expectation is that all applicants will have a GEP and would like this GEP to be certified. Still, the certification will look not only at the GEP, but also the context in which the GEP is being developed (i.e. the institution’s GE policies), its implementation and the impacts of policies and GEP in terms of sustainable institutional change.

#### **Horizontal and vertical modularity:**

The contents of the GE policies/GEP that needs to be certified will be assessed using a modular system. These are differentiated between “horizontal” modules that define the content scope of the policy/GEP and “vertical” modules, that look at the progression achieved. Horizontal modules are e.g. the domains<sup>9</sup>(or thematic areas) covered in the GEP. Vertical modules are linked to the nature of measures or actions, e.g. awareness raising to capacity building and ultimately processes institutionally embedded.

#### **All domains need to be covered:**

The new Europe-wide GECAS includes a holistic approach and therefore a coverage of all relevant domains.

The domains are grouped based on the thematic areas defined by the EC:

- Work-life balance
- Organisational culture
- Gender balance in decision-making
- Gender equality in recruitment

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<sup>9</sup> Withing CASPER, we are using domains to express policy areas where GE can be applied, like work-life balance or recruitment. This is similar to what the EC calls “recommended thematic areas” in the description of the eligibility criterion for Horizon Europe.



- Gender equality in career progression
- Integration of the gender dimension into research
- Integration of the gender dimension into teaching
- Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

### Impact drivers

In addition to these domains, impact drivers will be considered to be part of the content of the policies and GEP that are being certified. These impact drivers have been further researched, developed and operationalised as part of Task 5.6. Applying the impact driver concept includes and goes further than the EC's "building blocks".

We are listing them briefly below and will describe them with more detail in section 3.1.4 on procedures.

Impact drivers:

- Core team of change agents
- Capacity/skills for driving institutional change for GE
- Leadership actively committed to GE/GM
- Involvement of internal stakeholders
- Involvement of external stakeholders and experts
- Availability of resources
- Coverage of the different dimensions/areas of GE institutional change
- Transparency and accountability
- Institutional policymaking based on a robust understanding of GE
- Organisational culture
- Organisational governance

### Gender+ approach:

The Gender+ approach '*recognises that gender inequality and other inequalities are connected and are thus best addressed with those possible intersections in mind*' (Verloo et al. 2011, p.4). [Deliverable 4.3 describes how](#): "*it is underpinned by intersectionality theory and calls for a conceptualisation of gender equality as intersecting with other factors such as ethnicity, disability, age, religion/belief and sexual orientation*"<sup>10</sup>. While gender could be at the centre of this scheme, other integrated indicators would be taken into consideration in the new Europe-wide GECAS.

**Processes, outputs, outcomes, and impacts:** [Deliverable 4.3](#) indicated that a new Europe-wide GECAS should focus on certifying both processes as well as outputs and outcomes. Processes are need to realise structural change, while outputs and outcomes are proof of progress.

### Faculties, departments and organisations

Although this new Europe-wide GECAS scenario allows application/participation by individual department and faculties, a public commitment/ endorsement from the university will always be required.

<sup>10</sup> Charikleia Tzanakou, Shireen Chilcott, Kate Clayton-Hathway, & Anne Laure Humbert. (2020). Key prerequisites for a Europe-wide gender equality scheme. Chapter 4, Page 17. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4428168>



### 3.1.4. Procedures

#### Evaluation:

The evaluation process in the new Europe-wide GECAS will combine self-assessment (through a self-reflection tool developed for this purpose) and an external review. The external review will be conducted by a panel of gender experts that will be appointed by the certification authority. These experts will have expertise in both gender equality and institutional change processes and will have been trained by the certification authority.

The tools used to evaluate the GEP and/or the policies in place will make use of the impact driver model as described above. This means that the impact drivers will be the core of the evaluation to which additional elements will be added to check on impacts in specific domains, such as the improvement in gender balance in decision-making bodies, etc (table 1 below).

Impact drivers	Examples of indicators
<b>1). Core team of change agents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core team of change agents exists, the size and composition of which are commensurate with the size and complexity of the organisation</li> <li>• Core team comprises motivated people</li> <li>• Core team has a formal mandate and ownership over the endeavour</li> <li>• Core team has access to an extended group of change agents</li> </ul>
<b>2). Capacity/skills for driving institutional change for GE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proficiency in the use of participatory approaches and co-creation techniques</li> <li>• Active understanding of strategic framing and of the political nature of change processes</li> <li>• Capacity to deal with resistances</li> <li>• Institutional learning about GEP implementation</li> <li>• Ability to mobilise and engage stakeholders</li> </ul>
<b>3). Leadership actively committed to GE/GM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GE is a priority in the institutional agenda / strategic documents</li> <li>• GE is present in the public discourse of leaders</li> <li>• Explicit and visible commitment of leaders to GM</li> </ul>
<b>4). Involvement of internal stakeholders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership engagement with the core team of change agents and GE work</li> <li>• Variety of internal stakeholder groups engaged (coverage)</li> <li>• Numbers of people / size of groups that engage with GE efforts</li> <li>• Degree of adherence of internal stakeholders to the aims of the GE efforts</li> <li>• Internal stakeholders take up initiatives themselves</li> </ul>
<b>5). Involvement of external stakeholders and experts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NGOs/CSOs are involved in the institutional work</li> <li>• Gender-focused events are organised</li> <li>• External partnerships with relevant institutions have been established</li> <li>• External gender expertise is available and used</li> </ul>
<b>6). Availability of resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal gender knowledge and expertise are available and used</li> <li>• Funds dedicated to GE</li> <li>• Capacity-building initiatives on GE issues</li> <li>• Support materials (guidelines, toolkits, directory of resources, etc.) are available</li> </ul>





	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutional sex-disaggregated statistics are available</li> </ul>
<b>7). Coverage of the different dimensions/areas of GE institutional change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comprehensiveness of the GEP/GM work in terms of areas addressed</li> <li>• Comprehensiveness and sophistication of the work within addressed areas</li> </ul>
<b>8). Transparency and accountability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some GM elements are mandatory (self-imposed)</li> <li>• Incentives and/or sanctions are in place</li> <li>• GE is included in unit reports and assessment for internal monitoring</li> <li>• GE reporting is done and is publicly available</li> </ul>
<b>9). Institutional policymaking based on a robust understanding of GE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structured understanding of gender issues: differences versus inequalities, mechanisms, structures &amp; systems</li> <li>• Based on data analysis, consistent policies are designed</li> <li>• Contextualised GE and GM goals exist</li> </ul>
<b>10). Organisational culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GE is expressed as an organisational value, both formally and informally</li> <li>• Existence of gender inequality is acknowledged</li> <li>• Obstacles to GE/GM are addressed</li> </ul>
<b>11). Organisational governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender analysis is taken into account in strategic planning</li> <li>• Gender analysis is taken into account in internal monitoring</li> <li>• Gender analysis is taken into account in internal audits and institutional assessments</li> <li>• Gender-sensitive routines exist</li> <li>• Gender-specific routines exist</li> </ul>

Table 1. Impact drivers and examples of indicators

### Progressive approach

A progressive approach principle would be applied to the new Europe-wide GECAS. The philosophy behind the progressive approach is to:

- Offer an entry-level with a low threshold, not to exclude any organisation to apply for certification
- Create an incentive to continuously improve, in order to maintain the certification and ultimately to move to a “higher” level of certification

The system proposed would be based on credits comparable to what is used for students at universities. Credits would be given for actions on each of the modules: “horizontal” modules that are content related (e.g., the recommended areas of the EC; additional inequality grounds) and “vertical” modules which are linked to processes and progress towards institutional change. The end-result will also be a score <sup>11</sup> that defines the level of certification achieved and can show progression at the moment of renewal.

This system would allow a high level of flexibility. Offering an entry level with a low threshold means that applicants can apply based on a plan or intentions linked to a process-based assessment. Applicants would have to provide a GEP, but this plan would not necessarily need to be already implemented. This plan however would need to be based on evidence (data collection, a gender equality diagnosis/audit), and have been defined according to the principles described in 3.1.1 above.

<sup>11</sup> This score solely reflects the situation within the organisation and is not meant to be compared to that of other organisations. It merely serves as a benchmark for further progress towards institutional change and can be informative to organisations with regard to their overall current situation. It would not be made public but only used by the certification authority and the institution. The score is used to define the “level” of the certification, which is made public. Levels are based on thresholds that are reached.



To gain credits, and therefore move to higher levels, applicants would have to show progress on (part of) the following dimensions:

- Progress in **implementation**
- **Monitoring** and **evaluation** of the implementation and the evolution of outputs/outcomes (e.g., having concrete monitoring mechanisms in place and producing regular reports)
- **Expansion** of the scope of the plan (covering domains more in-depth = horizontal expansion)
- Actual **impacts** in concrete domains (impacts in each specific domain or process element, brings credits = vertical expansion)
- Overall impact and improvement at **institutional** level measured through the impact drivers.

#### **Harmonised approach:**

The scheme proposed in this scenario would be valid for all types of organisations, all countries and all levels of experience with GE. This would create a level playing field for the whole EU and beyond and correspond to the ambition of a harmonised approach and achieving convergence among Member States.

#### **Validity and renewal:**

The certification would have a short validity (2 years). At the end of the 2 years, the first certification would not be valid anymore unless it is renewed. Renewing a certification would only be possible if the score obtained is higher as the evaluation needs to demonstrate progress to qualify for a renewal. A four-year validity could be possible from the second renewal on and for institutions who reached a high level and/or have shown significant progress.

#### **Role of national authorities:**

Ideally, national authorities will promote the scheme and integrate it into their own R&I policy frameworks. They could also play an active role in promoting the scheme and in organising support activities for RPOs who apply for the scheme as described below. The network of national focal points set-up for GE and more particularly the changes in Horizon Europe, could be trained to play a role in the promotion and first line support to (potential) applicants.

#### **Voluntary scheme:**

As for the other scenarios, the new Europe-wide GECAS would be a voluntary scheme. Participants would never have the obligation to participate in the scheme, even if encouraged and incentivised by the EC's GE related criteria for funding.

### [3.1.5. Certified institutions](#)

#### **RPOs from the EU and associated countries**

Research performing organisations, whether they are universities or research centres, are the primary target of this new Europe-wide GECAS as is the case on both other scenarios.

It would be possible for departments and faculties to apply for the certification. This would only be possible if endorsed by the institution. This approach would incentivise departments of faculties who could obtain a higher score than the overall institution to apply separately, setting an example inside the organisation to follow.

#### **RFOs**



Research Funding Organisations have the potential to play a very significant role in promoting GE in the research and innovation eco-system. This is also earmarked in the EC's GE policy.

RFOs could apply to the scheme and obtain a certification along the same principles as described above. A first check was performed during the workshop with RFOs organised in the scenario development phase of CASPER where it was confirmed that the same structure and principles could be applied to RFOs. Only minor changes would be necessary, adding only a minor level of complexity to the scheme. During the validation phase, 13 RFOs were interviewed. Their responses confirmed both the feasibility as well as the positive attitude. When asked about the expected attitude of their organisation towards the adoption of a Europe-wide GECAS, the results are much higher than for RPOs: a mean value on a 1-5 scale of 4.2 compared with 3.8 for RPOs that do not yet participate in a certification.

As is the case of RPOs, the GEP, the GE policy, or a combination of both could be certified for RFOs. The same applies to the holistic and progressive approaches that would be used to increase the ambition and impact of the policies and GEPs proposed by RFO applicants for certification.

### **Private sector**

Private sector organisations that perform research and/or innovation activities would also be considered as a target group and will be able to apply for certification under this new Europe-wide GECAS.

A first check was done during a workshop with nine private organisations with diverse profiles. Participants included not-for profit and for-profit organisations from different sectors and size.

An important lesson learnt is that the scheme as foreseen for RPOs could also work for private sector organisations. Adaptations would be minor and add only marginal complexity to the scheme.

#### [3.1.6. Certifying authority](#)

Two options appear as feasible for this scenario:

- The European Commission would act as certifying authority, as it does for HRS4R today.
- A separate legal entity would be created at the initiative of the EC, that would act as the certifying authority. The advantages of the second option would be the possibility to involve other stakeholders in the governance structure and the possibility to generate income and use it to pay part of the costs of the scheme.

#### [3.1.7. Synergies with existing schemes](#)

RPOs which already have a certification or award could apply based on an equivalences system (to be set up) with the most important existing schemes (national or international): this could attribute an entry level for applicant RPOs already granted with other certifications/awards, either automatically or through a simplified procedure. Such equivalence would be attractive mainly to organisations who have a certification and are interested to obtain the new Europe-wide GECAS as well. They could do it with a small effort.

