

THE HUMORARIUM TOOLKIT

DID YOU TAKE
A SPOONFUL OF SUGAR?

YES, I DID!
I HAVE IT RIGHT HERE!

DID YOU TAKE
THE MAGIC BAG?

SURE!

NO WORRIES!

I HAVE...
THE HUMORARIUM TOOLKIT



THE HUMORARIUM:

TOOLKIT FOR THE USE OF FEMINIST HUMOUR TO COMBAT SEXISM AND RESISTANCES TO GENDER EQUALITY IN ACADEMIA

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Important disclaimer for the use of vignettes:

The vignettes were created to raise awareness and improve competence in the context of gender equality in academia. They can be used to spark and facilitate discussions in a variety of contexts. However, it is important to note that the vignettes may not be used for commercial purposes. This includes selling the vignettes or using them to promote a service or a product. This toolkit and the vignettes are licensed under a Creative Commons license **CC BY-NC-ND**, which means that they may be shared and used for non-commercial purposes as long as proper attribution is given. It is important to abide by the restrictions on the use of the vignettes in order to respect the rights of the creators and maintain the integrity of the purpose they were created for.

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NOTE TO READER

The Humorarium Toolkit has been designed to support gender equality stakeholders in research performing organisations in their effort to combat different forms of gender inequality and resistance to change, particularly in the context of academia. The toolkit is an output of the GEARING-Roles project (Gender Equality Actions in Research Institutions to transform Gender Roles, Horizon Project No. 824536) which has identified humour as a tool to combat resistances. The toolkit provides two important elements to support its goal: (I) arguments that respond to the resistance encountered in the implementation of gender equality plans (Chapter 2) and (II) graphic humour in the form of vignettes or cartoons ([Chapter 2 and 3](#)).

This document is divided in two main parts (Part I and Part II). The toolkit package is presented in Part I and the theoretical background and justification of the followed methodology are presented in Part II. In Part I, Chapter 2, the arguments provided are organised along selected topics that were identified as commonly encountered in discussions on gender equality. These include arguments for quotas, affirmative actions, meritocracy, inclusive language, motherhood and work-life balance, and gender-based violence. For each argument, the situation in which it might be encountered is also presented, in addition to the rationale for counter-arguments. The vignettes, designed by four artists and graphic designers, are allocated under the different topics. In Chapter 3, the reader can be inspired by a set of ideas and potential practices for the use of vignettes, along with other recommendations for individuals and policy-makers (Chapter 4 & 8), and inspiring resources (Chapter 9). The process for the development of the humorarium is presented in Chapter 5, followed by the literature review for the use of humour in general and feminist humour to combat resistance to gender equality in the context of academia, in Chapter 6. Previous initiatives with a similar approach are presented in Chapter 7.

The toolkit can be used to foster a dialogue between faculty and technical staff, leaders of organisation(s) and/or students on different aspects related to sexism and gender equality in academia. The counter-arguments can be used in everyday interactions as well as formal discussions on the topic of gender equality. The vignettes aim to show how feminist art and humour can be a powerful mean to reach different groups of people and promote equality in a light and effective way for topics that would usually be assumed to be contentious. The use of feminist humour,

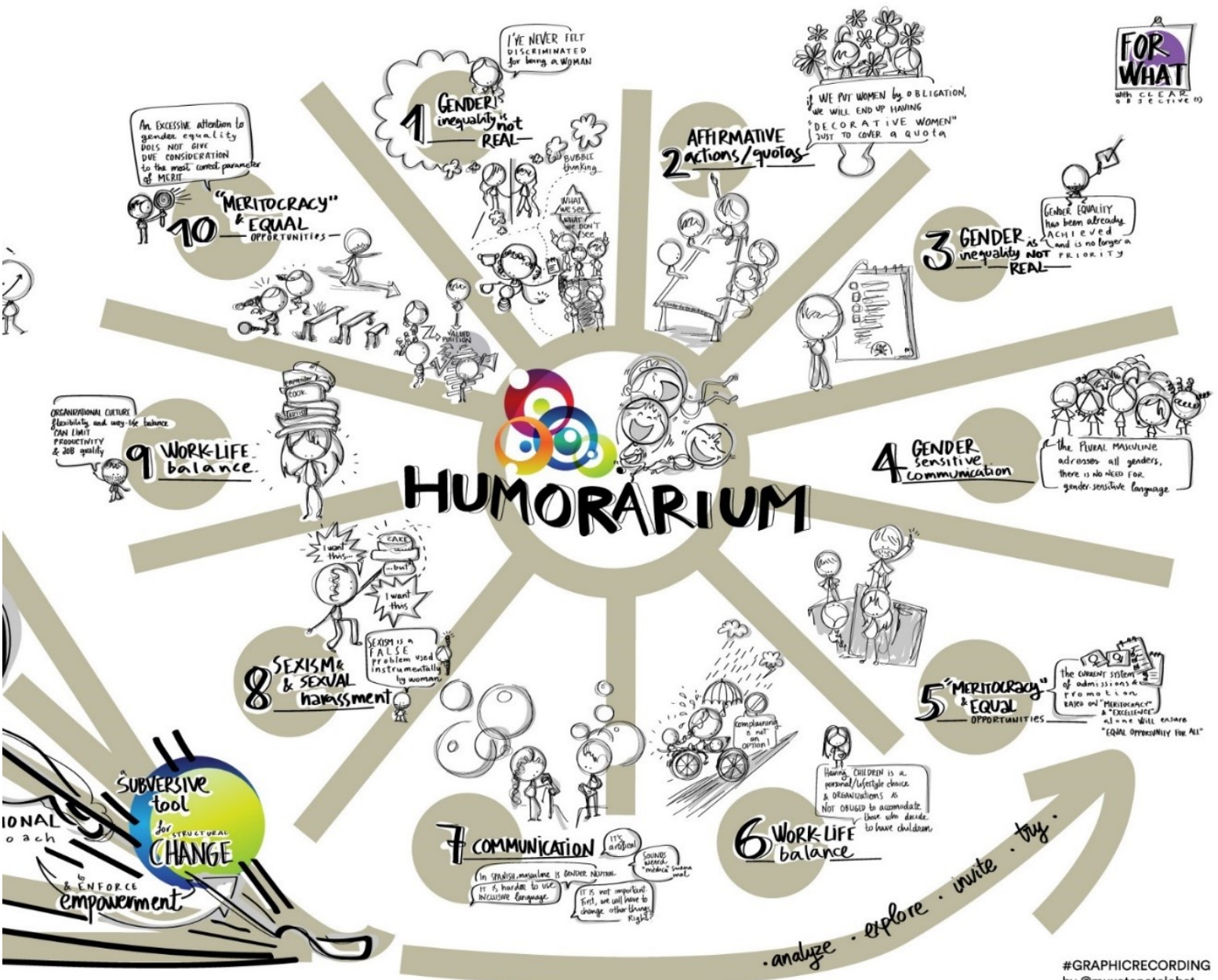
discussed in Chapter 6, has a great transformative potential, constituting an alternative vision of social realities and constructs that contribute to promoting change and combating resistance.

If you want to learn more, get in touch with us to explore options for training and capacity-building activities at gender@yellowwindow.com.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This process started at the initiative of several members of the consortium during one of the trainings on resilience organised by YW. Without the initial conversations between Dolores Morondo, Lorena Fernández, Agostina Allori and María López, this process would not have been possible. These colleagues were also crucial in the early stages of the process, such as the mapping of the initiatives, the creation of the Pinterest board and the literature review. Without their work, we would not have reached this point. In the second phase of the project, the collaboration and involvement of all GEARING-Roles partners was crucial. The collection of cartoons in different languages, the discussions around the conceptualisation of humour and the identification of arguments and situations in which this resource could be used marked a turning point. Our sincere thanks to all partners, and a special mention to our colleagues of Sabanci University, who have been bringing their inspiration and organised the workshop with Asli Alpar. We would also like to extend our gratitude to the artists who designed the vignettes to combat sexism and resistances to gender equality in academia. Their talent and dedication have greatly contributed to raising awareness and promoting change in this important area. The work they created are powerful visual representations of the struggles and triumphs of women in academia and they serve as a reminder of the work that still needs to be done to achieve true equality. We are honoured to have had the opportunity to work with such talented and passionate individuals, and we look forward to continuing the collaboration with them in the future. The names of the artists are: Miryam Artola, Iñigo Maestro, Arevik d'Or, Asli Alpar and Marta Orduna Cortillas.

PART I: TOOLKIT PACKAGE



1. Feminist humour and participatory techniques

The use of humour from a feminist perspective is growing, even in academic sectors (Bocher, 2020; FESTA 2016, Drew, Bencivenga, Ratzler, Poggio, & Saglamer, 2017). As evidenced by the use that projects such as FESTA and SPEAR have made of this resource (Chapter 6), humour can be an adequate tool to deal with situations that a priori would assumed to be conflictive or tense.

In the context of the GEARING-Roles project, some of the identified vignettes were used in a workshop hosted by Deusto on March 29, 2021, focused on the issue of leadership. The objective of this workshop was to promote dialogue between the institutional representation of the different partners of the project and the exchange of good practices or successful initiatives around the axes of action of the gender equality plans. In relation to the specific objective of leadership, the institutional diagnoses had detected a common resistance to the implementation of positive action policies to increase the number of women in leadership positions (GEARING-Roles 2020). Likewise, in the context of the Work Package (WP) specifically dedicated to this priority of the European Research Area (ERA), the University of Deusto had detected an assimilation of certain leadership qualities with stereotypically masculine values, while some of the highest valued aspects of leadership were linked to stereotypically feminine values (GEARING-Roles 2021).

To address this issue in such a way that initial resistance was not encountered, or the debate was polarised, it was decided to use some of the vignettes identified and categorised in the “leadership” axis during the mapping phase (see section 5.1) to brainstorm on different aspects related to gender biases in management positions.

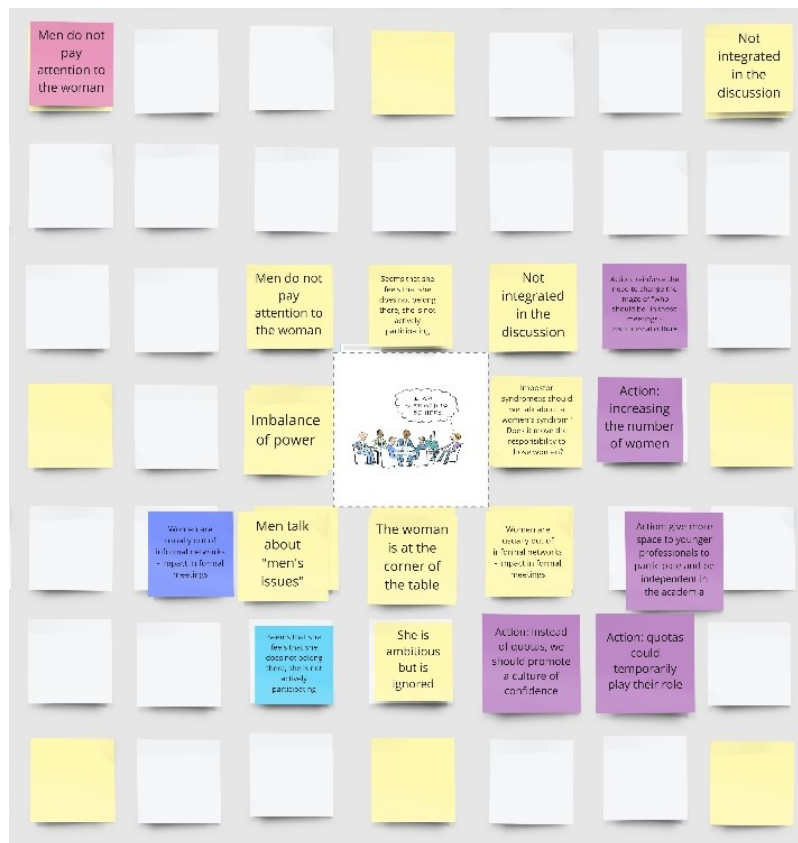


Image 1: Lotus flower poster used in the pairing session organised by UDEUSTO

This initiative achieved the intended objective of fostering an open dialogue between the leaders of the different organisations on different aspects related to leadership and feminism. The exchange of opinions and interpretations about the reality embodied in the vignettes favoured a broad approach and, at the same time, an atmosphere of relaxed debate.

