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Athena Newsletter



athena
gender equality to unlock
research potential

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Do you know that almost 60% of women graduate in the EU, but very few of them pursue a research career?

Women are still underrepresented in most scientific disciplines, which constitutes a waste of talents for the European Research Area. We do not need only legal and administrative supporting mechanisms, we need to replace existing unconscious bias, with a more equal, inclusive and fair understanding and practices of gender roles.

The ATHENA project is committed to strive towards gender equality, mitigating barriers to the recruitment, retention and career progression of female researchers and addressing gender imbalances in decision-making processes. ATHENA delivers and implements Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) in 8 research performing (RPOs) and research funding organizations (RFOs). ATHENA ensures that all people, disregarding of their gender, will have the opportunities to express their potential in research and contribute to an innovative, competitive and thriving Europe society.



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ATHENA kick-off meeting

“The kick-off meeting of the project ATHENA – Implementing gender equality plans to unlock research potential of RPOs and RFOs in Europe” – took place on the 3rd and 4th of February 2021, online. This event gathered during two days representatives of the ten partners of the consortium and representatives from the European Commission services, Christopher Niehaus and Athanasia Mongou from DG Research and Innovation, as well as representatives of the SPEAR and CHANGE H2020 sister projects.

The project ATHENA is financed by the Framework Program Horizon 2020, with € 1 828 310, and will operate for 4 years (February 2021 to end of January 2025), under the coordination of Consulta Europa Projects and Innovation S.L. (Canary Islands-Spain). The project includes the participation of a total of ten partners that include 6 Research Performing Organizations

from Slovenia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Spain and 3 Research funding organizations from the Canary Islands, in Spain, Azores, Portugal, and Italy. These partners are from countries and regions of the EU that have some of the lowest Gender Equality Indexes in the EU, from central Eastern EU countries and EU outermost regions. Therefore, the project goals have even more relevance in these contexts as the Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) intend to contribute to the unlocking of the research potential thus improving the overall performance of the European Research Area. ATHENA aims at removing barriers to recruitment, retention and career progression of female researchers; address gender imbalances in decision-making processes and generate a cultural change needed to avoid future gender bias and discriminatory practices through the creation of GEPs.

The two-days meeting has been very productive since it allowed project partners to know each other and together confirm their view on project goals and activities, exchange experience and share a common strategy for a successful implementation. Athena project comes with a very strategic timing together with the launch of the EU’s 2021-2027 R&D programme, Horizon Europe. To access Horizon Europe funding public institutions will be required to have a Gender Equality Plan which will be the main result for the ten partners involved. As Jean-Eric Paquet said at the Commission’s Research and Innovation Days conference on 22 September 2020: “We will make the existence of a reasonable, fully owned gender equality plan a requirement to become eligible under Horizon Europe”.



Gender Equality Audit and assessment of procedures and practices at organizational and national level were carried out!

Providing a solid basis for the development of appropriate gender equality plans is the main aim of the WP2 Gender Equality Audit and assessment of procedures and practices at organizational and national level. By the end of the month July 2021 we have finished the deliverables D2.1 Common database for gender equality audit and D2.2 Report on national status in gender equality in Bulgaria, Spain, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia: Legislative and Policy Backgrounds to Promote Gender Equality in Research. These documents provide a comprehensive view on our work during last 7 months.

Following the legislative framework of the analyzed countries, equality of men and women is a fundamental principle defined and grounded in the Constitutions, nevertheless its application and practice vary among countries. Gender equality



is guaranteed in national laws, most of the countries within the project consortium reflect the issue also in strategic materials. Nevertheless, it is worth to point out that issue gender equality exclusively in research is rarely reflected within the strategic documents. Moreover, due to the gender backlashes in some countries, the gender equality initiatives within institutions are often put outside the systemic solutions. Despite the differences, the EU has had a significant influence on gender mainstreaming in all of the consortium's countries.

Differences has been also identified during the gender equality audit and assessment

at organizational levels. In many cases, the indicators mirror the existing trends: we have often a sufficient proportion of women among graduates, but as a careers and positions are developing, the proportion of women is decreasing.