CASPER, through Task 3.5, has looked into the existing CAS and whether having a certification means compliance with the Horizon Europe eligibility criterion. This is a first step in the development of an equivalence system between schemes as proposed here. As described in the deliverable of this task (D3.5, not yet available), most existing CAS are looking into this compliance with the EC's eligibility criteria. Being compliant with these criteria would make the step towards the scheme of this scenario quite easy for organisations.



### 3.1.8. Support for applicants

Meeting the ambitions of the Europe-wide GECAS without organising a form of support to applicants would be difficult. This is particularly the case for “beginners”, institutions that have limited or no GE experience, are starting from scratch and have limited or no internal expertise available.

Organising support to applicants as scheme organiser is not an easy task as asking fees for support services would be considered as creating potential conflicts of interest, and as there are obvious limits as to the level of support that can be offered for free.

Still, a form of support can be foreseen within the design of the scheme itself. This is possible through e.g., the tools made available for self-evaluation, that can provide advice and be supportive of the process. It can be envisaged that reporting and feedback from external evaluators will be constructive and developmental to support and advise applicants and give them directions on how to improve in future (both if they were successful or not).

The scheme organiser can go a step further and also develop tutorials or webinars that can be put online, including trainings for core team members who plan to prepare the application.

The scheme organiser could also feed information and knowledge to organisations which provide advice to potential applicants: innovation agencies, organisations who take the role of national contact points (NCPs) for Horizon Europe as well as gender equality experts and trainers who offer their services to RPOs or applicants in general.

Member States could also take up a role in this support network by making sure that innovation agencies and NCPs develop the necessary expertise to provide support. This can also take the form of subsidising the cost of the services of innovation agencies, NCPs, as well as gender experts and independent trainers.

Organisations that have obtained the certification can also be incentivised to reach out to other organisations who want to apply. They can share their experience and offer advice. A mentoring programme is proposed as part of this scenario (see below in next section).

### 3.1.9. Incentives for applicants

**Link to funding:** through the inclusion of the GEP as part of the New Europe-wide GECAS certification, there is an indirect link to funding as the GEP is an eligibility criterion and GE is also an award and a ranking criterion as described above in Chapter 2. When this GECAS exists, RFOs could consider to “prioritise” organisations having the certification, e.g., by giving them precedence in case of ex aequo ranking in competitive calls. The EC is using this approach in Horizon Europe for the gender balance among the personnel named in a proposal, which is used as a ranking criterion to evaluate ex-aequo proposals. An alternative is to launch calls specifically for certified RPOs.

**‘Club of certified ones’/ ‘Champions of equality in Europe’:** it has been stated by several stakeholders along the process that a New Europe-wide GECAS can represent ‘prestige’ and recognition for the applicants and winners. A network of certified institutions can be created to share good practices. Members of this network would be stimulated to offer advice and mentoring to prospective applicants. The practice of mentoring could be taken up in the credit system at the moment of renewal of the certification to incentivise the more experienced to act as mentors for the less experienced.

**Publicity:** the awarding ceremony should be a public event that will gather the winners of each year, as an event to recognise the work done but also to facilitate networking among institutions. The event



would be held during a week that has a special significance or meaning for gender equality. A special moment during the ceremony can be dedicated to celebrate the winners, including a motivation for awarding that can guide future applicants.

### 3.1.10. Branding

It became clear from the very first activities of CASPER that for a GECAS to enhance organisational reputation, a strong brand (name and logo) is needed. The brand's endorsement (certification stamp) should be a tool to show recognition for the work done, to set the bar and raise the standard. Next to being proof of certification as such, it should give visibility to the individuals and collectives that advocate and administer the scheme, be a personal award for the change agents and show advantages for the individuals and not just the business case, e.g., in a yearly conference for dissemination of findings, methods, best practices and networking to celebrate small or bigger steps towards institutional change.

A strong brand will also help the new Europe-wide GECAS to stand out in the competitive field of certifications and awards.

This importance of branding was confirmed during the co-design of the new Europe-wide GECAS scenarios together with stakeholders and led to the definition of principles that should guide the branding creation. These principles are: easy to pronounce; short, clear and simple; self-explanatory (evoking the EU). The name should be appealing; gender sensitive; inclusive; non-ambiguous. Distinctiveness is expected.

Workshops with stakeholders led to the definition of key words to be used when developing the brand name.

The key words that appeared most often are:

Equality/Equity  
Inclusion - For All  
Europe / European

Other keywords were either mentioned more sporadically or subject to more discussion:

- Reference to Gender, Gender+, Intersectionality
- Excellence, quality (in), research, academia, science, talent
- Fairness

The brand name proposed for the new Europe-wide GECAS is EUQUAL as first choice and EUQUITAS and FAIR ERA as two potential alternatives.



### 3.2. Scenario 2: GES4R (as a sister scheme of the HRS4R)



#### 3.2.1. Principles

The European Charter for researchers is a “set of general principles and requirements which specifies roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers as well of employers and/or funders of researchers”<sup>12</sup>. Its principles are the following:

Applicable to researchers:

- Research Freedom
- Ethical principles
- Professional responsibility
- Professional attitude
- Contractual and legal obligations
- Accountability
- Good practice in research
- Dissemination, exploitation of results
- Public engagement
- Relation with supervisors
- Supervision and managerial duties
- Continuing Professional Development

Applicable to employers and funders:

- Recognition of the profession

<sup>12</sup> For more information, visit: <https://www.euraxess.es/spain/services/charter-code-researchers>.

- Non-discrimination
- Research environment
- Working conditions
- Stability and permanence of employment
- Funding and salaries
- Gender balance
- Career development
- Value of mobility
- Access to research training and continuous development
- Access to career advice
- Intellectual Property Rights
- Co-authorship
- Supervision
- Teaching
- Evaluation/appraisal systems
- Complaints/appeals
- Participation in decision-making bodies
- Recruitment

The code of conduct for the recruitment of researchers consists of “a set of general principles and requirements that should be followed by employers and/or funders when appointing or recruiting researchers”<sup>13</sup>. Its principles are the following:

- Recruitment
- Selection
- Transparency
- Judging merit
- Variations in the chronological order of CVs
- Recognition of mobility experience
- Recognition of qualifications
- Seniority
- Postdoctoral appointments

### 3.2.2. Certification or award system?

The HRS4R is a recognition award, which corresponds to a certification rather than an award (prize) and therefore the GES4R would be one as well.

This scenario stipulates an additional recognition award for those organisations that have endorsed the EU charter for researchers and the Code of conduct for recruitment of researchers. The Charter and Code would have to be adapted to include non-academic staff and students.

### 3.2.3. Content of the certification

The content of the scheme is based on the Charter and ensures that the building blocks and the recommended areas (content domains) as defined in the eligibility criterion for Horizon Europe are covered.

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<sup>13</sup> For more information, visit: <https://www.euraxess.es/spain/services/charter-code-researchers>.



This is on the one hand to ensure that certified organisations are automatically eligible for funding under Horizon Europe, but also –on the other– to ensure that both process and multiple domains of action are covered (as outcomes are not covered explicitly in this scenario).

Link with the GEP eligibility criterion:

### Process elements

**Two building blocks would be covered together with the HRS4R:** public commitment of the institution & dedicated resources.

**Two building blocks would be covered through the GES4R:** data collection and monitoring & capacity building.

### Domains covered

All of the five recommended areas (work-life balance and organisational culture; gender balance in leadership and decision-making; gender equality in recruitment and career progression; integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching; measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment) should be covered.

**Gender+ approach:** gender equality and non-discrimination are included in the HRS4R. Intersectionality would be included in the Charter of the GES4R. However, it should be noted that the HRS4R is under revision at the moment and a gender+ approach might be incorporated through policy modifications.

**Processes and policies:** in line with the HRS4R, processes and policies are considered; not outcomes.

**Application:** the application and evaluation are based on a gap analysis for different areas of action, translated into an action plan. This same principle would be applied to the GE areas of action, leading to a GEP which would be assessed on its potential towards institutional change and the Horizon Europe eligibility criterion.

### 3.2.4. Procedures

#### Validity for 3 years, renewable:

Renewal of the certification is based on absence of deterioration. If there is no change compared to the previous 3 years, the award stands. Progression beyond compliance/award is not incentivised.

#### Combination of self-assessment and peer review:

Self-assessment is coordinated by the HR department as for HRS4R, but for GES4R inputs would come from gender experts, whether internal or external.

#### Voluntary scheme:

As with the HRS4R, the GES4R is a voluntary process. Institutions should be aware that the HRS4R is a long-term commitment, which includes joint efforts and coordination with various internal and external stakeholder groups.

#### Harmonised approach:

This scenario, as well as the other scenarios, contributes to a harmonised approach to GE as this would be one scheme that is valid for all countries.





### 3.2.5. Certified institutions

Higher education institutions and RPOs from the EU and associated countries. This scheme would apply to the whole institution, not a department or faculty. The GES4R is always linked to HRS4R. An institution can get HRS4R award and not the GES4R, but not vice-versa.

RFOs can apply to the HRS4R and can also apply to the GES4R. This is not the case for private sector organisations.

### 3.2.6. Certifying authority

The certifying authority would be the EC as is today the case for HRS4R.

There would be a need to establish GES4R peer-review panels with GE experts that would complement the existing HRS4R panels.

### 3.2.7. Synergies with existing schemes

No specific synergies are envisioned for this scenario apart from the synergy with HRS4R.

### 3.2.8. Support

Support would be provided, as in the HRS4R, by national authorities through the Euraxess network, envisaging that Euraxess members are linked to gender experts in each country.

### 3.2.9. Incentives for applicants

For applicants already having the HRS4R, applying for the GES4R would be simpler and more convenient than applying for a completely different scheme.

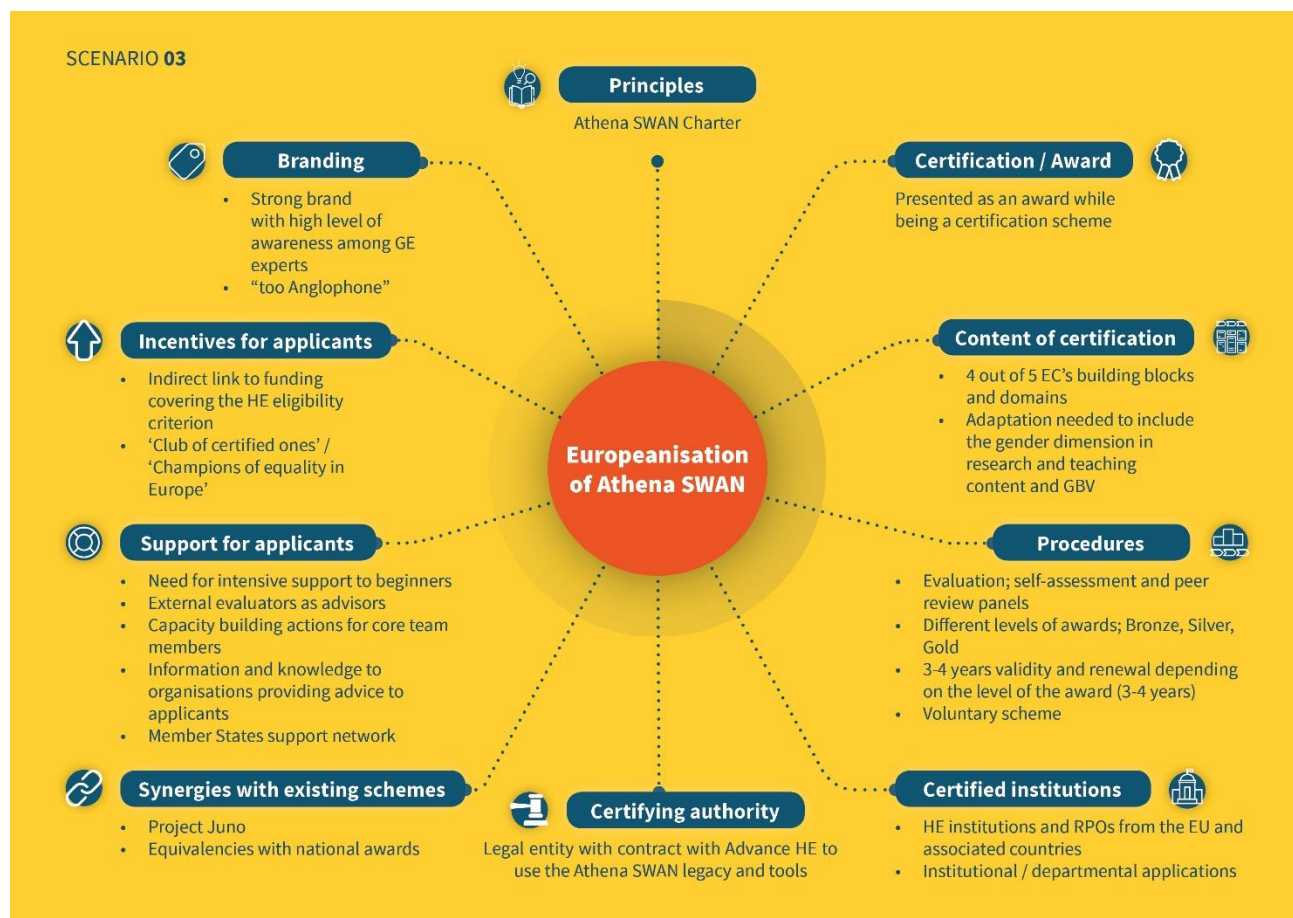
The same indirect link to funding exists for this scenario, as it does for the two other scenarios.