Importantly, the use of these resources with humour, in order to achieve the desired objective, must be carried out avoiding polarisation or the use of mockery, since otherwise it is likely that the opposite result will be obtained. This approach fits with the feminist approaches to humour mentioned above, which resort to the visualisation of shared situations and the construction of community (Case, 2009; Riquelme, 2021). The use of these resources can also be a way to identify new alliances and synergies within organisations, through a close and accessible discourse for different groups within academic institutions.

The feminist approach to humour can also serve to carry out a critical review of sexist humour. This issue has been evidenced in the work carried out by GEARING-Roles during the second vignette collection phase, to which all partners who had shown

interest in the Humorarium contributed. During the discussion session of the collected vignettes, it was evident that some of the images identified by the partners were not feminist images, but rather sexist images. However, during their shared analysis, the potential of using these images from a feminist perspective was manifested to show the inconsistency of some of the patriarchal arguments that prevail in different contexts, including the academic context.

This dual use of humour responds to its dual functionality, which is consistent with the evolution of feminism itself. The use of humour for the feminist analysis of sexist resources corresponds to the critical function of feminism, evidencing the inconsistency of patriarchal arguments (Woodzicka & Ford, 2010; Ford, 2000). This critical analysis is, in itself, the object of resistance and therefore can give rise to further jokes, resources of sexist humour specifically against feminist action. The use of sexist humour to combat the critical analysis of feminism generally resorts to portraying feminists in a stereotyped way (Pereira, 2013), and often alleges the “lack of sense of humour” of this group.

The use of feminist humour, with the aforementioned characteristics, has therefore a great transforming potential, constituting an alternative vision of social realities and constructs that contribute to promoting change and combating resistance. This functionality of humour is based on the achievements already obtained by feminism. A detailed analysis for the use of feminist humour to combat sexism in academia, can be found in the second part of this document, Chapter 6.

2. Selected topics for the humorarium

2.1. Gender inequality is not real

Argument against gender equality

“Never felt discriminated for being a woman.”

Situations where this argument may be raised

This argument might be often encountered in the following situations:

- Formal and informal discussion for gender equality between friends and colleagues. Usually, such statements come up when one member of a group shares a story of discrimination they have faced. Such argument can devalue the experience and feelings of the person who shared their personal experience and perpetuate inequalities.
- Decision-making boards and meetings. When inclusive measures for gender equality are recommended in a formal discussion of middle/top management, a woman may object, claiming that such procedures are inefficient or that gender inequality does not exist since she has never encountered discrimination.

Rationale for counter-arguments

Whenever we address equality in the academic environment, we come up against great barriers and arguments that question gender inequalities. All these barriers pose great challenges for those working on structural change processes, but we find it especially difficult when we encounter those who claim that they have never been discriminated against for being women.

One such counter-argument is "It's great to hear you've never faced discrimination. I recognise that this is your personal/individual experience, which does not reflect the reality of many other women. The underrepresentation of women in positions of power demonstrates that many types of discrimination exist and harm many women."

Another counter-argument could be “Indeed, many women may not face prejudice. We must keep in mind that this may be explained by the fact that they were privileged or came from a background where there was less bias against them. Privilege is often invisible to those who have it, therefore we need to recognise it, and transform it into confidence that will help foster confidence in others, such as by advocating for marginalised groups.”

It's important to remember that many individuals become defensive when someone points out their privilege. Having one's privilege highlighted may seem like being told that one is lazy, lucky, or undeserving of good things, or that one's life has been easy (Catlin, 2019, p.13). By recognising our privilege, we need to acknowledge that privilege is often a key ingredient in cultivating professional confidence. For example, confidence that you can leverage your network to get a new job (Catlin 2019, p.18) or to submit your request for promotion. By recognizing one's privilege, individuals can use it as a tool for empowerment, transforming it into confidence that can be used to foster confidence in others. This could include using one's privilege to advocate for marginalised groups, or working to dismantle systems of oppression.

Vignette 1: **Glass ceiling** – Inigo Maestro



Vignette 2: **Teachers** – Asli Alpar



Vignette 3: **Espresso** – Arevik d'Or



I'm sorry, I don't know how to make you an espresso macchiato with the coffee machine in the kitchen. I'm trained as an astrophysicist.

Vignette 4: **Equal Pay** – Arevik d'Or



This new product is biologically degradable, not tested on animals and the female researchers received equal pay.

Vignette 5: **Young Lady** – Asli Alpar



2.2. Affirmative action: quotas

Argument against gender equality

“Gender quota would result in the erosion of legitimacy for elected Senate members. Moreover, individuals have multiple identities, gender being only one of them, and if the Senate aimed to set diversity policies for its membership, other factors, such as nationality or class should be considered. We suggest instead of quota, to run awareness-raising, encouraging the constituents to vote with the idea of gender balance in mind.”

“If we put women by obligation, we will end up having “decorative women” just to cover a quota.”

“Making a career or being chosen for reasons of gender equality is almost offensive for a person normally intelligent and conscientious in her work. Everyone should recognise the skills and competence of others, regardless of their gender.”

Situations where this argument may be raised

Arguments against quotas are usually stated in:

- Organisations’ boards, government, official decision bodies. Gender diversity quotas or targets and their respective merits as strategies for selecting or promoting women in the workplace are very much debated and usually misunderstood. Usually, quotas are introduced as a fast-track to achieve gender-equal committees and receive a lot of counter-arguments.

Rationale for counter-arguments

Another situation we face on a daily basis is the resistance to quotas and affirmative action measures to balance inequalities, especially in leadership positions. Beyond ignoring the benefits of diversifying the academia and its leadership, it seems that quotas scare them more because of the loss of their privileges than because they doubt the capacity of women to be in these positions.

“Today, more than half the countries in the world have adopted political quotas. They range from party quotas – a certain representation of female candidates on party lists, whether voluntarily adopted or mandated by the law– to reserved seats for women who must be represented in elected office. This reflects the realisation that the self-perpetuating effects of discrimination can only be broken if opportunities for the traditionally discriminated-against are created. If people assume women are unsuited for leadership, women invest less in leadership training and seek out fewer leadership opportunities. And when they do seek to become leaders and confront the stereotype, they are less likely to be chosen. Quotas can short-circuit this mechanism. Far from elevating the under-qualified, quotas prove in fact to broaden the pool of qualified candidates” (Iris Bohnet, *What Works: Gender Equality by Design*, 2016, p. 238).

Vignette 6: **Decision-Making** – Asli Alpar

MANAGERS ARE
OFTEN MALE BECAUSE
WOMEN ARE NOT GOOD
AT DECISION-MAKING.



REALLY?
I THINK
I MADE
A REALLY
GOOD
DECISION
BY
DROPPING
YOUR
CLASS.



Vignette 7: **Inflated** – Inigo Maestro



2.3. Meritocracy and equal opportunities

Argument against gender equality

“The current system of admissions and promotion based on meritocracy and excellence alone will ensure equal opportunities for all.”

“People should be hired based on merit, not because of their gender.”

Situations where this argument may be raised

Similarly, to the previous argument in Section 2.2., the above arguments might be encountered in situations where quotas are proposed as a good practice to ensure a minimum representation of an underrepresented group. In such cases, the belief that quotas can thwart meritocracy is stated, by “favouring” candidates that are supposedly less capable and skilled to take a position. Such arguments might be encountered in decision-making bodies for hiring and promotion procedures etc.

Rationale for counter-arguments

If there is one thing that characterises the academic environment, it is the discourse of meritocracy. The term “meritocracy” was coined in Michael Young’s satirical 1958 novel, “The Rise of Meritocracy,” where it described a kind of self-delusion in which rich people convinced themselves that their wealth was evidence of their moral superiority. Meritocracy poses our society as a finite game with winners and losers, and its circular reasoning (“the best people succeed, therefore anything you do to succeed makes you better than the people who lose”). At some point, we need to acknowledge it’s not always the most deserving who are in the positions of power.

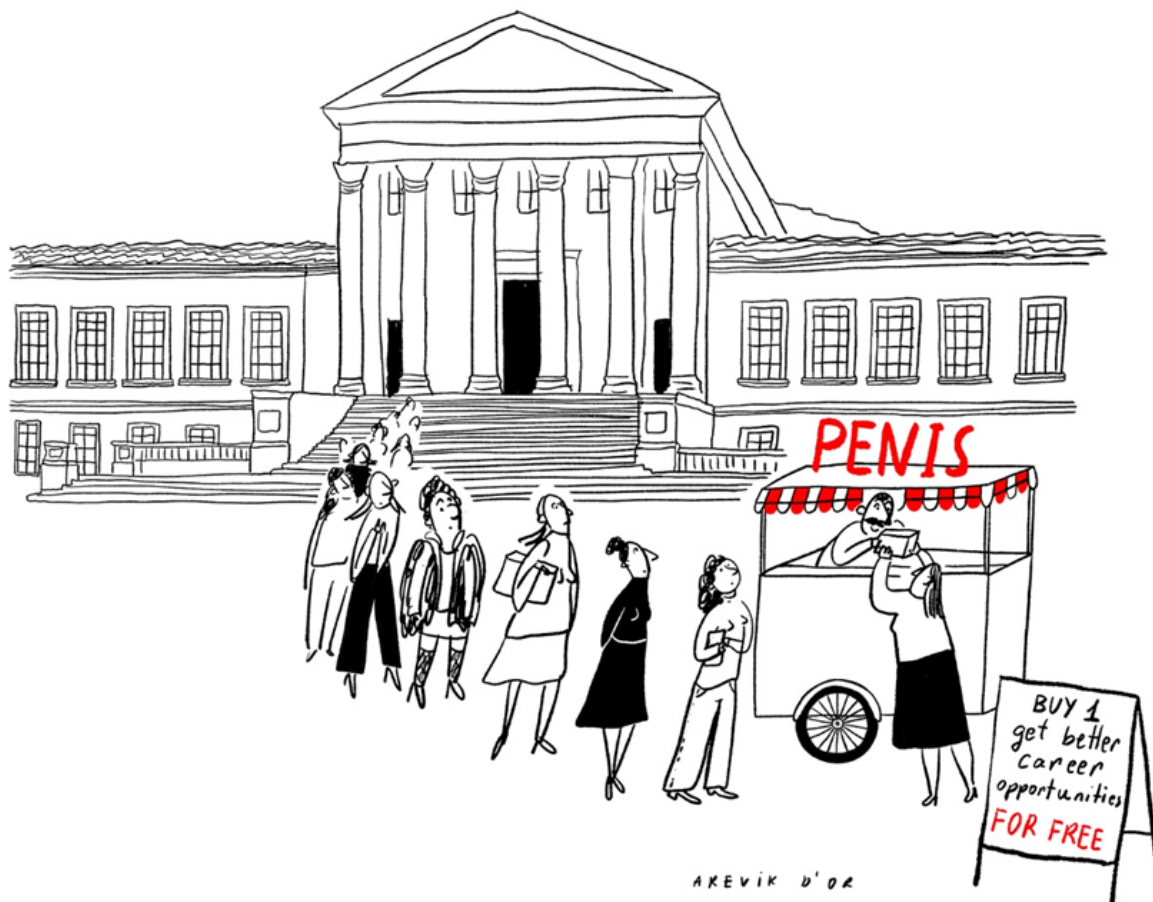
“Most sectors would probably have a 50/50 split if people were hired only on their merit. Unfortunately, organisations and research institutions typically hire based on an applicant’s perceived quality (unconscious prejudice plays a role here), which means that many perfectly talented women are sometimes ignored in favour of a male applicant. Gender quotas indeed have been criticised for favouring women based on their gender, perhaps leading to unfavourable effects for women who are perceived by other employees to have been chosen based on their gender rather than their merit. However, a study (conducted by The Conversation) discovered that if employees are taught about gender discrimination in the workplace, quotas can help eliminate the prejudices that affect hiring choices and encourage more women to apply for jobs. Meritocracy only works if everyone has a legitimate shot at the target (Catlin, 2019).”

