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GE ACADEMY

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Deliverable 3.2: Position Paper on the Certification System

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About the project

Gender Equality Academy (GE Academy) is a Horizon 2020 project (2019-2021) developing and implementing a high-quality capacity-building programme on gender equality in research, innovation and higher education. It targets several groups of actors:

- a) management, administrators, HR managers and academic staff to increase their skills in implementing measures towards gender equality in their institutions;
- b) researchers to deepen their expertise and increase their interest in the gender dimension of their work;
- c) gender trainers and experts to further develop their skills in delivering training sessions to research & innovation and higher education communities in Europe and beyond.

The capacity-building programme is based on state-of-the-art knowledge and is composed of different training formats. One of the aims of the project is also to establish a pan-European network of qualified gender trainers and experts.

Executive summary

This position paper reflects on the potential implementation of a certification system for the quality of gender equality training in the field of research and innovation. Gender equality training and, more generally, gender equality capacity-building has received a new impetus in the course of the GE Academy project as a result of the new eligibility criterion in Horizon Europe. This eligibility criterion requires applicants to have a Gender Equality Plan, which must be supported by training and capacity-building. To reach positive impacts and contribute to structural change in institutions, a systematic focus on quality is necessary.

In the position paper, the pros and cons, opportunities and risks of alternative certification options are explored. The paper draws on relevant sources and documentation of existing models and initiatives from the area of gender training, but also on potentially inspiring certification systems in different fields. These sources are complemented by a reflection of experience made by project partners with standards implementation and evaluation, communicated during several workshops and in reports and deliverables produced within GE Academy. Four models for certifications of the quality of gender equality are discussed:

MODEL 1: Certification of trainers;

MODEL 2: Certification of individual trainings;

MODEL 3: Certification of organisations as training providers;

MODEL 4: Certification of subsidiary training providers (i.e. a model in which a certifying body would be established that would certify other organisations providing training as adhering to the parent's entity quality standards and related quality assurance mechanisms).

In considerations of different models, three important factors arose: the processual character of gender equality training, time-bound nature of certification, need for common use (or availability) of quality standards to really function as a quality assurance mechanism.

In addition, several recommendations related to the development a certification scheme have been formulated: the importance of outcome-based regulation has been outlined, concentrating on reaching the regulatory objective rather than on the process of how exactly it is achieved (although elements of process standards may also be included in the certification procedure); need to develop a certification model in a participatory manner, so that it is of value to all stakeholders and have the desired positive effects; need to consider funding possibilities to ensure sustainability of any certification model and eliminate inequalities and accessibility barriers on the part of trainers or institutions from less privileged countries; need to also consider a certain level of decentralisation to adapt trainings to local context and increase accessibility; gradual implementation of any certifying scheme – starting light and developing into a more structured process, also blending in the stakeholder feedback.

List of abbreviations

GE	Gender equality
GE Academy	Gender Equality Academy
GEP	Gender equality plan
GET	Gender equality training
NCP	National contact point
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
R&I	Research and Innovation
RFO	Research funding organisation
RPO	Research performing organisation
T-t-T	Training of trainers

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1. Introduction

This position paper reflects on the potential implementation of a certification system for the quality of gender equality training (GET) in the field of research and innovation. Despite gradual progress, women remain underrepresented among researchers across the European Union. There are important gender gaps in specific scientific fields and decision-making and leadership positions. Moreover, only a small share of research projects and publications also include a gender dimension (e.g. European Commission 2021). GET – the main object of focus of the Gender Equality Academy (GE Academy) project – can be seen as an instrument that "contributes to gender-transformative change at the level of individuals, institutions and societies" (UN Women 2020: 6).¹ However, as has been recognised by many (e.g. EIGE 2014, UN Women 2020), to reach positive impacts and contribute to structural changes in institutions, a systematic focus on quality is necessary.

GET and, more generally, gender equality capacity-building has received a new impetus in the course of the GE Academy project as a result of the new eligibility criterion in **Horizon Europe**. This eligibility criterion **requires applicants to have a Gender Equality Plan (GEP)** in place by the time grant agreements are signed for the calls with deadlines in 2022. Required building blocks are defined that GEPs must include, one of which is that **the GEP implementation must be supported by training and capacity-building**².

A second evolution at the EU level is the potential introduction of a certification system for gender equality in Research and Innovation (R&I). Currently, the Horizon 2020 CASPER project³ is completing a feasibility study of four potential certification schemes; to ensure alignment of the various policy developments in the EU, the scenarios take as a starting point the GEP building blocks in Horizon Europe, hence creating a potential for considering training and capacity-building quality through the prism of this potential new certification.

In addition, the Work Programme 2021-2022⁴ foresees an Award for Academic Gender Equality Champions, which "is meant as a booster and complement to the requirement for higher education and research organisations applying to Horizon Europe to have in place a Gender Equality Plan in place, and as an enabler for the transformation agenda of universities set in the new European Research Area in synergy with the European Education Area".

¹ Nevertheless, gender should be understood as intersected with other structural inequalities. To stress this approach more explicitly, some suggest using the term "gender+" (Madrid Declaration 2011).

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/democracy-and-rights/gender-equality-research-and-innovation_en#gender-equality-plans-as-an-eligibility-criterion-in-horizon-europe.

³ For more information about the project and the four different scenarios see <https://www.caspergender.eu/>

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2021-2022/wp-11-widening-participation-and-strengthening-the-european-research-area_horizon-2021-2022_en.pdf.

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Reflection on a potential certification system for the quality of GET and capacity-building is therefore very timely, and in this position paper, **different options are considered**.

Calls for greater emphasis on the quality of GET and more in-depth reflections on what quality means in this field and how to assure it are recurring (e.g. Frey et al. 2006, Madrid Declaration 2011, UN Women 2019b, UN Women 2020). An important contribution to the formulation of quality criteria for GET and quality assurance mechanisms was a project *Gender Training in the EU: Mapping, research and stakeholders' engagement (2012-2013)* launched by the European Institute for Gender Equality. In an online discussion on quality assurance mechanisms among GET practitioners, **three main reasons why there is a need for quality assurance mechanisms** in the European Union were mentioned. The quality assurance mechanisms are expected not only to **improve the quality of training and ensure that it leads to better gender equality outcomes**, but they are also expected to **improve the process of commissioning training** (EIGE 2014). As the new eligibility criterion in Horizon Europe that requires applicants to have a GEP stimulates the demand for GET on the part of higher education and research institutions, the discussion on the benefits and risks of a potential certification system for the quality of GET for these institutions as commissioners is vital.

There have already been many **efforts to set quality standards for GET by different institutions, projects and experts**.⁵ **Following these previous efforts, GE Academy conducted a thorough review of existing sets of quality standards** and created a database of 179 standards. After **revisions and discussions** with partners and external experts, the set was reduced, and selected standards were grouped and reworked. **The resulting set of 40 quality standards then guided the design, roll-out and evaluation of all training sessions organised within the project**. Based on the experience gained, the set was further revised and updated (this finalised set, deliverable D3.3 *Final quality standard booklet*, whose primary authors are Marina Cacace, Luciano d'Andrea and Federico Marta from Knowledge & Innovation, will be published after the end of the project [here](#)). The choice and formulation of the standards drew on feminist pedagogy approaches, and more specifically, on the principles included in the PERFCKTSI model developed within the project SUPERA⁶ by Yellow Window.⁷ The set of standards includes both quality standards for GET, which are organised according to the phases (preparation, implementation and evaluation) and criteria defining an ideal gender trainer profile. As will be specified in more detail below, the standards are

⁵ The main examples are documents published by UN Women Training Centre (*Compendium of Good Practices in Training for Gender Equality* 2016a, *Quality in Training for Gender Equality* 2016b, *Quality Assurance Tool for Training for Gender Equality* 2018a, *Gender-transformative Evaluation of Training for Gender Equality* 2018b, *Evaluation Tool for Training for Gender Equality* 2018c, *Manual on Training For Gender Equality* 2019a), or by EIGE (*Gender Training: Step-by-step Approach to Quality* 2012a, *Gender Training: Factors Contributing to its Effective Implementation and Challenges* 2012b, *Quality Assurance Mechanisms for Gender Training in the European Union* 2014, *Gender equality training: Gender mainstreaming toolkit* 2016), or activities in some projects, such as: Pro(e)quality (2005-2007), OPERA (2008-2011 as part of the project QUING), INTEGER (Institutional Transformation for Effecting Gender Equality in Research, 2011-2015), GenderStrat4Equality (2014-2016).

⁶ <https://www.superaproject.eu>

⁷ The PERFCKTSI acronym stands for the following principles: Participatory approaches and processes, Empowerment, self-reflection and Reflexivity, recognition of multiple interpretations of Feminism, Contextualisation, recognition of multiple “Knowledges” and relevance of “ownership” of knowledge, shared aim of social Transformation, Standpoint awareness and critical perspectives, Intersectionality/Gender+ approach.