### 3.2.10. Branding

One of the most criticised aspects of the HRS4R during the different stages of CASPER was its branding: the difficulties to pronounce the name and its lack of simplicity. The name GES4R is a proposal based on the HRS4R branding. This name has the advantage to have a strong and clear link to the HRS4R scheme, but has the disadvantage to reproduce the same weaknesses.



### 3.3. Scenario 3: Europeanisation of Athena SWAN<sup>14</sup>



#### 3.3.1. Principles

The Athena SWAN Charter is based on ten key principles, which are stated below. They would most probably require some adaptation for a Europe-wide GECAS.

By being part of Athena SWAN, institutions commit to adopt these principles within their policies, practice, action plans and culture<sup>15</sup>:

1. *We acknowledge that academia cannot reach its full potential unless it can benefit from the talents of all.*
2. *We commit to advancing gender equality in academia, in particular, addressing the loss of women across the career pipeline and the absence of women from senior academic, professional and support roles.*
3. *We commit to addressing unequal gender representation across academic disciplines and professional and support functions. In this we recognise disciplinary differences including:*

<sup>14</sup> This scenario is based on the functioning of Athena SWAN UK before its transformation, which has been introduced in July 2021. More information can be found here: <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/equality-charters/transformed-uk-athena-swan-charter>.

<sup>15</sup> Information extracted from: <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan-charter>. Accessed on 16/07/2021.



- a. *the relative underrepresentation of women in senior roles in arts, humanities, social sciences, business and law (AHSSBL)*
  - b. *the particularly high loss rate of women in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine (STEMM)*
4. *We commit to tackling the gender pay gap.*
  5. *We commit to removing the obstacles faced by women, in particular, at major points of career development and progression including the transition from PhD into a sustainable academic career.*
  6. *We commit to addressing the negative consequences of using short-term contracts for the retention and progression of staff in academia, particularly women.*
  7. *We commit to tackling the discriminatory treatment often experienced by trans people.*
  8. *We acknowledge that advancing gender equality demands commitment and action from all levels of the organisation and in particular active leadership from those in senior roles.*
  9. *We commit to making and mainstreaming sustainable structural and cultural changes to advance gender equality, recognising that initiatives and actions that support individuals alone will not sufficiently advance equality.*
  10. *All individuals have identities shaped by several different factors. We commit to considering the intersection of gender and other factors wherever possible.*

### 3.3.2. Certification or award system?

Although Athena SWAN is called an award, though it is in fact a certification scheme on the basis of the definition <sup>16</sup> used in CASPER ([Deliverable 4.3](#)).

### 3.3.3. Content of the certification

In its current form, Athena SWAN covers three out five recommended areas. To better align with the thematic areas recommended by the EC, it would need adaptations to include the “integration of the gender dimension in research and teaching content” and to include “measures against gender-based violence” as an explicit requirement. This is considered as feasible. This is also the case for a Gender+ approach as the adaptation to include intersectionality is understood to be on-going (and already part of silver and gold levels).

There will be a direct link to the existence of the GEP as both the building blocks and recommended areas as defined by the European Commission for Horizon Europe would be covered in this Scenario if the changes suggested are implemented. However, this GECAS seeks to be more ambitious as is the case for scenario 1. Not only the GEP will be certified, but also policies and actions.

- **Process elements: all the process building blocks should be covered**
- **Domains covered: all the recommended areas should be covered**

<sup>16</sup> Charikleia Tzanakou, Shireen Chilcott, Kate Clayton-Hathway, & Anne Laure Humbert. (2020). Key prerequisites for a Europe-wide gender equality scheme. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4428168>



### 3.3.4. Procedures

#### **3-4 years validity and renewal:**

Depending on the level of the award: institutions/departments need to re-apply within 3 years or 5 years to renew the award.

#### **Voluntary scheme:**

Like Scenarios 1 and 2, application is on a voluntary basis.

#### **Evaluation:**

Following the design of Athena SWAN UK, this scenario proposes that the evaluation will be based on a combination of self-assessment and peer review. Athena SWAN Charter award applications are assessed by peer-review panels convened by the certifying authority and then recommend their decisions on awards to the latter. When assessing submissions, the panel expects to see evidence of a rigorous and thorough evaluation process. It considers the following themes at all levels of award: communication, senior or high-level commitment, effective analysis of the data, self-reflection and honest engagement (these processes align with the EC's building blocks). As described in [Deliverable 3.3](#), panellists also provide data in relation to the different sections in the application:

- Letter of endorsement;
- Description of the department/institution;
- Self-assessment process;
- A picture of department/institution (student data; academic staff data);
- Supporting and advancing women's careers (data for careers of staff, flexible working, organisation and culture);
- Case studies (for silver/gold);
- Further information and action plan.

#### **In reaching a decision on the appropriate level of award, panels consider:**

- ✓ the clarity of the evidence provided of what has been done and what is planned
- ✓ the rationale for what has been done and what is planned and how they link to the organisation's strategic mission and goals
- ✓ how successful the actions taken have been, how that success was measured and evaluated and how the organisation and the individuals who work in it have benefited
- ✓ the link between the data and the action plans
- ✓ the understanding of the institutional context/local circumstances and key issues demonstrated
- ✓ the significance of any changes, programmes/initiatives in terms of their anticipated outcomes, their sustainability and the likely longer-term impact on the organisation, its processes and its culture
- ✓ the level of input, investment, involvement, commitment and support from senior management, heads of departments, senior academics and research team leaders (men and women)
- ✓ consultation with input from all research academic staff (men and women), particularly encouraging women's participation
- ✓ the extent to which what was developed and introduced was different, innovative or particularly challenging



- ✓ the suitability and sustainability of what has been developed and the ease with which changes have been or are likely to become embedded in the organisational/ departmental culture
- ✓ the extent to which activities, programmes and changes have successfully addressed perceptions and expectations that shape or constrain career choices and outcomes
- ✓ the extent to which the value of what has been done is recognised, welcomed and valued by staff generally.

**Different levels:** following the design of Athena SWAN UK, this scenario proposes three different levels: Bronze, Silver and Gold. At Bronze and Silver level, institutions are expected to consider the role of the intersection of gender with ethnicity for both academic and professional and support staff. Self-assessment teams are expected to consider intersectionality in increased detail for the higher level of award. At Bronze level, if it is not possible for the institution to cover this within the application (i.e., because of lack of data), the panel will expect to see that appropriate actions have been put in place (i.e., actions to improve collection of data). At Silver level, an explanation of any actions implemented and their impact should be provided.

#### **Harmonised approach:**

This scenario, as well as the other scenarios, contributes to a harmonised approach to GE as this would be one scheme that is valid for all countries.

#### 3.3.5. Certified institutions

Departments, research institutes and universities can apply and be certified.

#### 3.3.6. Certifying authority

A separate certifying authority would need to be set up, comparable to the second option described for scenario 1. This legal entity would need to have a contract with Advance HE to be able to use the Athena SWAN legacy and tools.

#### 3.3.7. Synergies with existing schemes

Project Juno and Athena SWAN are reciprocal awards, meaning that when a department has achieved one, they can convert it to the other using existing paperwork provided that they are a Juno Supporter and the institution (where the department belongs) has achieved at least Athena SWAN Bronze. Both schemes have additional requirements which should be consulted<sup>17</sup>.

Equivalencies as envisaged in scenario 1 could therefore be possible in this scenario as well. This could lead to a simplified procedure for those who already have a national or international CAS. One can assume this equivalency would be automatic for organisations having a national Athena SWAN (like e.g. Irish RPOs).

#### 3.3.8. Support

The same principles for providing support as described for scenario 1 could be applicable to this scenario as well.

The main differences would be:

- The need for support to beginners would be probably higher than in scenario 1 as the threshold for beginners is higher in this scenario.
- The scheme is already designed, therefore support as part of the design of the scheme itself is already set (could of course still be improved).

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<sup>17</sup> See: [link](#) to the Athena Swan guidance and conversion forms to Bronze and Silver.



Other forms of support, like capacity-building actions, mutual exchange and setting-up a network of support agents are also applicable for this scenario (with a potential role for Member States).

### 3.3.9. Incentives for applicants

#### **Link to funding:**

Although a link to funding would be the strongest incentive for applicants, this is not foreseen, at least not directly. There is an indirect link as being certified would prove that the eligibility criterion for Horizon Europe is met, but RPOs do not need to obtain the certification to have a GEP that meets the eligibility criterion. When the award exists, RFOs could envisage to prioritise award winners, e.g., by giving them precedence in case of ex-aequo ranking in competitive calls, or launching calls specifically for certified RPOs. This could be the case by the EC as part of Horizon Europe, but also for other RPOs as part of their own GEPs, in order to stimulate RPOs to be more ambitious and pursue sustainable institutional change.

#### **‘Club of certified ones’/ ‘Champions of equality in Europe’:**

Having an Athena SWAN is comparable in prestige to the new Europe-wide GECAS as mentioned above in scenario 1. A network of certified institutions could also be created under this scenario to e.g., share good practices. Members of this network would be stimulated to offer advice and mentoring to prospective applicants.

### 3.3.10. Branding

Athena SWAN is a strong brand with a very high level of awareness among the GE experts, and a relatively high level of awareness among the R&I stakeholders. However, it is perceived by several stakeholders as not European as it originated in the UK and therefore a higher education system that can differ from other countries. This could create a barrier to the acceptance of the brand for a Europeanised scheme.



### 3.4. Scenario 4: No action (stimulation of development of national schemes)

The consortium recommends that the “no-action” scenario is interpreted as a scenario where no Europe-wide GECAS is developed, but where there would still be some actions from the EC, even if these are not linked to the creation of a Europe-wide scheme.

In this scenario the EC would pursue its GE objectives through the proactive stimulation of initiatives to launch national certification and award schemes.

One of the advantages of this approach is the flexibility to adapt schemes to the national contexts. This scenario entails two major risks:

- It would potentially reinforce existing differences in levels of application of GE measures and institutional change in EU Member States and associated countries.
- There could be major differences in the design and quality of the schemes developed at national level.

This means that activities in this scenario would concentrate on:

- Stimulating the creation of national schemes.
- Stimulating cooperation among the existing and new national schemes.
- Supporting the qualitative development of these schemes, including minimum standards to be applied.
- Supporting the exchanges between schemes and the coherence among the schemes and with the EC policy. An equivalency system to the Horizon Europe requirements could play a supportive role for this activity.

Today, only a limited number of Member States and associated countries have a national scheme that can be considered to be a GECAS for the R&I sector. This is the case for e.g. Ireland with Athena SWAN and Germany with TEQ. Several countries are considering or have started the process of developing their own scheme, including some that are considering the Athena SWAN model. Potential action lines for the EC could be to:

- Organise a technical assistance mechanism to assist MS and associated countries in developing their own scheme: making expertise available, developing common tools that can be used in schemes that are designed and developed at national level.
- Support Athena SWAN as a scheme which is successful in its internationalisation and is still expanding. The EC could assist the scheme organiser in adapting the scheme to national contexts and provide assistance in the roll-out of Athena SWAN schemes among Member States and associated countries.
- Provide financial assistance to cover part of the initial investment for the development of a scheme.

As for the quality and coherence of the schemes the EC could develop following actions:

- Organise mutual exchanges between scheme organisers and schemes under development.
- Promote standards to be integrated in the scheme design and procedures. These standards would be inspired on scenario 1 and include:
  - The inclusive approach (how to cover gender+ and intersectionality).
  - The holistic approach, to work both on processes and outcomes, but also to work in parallel on all domains and not on a selection of domains.



- The progressiveness: obtaining certification is possible with a relatively low threshold but using the certification to stimulate progress.
- The sustainability of the GE policy in the RPOs and the effectiveness of the institutional change.
- The targeting of RFOs and organisations of the private sector.
- Provide technical assistance, particularly to ensure the coherence of the schemes with the EC policies and the equivalence of the certifications and awards with the eligibility criterion in Horizon Europe (making sure certified organisations are automatically eligible).