Another argument could be “Quotas aren’t designed for women. They are designed for those in positions of authority. In other words, the true purpose of quotas is not to enable women who do not deserve the position – or who are less talented than their male co-candidates – rise to prominence. Its true purpose is to push those who will propose candidates, to search more intentionally and vigilantly for appropriate,

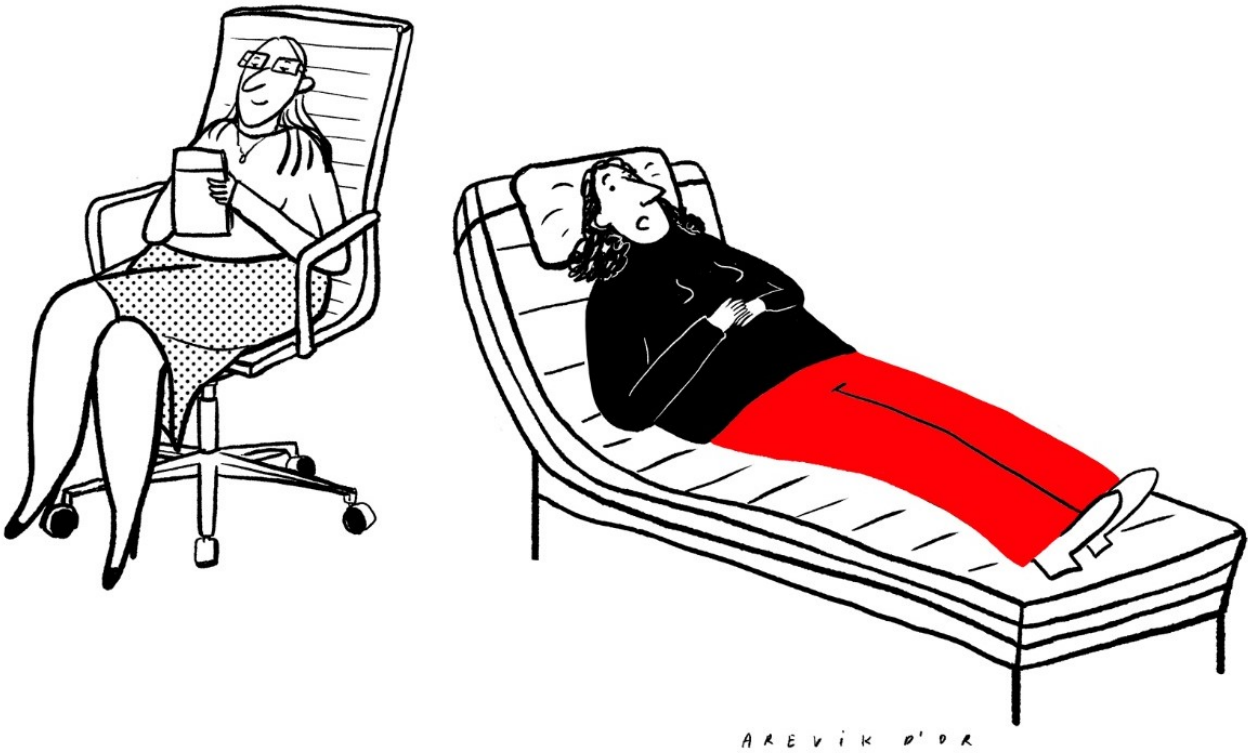
deserving, and capable women for (say) half the jobs on each team – so that the team composition is as gender representative of the relevant population as possible.”

“Quotas aren't what's disrupting the meritocracy. In fact, they strengthen it by weakening the power of these other factors that get in between performance and outcomes. Think about it; the things that ensure success in the corporate world are as much about personal connections and professional access, something that a lot of potential leadership candidates who aren't white men simply have less opportunity to obtain. Quotas, by forcing boards to look outside their usual recruiting pool, create those opportunities. And it's immensely clear that, absent some sort of internal revolution, there is no better way to course correct. Quotas work. They aren't magic, they aren't a silver bullet, but they get the process moving. So, if we really want a meritocracy, it seems we should embrace quotas (Elting, 2022).

Vignette 8: **Buy One** – Arevik d'Or

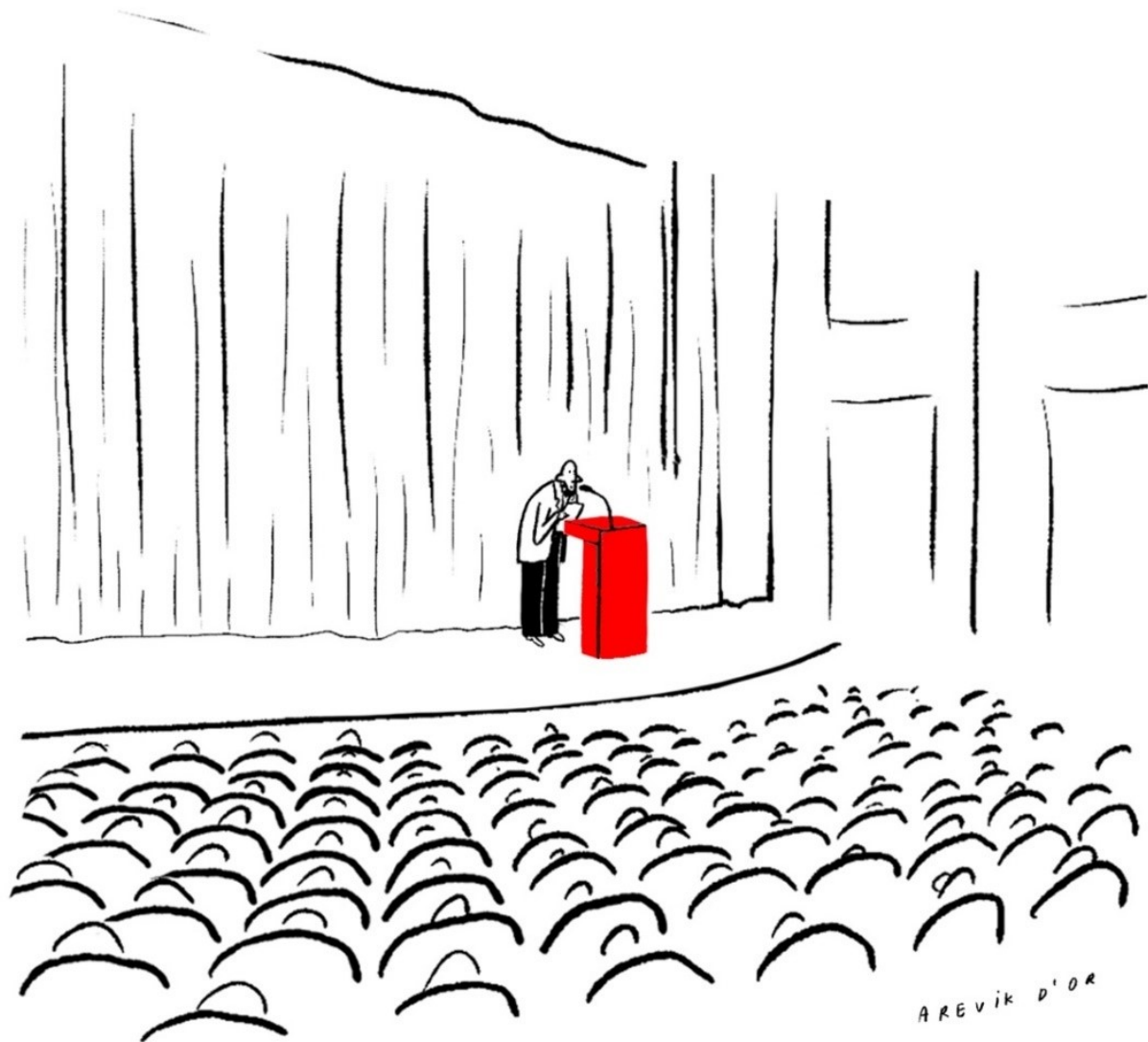


Vignette 9: **Full Professor** – Arevik d'Or



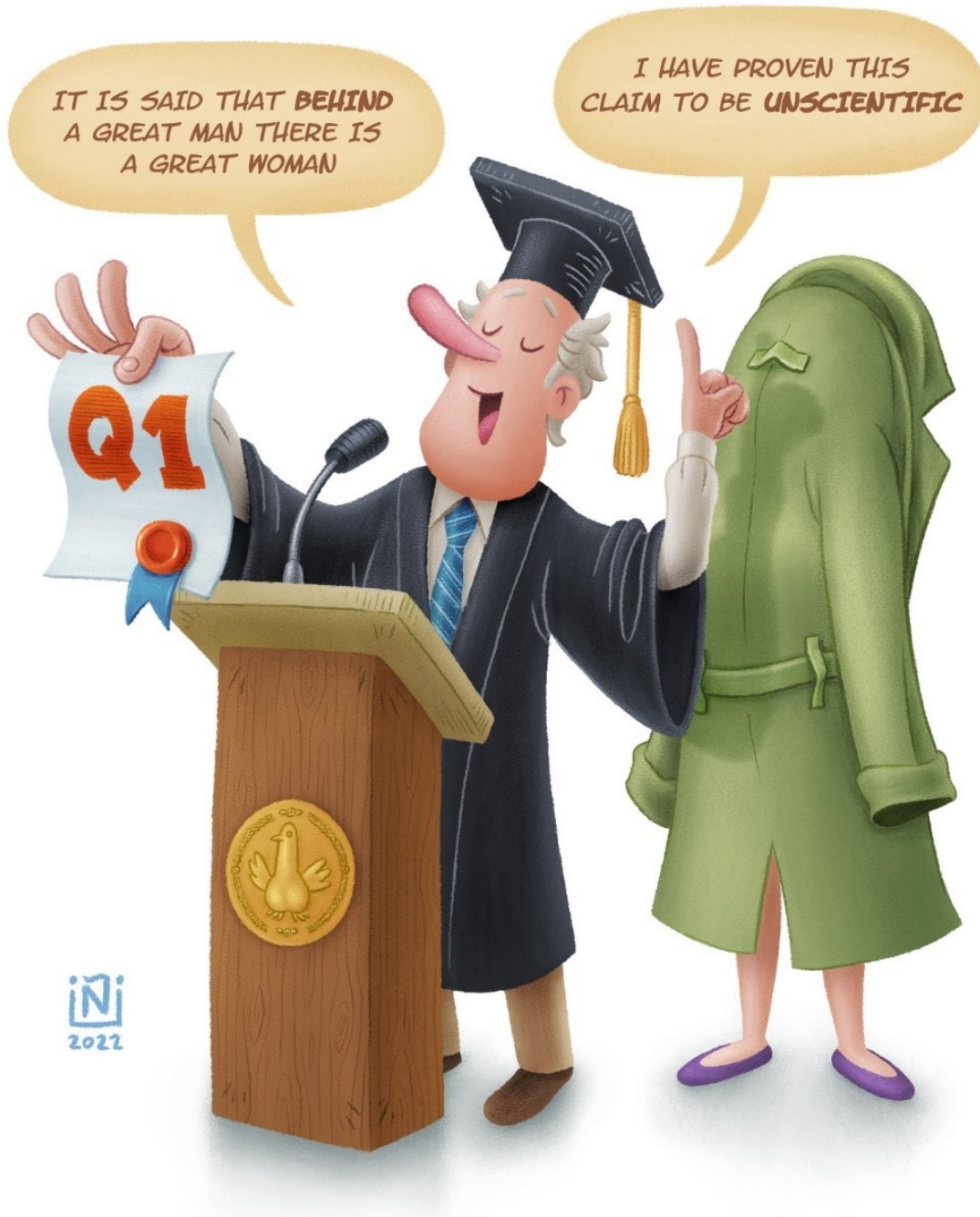
First I started working even harder to get promoted to full professor in the academy,
then I realized it will be much easier to just get a penis.

Vignette 10: **Congratulations** – Arevik d'Or



I also want to congratulate all the academic women for being stubborn enough to still be here.

Vignette 11: **Unscientific** – Inigo Maestro



2.4. Gender communication: inclusive language

Argument against gender equality

“It is not important. We need to change other things first.”

“It is hard to use inclusive language.”

“The masculine pronoun is already neutral and inclusive.”

“It is not discriminatory, it is only a joke. You should not take it so seriously.”

Situations where this argument may be raised

The above arguments might be encountered during:

- Decision-making discussions. Once a gender-inclusive language guidance or policy is introduced to an organisation, unfavourable reactions regarding its usage and importance are to be expected.
- Everyday discussion about the use of language. With the introduction of gender-inclusive policies, colleagues tend to point out to others the correct phrase or terminology, in order for them to follow the policy guidelines. Such indications may create reactions that devalue the importance of inclusive language.

Rationale for counter-arguments

Language is a social and cultural construct. In all spheres of human life, language builds realities. It is not fixed, but in constant evolution. It is hence an intrinsic part of the process for achieving an equal reality for all, rather than a matter that is placed at the margins.