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intended as "outcome standards", defining the desirable situation to be achieved without setting a particular means or instruments to reach it. **Within the project, the system for evaluating GET and their compliance with these standards was developed.** The evaluation also focused on criteria related to the structure (logistics, services, tools/equipment, platforms, handouts' quality, staff) and process (communication, methodologies, interaction between trainers, organisers, and participants) of training.⁸ Different evaluation methods were used to assess and ensure quality – documentary analysis, on-site observations, online focus groups and surveys (ex-ante, exit and ex-post).

To be able to assess the meaningfulness of any potential certification system, it is important to understand to what extent assuring quality through various evaluation methods linked to different quality standards provides a valid picture of training and is effective and feasible. This position paper on the perspectives connected to implementing a certification system for the quality of GET illustrates the pros and cons, opportunities and risks of alternative certification options. Even though it also examines some certification models that are not directly linked to the activities implemented within the GE Academy, **the aim is to make the most of the experience of the project.**

GET certification can be understood as the next step in quality assurance, building on previous efforts – different quality standards, recommendations, checklists etc. It makes it possible to clearly distinguish training, in which certain quality standards (embedded in a particular certification model) are followed and met. **Although certification considerations in this area are not entirely new,** as certification options have been explored, for example, by EIGE together with the Dutch company OQ Consulting BV (Dauvellier and van Osch 2013), **in case of no institution or project, these efforts have led to the development of a specific certification scheme at the EU level.** Based on our explorations, **certification in the field of providing GET is rather scarce** (even in the case of GET not focusing directly on R&I). Most of the existing certification schemes have a different focus – the certification of experts or trainers who have completed specific training.⁹ Therefore, in this position paper, **we draw not only on relevant sources and documentation of existing models and initiatives from the area of GET, but also on potentially inspiring certification systems in different fields.** These sources are **complemented by a reflection of experience** made by different project partners with standards implementation and evaluation, communicated during several workshops and in reports and deliverables produced within GE Academy.

In the following sections, **we explore four models for certifications of the quality of GET – certification of trainers, certification of individual trainings, certification of organisations as training providers and certification of subsidiary training providers** (i.e. a model in which a certifying body would be established

⁸ The partners responsible for the evaluation (Smart Venice) drew in this respect on the Donabedian model (Donabedian 1966), differentiating between three main categories of the evaluation objects (structure, process and outcome).

⁹ The most prominent examples of such providers issuing certificates are UN Women Training Centre (<https://portal.trainingcentre.unwomen.org/product/certificate-professional-development-programme-for-gender-trainers-2019-2020/>) and GenderPro (<https://genderpro.gwu.edu/credential>). Apart from these, there are existing certification schemes focusing on gender equality in research performing organisations, but not directly on capacity-building (e.g. Athena SWAN), or awards for institutions that have gender equality as an element (HRS4R). They are relevant to our inquiry but to a lesser extent.

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that would certify other organisations providing training as adhering to the parent's entity quality standards and related quality assurance mechanisms). The legacy of the GE Academy can be utilised in each of these models in different ways and to a different extent. Therefore, **our approach does not limit itself to exploring possible pathways for ensuring the sustainability of the project legacy** (and the identified models do not necessarily represent the consortium's views on the desirable sustainability of GE Academy). **Our intention** in this position paper is **to discuss the opportunities and risks of implementing a certification system for the quality of GET in a more general sense, so that any actor that may contribute to setting up a meaningful system for promoting quality in the field of GET could use it.**

2. Certification Models

This section introduces in detail four models developed based on relevant literature, existing quality assurance schemes in and outside GE Academy, the GE Academy experience, and consultations with project partners:

Model 1: Certification of trainers

Model 2: Certification of trainings

Model 3: Certification of training providers

Model 4: Certification of subsidiary training providers

As indicated above, the legacy of the GE Academy could be used in each of these models in different ways. Either its trainers or training offer could get certified, or a certifying body could be established, which would then certify training offers of other providers or organisations operating as subsidiary training providers. These models are not to be taken as an exhaustive list of all possible routes towards certification. There may be other options, and also different combinations are possible.

As we were considering the potential of certification, three important factors arose:

1. The processual character of GE capacity-building

GE training is a never-ending dialogue that is very dynamic in its character and cannot be analysed as a static entity, as is also reflected in the PERFCKTSI principles¹⁰. This implies the necessity to reflect this dynamic character of training in the certification process and the extent to which this can be achieved.

2. Time-bound nature of certification

One of the main goals in GET certification is to ensure the application of state of the art knowledge, incorporation of evaluation findings and adaptation to diverse contexts. Therefore, in any model, we have to consider what influence would the need to recertify have on its feasibility.

3. Common use

For standards to really be a quality assurance mechanism, they have to be in common use (Brunsson et al. 2012). As certification is meant to assure the quality of provided training generally, it needs to be available to everyone. Accessibility, in a broad sense, including the language variety in the EU¹¹, financial

¹⁰ This is also reflected in the final set of standards developed in the GE Academy project (listed in D3.3 *Final quality standard booklet*). For example, standard Ev(aluation)4 describes monitoring and evaluation activities as fully integrated into the training process - meaning they provide constant feedback for the further development of training formats and trainers' competencies.

¹¹ The language issue has other broader implications besides the obvious aspect of people across Europe speaking a broad range of languages. Bustelo et al. (2016) name also problems related to translation between the academic and activist or policy languages (e.g. as regards the design of gender mainstreaming interventions, diversity or the very nature of gender inequality).

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accessibility, regional inequalities in GE development and implementation or availability of gender experts (as potential evaluators), is, therefore, an important aspect to be considered when contemplating GET certification.

The structure of the chapters devoted to each model is unified to give the reader a better overview and understanding of the differences between the models. We focus on the following:

- Objects of certification, which in some cases are not interchangeable with the actor submitting the certification proposal. For example, when training is the object of certification, the actor submitting the proposal would be either a trainer or a provider, while in the case of trainers, the trainer is the object of certification as well as the one submitting himself/herself for certification.
- Possibilities for the certification body, since in every model, there are several options. Their selection then influences other aspects of certification - such as funding and the overall feasibility.
- Quality standards application, where we discuss the aspects relevant to defining quality in regards to the certified object, its operationalisation and measurability.
- Assessment process and methods applicable that could possibly fit the proposed model of certification.
- Funding possibilities. It should be noted that our goal in this regard is not to provide in-depth financial and business analyses, but only a brief overview of the context that is already clear from relevant literature and documentation and of existing models and initiatives.
- The advantages and disadvantages of the given model.

2.1 Model 1: Certification of trainers

2.1.1 Certified objects

This model is very straightforward as regards certified objects. Individual trainers would submit for certification, and the granted certification would be tied to the person who submitted it. However, elements of trainer certification may also be part of other models, as will be discussed in the following chapters.

2.1.2 Certifying body

In this model, there are multiple options on the certification body. The first option is that the responsibility of certification would be up to **the national or regional level, where National Contact Points (NCPs)¹² for gender equality already operate** (even though not in every country or region). NCPs could organise the Train-the-Trainer sessions (T-t-Ts), and certification could be tied to the successful graduation of such training. Of course, other methods of assessment that we elaborate on below would also be included. There is the potential involvement of national or EU funding and already experienced NCP staff that are well knowledgeable and qualified in gender equality and mainstreaming. Having a local certification body also enables further communication with certified trainers for coaching, mentoring, managing communities of practice or other activities that would strengthen the validity of the certification procedure. Moreover, there is potential for cooperation among the NCPs that would create a dialogical environment that could flexibly adjust to new developments in the GE capacity-building area.

Another option is establishing an **international NGO that would function in a very similar way to NCPs**, with the advantage of harmonising the certification across Europe.

A similar option is employing **the post-GE Academy project entity, which could also take the form of an NGO**. The established NGO could benefit from the GE Academy legacy, a part of which is a trainer database (<https://ge-academy-trainers.eu/>) and a trainer profile. In combination with existing experience on T-t-Ts sessions and co-training, it provides a good starting point for developing a certification scheme.

Trainers could also be certified in the form of micro-credentials proposed by the European Commission on achieving the European Education Area by 2025. The EC is planning to work on developing a common European approach to micro-credentials that would exist as part of higher education. Micro-credentials will *help widen learning opportunities and strengthen the role of higher education and vocational education and training institutions in lifelong learning by providing more flexible and modular learning opportunities. They are useful not only for professionals, but can also complement the curriculum for students at Bachelor, Master and Doctoral levels. A growing number of adults, with or without a higher education degree, will need to reskill and upskill through more flexible alternatives than a full degree in*

¹² NCPs are included in Horizon Europe as support mechanisms for development and implementation of GEPs at RPOs.