## 4. Scenarios Assessment

The scenarios described in Chapter 3 have been adapted after the validation phase, but have not undergone major changes. The validation has shown that scenarios were perceived differently by different types of institutions and stakeholders for specific reasons. During a workshop in January 2022 with the involvement of all partners and members of the project Advisory Board, the conclusion and decision of the consortium was to maintain and even strengthen the differences of the scenarios. This decision is also based on the validation result that no scenario can actually be fit to cover all the situations and needs. This allows to maintain the trade-offs, even highlight them, to make choices clearer, also to orient policy recommendations (Deliverable 6.2).

Chapter 4 clarifies the results from the validation: overall with the SWOTs for each scenario, by region and by type of stakeholder. These results affect the expectations about impacts and feed the reflection on the recommendations linked to the scenarios.

### 4.1. SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis described below is the result of a step-by-step exercise that started at the end of 2020 as an internal exercise. After each step in the scenario development process, these SWOTs were updated. The results below are based on the final update integrating the results from the validation phase.

Some strengths and threats are shared by all three scenarios. They are mentioned in this introduction and not repeated for specific scenarios.

#### **Meta-level weaknesses across all three scenarios**

- Gender+/intersectional approach entailing complex problems for data collection and policy implementation
- Gender+/intersectional approach creating resistances in some countries for political aversion to inequality grounds such as LGBTQI
- GE focus creating resistances in some countries as seen as preferential treatment for women

#### **Meta-level threats across all three scenarios**

- Conflict with national regulations (e.g., data collection).
- Leadership's refusal to engage in the light of the Horizon Europe's GEP requirement, as perceived to be sufficient.
- Embedding the gender perspective in research content and teaching could be perceived as extra work for researchers.
- External/peer reviewers might be perceived as meddling in internal affairs from the outside.
- National support mechanisms making GE a topic of political will of the individual governments, create possible imbalances among countries.

Readers should take into account the nature of a SWOT as well as the process used to build them up. Scenarios that are based on existing schemes can have items that are influenced by the image of the existing schemes, which is not the case for scenario 1 and 4.

## SWOT SCENARIO 1

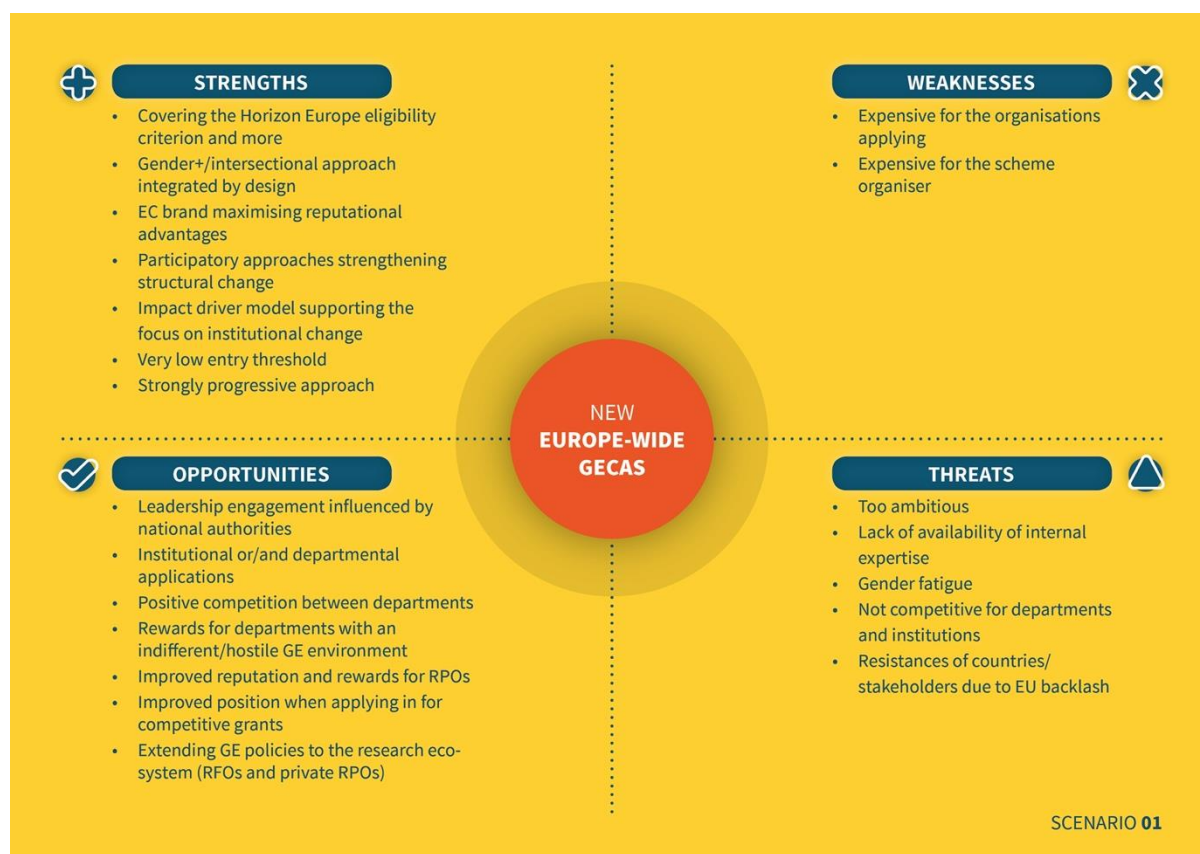


Figure 1. SWOT Scenario 1

## Strengths

- All the recommended policy areas and the mandatory building blocks that are part of GEP requirement of Horizon Europe programme are covered in this scheme. Some policy areas are defined more precisely and split.
- The scheme proposed in this scenario has been conceived from the start with a gender+/intersectional approach. Existing schemes have most often integrated these concepts after they were created through updates and adaptations.
- The branding of a GECAS is considered an important aspect for potential success. The fact that this scheme is associated directly with the European Commission is considered a strength by most.
- Different features of the scenario give it a much stronger focus on structural change than other scenarios: the participatory approaches embedded in the system, progression as a central feature and the innovative impact driver model provided.
- Participatory approaches are used to co-design measures, create support and take into account the expertise of users in developing concrete actions.
- The impact driver model aims to support change that is structural and therefore sustainable in the long term. This model is both a self-assessment tool, as well as a tool that can be used by external reviewers who play a role in the certification process.
- The scheme allows institutions with low experience in gender equality to apply and obtain the certification. The threshold is low in the sense that having a plan and intentions to execute the plan is sufficient to start. These good intentions will be assessed two years later and if sufficient progress can be demonstrated, the certification will be renewed.

- This progressive approach is also considered as a strength, because it puts the focus on continuous improvement. This allows to make the scheme attractive to both beginners and organisations that have long experience and significant achievements.
- The comprehensiveness and depth in terms of content strengthens this further, with the integration of both horizontal progression (covering more of the 8 domains) and vertical progression (deepening the measures, embedding the change and realising impacts).
- The fact that both processes and outcomes are considered in the assessment, provides a reward for creating a change process as well as the actual achievements reached and ultimately impacts obtained.
- Finally, the opportunities the scenario offers in terms of benchmarking and mutual learning is considered a strength.

### Weaknesses

- The scheme proposed in this scenario is perceived as heavy in terms of utilisation of resources for the applicants: time, therefore salary cost, management attention, money to finance concrete actions.
- The scenario is also considered as expensive for the scheme organiser. It would mean a significant investment as the scheme has to be developed from scratch and would be expensive to run. It would also be more expensive to manage compared to other schemes mainly because the external independent experts that would be contracted to verify the applications would be paid.
- The fact this scenario might “reinvent the wheel” is considered both as a risk as well as a weakness.

### Opportunities

- Joining this scheme is considered as an opportunity as it is an undisputable proof of meeting the GEP eligibility criterion of Horizon Europe.
- This scheme provides direct support by national authorities which is considered as additional help to convince the leadership of RPOs to engage in GE actions.
- This scenario is considered as an opportunity to harmonise and create common standards across Europe strengthening and embedding the already required GEPs in a wider context and lead to more adherence in the monitoring of their implementation.
- Benefits for less advanced countries/institutions will be high, such as improved reputation, continued access to funding, and impacting real institutional change in terms of GE (and rewarding existing efforts). At the same time, existing efforts and achievements will also be rewarded facilitating the exchange and opportunity to learn from other institutions.
- The scheme offers the possibility to RFOs to prioritise certified institutions (e.g. in case of ex-aequo for competitive calls/grants), creating the opportunity to get support through the scheme in accessing funding.
- The scheme can increase the ambitions of those already advanced (e.g. progression through different levels of certification), through the requirement for continuous progression.
- The scheme allows the possibility to apply both at the level of the whole institution and Department/Faculty, triggering positive competition between departments.
- This scenario was designed considering a possible future extension to Research Funding Organisations. Private sector organisations that perform research and/or innovation activities would also be considered as a target group and would be able to apply for certification under this scheme.

- This scenario is ranking highest in respondents' comparative holistic assessment: for institutional choice; for potential for long-term institutional change; as well as when considering all potential benefits for institutions.

**Threats**

- This scenario is considered by some as overly ambitious and challenging particularly for institutions that are less advanced.
- Gender fatigue in general and particularly for RPOs in countries with existing schemes could be considered as a threat leading to internal resistances and/or lack of engagement.
- EU backlash and national sensitivities (countries/stakeholders that are resistant to the EU and its initiatives).
- The scheme expects a lot of actions where expertise in gender and institutional change is needed such as diagnostic actions, co-creation of measures or capacity-building. Lack of internal expertise especially in countries/institutions with less experience might be a hindrance.

## SWOT SCENARIO 2

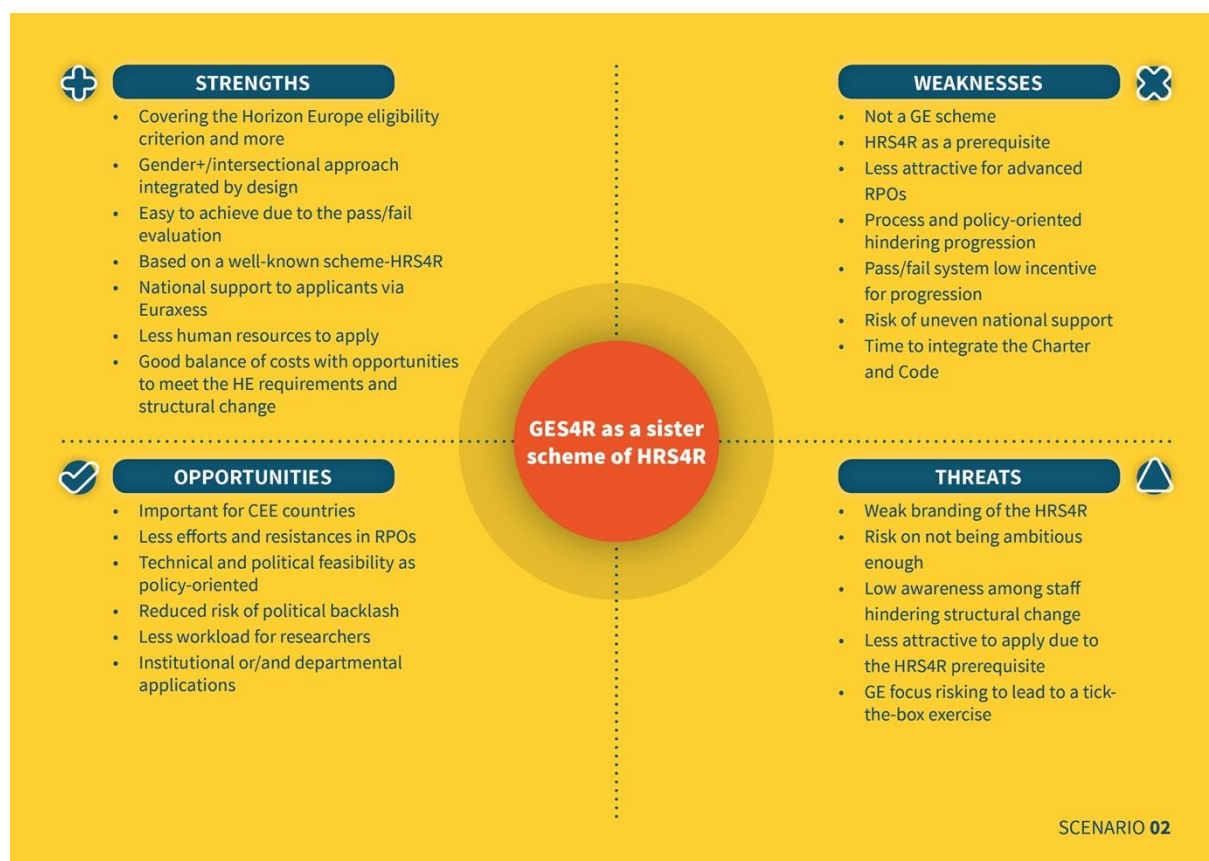


Figure 2. SWOT Scenario 2

## Strengths

- All the recommended policy areas and the mandatory building blocks that are part of GEP requirement of Horizon Europe programme are covered in this scheme. Some policy areas are defined more precisely and split.
- The scheme proposed in this scenario has been conceived from the start with a gender+ and an intersectional approach. Existing schemes have most often integrated these concepts after they were created through updates and adaptations.
- The evaluation of this scheme is based on a simple pass/fail system with no differentiated level of achievement, which is perceived as easier to achieve.
- The scheme is based on an already existing well-known scheme – HRS4R considering the pre-existing knowledge and expertise as timesaving and cost effective in terms of expenses and human resources for organisations.
- Provision for national support to applicants is provided by national authorities through the Euraxess initiative which is already in place.
- The scheme is a good trade-off to balance the availability of financial resources, the possibility to meet the Horizon Europe requirements and the efforts for structural change.