If it is true that it can be initially a challenge to adapt to new ways of communicating, it is also true that neglecting such a need maintains and reproduces the invisibilisation of women and other diverse groups. Language has been continuously adapted throughout history all over the world, following the modernisation and globalisation of life. Arguing that inclusive language is impossible because too difficult contrasts with the fact that language (any living language) is in constant evolution.

Using inclusive language is a means to ensure representation in society to diverse groups. Again, language is naturally adapted to the new social realities that emerge

over time. The denial of gender inclusive language on the basis of a supposed need to keep languages in their original format is hence one more means of resistance to gender equality and diversity.

We are often singled out as people who have no sense of humour, and who take everything too seriously, especially when we are addressed with sexist or even disrespectful language. However, it seems that inclusive language is a weapon that hurts the sensibilities of the white heterosexual men who dominate our institutions, because its use remains one of our biggest battles.

A counter-argument for the above statements could be “Language is really powerful. When language ignores issues of power and equity that shape people’s lives, it only foments further exclusion of marginalised people. It is more important than ever to use language that creates inclusive and equitable cultures.”

“Inclusive language is more than just avoiding the use of a few outdated or objectionable terms and phrases. It’s about adopting communication that recognises our society’s power differentials and dynamics, as well as their negative consequences. It is about expressing gratitude for the diversity everyone brings to the table.”

“Inclusive communication can be awkward and uncomfortable for even the most well-intentioned person. For some people it might be indeed hard to use, and many worry about “saying the wrong thing”. Language is always evolving as social and cultural change does, and you’re not expected to know everything all the time. You can simply ask what the right terminology or phrase is to use.”

“We should take inclusive language seriously, as it also sends a message to people and communities who have been marginalised that they’re safe to be themselves at work, that they belong, and that you’re committed to helping them flourish. Inclusive language acknowledges diversity, conveys respect to all people and promotes equality opportunities.”

Vignette 12: **Fresh Women** – Inigo Maestro



Vignette 13: **Joke** – Arevik d'Or



-I hate it when my lab colleagues say a woman belongs in the kitchen.
How on earth is she going to clean the rest of the house from there.
-That's not funny. That's sexist.
-It's just a joke!
-And your genuine opinion!

2.5. Motherhood and work-life balance

Argument against gender equality

“Having children is a personal/lifestyle choice and organisations are not obligated to accommodate those who decide to have children.”

“Complaining is not an option when you choose to become a mother.”

“Organisational culture flexibility and work-life balance practices can limit productivity and job quality.”

Situations where this argument may be raised

Such arguments are likely to be stated during informal interactions with colleagues, friends and family. When parents/mothers share the challenge of balancing family and work obligations, many may judge their decision and expect full responsibility from them.

Rationale for counter-arguments

Some people may view academia as a profession that provides flexibility and a relaxed atmosphere. This, however, is not always the case. The most challenging problem for women in academia is managing family obligations and academic work.

Motherhood is strongly linked to gender disparities in academia. Motherhood, established gender norms, and a lack of support for new moms are the most major variables that contribute to women missing out on crucial funding, fellowship, and publication opportunities.

Traditional gender roles have a long history yet are still prevalent today. Women, not men, were expected to give up their careers in order to remain at home and raise a family. While not explicitly mentioned, this is nevertheless to be expected today. These recognised norms continue to influence how women in academia see their professions. There are still double standards that assign distinct functions to the “good mother” and “good father” that impact the sexual division of labour within couples and families. Women who are the primary caretakers for the elderly and other dependents confront similar issues.

Many organisations around the world, particularly after the pandemic, have adopted various practices for work-life balance, such as flexible schedules, extra time block throughout the day, working-from-home policy, emergency back-up child and dependent care, and many more supportive benefits packages.

On the counter part, many argue that organisations are not obligated to accommodate those you have children or other dependents, and that work-life balance do not lead to productivity, or does not benefit the organisation at all.

A counter-argument could be "A better work-life balance may have a significant influence on an employee's capacity to focus and concentrate at work, whether at home or at the office, and the ensuing consequences on productivity are considerable. Employees who are well-rested and less stressed can not only be productive for longer periods of time, but the subsequent boost in morale helps them to give better service."

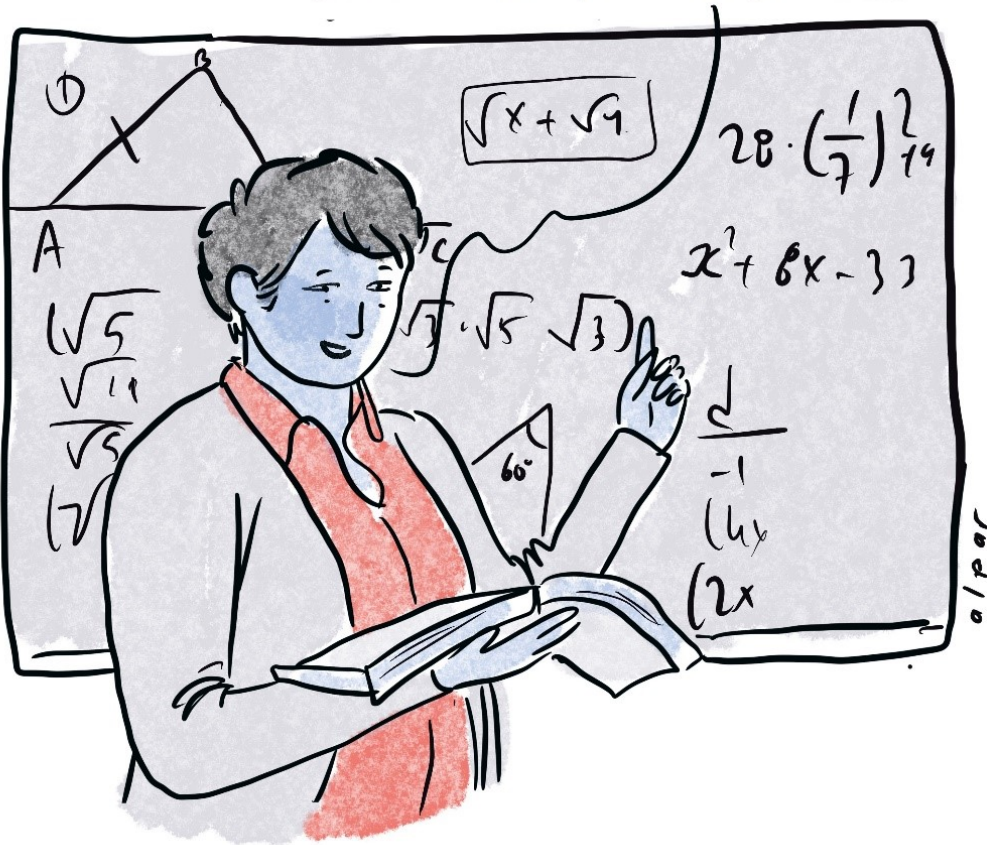
"By providing support services for primary caregivers such as mothers, employers have as a result higher employee engagement, reduced turnover, a more diverse workforce, and reduced health care and leave costs, as well as a reduction in absenteeism. Work-life balance can only benefit organisations.

"Some mistakenly understand gender equality as a women's issue only. It is important to highlight that the whole institution benefits from a more open and respectful organisational culture. The well-being of all improves when there is a better balance between work, family and private life."

Vignette 14: **Work to do** – Inigo Maestro



WE'VE DONE ALL THE CALCULATIONS...
IN ORDER TO ERADICATE SEXISM
IN ACADEMIA, THERE NEEDS
TO BE AN EQUAL DIVISION
OF LABOUR AT HOME.



Vignette 16: **Helping** – Inigo Maestro



2.6. Sexual harassment & gender-based violence

Argument against gender equality

“The university is a safe space. Such incidents rarely happen.”

“Usually, the sexual harassment cases are fake charges, aiming to hurt the academic staff.”

“Nothing serious happened, let’s not officially report it. This will hurt your career. Forget about it.”

“Why didn’t you report it immediately? Why only report it after all these years?”

“Sexism is a false/constructed problem used instrumentally by women.”

Situations where this argument may be raised

When incidents of sexual harassment or any other form of gender-based violence are shared or reported either officially or in an informal setting (between friends and colleagues) the reaction received might be disappointing, discouraging or even (re-)traumatising.

Rationale for counter-arguments

Since the age of 15, every other woman working in an EU member state has experienced sexual harassment ([ERA Survey](#), 2014). Women are frequently subjected to sexist jokes, disparaging remarks, degrading remarks, harassment, and violence.

Sexual harassment in the workplace, especially higher education, is more common among lesbian and bisexual women, transgender people, women of colour, and people with disabilities, according to research (Bondestam & Lundquist, 2020). Precarious working conditions make young researchers vulnerable and marginalised, especially young women in their early phases of their careers or working on temporary or short-term contracts (Pilinkaitė-Sotirovič).

Stories regarding reported students’ experiences of sexual harassment are routinely dismissed by supervisors or deans, saying that “nothing significant happened”. Their responses to potential harassment allegations frequently focus on the complaining students or researchers and their “false claims” against professors or supervisors. So

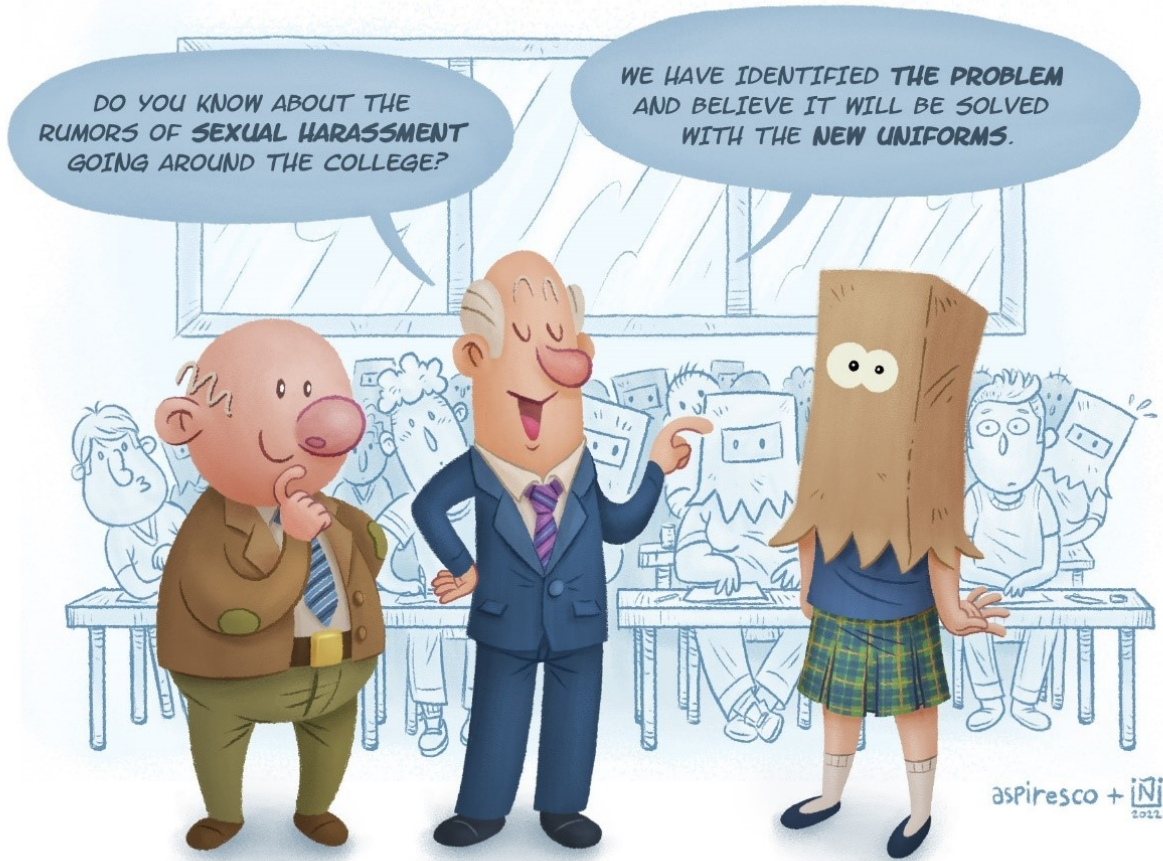
far, research on sexual and gender harassment in universities and research institutes has indicated that there is a general environment in academia that accepts or tolerates sexual and gender harassment.

Potential counter-arguments for the above arguments could be: “The percentage of fake charges is around 1%. No victim would be willing to follow such procedure to accuse anyone of false accusations.”.