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order to overcome the gap between the learning outcomes of their initial formal qualifications and emerging skills needs in the labour market. (European Commission 2020: 15-16) This would make higher education institutions the certifying body in this model, which has several advantages. These are already established entities experienced in education and training, in many cases with state-of-the-art gender equality knowledge at hand. There is a wide network of these actors (often state-funded) which would guarantee accessibility across Europe. Moreover, micro-credentials are not only available for people already participating in the labour market, but also to current students, giving the gender studies (and related fields) students the opportunity to obtain micro-credential while studying, combining academic education with practical training. However, the academic character of higher education institutions can hinder the recognition of skills and competencies outside academia, which could result in leaving out many capable trainers who come from other backgrounds, such as activism.

2.1.3 Quality standards application¹³

The field that gender experts and trainers must navigate is challenging – balancing out their feminist perspectives and adjusting to pragmatic paradigms of neoliberalism embedded in the perspective of gender as a business case (Ferguson 2015). This makes the job of a trainer extra complex, because these waters are constantly changing, and instead of direct and harsh refusal of GE, many actors (such as development banks or multilateral financial institutions) have assimilated GE rhetoric and stripped it of its political aspects while still deepening inequalities worldwide. **GE experts or trainers have to be very critically reflexive of their actions and of the environment they work in. The need for reflexivity and "gender fluency"**¹⁴ **impacts the overall possibility of certification.** Wong, Vaast and Mukhopadhyay (2016) summarise attempts to collect coherent lists of GE trainers and expert competencies. According to them, the majority of these trainer profiles focus on skills related to capacity-building, while less attention is paid to GE knowledge, which is *taken as a given, as if there is a gender knowledge that trainers need. There is little indication of an acknowledgement of different gender knowledges, let alone ways of knowing, and how these are politically and relatively situated. Little attention is paid to the concerns for reflexivity, praxis and the political nature of gender training and working with resistance* (Wong, Vaast and Mukhopadhyay 2016: 21). Acknowledging the political, transformative, reflexive and situated character of feminist knowledge transfer (Bustelo et al. 2016: 3) is essential for thinking about trainer competencies and their standardisation. In this regard, if we opt for trainer certification, we run the risk that in the attempt to come up with generally accepted norms, *rather than take a political stand, the lowest common denominator will be used in an effort to be inclusive* (Wong, Vaast and Mukhopadhyay 2016: 22).

¹³ In the GE Academy project, the criteria for trainers' profile were developed separately from the training quality standards. Based on the revision of existing trainer profiles and partner consultations, criteria from two profiles were selected. After the roll-out of the GE Academy programme, the criteria were worked on again during the internal workshops. The final selection consists of 14 criteria, sorted into three groups: basic expertise; methodological skills; personal and social competence.

¹⁴ This concept proposed is summarised in one of the trainer profile standards listed in D3.3 *Final quality standard booklet* of the GE Academy project: "Trainers are able to operationalise gender+ knowledge to fit the practice of the training audience and support the participants' next steps as change agents into their organisation." In the Booklet, the theoretical tools that "gender fluent" trainers can employ are specified as intersectionality or standpoint awareness.

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Moreover, Wong et al. (ibid.) emphasise that there is little regard for the lived experience of GE trainers, naming the exception of the OPERA stream of the QUING project, which proposed minimum criteria regarding "field competence". Based on the GE Academy experience, "field experience" could be understood as a combination of 1) practical experience in designing and delivering training and 2) specialisation in specific capacity-building topics. **Even though we recommend taking experience into consideration when developing a trainer profile, it comes with its own concerns if it is translated into certification standards per se.** The quality of a trainer comes largely through the delivery of many training sessions. However, this means that beginner trainers might find themselves in a disadvantageous position when entering the certification procedure. **Specialisation in concrete topics should be definitely included in a trainer certification to make it more valid and robust.** This also enables having more levels of certification¹⁵, which would make it accessible and attractive to both experienced and inexperienced trainers and create room for future professional development.

Designing and delivering a GE training in itself is a never-ending process of reflection, contextualisation and redesign. **The competencies of gender trainers should not be limited to their expertise on gender issues and knowledge of different policy areas. While delivering GET, individual trainers need to challenge their own gender stereotypes.** This goes along well with principle and outcome-based regulation (see Black et al. 2007)¹⁶, which allows actors to adjust to specific contexts flexibly and encourages open debate on the interpretation of the regulatory objectives. Success in the application of a rule is not so much in how exactly or clearly it is formulated, but rather by the level of consensus among those who apply the rule (Black et al. 2007).

2.1.4 Assessment process and methods applicable

As with other approaches, certifying trainers also offers various possibilities as regards the intensity of candidate assessment. The applicable methods listed from least to most demanding are (for a more detailed description, please see below):

- Portfolio
- Self-review
- Participants feedback
- Testing
- Evaluating learning outcomes
- Peer review
- Co-training, mentoring and coaching
- Graduating T-t-T

¹⁵ This has proven to be a successful model in ATHENA Swan providing bronze, silver and golden levels.

¹⁶ This approach to quality assurance means shifting the focus to broad-based standards, outcomes-based regulation and increased management responsibility (Black et al. 2007: 191). Principles stand as an alternative to both bright line rules, and complex/detailed rules. Bright line rules set a single (quantifiable) criterion to be reached, and complex/detailed rules give a very thorough definition of how it should be understood in practice. While both these rule types have their role in regulation, principles focus on the overall goal – the regulatory objective.

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There is a possibility to combine these methods, which would account for a more complex assessment. Some of the methods are nevertheless suitable as stand-alone due to their rigorosity and thoroughness, e.g. graduating T-t-T, but even those are time-bound. Therefore, in any case, it applies to trainers as well, that there would be a necessity to recertify after some time. However, these 'check-ups' would be less frequent and possibly less demanding than in the case of certification of training.

Portfolio

Screening a portfolio could be a simple and accessible way of assessment for certification for already practising trainers. They could provide all their qualifications and experience in a structured manner, examples, training scripts they delivered, feedback from contractors and participants or even recommendations. **The portfolio allows only for relatively shallow assessment, but is low in demand as regards resources, both on the side of the trainer and on the side of the certification body.** Screenings could also be carried out by peers, which would grant for a really lightweight structure of certifying body and flexibility as regards the preferred languages of trainers or adaptability to (local) contexts in which they actually deliver training. However, as a stand-alone method, portfolios are not very thorough, so ideally, they should be combined with other forms of assessment or serve as an admittance procedure to enter the certification process. Using portfolios would probably be motivating for experienced trainers, as it gives them a heads up in certification and is not very laborious and time-consuming. On the other hand, accessibility issues would have to be resolved for trainers who are beginners or are just interested in becoming one.

Self-review/assessment

Self-assessment is a method employed by already running certification or award schemes, such as Athena SWAN or HRS4R. Structured self-review could be a stand-alone method, e.g. in the form of a structured questionnaire or essay or a part of a portfolio. Trainers could reflect on their implementation of PERFCKTSI principles. This would show the depth of their understanding in this matter and the level of compliance with them. The burden of completing a portfolio is on the trainer, and assessment can be done distantly. Still, it requires the preparation of a comprehensive form that needs to be accompanied by detailed instruction, so the portfolios can be compared with each other as a part of the assessment (which would come in handy when assessing self-reviews from one region). However, **self-assessment requires a great amount of trust in the certification community - it might be argued that it lacks the objectivity and fairness of an external evaluation** (CASPER 2020: 25).

Participant feedback

Surveying participant satisfaction is a good choice for supplementary assessment, as it is not possible to rely on participants who may be influenced by their own personal resentment either towards the person of the trainer or towards GET as a whole. Moreover, it is questionable to what extent the participants understand the PERFCKTSI principles (or other principles applied to ensure the quality of GET) and are capable of evaluating their application by a trainer.

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Testing

Testing, especially online, has many organisational advantages - it can be reviewed automatically by a computer which lowers the costs, it can be done on a large scale and online, making it quite accessible, and it is unified. Testing is a good option as a substitute for portfolios as regards entering the certification process, because it is suitable for beginner trainers as well. GenderPro (2019) survey¹⁷ results show that the majority of respondents (52 %) think that besides taking an online test to be given a credential as a gender professional in development, they should also submit a portfolio. **Testing is not very valid as regards actual competencies of trainers, most of which are applied in action and interaction with training participants.**

Evaluating learning outcomes

If the certification would be outcomes-based, evaluating the outcomes could be a good way to ensure that the trainers provide non-harmful and productive trainings. **This would not necessitate evaluating institutional change, but mostly focus on changes in attitudes of participants as a result of attending the training.** This method can be very fruitful and, if combined with others, also very valid.

Peer review

Peer review can be applied on several levels. As it has been mentioned, it can be employed in reviewing training scripts and portfolios or even carried out as a consultation/interview over those (or self-review). However, it is especially efficient as an on-site visit (observation of a training), which fosters best practices exchange as well as networking. Most importantly, **peer review can be delivered in a plethora of languages and contexts, which aligns with several PERFCKTSI principles.** However, in countries where GET practice is not highly developed, there could be a lack of suitable peers, which could lead to accessibility issues.