## Weaknesses

- To acquire the GES4R, organisations need to HRS4R as a prerequisite.
- The HRS4R brand lacks attractiveness for more advanced organisations focusing only on process and policy hindering staff involvement and continuous progression.

- The pass/fail evaluation system is considered as a static approach without incentives for progression.
- The provision for support to applicants provided by national authorities through Euraxess is placing the risk of being uneven across countries, increasing already existing gaps.
- From the supply side, this scheme requires time to integrate the Charter and Code for organisations that have not in place HRS4R.

### Opportunities

- Joining this scheme is considered as an opportunity to acquire support to meet the mandatory building blocks that are part of Horizon Europe GEP requirement.
- This scenario is considered as an opportunity to harmonise and create common standards across Europe strengthening and embedding the already required GEPs in a wider context and lead to more adherence in the monitoring of their implementation.
- This is an important scheme for CEE countries that emphasise the reputational benefits and the expectation of a higher level of (national) political support or a lower risk of barriers to be expected from the national (political) level.
- As an existing scheme the familiarity with HRS4R for some organisation is reducing efforts in terms of human resources and resistances within the organisations.
- The assessment of this scheme is based on processes rather than policies which is perceived as more feasible from outcome-oriented evaluations.
- Any political backlash due to gender is prevented as the scheme focuses on HR policy.
- In terms of human resources and workload, the implementation is mostly managed by HR departments avoiding overload on research staff.
- The scheme allows the possibility of applying only at the level of the whole institution making the process simpler and centralised and maximising the impact of the scheme as coming from the highest level.
- This scheme is ranking the highest in respondents' comparative assessment for both technical and political feasibility and the lowest in respondents' assessment of most expected obstacles.

### Threats

- This scheme is a sister scheme to the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers so the responsible staff is mainly the HR which might result in low awareness of HRS4R among the staff which could hinder structural change.
- In order to join this scheme, there is a prerequisite of first having to apply to HRS4R which could discourage some organisations from joining.
- This scenario integrates the gender equality focus to the existing HRS4R, risking the creation of a perception that it is an "add-on", and therefore treated as a tick-the-box exercise.
- The scheme lacks a participatory approach and the focus on HR staff risks excluding research staff from the certification process and treat gender equality in an overly technical way.
- The wider target of the GES4R includes the involvement of non-academic staff and students which might be challenging for some institutions with the HRS4R in place.
- This scenario has a centralised approach, which in larger institutions might mean that actions decided on centrally are not well disseminated at all levels.
- The simple pass/fail evaluation makes it an unambitious/unattractive scenario for more advanced organisations, while it is also potentially discouraging for less experienced RPOs.
- This scenario is ranking lowest in the assessment of all potential benefits for institutions and for potential for long-term institutional change.

## SWOT SCENARIO 3

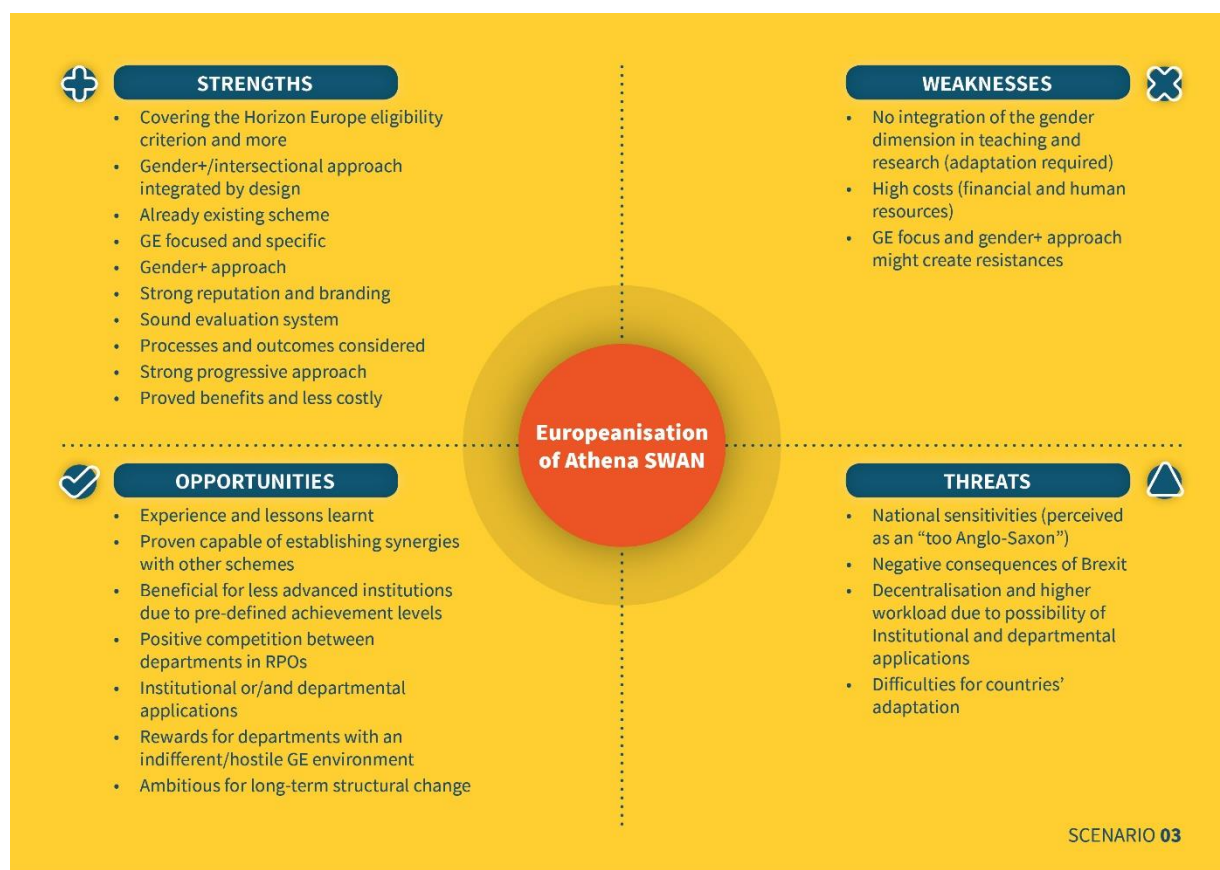


Figure 3. SWOT Scenario 3

## Strengths

- All the recommended policy areas and the mandatory building blocks that are part of GEP requirement of Horizon Europe programme are (potentially) covered in this scheme.
- This scheme is already in existence thus it is tested with proven results. There are support materials and mechanisms already in place with pre-existing knowledge and expertise, making it easier for less advanced countries to apply relying on a community of practice.
- This scenario would have the advantage over the other scenarios of being based on benchmarks already available from other organisations awarded with Athena SWAN and facilitating “cross-country comparisons”.
- This scheme can be an effective driver for institutional change with a strong focus on gender equality that it covers many content areas.
- Athena SWAN includes a participatory approach providing a greater sense of ownership and strengthening structural change.
- The progressive approach is considered very interesting, as a stimulus and an incentive through predefined levels.
- This scheme has a strong reputation and good branding as it is understood both as being well known and recognised in Europe, and as already familiar to many stakeholders.
- From the supply side, thinking of a cost/benefit ratio, especially from the point of view of workload and costs, it is possible that the adaptation of an already existing and functioning tool on a European scale which has already proven to work and should be adapted to the local context, requires less resources for implementation, while benefits are proven.

- This scenario evaluates and assesses both processes and outcomes which is considered as a positive aspect for effective institutional change.

### Weaknesses

- Athena SWAN as an existing scheme might not effectively capture new relevant priorities in the GE field. A recent example is the alignment with the EC's thematic areas, but such a situation can occur again in future.
- The absence of the gender dimension in research and teaching content in the original Athena SWAN formulation requires the adaptation of the original model to address the policy area of the integration of this dimension.
- This scenario ranks higher in the assessment of costs in financial and human resources needed to apply and set it up with an emphasis on data collection and heavy administrative work which might contribute to a tick-the-box approach and reduce the potential benefits.

### Opportunities

- Joining this scheme is considered as an opportunity to acquire support to meet the mandatory building blocks that are part of Horizon Europe GEP requirements.
- This scenario is considered as an opportunity to harmonise and create common standards across Europe strengthening and embedding the already required GEPs in a wider context and lead to more adherence in the monitoring of their implementation.
- This scheme provides the possibility to rely on extensive support materials and mechanisms already in place with pre-existing knowledge and expertise, making it easier for less advanced countries to apply relying on a community of practice.
- This scenario provides the possibility to apply both at the level of the whole institution and Department/Faculty level potentially triggering positive competition between departments.
- Athena SWAN ranks higher in the assessment of most potential benefits for institutions and the potential for long-term institutional change.
- The Europeanisation of the scheme will make the certification seem more in line with the European harmonisation (Bologna process) and less geared to a specific higher education model (UK/US).
- As an existing scheme, the familiarity with the processes is reducing efforts and potential resistances, while the predefined achievement levels could benefit less advanced organisation.
- Synergy with Athena SWAN thanks to "natural" equivalence of awards: RPOs that do have Athena SWAN (UK and Ireland), would very easily receive the certification from the European Athena SWAN with a simple equivalency arrangement.

### Threats

- The Athena SWAN framework is conceived for a UK/US higher education system. The scheme could be perceived as imposing standards and practices failing to get connected to national sensitivities including differences in the approach and terminology when translating and transferring material to local context without taking into account other education systems with different cultural perspectives.
- This scenario provides the possibility to apply both at the level of the whole institution and Department/Faculty level which might lead to decentralisation and higher workload.
- This scheme offers different certification level which could increase inequalities between organisations with different resources and capacities with a risk of discrimination against less advanced organisation.



- 
- This scenario is ranking lowest in the comparative assessment for political feasibility, connected with the UK connotation of the brand and highest in expected obstacles for data collection and compatibility with national regulations.
  - Due to Brexit and its aftermath, the Europeanisation of Athena SWAN could be suffering from both its political unpopularity and its origin in a specific country, which could make its reception more delicate in others.