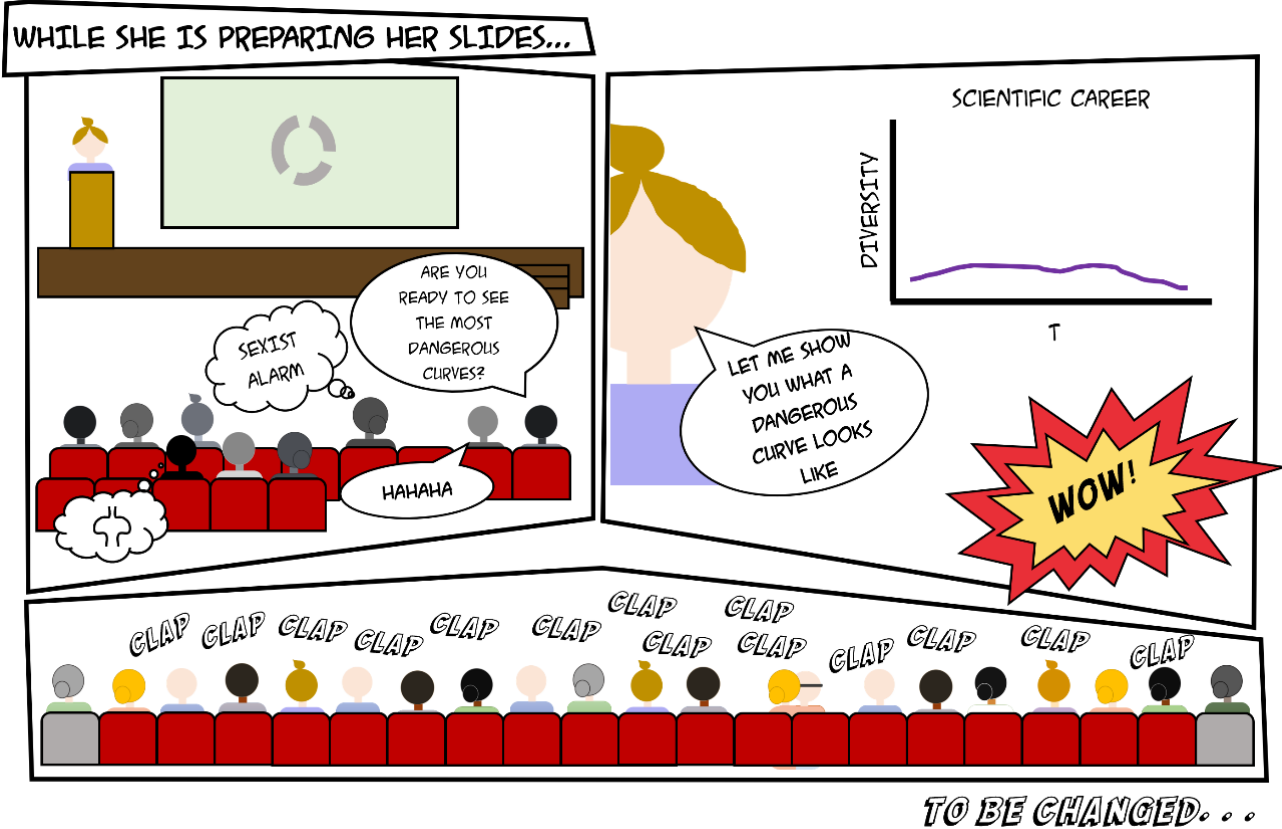
“Hierarchical structures and power relations in academia can also contribute to the normalisation of psychological, physical, sexual harassment on the grounds of gender. In some scientific fields requiring spending a lot of time in labs, fieldwork or other settings, the relationship between student or researcher and their supervisor can develop the grounds for dependency and compliance. Post-graduate students and researchers depend on their supervisor or mentor who have the power and authority to control research processes and career prospects. Top department leaders can also have a lot of power when they are in the position to attract funding. This power can be misused, but those depending on the funding would not dare to disclose any harassing behaviour for fear of losing their job and/or being publicly shamed.”

“According to the [largest survey on Gender-based Violence in Academia in Europe, with over 42,000 responses, conducted by UniSAFE](#) (2022), nearly two in three (62%) of the respondents who took part in the survey disclosed having experienced at least one form of gender-based violence since they started working or studying at their institution. Almost 1 in 3 respondents have experienced sexual harassment. Among respondents who had experienced gender-based violence, only 13% reported it. Almost half of the victims (47%) explained that they felt uncertain whether the behaviour was serious enough to be disclosed. Another frequent reason indicated by 31% of the victims is that at the time of the incident they did not identify the behaviour as an act of violence.”

Vignette 17: **Uniforms** – Inigo Maestro



Vignette 18: **Curves** – Marta Orduna



3. How to use the vignettes

3.1. Important disclaimer for the use of the vignettes

The vignettes were created to raise awareness and improve competence in the context of gender equality in academia. They can be used to spark and facilitate discussions in a variety of contexts. However, it is important to note that the vignettes may not be used for commercial purposes or re-published without permission. This includes selling the vignettes or using them to promote a service or a product. Additionally, this toolkit and the vignettes are licensed under a Creative Commons license CC BY-NC-ND, which means that they may be shared and used for non-commercial purposes as long as proper attribution is given. It is important to abide by the restrictions on the use of the vignettes in order to respect the rights of the creators and maintain the integrity of the purpose they were created for.

3.2. Inspiration for the use of the vignettes

The vignettes can be used to foster an open dialogue between staff, leaders of organisation(s) and/or students on different aspects related to sexism and gender equality in academia. The vignettes presented in the previous section were linked to topics according to the authors' perspective and judgment. However, depending on context, culture, background, and experiences, a different interpretation may be given to each vignette, therefore a different topic/category may apply. There is no single interpretation, nor right or wrong explanation for each vignette.

In order to encourage reflection and active participation on the subject of sexism and gender equality in academia, we hope to provide some ideas for activities in this section that can serve as inspiration for the use of the vignettes:

Share your own experience using a vignette: The vignettes can spark a discussion that many people may relate to. By sharing personal experiences, we also empower others to share theirs, therefore we create a movement of change-makers and agents.

In the digital era, social media act as tools for networking and mobilisation. You can share your experience, opinion and your own interpretation for one or more vignettes by starting your own blog or writing LinkedIn articles. LinkedIn is a professional social platform with great engagement that can spark discussion and reflections to a worldwide audience and lead to meaningful connections.

Vignettes as an awareness-campaign: Vignettes can act as educational and awareness-raising tools for the different forms of sexism and inequalities in academia. Each institution/department/team can use the vignettes on their social media, newsletter, or internal communication channels to boost awareness and understanding. Each vignette can be accompanied by a short description of the topic that it represents (depending on its interpretation) and encourage discussion. In addition, depending on the lay-out of the workplace, vignettes can be used as a poster on the office walls or office doors.

Class Discussions: Encourage class discussion on current events or recent studies related to gender equality and sexism in academia. The vignettes can act as the start point of a discussion. Actively listen and engage with students' thoughts and opinions and try to expand the discussion beyond academia. Ask questions such as: Which similar forms of prejudice occur in your daily life? What assumptions are hidden behind this conversation? What makes you uncomfortable by reading this vignette? The discussion can be facilitated in order to capture the different interpretations of the vignettes. In order to foster participation, you can choose the "vignette of the month" and have such a discussion for 30-60 minutes once a month.

Re-boost activity for the team: During internal re-boost or team-building activities vignettes can act as a tool for internal discussions and better engagement. The team can work in groups, and each group can work with different vignettes and capture their thoughts and experiences on a board with sticky notes. Through this experience, members of the team that may have experienced incidents of sexism or discrimination can share with others that were unaware or have disbelieved such events.

Participatory technique discussions with leadership: Similar to the participatory technique described in Section 5.1. and 5.2, vignettes can be used as a tool for exchange of opinions and interpretations about the reality embodied in them, with leadership representatives. The use of the vignettes can also facilitate discussion with other institutional representatives to exchange inspiring practices on the different topics that each vignette represents. Find various participatory techniques [here](#).

The ideas proposed are examples for inspiration and are not aimed to limit the use of the vignettes.

Remember: The Humorarium and the use of vignettes are meant to show how feminist art and humour can be a powerful means to reach out to different groups of people and trigger reflection. Humour can be an adequate tool to deal with situations that were assumed to be controversial, tense or taboo. In order to be ready for counter-arguments or negative reactions, remember to build your case by using arguments for each topic, presented in the previous chapter.

4. Recommendations for users

This Chapter includes recommendations for the use of the Humorarium Toolkit to foster a fresh dialogue in academia for gender equality.

We have identified different target groups and stakeholders that could be interested in using the Humorarium and therefore structure these recommendations according to this clustering of stakeholders, presented in the following section and in Chapter 8:

Change agents and structural change community:

Get out of the box: This toolkit is an important resource in today's academic landscape, as it helps to promote more inclusive and equitable academic spaces. We encourage to use its elements in different settings beyond those mentioned above. The best way to spark social and institutional change is by asking the right questions! Get inspired by the counter-arguments and the rationale provided for each topic, and challenge your colleagues with critical questions that can create room for the counter-arguments to do their magic.

Create your own vignettes: It is important to use vignettes and resources adapted to the context/situation and to take into account cultural aspects and barriers. Therefore, teams and change agents can create their own vignettes by using different resources and tools. See some example of online tools:

- Pixton: <https://www.pixton.com/>

- Storyboard: <https://www.storyboardthat.com/es/comic-maker>
- Creately: <https://creately.com/es/usage/creador-de-comics/>
- ComicGen: <https://gramener.com/comicgen/v1/>

Engage different stakeholders (students, administrative staff, leaders) in the use of humour as tool for change and brainstorm with them about new topics/resources, and find artists in your own community.

Feminist researchers:

Use humour more often: Humour appeared as a possible and interesting tool in the fight against sexism and resistance to gender equality. Dare to use it in your everyday interactions and discussions when addressing topics related to gender inequalities. By using humour, individuals can broach difficult or sensitive topics related to gender inequalities in a less confrontational or threatening way, which can make it easier for others to engage with the material and consider different perspectives. However, it is important to note that not all types of humour are appropriate or effective in this context. For example, making jokes at the expense of marginalised groups is not acceptable as it perpetuates harmful stereotypes. Instead, try to use humour that highlights the absurdity of gender inequalities, rather than reinforcing them.

Use participatory techniques and be creative: By coupling the vignettes with counter-arguments, you can show how feminist art and humour can be used to challenge and disrupt gender inequalities. Gather your team or department to brainstorm and develop new counter-arguments and dare to design your own vignettes! This can be a great way to tap into the collective creativity, expertise and experience of the group, and to generate a variety of perspectives and ideas.

Students:

Humour as a pedagogical tool: Not only is humour a good pedagogical tool, but it can also be a powerful tool for students to denounce situations of injustice and inequality and to encourage debate. Thus, cartoons can be used, for example:

- To address situations of objectification and bullying in the classroom
- To initiate debates on gender inequalities in the institution.

Artist/comedians/designers:

Get close to academic environment and institutions. Use the arguments and counter arguments framed in academia to disseminate and raise awareness about gender inequalities. Collaborate with feminist scholars and institutions to develop and innovate in the use of humour.

PART II:

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

5. Humorarium development process

5.1. Initial mapping

The data collection for the humorarium work was carried out in three phases. As mentioned above, the initial idea arose in a conversation in October 2020 between participants of the GEARING-Roles project from the University of Deusto and Yellow Window about the ambivalent/polyvalent functions of humour as a way of dealing with resistance against gender equality.

Despite recognising the negative impact of the use of sexist humour on feminist academics, work also began on the need to develop their own tools based on feminist humour that could help combat resistance to gender equality in the academy.

After that meeting, to map the existing resources available, the members of the team searched for vignettes and illustrations – with a feminist approach – that could be related or nexus with the problems presented in the Argumentarium. Some of the searches were directed towards various artists whose works are already framed and identified in a feminist current; such is the case of Femme Sapiens, Maitena, Núria Pompeia or Lizza Donnely. In other cases, it was not possible to know exactly the intention of the authors (Barthes, 1967), and vignettes that present, reflect or represent a problem that can be read from a gender perspective and/or a feminist perspective, were chosen.

This initial phase combined two methods:

- 1) On November 12, 2020, a collaborative Twitter campaign was launched in order to collect more vignettes and meet new artists. Table 1 (below) shows the impact the campaign had.