Co-training, mentoring and coaching

Several of the PERFCKTSI principles refer to the participative character of trainings and recognising various knowledges and feminisms. With on-site visits, an issue of asymmetry arises. **As an alternative to hierarchical assessment, co-training, mentoring or coaching could be employed as a method for a more egalitarian way of trainer certification.** These methods are in-depth and rely on long-term contact between the trainer and the mentor or coach. This makes them **very strong in ensuring that the principles are implemented correctly, sufficiently and contextually.** On the other hand, they are very time consuming and resource-heavy.

¹⁷ GenderPro (<https://genderpro.gwu.edu/>) is a capacity-building programme for development professionals regarding gender equality and mainstreaming. The mentioned survey was exploring the idea of credentials for graduating the programme in order to standardize the expertise on gender in development.

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Graduating T-t-T

T-t-T is probably the most robust of the presented methods. It ensures repeated contact with the certification candidates, grants time and space for an in-depth discussion of principles and their application and a network of trainers is established, even if only as a side effect. Graduating the training might consist of a combination of assessment methods: testing, self-review, applied assignments such as developing a training script, peer review (consultation, on-site visit), supervision, and more. **This gives the possibility to have either a lightweight version of T-t-T (which is still demanding in comparison with other methods) or a very robust system, which also allows for gradual multi-level certification.** The downsides of this model include its very demanding and resource-heavy nature on the side of the certification body as well as the candidates. This might deter trainers who are already experienced as there is not much benefit to be gained in their case, and once they have a developed network of customers, the sole certification might not be a strong enough motivation.

2.1.5 Funding possibilities

This model could be based on fees paid by the trainers who would like to be certified. However, GE Academy experience shows that trainers are not even entirely ready to pay for inclusion in a database of trainers whose certification is similar albeit different service. Unless there are external incentives to do so, the likelihood of trainers willing to pay a fee is low. The requirement in the Horizon Europe programme for research performing organisations (RPOs) to have a GEP in place, one of its building blocks being capacity-building, could be such an incentive (due to an increased demand for qualified trainers).

Other than that, a strong brand of certification that would be recognisable among the interested public could be a motivating factor. In an EIGE organised online discussion (2012) on certification, trainers expressed that this is a very important factor, since if the customers do not know about the certification process and its interconnectedness with quality assurance, there is no added value for trainers in obtaining the certification. Branding is listed as consideration for potential certification of GEPs also in the CASPER project - including name selection, professionals in marketing being involved in delivering a prolonged marketing campaign or an award ceremony (CASPER 2020: 32). Therefore, promoting the benefits of certified trainings would have to be a significant part of the certification budget. Another motivation for trainers is knowledge sharing (EIGE 2012c), which trainers also see as a quality assurance mechanism in and on its own. The possibility of exchanging good practices, support and further education for trainers could be motivating trainers to pay for such service.

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2.1.6 Advantages and disadvantages

+	<p>The flexibility of this model, which is based on trainer competencies, skills and knowledges rather than on quality standards, gives a lot of space for tailor-made solutions as regards the whole training process.</p>
	<p>If well designed, it can be more motivating for trainers than focusing certification on individual trainings because it is a possibility to gain a recognised qualification. This has two preconditions: well-known certification brand¹⁸ and/or possibility for further professional development.</p>
	<p>Opportunity to build a strong cooperating network of gender practitioners. A community of practice is a valuable tool for promoting state-of-the-art training practices.</p>
	<p>This model can incentivise trainers to become involved in a training programme.</p>
	<p>Easier and cheaper organisation: less frequent check-ups and recertifications are needed than in the other models, which lowers the costs and increases attractiveness. There is no need for each training to be approved and evaluated separately, as every training delivered by a certified trainer would be certified by extension.</p>
-	<p>Less control over the exact content of training activities and the actual application of standards. Even very qualified trainers may deliver training of lower quality, not consistently applying the standards. There is no guarantee for their performance (due to the lack of intrinsic motivation, the time constraints on the part of a trainer or the contracting organisation).</p>
	<p>If the certification is bound to specific training topics, there is a need for the trainers to undergo multiple certification procedures (e.g. graduate several T-t-Ts that cover more topics).</p>
	<p>The model does not directly capture many aspects that may also be relevant to the quality of trainings (the size of the groups, logistical and accessibility issues, room set-up, evaluation issues, etc.).¹⁹</p>
	<p>There is a lower potential for collecting comparable data for further research on GET and quality assurance.²⁰</p>

¹⁸ In GenderPro (2019) survey, which explored the idea of granting credentials for graduating the capacity-building programme on GE in development, gender experts and trainers have frequently mentioned, there is no need for certification if prestige and renown do not come with it.

¹⁹ Some of these aspects could possibly be ensured in another way (for example, as a recommendation or checklist for trainers).

²⁰ This drawback however, can be relieved by selecting the right certifying body: if NCPs are selected, they can keep in touch with the trainers on a regular basis since they are literally closer to them than a pan-European NGO.

2.2. Model 2: Certification of trainings

This model comes with some caveats that make its description slightly less straightforward than it was in the first one. We decided not to reduce these complexities, as it would distort the model too much. **Therefore, we consider two options: that an individual trainer proposes certification of GET and that an organisation does so - however, in both cases, only a specific training would obtain certification (not the trainer, nor the provider), as this falls under the models 1 and 3 respectively.** Moreover, we also explore how this model intertwines with the first one, as we suggest that it might be necessary to consider who would deliver the training in the process of certification, as the facilitation influences the quality of training immensely.²¹

2.2.1 Certified objects

By definition, a specific training would be the certified object (there is a possibility also for a whole training programme to be certified, on which we elaborate below). However, as we have mentioned, **there are several possibilities as to who would be submitting training for certification. The first option is an individual trainer.** The level of this model's attractiveness for trainers would be determined by the amount of work that would be put into application, cost of the certification and expected benefits. What could help is having certification with a very well renowned brand, which would increase the motivation of trainers to participate (more on that in the previous chapter).

The second possibility is having a training providing organisation, such as an NGO, private company or a public institution, submit a proposal for certification. An organisation is more likely to have sufficient resources, and its motivation to have trainings certified is higher considering the potential advantage that it gives it in the market, which is currently growing fast due to the European Commission conditioning research funding with GEPs. Also, a provider has further capacity to promote the certification and its benefits to potential customers than an individual trainer.

2.2.2 Certifying body²²

National contacts points or an NGO introduced in the trainer certification model are applicable here with more or less the same benefits and risks.

Since one of the building blocks of GEPs, as proposed by the Horizon Europe programme, is capacity-building, an option to connect a certification of gender equality in RPOs and GET arises. Horizon 2020 project CASPER, which has been mentioned above, aims to develop three possible scenarios for an EU-wide framework in GE certification. If such a scheme is put in practice, it is possible to consider some form

²¹ For including this aspect in the model we bare inspiration from already existing schemes. For example, APMG International includes trainer assessment in the accreditation of training procedures. (See more here: <https://apmg-international.com/article/behind-scenes-apmg-course-accreditation>).

²² In this chapter we do not refer to benchmark practices and options that besides quality standards also include quality assurance mechanisms as these are dealt with in Model 3 and 4.

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of GET certification in the evaluation process. This means the training would not be certified on its own for future delivery, but would be assessed retrospectively as a part of RPO's pursuit for GE certification on the basis of information about capacity-building actions and GEP provided at the certifying institution. A training failing such assessment would then not count towards the GEP certification. Connecting quality assurance in capacity-building to certifying GEPs would be an incentive for the RPOs to pay attention to training. Nevertheless, this option would necessitate a thorough communication towards RPOs, so they would be able to estimate the quality of training beforehand in the selection process (which could be done in the form of guidelines, checklists and other materials available to RPOs). However, from a technical point of view, it would probably be easiest for RPOs to choose from a range of already certified training or from a range of certified providers (please see model 3).

2.2.3 Quality standards application

EIGE explored the state and potential for further development in GET in its (already mentioned) project *Gender Training in the European Union: Mapping, Research and Stakeholders' Engagement (2012-2013)*. An online discussion with gender experts and trainers took place in 2012. One of the aspects of GET debated was quality assurance and standardisation. While the participants generally felt that it is a necessity to control for quality in GET, it also has to be flexible enough to allow adjustment to the needs of the audience, provide a set of general principles, remain focused on outcomes rather than contents while providing minimum requirements on the process of training (EIGE 2012c: 3). **Thus, a feasible approach seems to be the possibility of focusing on outcomes rather than processes, which allows for flexibility while maintaining the quality of training.** The principles and outcomes-based approach stems from the idea that specific actors in practice, such as trainers and training providers, are better equipped to manage the processes and actions to reach certain objectives (Black et al. 2007). Therefore the focus should be on deciding what we want to achieve rather than how.