## SWOT SCENARIO 4

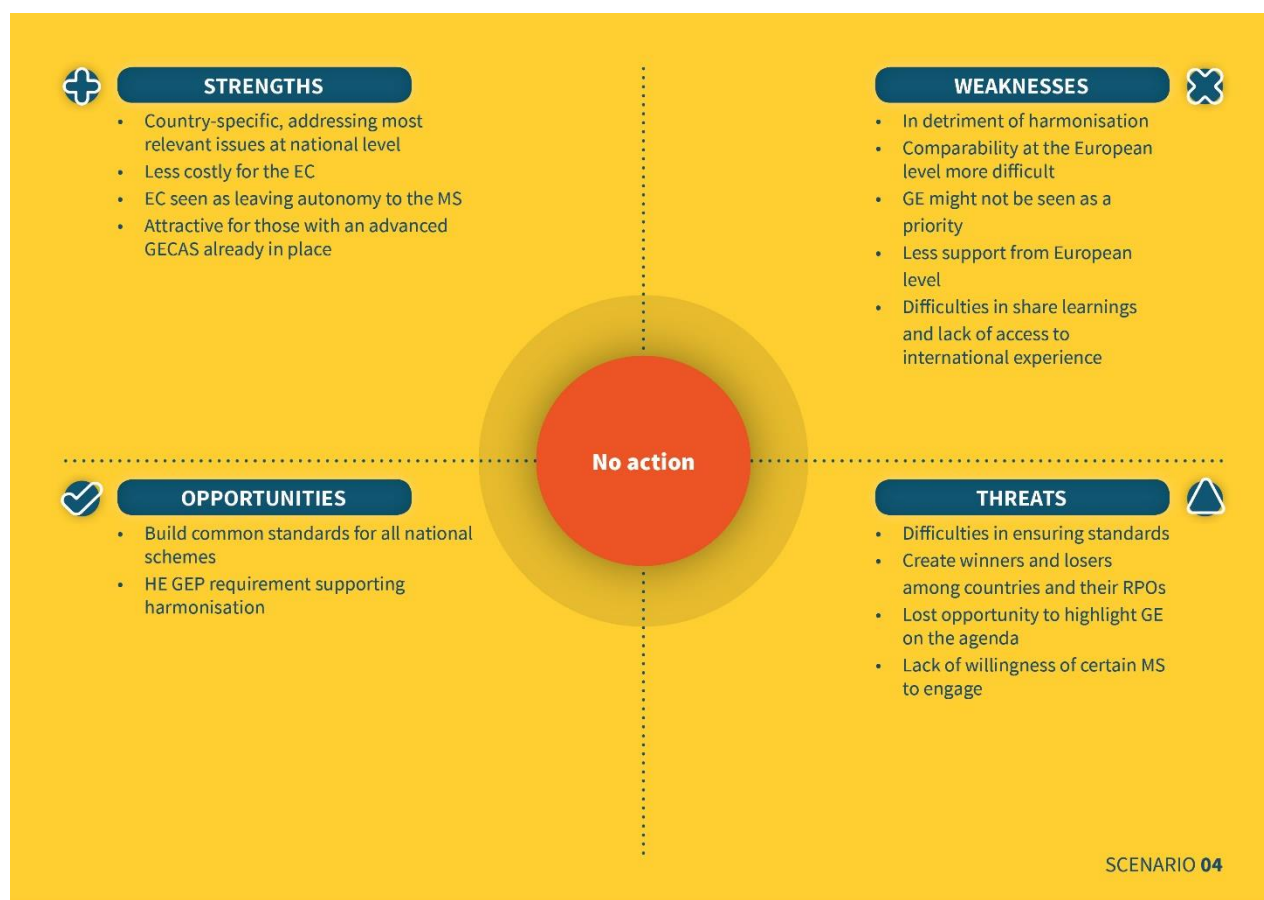


Figure 4. SWOT Scenario 4

### Strengths

- The possible advantages of not promoting a European-level scheme but supporting the Member States and associated countries in setting up and managing a national certification system that addresses the most relevant issues at national level, tailoring the scheme to national characteristics and priorities.
- Adapting existing schemes to national contexts and frameworks is challenging, while with this no direct-action scenario, there are no problems of compatibility with legal frameworks.
- In this scenario, the EC is seen as leaving a degree of autonomy to the different Member States, which might reduce resistances from national authorities.
- This scenario is attractive for those more advanced in an involvement with an existing GECAS already in place.
- From the supply side, this scenario is less costly for the EC as it transfers the responsibility to the Member States and Associated Countries.

### Weaknesses

- In this scenario, the Member States and associated countries might not be willing to engage with harmonisation efforts. This lack of consistency across European countries, where some would continue to progress more than others will probably increase the differences among Member States.

- The different national schemes would make comparability at the European level more difficult especially in terms of assessing progress/benchmarking or providing transparency to researchers who wish to inform themselves about the GE conditions.
- Since this scenario relies on national specificities and actions, less support could be provided from the European Commission. At the same time, it would be more difficult to access international experience and share learnings.
- Acknowledgement and recognition attached to the European Commission would be a lost opportunity with reputational issues and lack of prestige.

### **Opportunities**

- The no direct action scenario brings the opportunity to build common standards that all national schemes have to follow.
- The mandatory building blocks that are part of Horizon Europe GEP requirements could be a leverage to support harmonisation of national schemes.

### **Threats**

- In this scenario, the lack of assessment mechanism at EU level could potentially lead to investing fewer resources in the scheme and therefore to gender equality work within organisations.
- This scenario risks the creation of imbalances among countries and RPOs with winners and losers.
- National schemes would need to reduce resistances from national RPO leaderships which might risk effectiveness over reducing resistances.
- This scenario would be a lost opportunity to raise the importance of equality issues in national/European agendas.

## 4.2. Regional differences in attractiveness of the scenarios

This section describes the regional differences in attractiveness of the four proposed scenarios, as indicated by the collected answers and rankings of respondents from the six different (macro-)regions. These six regions – comprising of the Nordic countries, the UK and Ireland, Mediterranean, Central-West, Central-East, and the Balkans – are compared for each of the scenarios. As a point of reference, the New Europe-wide GECAS scenario was ranked first in terms of attractiveness when taking the mean value of all respondents, followed by the GES4R scenario and the Europeanisation of Athena SWAN scenario. The no-action scenario came in last place, well below the three other scenarios. These rankings are visualised in Figure 5 below, also in descending order.

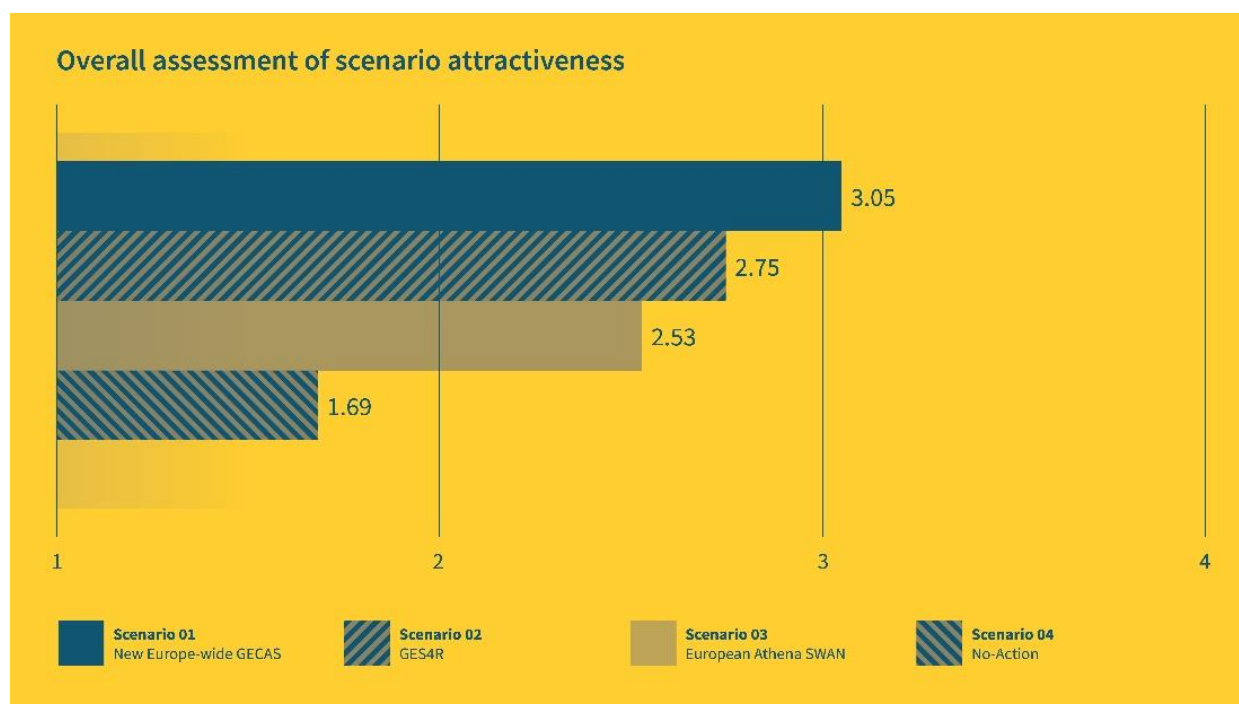


Figure 5. Overall assessment of scenario attractiveness [Scenario 1 = New Europe-wide GECAS; Scenario 2 = GES4R; Scenario 3 = European Athena SWAN; Scenario 4 = No-action]

However, looking at the perceived technical and political feasibility, GES4R is ranked first for both, and the New Europe-wide GECAS scenario comes in second. The no-action scenario shares this second place for political feasibility, but comes in the last place for technical feasibility, with Athena SWAN taking up the fourth and third places, respectively. Figure 6 below reflects these findings

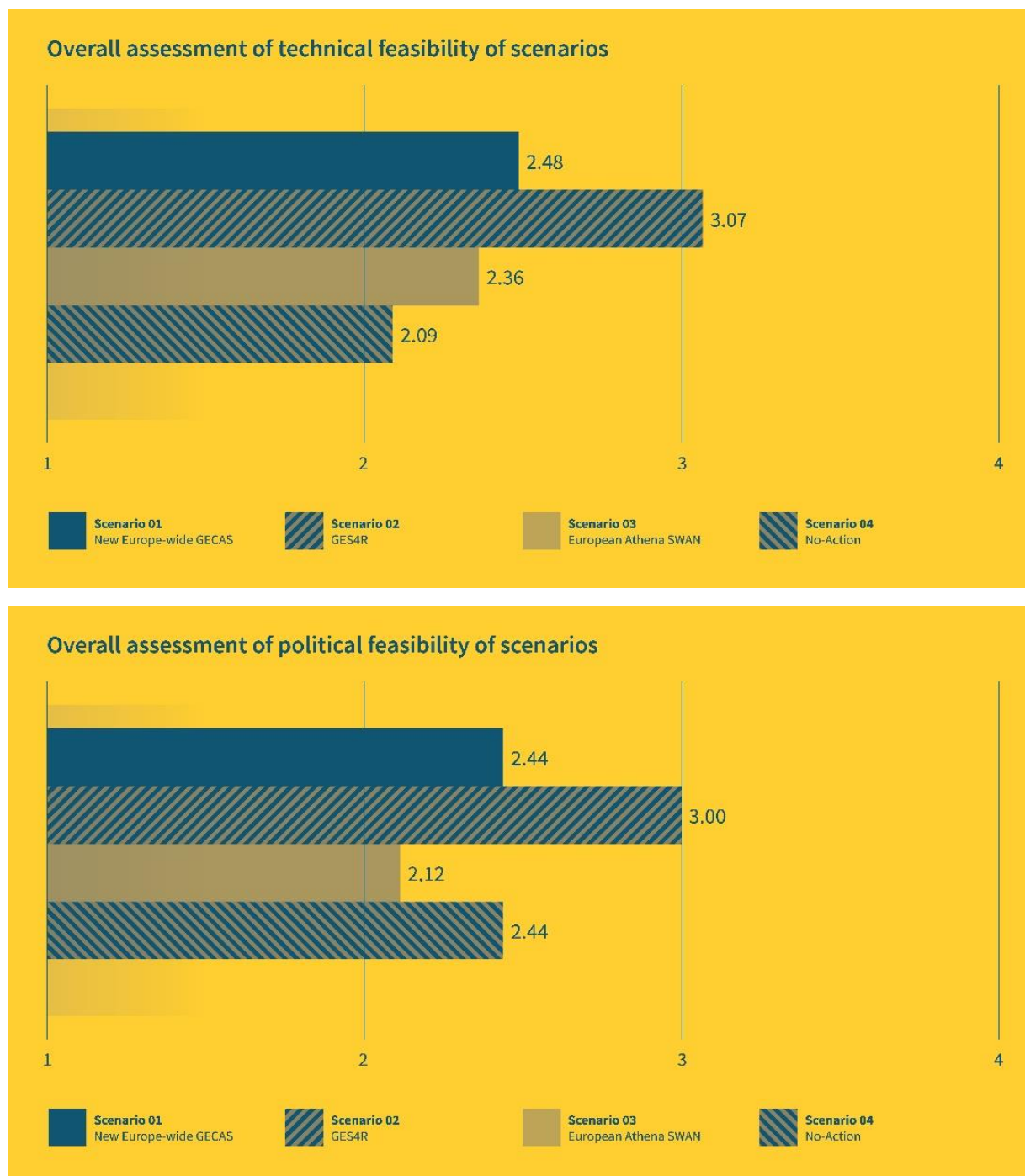


Figure 6. Overall assessment of technical feasibility (above) and political feasibility (below) of scenarios [Scenario 1 = New Europe-wide GECAS; Scenario 2 = GES4R; Scenario 3 = European Athena SWAN; Scenario 4 = No-action]

Zooming in on the New Europe-wide GECAS scenario in the upper left corner of Figure 7 below, we can see that it is consistently highly rated across the regions, with the Mediterranean region strongly preferring this scenario over the three others and ranking it very highly. Elements assessed as favourable by respondents from this region include the potential for long-term change, the inclusion of an outcome evaluation, the participatory approach, the EC brand and reputation associated with the scenario, and the possibility of also applying the scenario at a department/faculty level, with only the workload and needed effort on data collection cited as drawbacks, the possibility of also applying the scenario at a department/faculty level, with only the workload and needed effort on data collection cited as drawbacks.