Type of interaction	Number
Impressions	20.076
Likes	201
Re-tweets	56
Total interactions	5306

Table 1: Impact of the collaborative Twitter campaign to compile feminist vignettes

- 2) A Pinterest board was created and the first identified vignettes were uploaded in order to corroborate whether the Pinterest algorithm allowed increasing the number of vignettes with similar content.

Despite expectations regarding this platform, the second initiative was not entirely effective. For this reason, most of the first data collection phase was carried out through online searches by the team.

As a result of this first round of searches, 68 vignettes from at least 35 different artists were collected in a database. It should be noted, as a research bias, that most of the members of the work team have Spanish as their native language, so the first vignettes collected were also in Spanish.

As indicated in the introduction, to group the images, the categories used in the Argumentarium were followed. The categories of this tool have an empirical support as they are those discursive resistances to the implementation of gender policies that different members of the GEARING-Roles consortium listen to in their daily practice in pursuit of institutional change. These discursive resistances usually revolve around certain common topics.

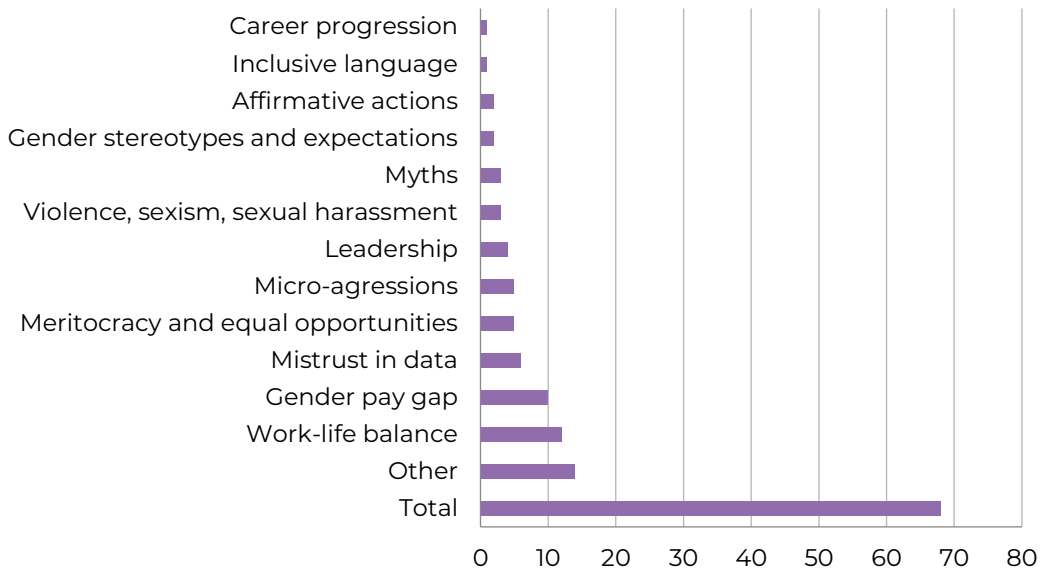


Figure 1: Vignettes by category (1st stage)

Likewise, at least 35 different artists were identified, although in some cases the label “unknown author” was used, with a total of 18 female authors and 15 male authors.

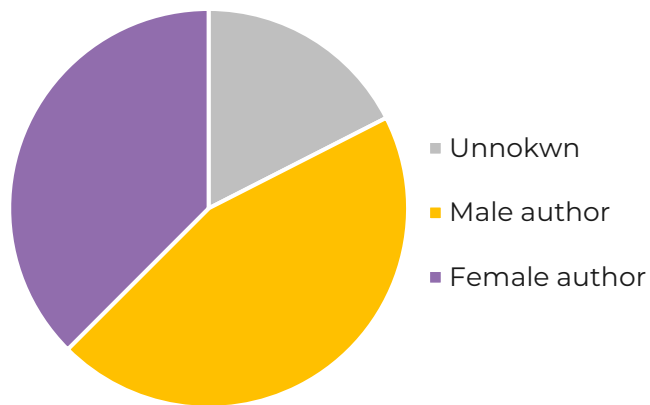


Figure 2: Authors by sex (first stage)

As also mentioned, most of the researchers involved in this process have Spanish as their native language, so 39 vignettes are in that language and 23 in English.

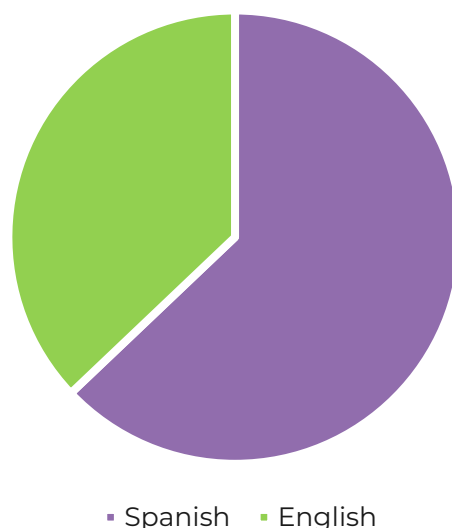


Figure 3: Vignettes by language (first stage)

Once the vignettes had been collected and the data analysed, the 'Humorarium' tool was presented by one of the Deusto team participants at the GEARING-Roles consortium meeting on May 7, 2021. Both the tool and the initiative were well received by the other partners. Based on this, Deusto and Yellow Window organised a thematic session on the Humorarium on June 1, 2021. This vigorous and prolific conversation also served as a trigger for other ideas about the uses, functions and limitations of humour that will be covered in the next sections of this document.

As a preparatory work for this meeting and taking advantage of the presence of institutions from different countries (Slovenia, the Netherlands, Portugal, the United Kingdom and Turkey), the participants were asked to collect vignettes in their respective languages.

With the contribution of the other members of the consortium, in this second phase, 20 new vignettes were collected in Dutch, English, Portuguese and Turkish, which allowed incorporating the complexity of the different languages into this research. Likewise, each member presented the vignettes found, explaining the meanings and particularities in their respective languages.

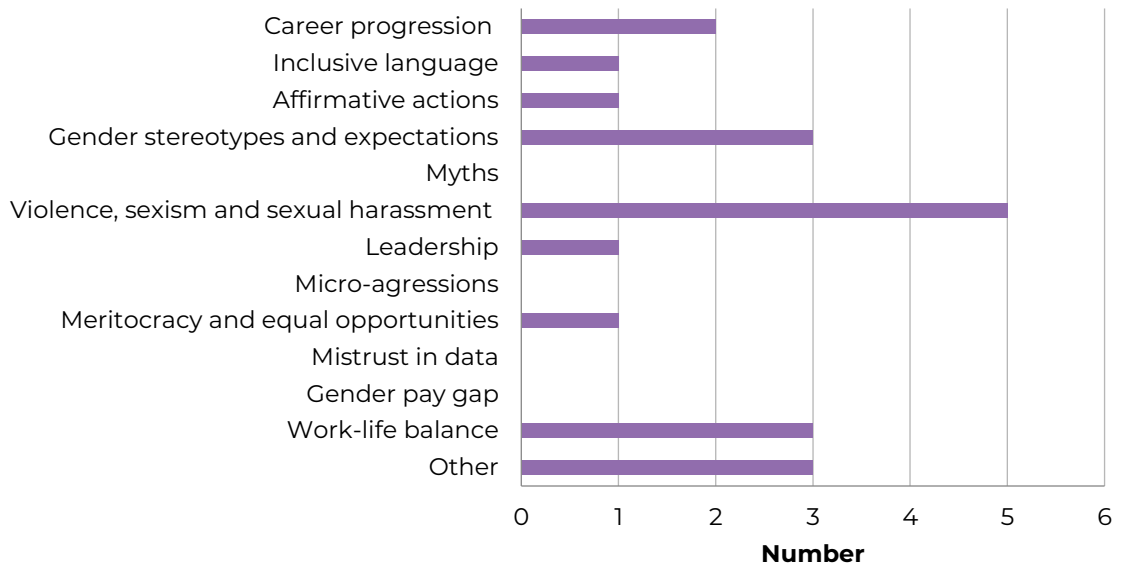


Figure 4: Vignettes by categories (second stage)

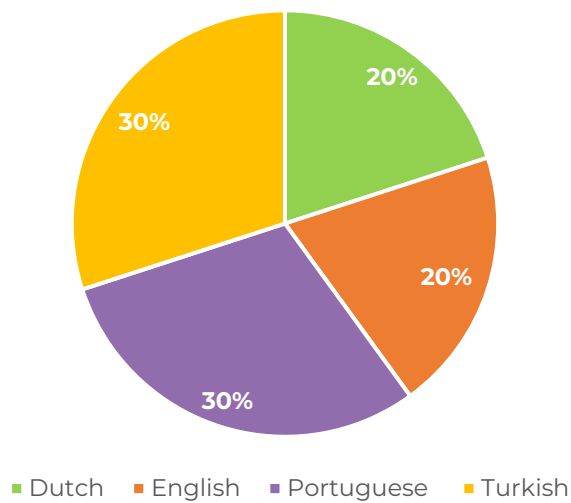


Figure 5: Vignettes by language (second stage)

Between the two stages, a total of 88 vignettes on various topics were collected in 5 languages.

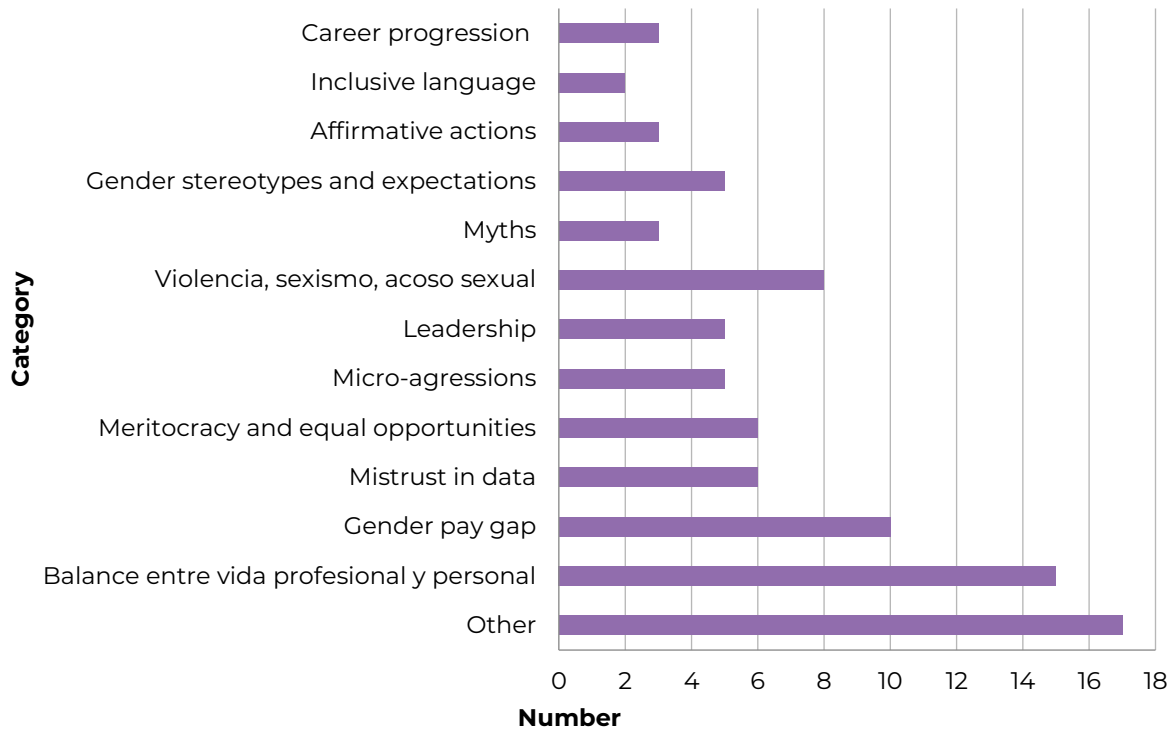


Figure 6: Total number of vignettes by category

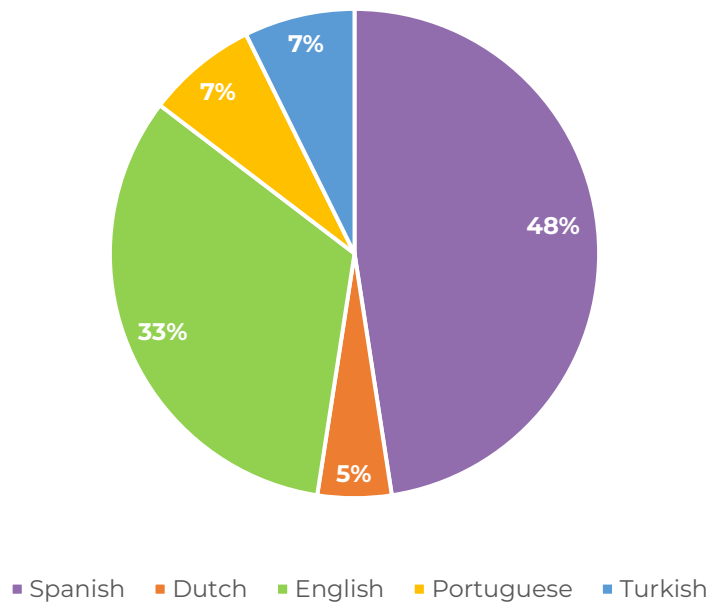


Figure 7: Total number of vignettes by language

5.2. Co-creation and discussion phase

Once the artists and themes addressed had been identified, as well as the limitations and difficulties for the use of vignettes as a resource, a co-creation phase began in which the GEARING-Roles team jointly addressed the suitability of the resource and the most feasible themes to be addressed through it.