The GE Academy project experience with quality assurance and evaluation would be best utilised in this certification model, as it was individual trainings, their scripts, design, implementation as well as outcomes that were closely monitored. Furthermore, a final list of 38 quality standards based on the PERFCKTSI principles²³ and sorted according to the training phase (design; planning and preparation; implementation; evaluation) was developed. The final set of standards is generally constructed as outcome rules (as discussed in the previous paragraph) determining the desirable situation (e.g. application of participatory methods, having intersectional and inclusive training materials), but not indicating how to reach the expected outcome. This approach considers the very diverse field of GET, which makes it inappropriate to request standardised processes (for actors, such as the trainers, contractors, or funding bodies).

The Quality Standards Booklet gives a clear idea of which standards and how they would be specifically applied. Possibly, the standards could be further organised according to specific types of training, distinguishing workshops, summer schools, webinars, etc., for an easier assessment. Alternatively, the

²³ With the exception of a few standards that refer to more general principles for effective training, however also selected based on their relevance and compatibility with PERFCKTSI principles.

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distinction between online and in-person formats could be introduced, as it appears in some existing schemes, which focus on one of these areas exclusively.²⁴ However, this can be done only under the condition that the standards are frequently reviewed. **The GE Academy project experience shows that new formats appear often and particularly online formats tend to have blurred lines.**

2.2.4 Assessment process and methods applicable

Methods for certification assessment applicable for this model are:

- Analysing training scripts (principles, alignment with learning objectives)
- Evaluating (learning) outcomes (and attendees feedback)
- Screening trainers delivering the training
- On-site assessment (peer visits, consultations or feedback, supervisions, training observations)

These are not individual methods, but rather groups, each of which includes several possibilities and tools that would need to be further developed.

Analysing training scripts (principles, alignment with learning objectives)

Analysing scripts is one of the easiest methods when it comes to quality assurance in GET. It can be done distantly, without the necessity to travel, it is relatively time as well as financially efficient.

In the GE Academy project, documentary analysis preceding training delivery included script and agenda. Others, such as emails to participants, slides and training materials, were scrutinised before the training. A checklist was developed, so the evaluators know which aspects of the documents to focus on - it included items reflecting the quality standards developed in accordance with PERFCKTSI principles (e.g. design appropriate for the beneficiaries, transparency of communication with participants, gender sensitivity and intersectionality of training materials, etc.).

On the one hand, for some formats, such as webinars or roundtables, this method might suffice on its own. On the other hand, it also has significant drawbacks that probably make the method insufficient for certification on its own. Obviously, when analysing a script, it is possible to recognise whether the principles and standards are adequately implemented in the design, but that says nothing about the actual delivery, trainer competencies and many aspects of PERFCKTSI principles that can only be observed during or after the training.

Evaluating (learning) outcomes (and attendees feedback)

Evaluating learning outcomes and fulfilment of learning objectives in combination with a previously mentioned method of analysing scripts would provide a more rounded and complex representation of the training reality. Indirectly, this method provides information on the implementation and delivery of the GET, since the presumption is that poorly facilitated training (even if well designed) would not reach the

²⁴E.g. The ECBCheck focuses solely on online trainings.
(www.ecb-check.org/7/ecbcheck-e-learning-programme-certification)

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desired results. In addition, information can be collected from the participants to further explore the actual course delivery. The obvious limitation is that this can only be done once the course actually takes place, so the certification can be only done in retrospect or would have to have phases: 1. script review and 2. evaluation. It would also have to be determined how many evaluations are sufficient to grant certification, but evaluating outcomes is a method easily done for recertification. Nevertheless, this method is probably more complicated to carry out than it initially seems. In order to evaluate the achievement of learning objectives, participants would have to be monitored before and after training, e.g. by taking a test, which only assesses their immediate reaction to the training. It does not, however, show the impact on their everyday practice or the influence on institutional change. Participants' satisfaction with the training is easier to measure, although it is also a somewhat less reliable method. However, it could be used to assess to what extent was relevant to participants' expectations, needs and practice.

Screening trainers delivering the training

This method is recommended to be included based on the assumption that the training quality is closely tied to the capacity of the trainer because the competencies, knowledge and skills of the person facilitating the training have a major influence over what effects it will have on the participants. It is possible to include some form of trainer screening in the training certification model. In this case, the screening could be done distantly – in the form of a portfolio, qualifications and previous experience, or as an interview or consultation online.²⁵ The trainer profile developed in the GE Academy project could be used as a reference for developing some of the proposed certification assessment methods (listed below), if it is decided that trainers are to be a part of the certification package.

On-site visits (Peer visits, consultations or feedback, supervisions)

This assessment method can be applied in a variety of ways — a visit during the training by a peer with written or verbal feedback, consultation or even supervision. In combination with analysing scripts, it is a very valid procedure that can provide reliable information on the quality of GET. Moreover, it covers screening trainers and can also contain a collection of data after the training to reflect the level of learning objectives fulfilment. However, this makes the certification of trainings much more demanding than only screening scripts.

2.2.5 Funding possibilities

Funding in this model is defined mostly by who is certified and who is the certifying body - as we have proposed at the beginning of this chapter, either 1) an individual trainer or 2) a training provider could submit training for certification, which would influence the funding possibilities.

²⁵ Of course, for a very robust certification models 1 and 2 could be integrated fully, meaning that both the training and the trainer would both obtain certification. However, we decided not to focus on mixed-model options as it would complicate the matter beyond the capacity of the paper, although some attention is paid to this issue in the conclusion.

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1) If individual trainers should get their training certified, factors that we introduced in the first model as regards funding apply here as well. There is not much indication so far individual trainers would be motivated to pay for such service based on the GE Academy experience and communications with trainers during the project. Furthermore, having to finance separate certifications for individual training is likely to diminish their motivation to participate. Therefore this route does not seem to be feasible.

2) Another option is for the providers to get their trainings certified. This might be a more feasible option, since organisations might have greater resources for entering and funding such a process while also the potential for considerable benefits stemming from obtaining certification is higher than for individual trainers. Individual trainers have a very limited capacity to deliver the certified training, as they are a single person. This means it would possibly take longer for the investment into certification (be it money or effort) to return and begin to pay out. With providers, who can have more trainers delivering the same training, the investment return is much quicker, as they can deliver more training in a shorter amount of time. Since it would certainly be necessary to recertify the training, the fee needs to be reasonable enough to make the certification worth it. Furthermore, providers have a greater chance and capacity to promote the added value of certification for the contractors, which means they themselves can become promoters of the certification scheme.

As with other models, a sliding scale model is a possibility to alleviate the already existing inequalities in GE promotion among the EU member states.

2.2.6 Advantages and disadvantages²⁶

+	<p>Very good control over the training activities actually provided, the exact content of trainings and the actual application of standards, if assessment methods beyond analysing scripts are employed.²⁷ This model provides the most certainty as regards reducing the risk of the negative impact of GET.</p>
	<p>Opportunity to collect reliable data on the outcomes of GET and generate new knowledge on GE capacity-building, if at least script analyses and either the learning outcomes or peer reviews are employed as assessment methods in the certification process.</p>
	<p>Aspects of the training, such as planning and preparation, evaluation and delivery, including the size of the groups, logistical and accessibility issues, room set-up and others, can be covered.</p>
-	<p>The inflexibility of the certified trainings in diverse contexts: Once a specific model is certified, it leaves too little room for trainers to adapt the training for a concrete group and its needs. This might decrease the intersectional and contextual character of the training as well as inclusivity, which leads to the diminished capacity of the GET to initiate institutional change and increases the likelihood of resistances, which are the main reason for the ineffective implementation of gender mainstreaming (Benschop and Verloo 2006).</p>
	<p>Considering that training is a dynamic process, certifying a specific training script once and for all is pointless, since it is static and does not allow for future implementation of experience gained in the field processed through trainer competence and reflection. Changes in trainings (script adaptation, implementation of new knowledge, innovation in methods, adjustments in content, etc.) require recertification, which also complicates tailor-made solutions, hinders flexibility and slows down the implementation of state-of-the-art knowledge.</p>
	<p>High staff requirements and costs: It very much depends on what exactly would be assessed in the process of certification (e.g. structure, process, outcomes), but certification of trainings may be quite time-demanding and laborious.</p>

²⁶ We have shown there are various possible combinations of quality standards application, assessment methods and funding, that would create more options for modelling certification of trainings as such. Hence, as regards the pros and cons of certifying specific trainings, it is possible to draw several general conclusions. However, they may apply specifically to some models and not others.

²⁷ Ideally, the implementation phase of the training should be overseen. Obviously, this is very demanding as regards financial and human resources and it remains questionable if the added value is sufficient to make up for it. The investment would need to be significant to ensure a network of evaluators that are both qualified and acquainted with certification principles and standards and the expenses would continue to be high long term, because: 1) the evaluators need to be paid for their work and travel/accommodation costs for on-site visits need to be covered, 2) the network of evaluators would need to be thick and broad to reduce the risk of inaccessibility for trainings not delivered in English.