The Nordic, Central-West, and Balkan regions also display high rankings for the Europe-wide GECAS scenario, albeit somewhat lower than the Mediterranean region. The Central-East and, especially, the UK and Ireland regions rank this scenario lowest, although they would still prefer it over, say, a no-action scenario. On top of the aforementioned negatives, these regions also indicate, among others, the associated costs, conflicts with national regulations, and the further stress on competition in higher education as cons.

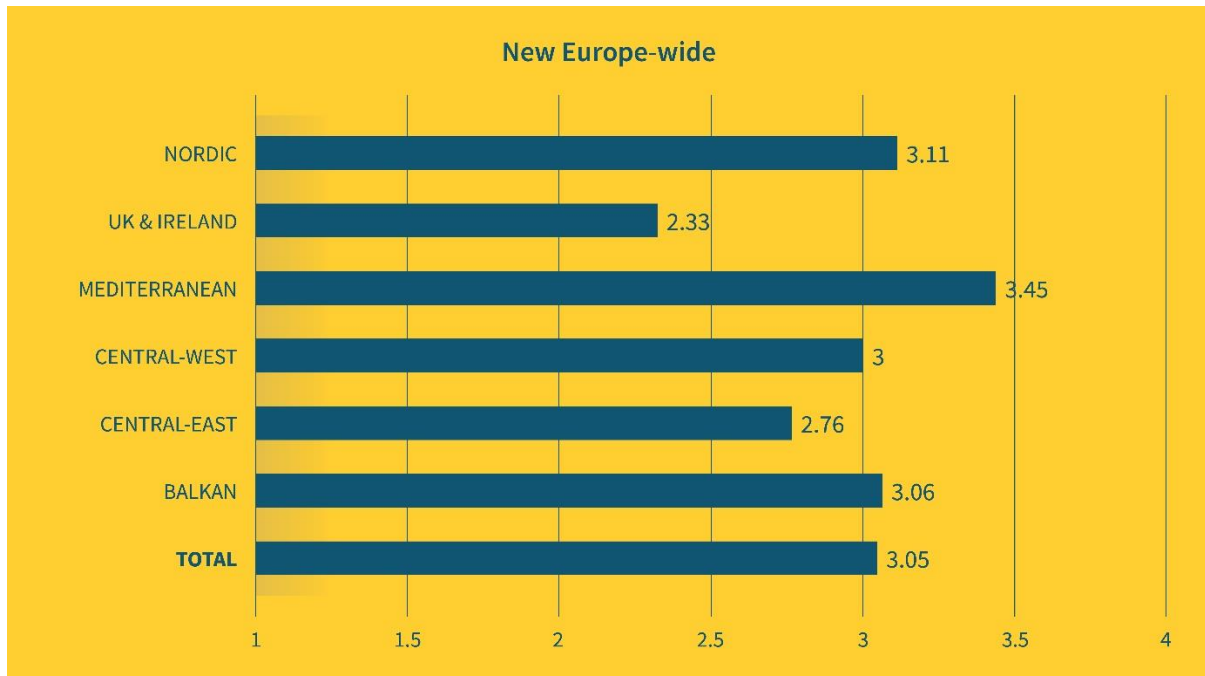


Figure 7. Assessments by macro-region of the four scenarios: New Europe-wide GECAS



Figure 8. Assessments by macro-region of the four scenarios: GES4R

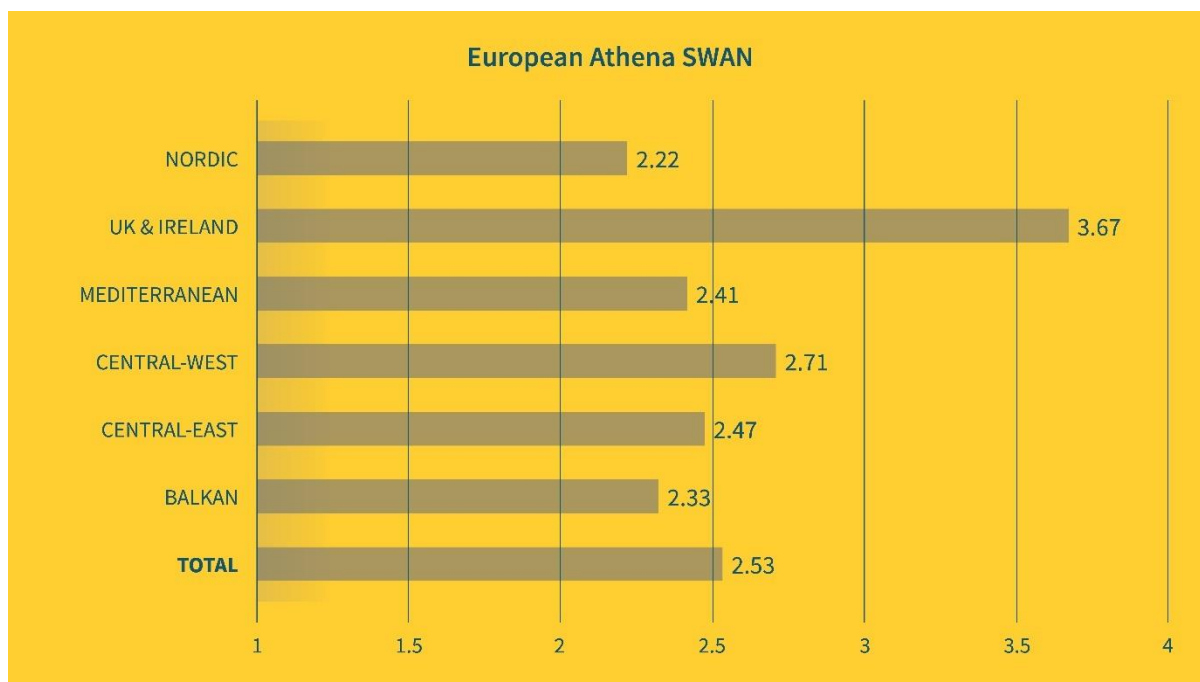


Figure 9. Assessments by macro-region of the four scenarios: European Athena SWAN

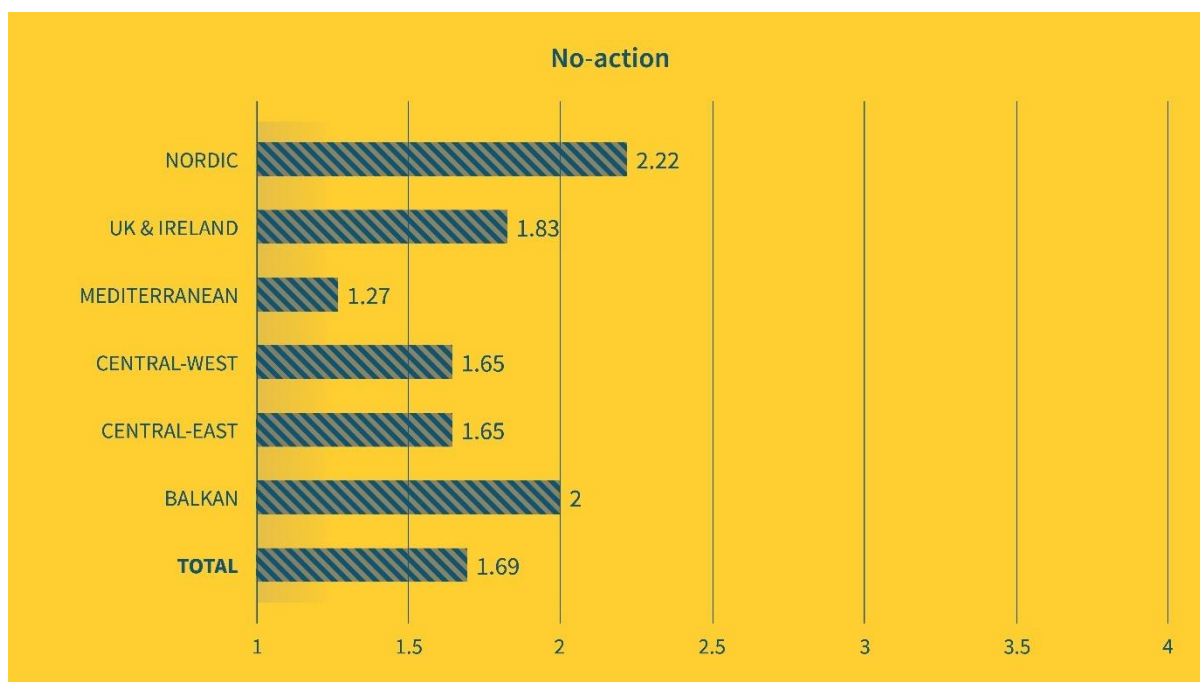


Figure 10. Assessments by macro-region of the four scenarios: No-action

As for the GES4R scenario, represented in Figure 8, it is generally rated lower than the New Europe-wide scenario, but it still scores relatively well. The Central-East region is most in favour of it and prefers it over all other scenarios, specifying, for instance, the connection with the HRS4R brand, the absence of an outcome evaluation, the potential for long-term change, and the support from Euraxess structures as important advantages in their region.

Slightly lower ratings were given by the Mediterranean, Central-West, and Balkan regions, but the Nordics as well as the UK and Ireland assigned quite low scores. These latter regions generally see GES4R in a significantly different light, citing as negative factors: a low potential for change, the

absence of an outcome evaluation, the need to have HRS4R as a prerequisite and the focus on HR staff, and the lack of attractiveness of the HRS4R brand.

The Europeanisation of Athena SWAN scenario, in Figure 9, is clearly and strongly preferred by the UK and Ireland region over the other scenarios. Reasons given include the fact that the scheme has already been tested with proven results, their familiarity with the scheme, the inclusion of an outcome evaluation, the strong brand/reputation, the possibility of also applying the scenario at the department/faculty level, the easy equivalence system with Athena SWAN, and the fact that support materials and communities of practice are already in place.

To a lesser extent, the Central-West region is also in favour of this scenario for similar reasons. However, the Nordic, Mediterranean, Central-East, and Balkan regions are less enthusiastic, highlighting, among other reasons, the workload and needed effort on data collection, the associated costs, the possible conflicts with national regulations, the strong need for internal expertise, and national sensitivities towards importing a national scheme.

Lastly, the no-action scenario, in Figure 10, attracts the lowest ratings by a significant margin, though there are still regions that seem to be more favourably inclined than others. The Nordic region seems to have the most positive attitude, which could (partly) be due to this region's already advanced GE measures. The consistency with national legal frameworks and the ease of aligning this scenario with schemes and GE provisions already in place are cited as positive factors.

The Balkan region is also, relative to the other regions, more favourably inclined towards a no-action scenario. The UK and Ireland, Central-West, Central-East, and (in particular) Mediterranean regions assign low ratings to this last scenario, for reasons that include the lack of consistency and widening gaps across European countries, less willingness of countries to engage in harmonisation efforts, the perception of tick-the-box exercises, and the lack of an EC brand (and thus less reputational advantages).



### 4.3. Analysis of potential impact of the different scenarios in the new policy context

The reflections in this section try to anticipate the future and the potential behaviour of stakeholders in reaction to the hypothetical scenarios. Even if these reflections are based on the results of the validation phase, they should be considered as scenario assumptions and hypotheses of the CASPER research team.

#### 4.3.1 How will research performing organisations react to this new policy? ‘Box ticking exercise’ or sustainable institutional change?

Today, only a minority of the RPOs that participate in H2020 would meet the eligibility criterion. This means that universities and research centres for whom the eligibility criterion will apply from 2022 onwards need to develop a GEP soon. Meeting an eligibility criterion is a box ticking exercise: either they meet the criterion (tick the box) or not. If not, organisations are not eligible and the submitted proposal will not be evaluated. The pressure is therefore high on thousands of organisations to develop a GEP and not to miss the opportunity to participate in Horizon Europe projects.

Because of the urgency, one can expect that most organisations will make sure they meet the criterion, without necessarily paying attention to the quality of their GEP or the role it can play in effecting gender structural change in their organisation. The problem with this type of reaction is that the way the eligibility criterion is formulated shows a high level of ambition from the EC. The Commission does not expect a tick-the-box exercise but aims for RPOs to adopt a GEP as a first step towards an institutional change process that is sustainable in the long term. What will happen with those RPOs that have set up a plan, got top-management support, advertised the plan on their website, but fail to implement most of the planned actions? Or to those that cannot show actual progress or impact?