To this end, on the 27th of January 2022, a seminar was organised in Bilbao on the use of humour in the academic environment. In this seminar, in addition to presenting the theoretical review on the use of feminist humour, its conceptualisation and the results of the mapping carried out, we identified the issues to be prioritised and brainstormed on possible narratives that could inspire our own cartoons. It was considered particularly important to develop one's own resources as opposed to a collection of existing resources for two main reasons. Firstly, because of the difficulty in identifying authorship of multiple vignettes and permissions for use. Secondly, in order to be able to develop ideas and themes agreed by the team and with a shared humoristic approach that allows the use of these cartoons in different cultural contexts.

In this seminar, we had the collaboration of the illustrator Miryam Artola (Muxote Potolo bat). As a result, the following infographic was created summarising the prioritised themes and shared narratives.

GEARING ROLES

feminist HUMOUR

WHY HUMOUR
 EXECUTION & IMPROVES PRODUCTIVITY
 REDUCES STRESS & INCREASES MOTIVATION

collaboration
 better DECISION making & better COMMUNICATION

TRUST

WHAT IS FEMINIST HUMOUR
 IT TO SUBVERT HIERARCHIES

WHEN & HOW
 Doing things in different ways
 projects implementation

LAUGHING IS AN EXPRESSION OF freedom

explores POSSIBILITIES
 FACING & PRESENTING RESISTANCES

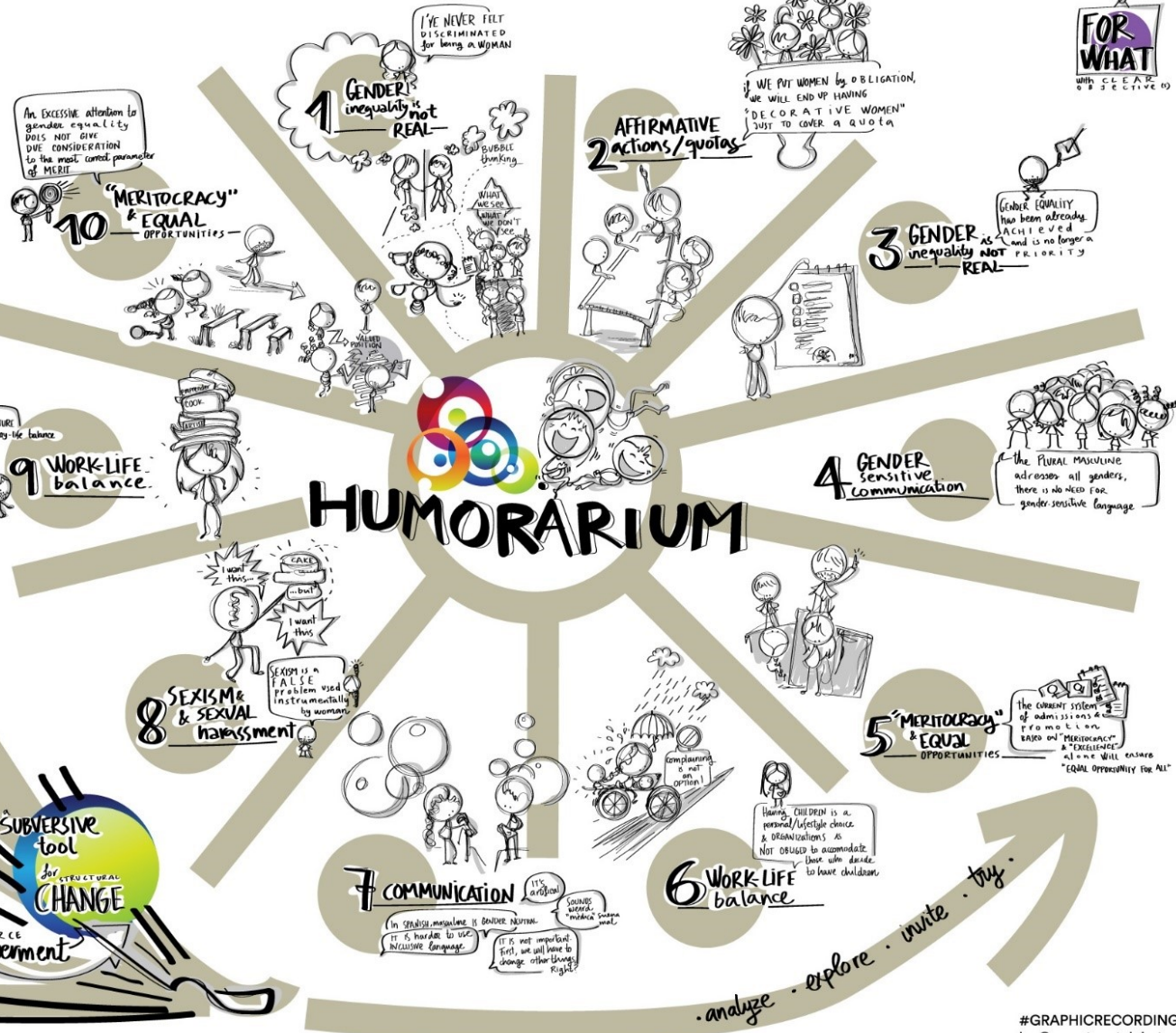
being AWARE of the CULTURAL context

encourages reflection on INEQUALITIES

from an INTERSECTIONAL approach

SUBVERSIVE tool for STRUCTURAL CHANGE

to ENFORCE empowerment



analyze · explore · invite · try

#GRAPHICRECORDING
 by @muxotepotolob

Image 2: Infographic summarising the prioritised themes and shared narratives.

Subsequently, a queer-feminist humour workshop led by Sabanci University was organised in March 2022. This seminar began by exploring other methodologies of using humour in the academy, such as the use of humorous texts for the presentation of results, and then held a co-creative session with the participants to develop feminist illustrations in a humoristic way.

Although, as mentioned above, other ways of using feminist humour have been explored and implemented in project activities such as the final conclusions of the project's final conference (available [here](#)), we chose to focus on graphic humour, as we felt that its use was more appropriate and better adapted to the academic context.

In order to develop their own materials, a call for artists, humourists and graphic designers was launched and the artists identified in the initial phase were contacted. As a result of this call, a series of vignette ideas and drafts were received, of which of which 18 have been included in this toolkit, drawn by four different artists.

6. Academic approach to humour and feminism

Resistance to gender equality is one of the most common difficulties faced by institutions in their processes of institutional change. This section presents the theoretical background of the use of feminist humour to combat sexist humour and builds the case of theoretical arguments that respond to the resistance encountered in implementing equality plans in academic institutions. In the context of a workshop on resistance in the framework of the GEARING-Roles¹ project, during an informal conversation, that the use of humour appeared as a possible and interesting tool in the fight against sexism and resistance to gender equality. In line with this reflection, at the University of Deusto, in collaboration with Yellow Window, a conversation began on the potential of the so-called “feminist humour” to counter-argue or counteract “sexist humour” (Riquelme, AR, Carretero-Dios, H., Megías, JL, & Romero-Sánchez, M. (2020); Hartz (2007); Tejerina and Perugorría (2017); van Stekelenburg and

¹ Gender Equality Actions in Research Institutions to transform Gender Roles (GEARING-Roles), <https://gearingroles.eu/>. Grant Agreement No. 824536

Klandermans (2013)). This reflection was aligned to the “Argumentarium”, a tool of the GEARING-Roles project that collects theoretical arguments that respond to the resistance encountered in the implementation of equality plans, classifying them according to types of resistance.

Since then, the GEARING-Roles project started reflecting on the use of humour as a tool of subversion to combat these resistances. This Humorarium is an initiative that aims at showing how feminist art and humour can be a powerful means to reach different groups of people and promote equality in a light and effective way.

The process to create and draft this Humorarium has been a long and co-creative process in which various activities have been carried out to understand the potential of humour and to define what aspects we want to reflect on.

The process started with a theoretical review and a mapping of feminist humour (see the section on the development process of the humorarium). After this first approach, in January 2022, a seminar was held at the University of Deusto, during which shared experiences that we wanted to challenge through feminist queer humour were identified. In this workshop, we collaborated with the artistic designer Miry from Muxote Potolo Bat.

Later, in March 2022, Sabanci University held the workshop “Gender equality in Academia: Responding to resistance with queer-feminist humour”, where it was discussed what we consider humour to be and some examples of queer-feminist humour from Turkey and other countries were shared. Also, participants learnt how to draw cartoons based on issues of gender equality in academia and responding to resistance through humour.

Within this framework, we have identified and tested different uses of feminist humour, such as humoristic discourses, stand-up comedy and graphic humour. However, as the aim of this toolkit is to provide gender equality stakeholders with tools and resources to combat sexism, we have opted for this last form of humour: graphic humour in the form of vignettes or cartoons.

After identifying the main arguments commonly used to resist gender equality, GEARING-Roles has produced a toolkit to support those that wish to use humour to counter resistances as well to raise awareness for gender inequalities, particularly in the context of the academia. The toolkit is organised along the themes of the identified arguments with vignettes.

In order to address the task of using humour to combat resistance to gender equality in the academy, a review of the literature was carried out using the keywords: "feminist humour", "humour and academia", "macho humour". The results obtained have been structured around the employability of the resource, and the characteristics of the type of humour appropriate for combating resistance to gender equality.

6.1. The use of humour in academia

Traditionally, humour has not been well valued by western culture (Kotthoff, 2006), and even less so when humour is used by women. However, Case and Lippard affirm that it is a significant resource in the daily life of our culture and that it can be an indicator of the hot issues in our society (2009: 241).

As Helga Kottot points out, women have been more the "object" than the "subject" of humour, but this "traditional incompatibility of femininity with humour" is subsiding (2006: 5). Riquelme et al. (2021) attribute this change to the relevance of the feminist movement and gender equality. These authors state, citing Hartz (2007) and Tejerina and Perugorría (2017), that humour has been a tool for collective actions, to encourage adherence to social movements, highlighting its potential as a tool to promote reflection and participation. The humour used in this context is called "subversive humour" and is characterised by the use of satire and social denunciation (Riquelme, 2021, p. 3).

For Mary Crawford, insofar as gender and humour are social constructions, both depend heavily on social context (Crawford, 2003). In Charles Case and Cameron Lippard's comprehensive review of the impact of humour on patriarchy, they distinguish two theoretical perspectives on humour:

- a) the symbolic interaction and phenomenological perspective, which focus on the process by which social realities, ideologies, and identities are constructed and deconstructed through the minutiae of symbols, rituals, interactions, and role-playing in everyday life (e.g., Berger and Luckmann 1967; Foucault 1980; Fuchs and Case 1989; Goffman 1959; Schutz 1932 [1967]). The audience for humorous discourse plays its part in the creation of meaning through its acceptance of the joke or witticism as amusing or appropriate as humour. By

laughing, the audience symbolically demonstrates agreement with the premise of the joke or at least acknowledges the right of the joke teller to make such assertions.

- b) the conflict perspective (Case, 2009, p. 242). In this second perspective, they understand humour as a tool to question asymmetries of power and affirm that, traditionally, it is the "powerful" or "privileged" groups who make greater use of humour in order to perpetuate their position. Therefore, these authors conclude that humour is used both to consolidate positions of power and to challenge injustice and inequality.