2.3 Model 3: Certification of a training provider

2.3.1 Certified object

In this case, the certification focuses on the more general capability of the certified organisation to provide adequate quality training. Attention is largely focused on its own quality assurance mechanisms and other internal conditions. These are perceived as a prerequisite for delivering quality training, which is itself subject to less control and regulation than in the case of the previous model, where the training is the subject to certification. This model might be very relevant to the GE Academy project - if the entity that would use the project's legacy was certified as a training provider, it would ensure its sustainability.

EIGE, with the help of the Dutch company OQ Consulting BV (Dauvellier and van Osch 2013), has already tried to analyse the possibilities of accrediting GET providers (offering GET in a general sense). However, most of the options discussed are no longer relevant as the field of potential certification bodies has changed. Those that remain valid will be presented below, and they will be complemented by other variants.

2.3.2 Certifying body

Probably the best-known general certification scheme is ISO, developed by the International Organization for Standardization. The International Organization for Standardisation develops international standards, but it is not involved in the certification process. This is performed by external certification bodies. The possibility to use this certification scheme in the field of GET has already been explored by Dauvellier and van Osch (2013). The authors focused on ISO 29990: 2010 Learning services for non-formal education and training — Basic requirements for service providers. However, this ISO was replaced in 2017 by **ISO 29993: 2017 Learning services outside formal education — Service requirements**.²⁸ This standard aims to provide a general frame of reference for quality learning services outside formal education, including all types of life-long learning (both physical and online). It formulates requirements covering all phases of the service (from needs analysis and learning objectives' definition to evaluation) and other aspects (advertising or transparency).

As a general instrument for improving learning services, ISO 29993: 2017 seems to be suitable. Its advantage also is that it is an internationally recognised instrument. More detailed information on the operationalisation of the quality standards utilised and their compatibility with those based on feminist pedagogy (the PERFCKTSI model) can only be obtained when cooperation with a certification body is initiated.

²⁸ <https://www.iso.org/standard/70357.html>

The management system elements for an educational organisation contained in ISO 29990: 2010 are also addressed in ISO 21001: 2018 Educational organizations — Management systems for educational organizations — Requirements with guidance for use.

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The certification process presupposes establishing quality management in compliance with the ISO standard. After the initial assessment, the areas of non-compliance are identified, and possible improvements are recommended. This is followed by an on-site audit by an ISO certification authority. The certificate has to be renewed at regular intervals as recommended by the certification body (normally every three years). There are also regular surveillance audits.²⁹

Another possible option would be certification by the **CPD Certification Service**.³⁰ The CPD Certification Service is the largest continuing professional development accreditation service worldwide.³¹ It provides accreditation for organisations across many different sectors ranging from small companies to large training providers. It certifies both individual training courses and a complex training portfolio.³² Both physical and online trainings may be included. The offer by all accredited providers is displayed on the CPD Certification Service website. The CPD Certification Service is based in the United Kingdom, and its services are primarily used there (various institutions recognise the CPD courses and events as post formal qualification). Nevertheless, according to the information provided on its website, the CPD quality marks are protected by international copyright legislation and are compatible with global requirements.

As in the previous case, more detailed information on the operationalisation of the quality standards utilised and their compatibility with those based on feminist pedagogy can only be obtained when cooperation with a certification body is initiated. According to publicly available information, submissions are assessed and certified against a set of criteria focusing on clear learning objectives and outcomes, coherent structure, methodical and logical approach to knowledge acquisition and educational value. Attention is also paid to the usage of examples, case studies and facts and their contextualisation, active involvement of participants and self-evaluation.

The process of gaining CPD accreditation is based on the evaluation of training materials by the CDP team of assessors. As indicated on the webpage, it is based mainly on the review of the materials, including presentation slides, handouts and any additional training notes. Therefore, it seems that the process is based mainly on structure-oriented quality standards (from which it implicitly infers the quality of the training process and its outcomes).

The International Accreditation Service (IAS) provides accreditation for organisations that provide professional-development training programmes (as part of its Training Providers and Training Course

²⁹ More information can be provided by certifying bodies, for example: <https://www.deuzert.com/ISO-29993/>; <https://euroveritas.com/ISO-29993-2017.php>; <https://bqc.gr/en/certification-iso-29990>; <https://www.ascentworld.com/iso-29993-certification>; <https://gccertification.com/ISO-29993-2017.aspx>

³⁰ <https://cpduk.co.uk/become-accredited>

³¹ The terms “accreditation” and “certification” are often used interchangeably. However, as explained by the National Accreditation Body for the United Kingdom, certification is a process in which an organisation, product or individual demonstrate that they conform to the criteria laid out in a recognized standard or scheme, while accreditation performs an oversight role that underpins the quality, impartiality and competence of the certification process (<https://www.ukas.com/accreditation/about/accreditation-vs-certification/>).

³² The application form allows the provider to enter more than one hundred courses for certification. Nevertheless, due to its concentration of individual courses, this service fits also model 2 (described in the previous chapter).

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Developers programme).³³ The organisation is based in the United States of America, but operates internationally. The accreditation process focuses on the provider's structure, facilities, qualification of trainers, curriculum, programme development and administration. Although it is based on specific criteria, alternate criteria may be considered if the proponent proves that their use is substantiated and that they otherwise meet applicable accreditation requirements.³⁴ This might potentially allow for certification using criteria that are relevant to GET. The evaluation is based on the documents provided and an on-site assessment by an assessment team. No further information is available.

As pointed out also by Dauvellier and van Osch (2013), another potentially suitable certification scheme is **Qfor Certification**.³⁵ The aim of this scheme is to provide quality assurance and certification of training institutes and consultancy firms. The original certification methodology was developed in the context of the Qfor European Collaboration Network with members from different European countries. However, currently, this certification service seems to operate mainly in Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain and France. The capacity to certify service in English or other languages is likely to be limited. The scheme has two modules – Qfor ClientScan and Qfor ProcessScan. The provider can choose to be certified in one of them or both. Qfor ClientScan focuses on client satisfaction, the assessment focuses on planning, execution, project management, reporting and the resources used, trainers, follow up, the client management, administration, logistics and the price-quality relationship. When requested, a specific module of questions can be added to the General Qfor model. Qfor ProcessScan focuses more on the operation of the institution itself – e.g. internal communication and evaluation, human resources management, management and follow up of competencies and experience, evaluation system etc. Also in this case, an additional module tailored to the needs of a specific provider can be developed upon request. Receiving certification for the second of the modules requires an on-site visit. The certificate is granted for three years.

2.3.3 Quality standards application

As it is clear from the certification schemes' descriptions above, a major disadvantage of their potential application in the field of gender trainings lies in the fact that while they provide a possibility to certify the training programme, they utilise their own quality standards, which do not reflect feminist perspectives. Specifically, in relation to the GE Academy and the possibilities of certification of its legacy within the activities aiming to support its sustainability, this means that the described certification schemes might regulate the implementation of trainings in a way that does not correspond with the PERFCKTSI model and the intentions of the GE Academy consortium (there can even be a partial conflict between them).

Due to the business interests of certification organisations, publicly available information concerning the quality standards used and the quality management mechanisms that the certification process requires to implement is relatively limited. It is not possible to assess to what extent the sophistication of quality

³³ <https://www.iasonline.org/services/training-agencies/>

³⁴ https://cdn-prod.iasonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/AC371-20201214-2.pdf?_ga=2.174458530.1246715785.1635625297-435789123.1635493819

³⁵ <https://qfor.org/?lang=Be>

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standards and the mechanism of their assurance is advanced and whether it surpasses the mechanisms already established and piloted in the GE Academy. Although there is usually some emphasis on the provider's own quality management, it is possible that its partial replacement would be required. Moreover, due to the logic of the certification process and feasibility in terms of financial costs, attention is focused primarily on the training structure (which can be assessed through written materials). The result can be less flexibility in changes of the training programme, and only a limited capturing of how the trainings actually look like.

2.3.4 Assessment process and methods applicable

In general, the evaluation process consists primarily of assessing written materials and on-site visits or audits. For more details, please see the descriptions of the individual certification options above.

2.3.5 Funding possibilities

The amount needed to pay for the certification of the training provider cannot be determined in advance. It can be determined only in cooperation with a chosen accreditation body after a mutually detailed specification of the offer. In general, the costs vary depending on the organisation's size and complexity and depend on the chosen accreditation body. As for the ISO certification, which seems to be the most suitable due to its complexity and international character, Dauvellier and van Osch (2013) estimate (in relation to this standard's previous version) that this process is relatively costly. Nevertheless, more detailed exploration is needed. In general, if there is no external funding, the costs associated with certification will increase the costs of trainings and thus limit their accessibility to participants from less privileged countries.