We can expect two main types reactions (and, more likely, several situations in between):

- RPOs will develop a GEP rapidly to meet the criteria without leveraging on internal or external expertise and involving the whole organisation. The GEP will remain a plan of good intentions with little or no concrete impact in the next years.
- RPOs will develop a GEP using internal (and/or external) expertise and involvement of (parts) of the organisation. This plan will be implemented with (variable) success, will face resistances, and will be revised over time taking into account the experience of first implementation.

What is still uncertain is how the EC will react to the behaviour of RPOs. One can expect that reactions of the first type will face a sanction, probably losing the eligibility for future projects or even having to withdraw from funded projects. The target group for the scenarios are for sure the organisations who have the second type of reaction as described above. These can potentially be motivated to invest in a certification on top of developing their GEP.

#### **What does this mean for the different scenarios?**

Successful certification means an investment for a RPO compared to simply developing a GEP that meets the eligibility criterion. Many organisations will therefore not consider it. Some of the arguments that can lead RPOs to still make this additional investment are:

- The certification as a boost for institutional change: the ambition of the RPO to indeed launch a process of institutional change leading to more GE. This ambition and initiative can come from the management, from the research or grants office, or it can come from feminist scholars/activists

that see the window of opportunity created and use the eligibility criterion argument to start this process.

- The certification as an insurance: being certified provides a proof that the eligibility criterion is met. The first moment of verification of the eligibility criterion is when preparing the signature of the Grant Agreement. Having a certification should make this process smooth. A second moment of verification is the audits that the EC is likely to set up. Again in this situation, the certification will be a proof of eligibility, making the audit even redundant.
- The certification as a differentiating factor: the RPO becomes more attractive to other partners when building consortia. The message to potential partners is that “we are a responsible and professional organisation when it comes to funding and we act seriously and meaningfully to what is being asked” and that with us there are “no risks of having problems” during grant negotiation or project execution.

All three scenarios will help RPOs to achieve their objective to prove they are not only meeting the eligibility criterion, but assuring excellence in gender equality and therefore also in research. At first sight, this might appear as equal for all three scenarios, but scenarios 1 and 2 have an advantage in terms of low threshold:

- Scenario 2 is a certification that is relatively simple to obtain, particularly for organisations (hundreds) who have already HRS4R. The threshold is therefore low. There is also no need to show improvements to obtain a renewal, making the long-term impact safe.
- Scenario 1 has been designed to also have a low threshold for less experienced organisations. A challenging key point is however that this scheme expects progression. Demonstrating progression can however be postponed to the first renewal after two years.

#### 4.3.2 How will research funding organisations react?

Most RFOs are not directly concerned by the GEP eligibility criterion, as they are not getting funds from the EC, although some national RFOs do participate in projects funded by the EC and are now developing GEPs. This will trigger a process of developing GEPs by RFOs also due to the "role model function" of the EC as the largest funding organisation in the EU. Not all, but many of the applicants to national, regional or sectoral RFOs will have invested in a GEP and its implementation and will be interested to see this also recognised at national or regional levels.

A distinction needs to be made between three types of GE policies that RFOs can develop:

- A policy addressing the internal functioning of the organisation. This includes, like for the RPOs both the processes and the content areas (with the exception of the inclusion of the gender dimension in teaching); but also aspects which are specific to RFOs such as training and practices to ensure more gender balanced outcomes for evaluations and grants, or the gender balance in evaluation panels.
- A policy targeted at the beneficiaries, the organisations that apply for funds (e.g., eligibility, award and ranking criteria).
- A combination of both.

RFOs developing their own GEP would correspond to the third type of policy. RFOs following the example of the EC could develop a policy of the second type as they would be acting on the criteria used to evaluate proposals, or the eligibility of beneficiaries.

One of the interesting results of the workshop<sup>18</sup> that was organised as part of CASPER with seven pioneering RFOs is the willingness of this group to apply for certification if this is possible. Today, applying for HRS4R is possible for RFOs already. If a new Europe-wide GECAS is put into motion, most of the RFOs that have already started a GE policy would therefore most probably apply for the certification. This could trigger a snowball-effect by this group of early adopters and put additional pressure on the other actors of the R&I ecosystem. The interviews with a sample of 13 RFOs during the validation phase have confirmed the high willingness of RFOs to both develop a GEP and consider certification.

Only Scenarios 1 and 2 contemplate a certification or award for RFOs. RFOs that already have or are considering the HRS4R Charter and Code, would probably react more favourably to Scenario 2, but only very few RFOs have HRS4R.

The validation phase has also highlighted two interesting differences between RFOs and RPOs. RFOs most often do not have access to internal expertise and need to seek this from outside, to a much higher degree than RPOs also because of their small size and wide breadth of subject areas among their staff. A second difference is the motivation to invest in certification. While prestige and international recognition are important for RPOs, which need to attract talented staff and resources, this is less the case for RFOs. They are however more motivated by strengthening their accountability towards other stakeholders and particularly policy-makers.

#### 4.3.3 How will the private sector react?

Large employers often do have gender equality, diversity and/or inclusion policies (including officers in charge), more exceptionally backed up by a form of external certification. But this is much less the case for smaller organisations. This is true for both the for-profit and the not-for-profit sectors.

Large organisations will therefore have a clear advantage if and when a GEP will become an eligibility criterion for all beneficiaries of Horizon Europe. They will have the possibility to build on what they have and fill in the gaps to meet the criteria (e.g. include the GE in the research content which is nearly always a blind spot in their policy).

The reaction of the smaller enterprises and organisations will be different as they only exceptionally have a formal policy in place or an action plan. There is today little awareness of the need for this type of organisation to take action and develop a GEP. Once they will become aware, the expectation is that they will make a decision based on cost-benefits: does their potential successful participation in a Horizon Europe proposal justify the cost to develop a GEP? The answer is probably more likely yes than no, but still some smaller companies or organisations might opt out. The reaction of smaller organisations will also depend very much on the role played by intermediary organisations (like National Contact Points) who advise and assist them when applying for Horizon Europe. These intermediaries will need to be trained to handle the questions and advise the SMEs and SMOs towards the right solution for them.

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<sup>18</sup> As part of the scenario development and the analysis of their feasibility, a workshop was organised with RFOs in June 2021. All participants can be considered as early adopters as they had a GEP in place or a formal GE policy.

### What does this mean for the scenarios?

As a matter of fact, only Scenario 1 would offer a potential solution to the private sector organisations. The question remains whether the “offer” of scenario 1 is attractive enough for private sector organisations in the context of the new eligibility criterion.

Given the fact that access to Horizon Europe funding is not conditioned by the GEP requirement yet for them, the certification will attract only a very small number of organisations at the start. If and when the eligibility criterion applies to them, private organisations will probably adopt different approaches mirroring the potential reactions of RPOs as described above:

- They can limit their investment to having a GEP, not pursuing the next step of a certification.
- They will look at how to valorise other schemes or awards they have (sectoral, regional) to prove that they do implement their GEP and do even more. The active development of equivalencies with schemes targeting the private sector would therefore be of interest to private sector organisations.
- They can look into the added value of applying for a GECAS under scenario 1 and consider whether the investment is worth it.

The same arguments as mentioned for RPOs will boost this third type of reaction:

- The ambition of the organisation to launch a process of institutional change leading to more GE.
- The certification as an insurance.
- The certification as a differentiating factor, making the organisation more attractive as a partner.

Neither Scenario 2 or 3 envisage a certification award or system for the private sector. In this sense, Scenario 1 presents a window of opportunity to attract companies and harmonise policies in that sector.

#### 4.3.4 How will Member States react?

Member States as well as Associated Countries are expected to take the necessary actions to ensure their RPOs will not lose access to Horizon Europe funding due to this new eligibility criterion. This will most likely take different forms, but in general, the expectation is that countries will look at those countries that have set up structures in place and copy these. This should have a positive effect and ensure more harmonisation in the EU.

A network of national contact points is developed and is supported by the EC. This will also boost the role of the countries as most of these NCPs are embedded in public organisations as is the case today with other NCPs (in most countries).

The new developed ERA policy agenda that is under development and the Ljubljana Declaration can be interpreted as a promising sign of further coordination at EU level. This will depend on the strong commitment of MS and AC, but again, the many endorsements of the Ljubljana Declaration are a sign of a potential strong commitment and therefore the role the MS and AC can take. To cite from the Declaration<sup>19</sup>:

*“As the Gender Equality Plans approach is embedded in the new European Research Area, support*

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<sup>19</sup> Ljubljana Declaration Gender Equality in Research and Innovation (2021): [https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MIZS/Dokumenti/PSEU/Ljubljana-Declaration-on-Gender-Equality-in-Research-and-Innovation- endorsed\\_final.pdf](https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MIZS/Dokumenti/PSEU/Ljubljana-Declaration-on-Gender-Equality-in-Research-and-Innovation- endorsed_final.pdf)

*and resources for their development and implementation are needed at all levels. This is particularly crucial in countries where the institutions are currently without a Gender Equality Plans requirement, to ensure those institutions are ready for the new Horizon Europe eligibility criterion. We recommend the Plans are tied to the policy coordination mechanism to be established for the Pact on R&I as well as to a dedicated EU network on their implementation, supported by the Commission, Member States and other countries. Such an endeavour, for example, could be linked to a European certification scheme for gender equality to ensure commensurability by building a common framework that recognises national differences.”*

### **What does this mean for the scenarios?**

We have little reliable information at this stage to predict the preference and potential roles Member States could play in case one of the scenarios is effectively launched except for the results of the workshop with ten members of the Standing Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation<sup>20</sup>. The main conclusion of this workshop is a “fear” linked to Scenario 1 as it was perceived as complex and costly (mainly in terms of investment). This perception among the participants was linked to the uncertainty of roles: what would be done by the EC and what would be expected from the countries themselves. A second conclusion is the attractiveness of Scenario 4 for some countries mainly because of the flexibility, the possibility of having diverse approaches with opportunities to learn from each other while sharing the same standards and objectives.

At this stage, one can identify four types of specific situations countries can have, that could influence their reaction:

- **Countries that have a national scheme:** this is the case for e.g. Ireland (Athena SWAN) and Germany (TEQ). These countries have little interest in seeing a Europe-wide scheme being developed. They are unlikely to promote the scheme and/or adapt their policy to give the new scheme a prominent place. Participants in the workshop mentioned above perceived Scenario 2 as the one with the lowest added value for countries that already have a national scheme.
- **Countries that envisage starting a national scheme:** this is the case for e.g. Spain or the Netherlands. These MS could:
  - reconsider their options and refrain from starting a new national scheme. The preference between the three scenarios is difficult to predict. Countries that were considering Athena SWAN might prefer and promote scenario 3; we have no information that would allow us to predict the factors that could influence the preference for one of the other scenarios.
  - if they want to pursue the development and launch of a new national scheme, they will probably be in favour of the no-action scenario.
- **Countries that have an anti-gender and anti-diversity policy** will probably oppose or have no interest in any of the four scenarios.
- The **fourth situation** are countries that are in none of the situations above. They have no scheme, are not planning to have one, and their policy is not hostile to gender. For these countries again,

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<sup>20</sup> Standing Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation under European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC SWG GRI) was a policy advisory committee that advised the Council of the EU, the European Commission, and member states on policies and initiatives related to gender equality in research and innovation. ERAC SWG GRI was a successor of Helsinki Group on Gender in Research and Innovation set up in 1999 and consisted of representatives of the Member States and Associated Countries, and the European Commission. In line with the planned revision of the ERA advisory structure, ERA-related groups, including the SWG GRI, was terminated at the end of 2021. More information about its mandate can be found here: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-1205-2017-INIT/en/pdf> (last access: 22/2/22)

we have no information that would allow us to predict the factors that could influence the preference for one scenario.

#### 4.3.5 How will organisers of existing GE certification or award schemes react?

Organisers of existing schemes have a very strong incentive to adapt the content of their scheme in order for award or certification holders to be considered as eligible in Horizon Europe. Task 3.5 has been looking at equivalences between the existing schemes and the eligibility criterion of Horizon Europe. This has shown that none of the existing CAS analysed would allow the holders of the certification to prove they cover all aspects of the eligibility criterion. It also has shown that this is only a matter of time as most CAS organisers are looking into the matter and will adapt their scheme to ensure that those who are certified can use the certification as proof of eligibility.

The expectation is therefore that the difference between existing CAS and the proposed scenarios will reduce as a consequence of the new eligibility criterion in Horizon Europe. This also means that independent of the scenario chosen, existing CAS will act as active competitors to the schemes proposed as part of scenarios 1, 2 and 3. This can be through adaptation to make differences smaller, or through differentiation to be more attractive to certain type of organisations or countries in case of international schemes.

As for the scenarios, this behaviour of CAS organisers will make it very easy for organisations with an existing certification that is compliant with the EC criteria to get the certification in scenario 1 with its low entry threshold. This will be less the case with scenario 3 as the entry threshold is higher.