Therefore, these authors conclude that humour is used both to consolidate positions of power and to question injustices and inequality. Riquelme et al. agree in this assessment and affirm, citing Hodson and MacInnis that humour “delegitimizes, discriminates and/or dehumanises a social group, reinforcing hierarchies and social asymmetries”, but that, in its own right it can be used to criticise and confront inequality as a subversive instrument to reverse the status quo (Riquelme, 2021, p. 2).

There is consensus when affirming that a feminist use of humour seeks precisely to address inequality and patriarchy (Case, 2009; Riquelme, 2021), and not to respond to sexist humour, used to perpetuate discrimination and sexism.

“Feminist humour, though, does not only address patriarchy but often addresses the shared experiences and perspectives of women, making no reference to men; this is especially true when we include black women comedians, such as Whoopi Goldberg (Bing 2004; Merrill 1988, Rappoport 2005).”

Regarding the potential use of feminist humour Crawford distinguishes two different ways of using it to foster equality: 1) discourses of femininity, which create sisterhood and promote intimacy and 2) discourses about masculinity, due to their direct relationship with femininity (Crawford, 2003). This author states that traditionally the most common way for feminists to use humour is the former, due to its contribution to community building and collective action, and further adds, citing Cameron, that there is still some resistance to analysing the male discourses by understanding that they are prioritised over female discourses (Cameron, 1998). In doing so, she emphasises the role of humour in creating resistance against the “dominant constructions of femininity”, as a first step towards the development of a group identity and the solidarity necessary to mobilise social change (Crawford 1995).

Both universities and the academic environment reproduce social inequality. Therefore, humour can be a useful tool to encourage reflection on inequalities and the impact of gender stereotypes in this context. However, in academia - as in other areas - humour has also been used to belittle and devalue gender studies, the work done by women and their complaints about gender stereotypes and biases in academia. This use of humour reflects the perception of some authors of the discipline as "trivial" (Marchbank & Letherby, 2006) or not "academically demanding" (Griffin, 2005). María Do Mar Pereira, in an observational ethnographic study in Portuguese and British universities, affirms that these references to the lack of "rigour" or "academic character" of gender studies are usually made in a humorous way, frivolling and making use of sexist stereotypes and even from mockery (Pereira, 2013). For this author, this use of humour to disparage gender studies, equality and the contribution of feminism perpetuates prejudices even in progressive institutions (Pereira, 2013) and is justified by alleging the "lack of sense of humour" of feminists. As we have seen, it is not a question of an absence of "sense of humour", but of a different way of understanding and exercising the "sense of humour" (Case, 2009).

6.2. What type of humour are we aiming for?

Features of feminist humour

The humour that we want to explore and that we want to practise is:

- a) **Inclusive:** a humour that includes us all, where we all laugh at, and if someone gets hurt or hurts you, then it is no longer a joke.
- b) **Personal is political:** We need to recreate forms of humour that are also loving in order to change the reality that we do not like. Because every joke is political and the political is personal.
- c) **Respectful:** from our lived and shared experiences, we want to use humour to combat the resistance that we still encounter today in the academic environment, but we do not want to be oppositional and we do not want to ridicule men. What we want to denounce are systems that cause inequalities. Humour or jokes that are hurtful for the recipient (risk to) miss their purpose and may on the contrary provoke strengthened feelings of resentment (Abedinifard, 2015).

- d) **Female humour versus feminist humour:** Many women, especially early female comics, “served to reinforce... cultural stereotypes” and “patriarchal views about women and gender” (Stoddard, 1977). Humour can be used as a means that “delegitimizes, discriminates and/or dehumanizes a social group, reinforcing hierarchies and social asymmetries”. As Limor Shifman & Dafna Lemish argue “part of the general expectation that females restrain themselves and repress sexual and aggressive drives, women were expected to smile respectfully when men told jokes, but not to create humour of their own” (Lemish 2010). However, we aim at deploying a feminist, inclusive humour that, in its own right can criticise and confront inequality as a subversive instrument to reverse the status quo. Therefore, we understand feminist humour as something beyond humour performed by women, but instead, humour that builds on shared experiences and questions asymmetries of power. We believe that feminist humour differs from ‘female humour’ as it is grounded in criticism of the patriarchal structure of society and aspires to reform it (Franzini, 1996).
- e) **Topical / Subversive:** Subversive humour is essentially the humour of the oppressed: humour as change effort (Kaufman & Blakely, 1980). Green (1977) argues that women are not supposed to talk about sexuality in a bawdy way. “But they do and when they do, they speak ill of all that is sacred—men, the church, marriage, home, family, parents” (p. 33). For this toolkit, the selection of topics to reflect on from the perspective of humour has been carried out following a process of debate and reflection within the team in connection with the arguments collected in the Argumentarium². The categories of this tool have an empirical basis in that they are those discursive resistances to the implementation of gender policies that different members of the GEARING-Roles consortium hear in their daily practice in pursuit of institutional change. These discursive resistances tend to revolve around certain common topics.
- f) **Symbolic interaction and phenomenological perspective:** Our source of inspiration for the definition of our framework for the use of humour is the shared experiences of women and gender norms, which serve to undermine the status quo by refusing to fall into patriarchal expectations of divisiveness. Social realities, ideologies, and identities are constructed and deconstructed through the minutia of symbols, rituals, interactions, and role-playing in everyday life (e.g.,

² The Argumentarium is a tool of the GEARING-Roles project that collects theoretical arguments that respond to the resistance encountered in the implementation of equality plans, classifying them according to types of resistance.

Berger and Luckmann 1967; Foucault 1980; Fuchs and Case 1989; Goffman 1959; Schutz 1932 [1967]. The audience for humorous discourse plays its part in the creation of meaning through its acceptance of the joke or witticism as amusing or appropriate as humour. By laughing, the audience symbolically demonstrates agreement with the premise of the joke or at least acknowledges the right of the joke teller to make such assertions.

7. Previous initiatives

Marie Bocher et al. in their article “Drawing everyday sexism in academia: observations and analysis of a community-based initiative” (2020) compile an interesting series of illustrative experiences about the impact of gender inequality in the academic environment, in vignettes format. This article synthesises the results of the project “Did this really happen?”, which sought to collect experiences related to gender biases in science (especially in the STEAM area). This project is therefore a clear example of how feminists use humour to combat situations of discrimination and inequality, through humouring situations experienced by women to illustrate their ridiculousness and build community and solidarity around them.

It is not the only project that has resorted to this resource to demonstrate the role that humour can play at work for the sake of equality. There are also two other initiatives within the structural change projects community that have explored this application.

The “Resistances handbook” of the FESTA project (2016)³, which aimed to “provide a deeper understanding of the resistance to structural change towards gender equality in academic institutions and the ways to deal with it”, used some humoristic vignettes to illustrate some of the resistance detected. For this manual they collaborated with a designer, Prof. Dr. Tayfun Akgul.

³ Female Empowerment in Science and Technology Academia (FESTA), <https://www.festa-europa.eu/>.

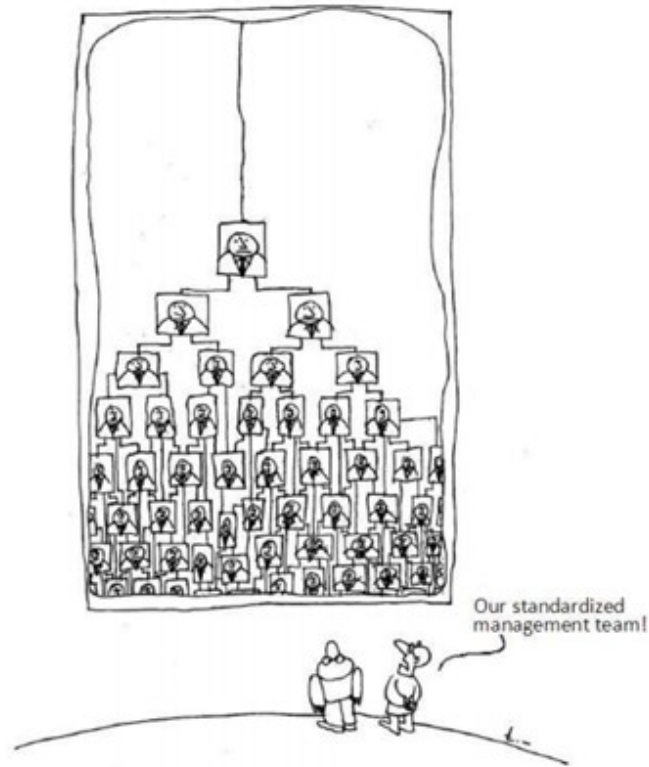


Image 3: Sample of the vignettes in the FESTA handbook.

The use of humour to de-dramatise situations related to change processes and the implementation of equality plans is therefore recognized as a useful tool (Drew, Bencivenga, Ratzer, Poggio, & Saglamer, 2017, p. 338).

The SPEAR⁴ project, through a questionnaire implemented by one of its partners, the University of Plovdiv, took advantage of humour as a mode of discourse and a form of social interaction on the issue of gender equality. This institution used humoristic drawings to examine the attitudes of the university community towards some traditional and contemporary stereotyped perceptions and prejudices about the role of women and men in professional and family life.

⁴ Supporting and Implementing Plans for Gender Equality in Academia and Research (SPEAR), <https://gender-spear.eu/blog/post/33/humour-against-gender-equality-stereotypes>.

8. Recommendations for policy-makers

Following the previous section on recommendation for users, this set is addressed to higher level of actors/stakeholders. Policy-makers can play a very relevant role not only in the spread of humour as a tool for change and a pedagogical tool but also in the development/drive of new resources:

European Commission / member states

The European Union has launched some initiatives using feminist graphic humour in collaboration with other actors such as UN Women and some countries. The contest called "Generation Equality: Draw it" was held in [2015](#) and in [2021](#) for the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration. Some of the vignettes in this competition addressed issues of equality in academia. It would be a good idea to organise the competition with a focus on the academic environment to increase the number of resources/vignettes available.

Resistance to gender equality has been identified in the literature as one of the factors impeding the consolidation of progress towards equality and structural change. Some specific initiatives have been funded to deepen the understanding of these resistances, always from an academic perspective. Opening research calls and programmes that include humour as a working methodology can contribute to the development of strategies to combat resistances.

Humour is directly related to cultural and traditional factors that make it difficult to find common approaches. For this reason, it would be good if member states joined these initiatives and encouraged the development of humour resources that help academic institutions in each country to have resources adapted to their cultural, social and normative contexts.

Higher Education Institutions and Research Centres:

The use of humour in learning environments has, as we have seen, numerous advantages, such as facilitating a pleasant atmosphere, helping learning, reducing conflict and stimulating creativity. In the case of feminist humour to combat gender

resistance, feminist humour is a tool to question asymmetries of power, to question injustice and inequality. Moreover, as humour has a large dose of social construction, it can contribute to bringing the "languages" and visions of the different actors in the university environment closer together, especially with university students. In this sense, higher education institutions could:

- Use feminist humour to engage different audiences.
- De-dramatise / soften situations where the positions of the different actors are strongly opposed.
- Acknowledge the use of humour as a teaching and academic tool and ensure that there is no gender bias in the use of humour by men and women. Use humour to combat prejudices and stereotypes. Ensure that the humour used in institutional events/documents is inclusive and does not ridicule or vilify any group.

9. Inspiring artists and resources

A list of artists and inspiring resources was compiled for the development of this toolkit. Below, we provide a list with the artists' and graphic designers' personal website, social media or platforms that may be used for the development of similar practices.

- Iñigo Maestro´s http://www.imaestroweb.com/?page_id=163
- Liza Donnely <https://lizadonnely.com/>
- Moderna de Pueblo <https://modernadepueblo.com/>
- Maitena <https://www.instagram.com/maitenaburunda/?hl=es>
- Flavita Banana <https://www.flavitabanana.com/>
- Helena Femme Sapiens <https://www.instagram.com/femme.sapiens/?hl=es>
- Nuria Pompeia https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/N%C3%BAria_Pompeia%22/_l_%22C%C3%B3mics/_Humor_gr%C3%A1fico
- Jorge Cham <http://jorgecham.com/>
- Muxote Potolo Bat <https://muxotepotolobat.com/>
- Pikara Magazine <https://www.pikaramagazine.com/2022/02/al-fin-humor-feminista/>
- Gazpacho Agridulce : <https://gaspachoagridulce.tumblr.com/>

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