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2.3.6 Advantages and disadvantages

+	The model would ensure the sustainability of the GE Academy project.
	In comparison to the certification of individual trainings, greater autonomy and flexibility in the adjustment of trainings can be expected (depending on an certification body chosen).
	If provided by a well-known certification body, this certification model may make the training provider internationally recognised and enhance its credibility.
	The process of certification (and the efforts related to its maintenance) may provide an opportunity for improving learning services.
-	Certifying bodies manage quality based on their own quality standards. They may regulate the implementation of trainings in a way that does not correspond with feminist principles (but it would depend on an accreditation body chosen).
	This also means that it would not be possible to fully exploit the potential of the standards for gender trainings developed and piloted within the GE Academy project and related quality assurance mechanisms.
	Even though greater autonomy and flexibility in the adjustment of trainings can be expected, compared to the certification of individual trainings, the certification may still limit the flexibility of the training offer.
	The process may be costly, which may increase the costs of trainings and reduce the accessibility of trainings for participants from less privileged countries. The costs may also discourage some organisations from getting involved.

2.4 Model 4: Certification of subsidiary training providers

2.4.1 Certified objects and certifying body³⁶

Another model of a certification system for GET presupposes establishing a certifying body that could certify other training providers (organisations) as objects adhering to the parent's entity quality standards for GET and related quality assurance mechanisms. These providers, which might be located in different countries, could provide GET developed by the parent entity or eventually develop their own trainings. To obtain the parent institution's logo, these trainings would have to comply with the provided quality standards and assurance mechanisms.

To become such a certifying body/parent entity could be one of the possible routes of ensuring the sustainability of the GE Academy legacy. In general, the organisations providing certification services may validate their competence in ensuring standards of the assessment (and demonstrate their commitment to ensuring high standards of service delivered by the certified bodies) by obtaining ISO/IEC 17065: 2012 Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services.

The undeniable advantage of this model (which can also be understood as complementary) is a decentralisation of the training offer and the possibility to adapt GET to the local situation of individual countries. Supporting trainers' expertise development in individual countries can also help expand the overall offer of GET for which (in connection with the gender equality plan as an eligibility criterion in Horizon Europe) high demand can be expected.

The potential of this multiplier effect is exploited in many different areas. As noticed by Dauvellier and van Osch (2013), the usefulness of this approach has been demonstrated in the field of HIV / AIDS prevention. The World Health Organization has developed trainings and created a network of collaborating centres. These centres could provide already developed trainings meeting the WHO quality standards or use the quality standards provided and create their own trainings. If they were able to demonstrate that they met the standards, they could use references to the WHO standards in the promotion of their activities and on the certificates of completion issued.³⁷ Another interesting example is from the field of fitness and specialised health exercise trainings. EuropeActive uses its own developed standards and quality assurance system to accredit training providers across Europe.³⁸ Examples of a similar mechanism can be found, for example, in the field of engineering, business analysis, innovation

³⁶ Due to the interconnected character of the certifying body and certified objects in this model, they will be presented together in one section in this chapter.

³⁷ https://www.who.int/3by5/publications/documents/capacity_building/en/index4.html

³⁸ <https://www.europeactive-standards.eu/es-standards>

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management, usability and user experience testing, food safety, renovation etc.³⁹ In some cases, the certifying organisations only endorse different providers' training programmes without using the possibility to roll out their own trainings.⁴⁰

In the field of GET, a possibility that seems to be in compliance with this model are the National Contact Points for gender equality, which the European Commission intends to appoint in cooperation with the Member States, to support RPOs at the national level in relation to GEP implementation. It may be conceivable that these National Contact Points, which are to be experts in the field, and therefore it may be anticipated that they know the national milieu, could be responsible for providing trainings, enforcing agreed European standards and for creating a network of collaborating trainers. Furthermore, in 2022, in response to a call HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ERA-01-80, a Centre of Excellence on Inclusive Gender Equality in Research and Innovation will be launched, which as part of its support for Member States and RPOs should include "the design and delivery of tailored training activities on inclusive gender equality in R&I". Given the scope of activities to be covered by the Centre of Excellence and the focus on inclusive gender equality, it is conceivable that the training design will have to address intersectionality. In cooperation with the network of the Contact Points for Gender Equality, standards related to intersectionality could be promoted.

The degree of emphasis on quality standards (especially standards that do not focus purely on the content of training activities) varies in the studied examples of models, as well as the complexity of certification systems.⁴¹ The certification of providers is usually performed based on an assessment of various types of documents, interviews or on-site visits (further details are provided below). The information on all trainings of certified partners that meet quality standards may be published on the website of the parent's entity. (Often, cooperation also includes sharing information and training and collaboration offers within a network.) Providers are usually accredited for a limited period of time (two or three years), after which they can apply for re-accreditation. In some cases, accreditation is limited in time only in the first phase. Accredited providers regularly send monitoring reports to the certifying body, and on-site visits or audits may be carried out.

2.4.2 Quality standards application

The advantage of this model is also that it would maximise the use of the quality standards developed within the GE Academy project and the quality assurance system that has been piloted within the project. As the GE Academy quality standards cover all phases of the GET process (training design, planning and preparation, implementation and evaluation), as well as the gender trainer profile, their application would

³⁹ Some examples can be found here: <https://www.ireb.org/en/cooperation/provider/>; <https://www.giminstitute.org/certified-trainer/>; <https://www.epa.gov/lead/instructions-accredited-training-providers>; <https://uxqb.org/en/training/how-to-become-a-recognized-training-provider/>.

⁴⁰ Examples: <https://www.rsph.org.uk/our-services/accreditation/training.html>; <https://pcw.gov.ph/profiling-and-certification-of-gad-training-programs/>; <https://oasas.ny.gov/training/certified-education-and-training-providers>.

⁴¹ However, it should be emphasized that only a small part of the information is publicly available. A detailed description of the conditions usually presupposes contacting the organisation and expressing the interest in cooperation.

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ensure consistent integration of feminist perspectives (in addition to ensuring training quality in a general sense). Nevertheless, as the quality standards in GE Academy have been set as outcome standards, for the purposes of assessing the provider's quality in a stage where it is not possible to draw on the evaluation of the implemented training activities, it would be necessary to prioritise criteria that are more relevant to the training structure.

2.4.3 Assessment process and methods applicable

The following procedure can be applied to assess⁴² the quality of the potential training provider and ensure its compliance with the quality standards for GET:

*Assessment of the materials documenting the organisation's experience with delivering trainings on relevant topics*⁴³

- documentation of realised training activities (topics, model training scripts, duration, number of participants etc.);
- at least two years of experience in providing trainings on gender issues in research and higher education should be documented (alternatively, the focus may be on the number of trainings delivered);
- a minimum of three independent references for the training provider.

Assessment of the internal quality assurance policy/procedures (the system and tools for monitoring and evaluation of trainings).

Qualification of trainers

- CVs and resume for trainings delivered;
- the Train-the-Trainer programme completion certificate (if such a programme is available).

Self-assessment of the organisation's strengths and weaknesses as a provider of trainings on gender in research and higher education (including the plan for eliminating the weaknesses).

Subscribing to the quality standards

The quality standard set will be made available and accompanied by a checklist specifying the necessary steps that have to be taken to ensure the quality and integration of feminist principles into all phases of the GET process. The provider will provide a written statement that it will comply with the set standards.

⁴² The certification body should ideally be multilingual to allow assessment of the materials supplied in their original language versions, without the need to translate them into English (which may present a barrier).

⁴³ In the interest of not excluding entities that are just starting to provide training, it is possible to enable these organisations to cooperate under the conditions of meeting the conditions of certification within a specified time horizon.

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Assessment of the submitted materials by the certifying body and their discussion at an online meeting with the provider's representatives and trainers, formulation of recommendations.

Detailed documentation of the first five trainings (training scripts, PowerPoint presentations, trainers' self-assessment and participants' feedback provided in the forms prepared by the certification body), the possibility of on-site visits of the certifying body on some of these trainings.

The certification decision (granting certification for 2-3 years).

Recordkeeping, regular monitoring reports (including participant feedback on each session) sent to the certifying body, possibility of audits.

Possible amendments (changes of trainers or significant modifications of the training offer) have to be approved by the certification body.

Re-accreditation.

2.4.4 Funding possibilities

Accreditation fees would be paid by the applicants. To eliminate potential exclusionary effects, it is advisable to set different levels of fees (fee zones) reflecting the diversity of economic conditions in different countries. Different levels of fees according to the number of courses delivered under the "brand" should also be set. Possible co-funding of the certification body from public sources to reduce the barriers connected with fees and support potential providers from different countries to get involved should be considered.

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2.4.5 Advantages and disadvantages

+	<p>Certifying subsidiary training providers would provide an opportunity to utilise the know-how gathered in GE Academy (including the quality standards developed within the project) and spread it to more institutions.</p>
	<p>This model would also provide an opportunity to decentralise the training offer and the possibility to adapt trainings to the local conditions in individual countries.</p>
	<p>It would provide space for possible involvement of organisations from currently less active countries.</p>
	<p>Supporting trainers' expertise development in individual countries can also help expand the overall offer of trainings for which – in connection with the GEP as an eligibility criterion in Horizon Europe – high demand can be expected.</p>
	<p>Training activities could be offered in local languages.</p>
	<p>Trainings delivered locally would allow for lower prices for face-to-face trainings.</p>
	<p>There would be greater flexibility and space for tailor-made solutions.</p>
	<p>The GE Academy brand would be strengthened.</p>
	<p>There would be a potential for financial involvement of individual countries to ensure that trainings are delivered (e.g. in connection with the GEP as an eligibility criterion in Horizon Europe).</p>
-	<p>One of the major obstacles is the complexity and difficulty of setting up a certification system.</p>
	<p>Certification of providers is also associated with high demands on human resources and administrative support.</p>
	<p>The model also seems to imply high costs.</p>
	<p>The control of the central certifying body over the validity of certification (e.g. compliance with quality standards) would probably be reduced.</p>
	<p>It would be necessary to develop a dense network of providers, which would also require substantial resources and time.</p>
	<p>Countries without already existing providers of trainings would be put at a disadvantage which would deepen geographical inequalities.</p>

3. Conclusion and final recommendations

In this last section, we synthesise the knowledge gained when exploring the certification models and also provide recommendations on how to proceed with the effort to establish an EU-wide certification scheme in the field of GE capacity-building. This topic was explored as certification, involving formulation of quality criteria and instituting quality assurance mechanisms, and is deemed to improve the quality of training and its outcomes as well as the process of commissioning training (EIGE 2014). We have introduced four potential models of GET quality certification as means of analysing the perspective of implementing an EU-wide certification scheme:

- 1) Certification of trainers,
- 2) Certification of individual trainings,
- 3) Certification of organisations as training providers and
- 4) Certification of subsidiary training providers

In each model, we examined the object of certification and appropriate options for certifying bodies, the possibilities and limits of quality standards application in practice, relevant assessment methods and funding. A comprehensive overview of the dis/advantages of each model was provided at the end of each section. The factors considered when contemplating the models were mainly the processual character of GE capacity-building, temporality (the need for recertification) and accessibility. Overall, we estimated the feasibility of the certification models (organisational and logistical as well as methodological) based on existing knowledge and experience gained in the GE Academy project.

The models included in this position paper are not exhaustive and were intentionally constructed as "ideal types" to enable initial analyses, as the issue at hand is multifaceted and complex. In reality, **the models are not discrete but thoroughly intertwined**. For future reference, **this is an opportunity to be explored, as it can lead to a more valid certification procedure that would benefit the goal of increased quality in GET more effectively**. This can be demonstrated in the example of the first two models, which could be fully or partially integrated. Based on the GE Academy project experience, the quality of any training is strongly dependent on the quality of the trainer (communication skills, feminist knowledge and gender "fluency", experience, etc.). Furthermore, the ability of the trainer to deliver specific training does not only depend on their skills and competencies, but also on their knowledge in the specific topic. Thus, it would make sense to connect both models in a way that recognises this interconnectedness - either by tying the certification of trainers (model 1) to certain topics/specific trainings or by certifying trainings (model 2) delivered by specific trainers who have proven the ability to do so. Of course, the model combinations do not end here; in other cases, they might be more partial, affecting only some of the aspects discussed in this paper. For example, in trainer certification (model 1), the applicant does not have to be only an individual trainer. It could also be a training provider proposing certification of an entire team of trainers. Alternatively, a group of independent trainers could form a team or a co-op and apply for certification, which could help relieve some accessibility issues or lower administrative and financial burden on the side of the applicants.

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In order to assess all the options, **it is recommended to carry out a complex analysis of certification models that would explore the overlaps of the individual models (as well as the option of connecting the certification of GE in institutions with GET certification) and how exploitation of these possibilities can strengthen or jeopardise a potential certification scheme.** Ideally, similar to the CASPER project, one of the explored alternatives ought to be no action scenario, since the analysis of the available resources and knowledge executed in this position paper does not provide definite conclusions on the added value of establishing a certification scheme compared to the estimated laboriousness and costs. However, based on the explorations and analyses delivered in this paper, there are a few recommendations that should be taken into account in the next steps of examining the potential of GET certification:

- **Most of the certification configurations** (potential combinations of approaches within and between models) **call for principles of outcome-based regulation** (Black et al. 2007). In this paper, this approach was mentioned especially in connection to Models 1 and 2. Concentrating on reaching the regulatory objective (e.g. that training be delivered in a participatory manner) rather than on the process of how exactly it is achieved, goes well with the dynamic and processual character of GE capacity-building and enables open communication between the certified and the certification body. Thus, orientation toward outcomes and principles has the advantage of congruence, flexibility, dialogical character and promotes behaviour that achieves the regulatory objectives (Black 2007: 195). Due to the diverse settings in which GE capacity-building takes place, the variety of topics that it covers and the number of stakeholders involved, it would be very complicated to set exact procedures to be followed. Certification needs to leave enough room for manoeuvre, so that the actors can choose the most optimal course of action fitting the particular situation. Nevertheless, this does not mean that there cannot be elements of process standards included, e.g. in models 3 and/or 4 where setting quality assurance mechanisms would probably be a part of the certification procedure.
- **There are many stakeholders** (trainers, institutions receiving training, training providers, gender experts and researchers etc.) and interested parties (governmental bodies, RPOs, RFOs, NGOs, etc.) **involved in the certification process.** To ensure that there are as few blind spots as possible, **the development of such a scheme needs to be executed in a participatory manner.** Certification needs to be of value to all actors to be fully functional and have the desired positive effects (such as general improvement of provided GET quality).
- **Any attempt at developing a certification scheme should be preceded by detailed scrutiny of the funding possibilities.** As one of the most influential factors influencing the GET certification identified in this paper is temporality, and the need for recertification, sustainability and long term planning are necessary considerations. Although there are incentives on the side of the trainers and organisations to obtain certification and even a willingness to bear some of the costs in the form of the certification fee, **the option of (at least partially) subsidised funding should be scrutinised as fees can be a barrier for some trainers.** Higher financial costs associated with certification can reinforce various types of existing inequalities and accessibility barriers. Moreover, it can lead to increased training costs and thus reduce their accessibility to institutions

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from less privileged countries. This issue is not easily relieved by a sliding scale depending on the geographical location, as English speaking trainers from all across Europe can provide training anywhere, including high-income countries. Thus, the focus would have to be on the actual income of the trainer or other relevant factors.

- Considering the goal of establishing an EU-wide certification scheme, our analysis suggests that **a certain level of decentralisation (in quality assessment and evaluation methodology, not in the quality criteria itself) may be desirable**. Certification needs to reflect local conditions and culture to properly operationalise the quality criteria in a manner that is valid in the local context. This is partially covered by the principle and outcome-focused approach to quality assurance; nevertheless, accessibility is reduced if certification is only available in English – trainers that are familiar with national conditions might not even provide training in English if they do not wish to operate internationally. Moreover, decentralisation also allows for a more hands-on approach, which decreases the risk of reducing quality standards only to "what can be measured" and fosters lively dialogue between the certified and the certification body. However, there are some risks that come with it. Decentralisation must be navigated so it improves the efficiency of evaluation of GET quality. It should not result in a lower bar for some and higher for others.
- Moreover, even in a situation when all of the above-mentioned requirements in the development of certification are respected, **gradual implementation of any certifying scheme should be applied**. Starting light, e.g. for model 1, with a simple database of trainers adhering to principles and quality standards with the potential to develop into a more structured process, with specific competence requirements, peer-to-peer good practise exchange, or even providing T-t-Ts. This way, the dynamic character of the GE capacity-building field is recognised. Slow progression, potentially divided into stages completed by evaluation, enables smoothly blending in the stakeholder feedback and gives room for building a strong brand of the certification. PERFCKTSI principles could be incorporated not only in the quality standards but also in the design of the certification itself, making it intersectional, inclusive and transformative.

The recommendations presented here need to be contemplated further than the scope of this position paper allows. Certification of GE capacity-building on the European level is an issue that, although not entirely unexplored, has not been researched and analysed in depth. The existing knowledge combined with the experience collected in the GE Academy project has allowed us to present initial analyses of four (ideal type) models, which has revealed the complexity of pursuing certification. Although the pitfalls are many, the matter of quality in GE capacity-building cannot be taken lightly. The growing importance of GEPs stemming from the conditions set by the European Commission for gaining funding means that the field of GET is going to grow rapidly. This is a great opportunity for GE across Europe; however, it carries its own risks, such as a decline of quality with the expected increase in the number of trainers and training providers. Certification is one of the ways to combat this threat.

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