Moreover, according to the qualitative audit, following unquantified aspects and measures to assess the situation in terms of gender equality at the organisation's level, most of the monitored measured has never been implemented.

Certainly, this creates an important outcome to be considered in the future gender equality plans.

Proportion of women among	ULPGC	ACIISI	SAV	UJK	JSI	UB	URAK	FRCT
Phd graduates (%) in 2020	35,7	n/a	59,7	70,4	37,5	56	50	n/a
Total number of employed researchers (%) in 2020	36,9	53,5	46,2	51,2	30,1	52,9	49,2	n/a
Academic staff by academic grade (%) Grade A (professor)	18,5	36,8*	24,1	29,9	23,6	43	18,9	n/a
Deans of Faculties/Institutes in the given year (%)	41,1	n/a	38,3	62,5	15,8	21	54,5	n/a
*modifications								

ATHENA GEPI Committees take action!

ATHENA Gender Equality Plan Implementation Committees are already established at each partner institutions in order to transmit co-produced knowledge on gender equality and promote institutional change.

The ATHENA Gender Equality Plan Implementation (GEPI) Committees has been recently established at each partner

institution implementing a Gender Equality Plan (GEP). The GEPI Committees are key actors of ATHENA project and especially of each partner organisation as they will be involved together with the core consortium partners to transmit co-produced knowledge on gender equality and facilitate and promote the institutional change through the development and implementation of the GEPs.

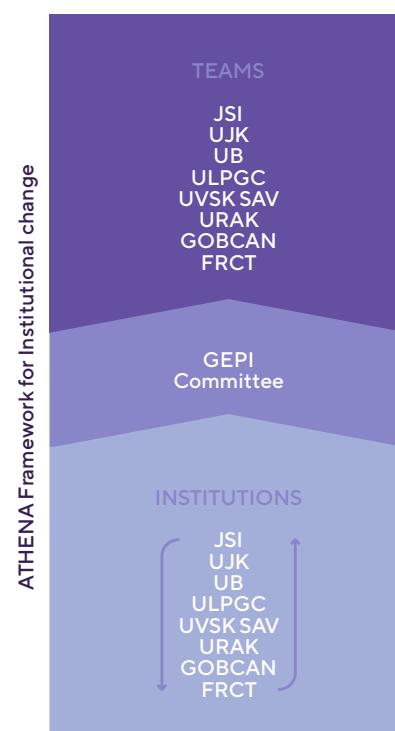
The implementation of the GEPs is a continuous process with a view to enhance and institutionalize gender equality in each ATHENA partnering organisation. To achieve gender equality, institutional transformations are needed and will lead to change the official holding composition, reducing women and men inequalities.



The ATHENA framework is aimed at giving the possibility to implement those transformations within its consortium of research performing (RPOs) and research funding (RFOs) organisations. As it can be observed in Figure 1, the GEPI Committees will act as connections between ATHENA's team in each RPO/RFO and the rest of the institutional community.

Therefore, the main objective of the GEPI Committees is to facilitate the institutional change towards gender equality. This will be achieved by continuously supporting and monitoring the implementation of the tailored institutional GEP.

Each GEPI Committee include at least 8 members of the ATHENA target groups, i.e. high and middle management; Human Resources professionals; researchers and professors; administrative staff; and students. The GEPI Committees will be involved in a participatory process and capacity building activities, as well as in the development, implementation and monitoring of the GEPs. These activities will aim at facilitating the changes to be introduced with the GEPs by raising the awareness of the different professional profiles within the partnering ATHENA RPOs/RFOs and making them familiar with the principles of gender equality and the new practices to be introduced under the project activities.





Check the ATHENA website, social networks and other materials to keep up to date!

Within the project work package 7, Dissemination and communication, the ATHENA “Dissemination and Communication Strategy” (D7.1) was produced and the “Project visual identity and website” (D7.2) have been created. In this sense, the project logo and layout of the promotional material were developed (flyer, brochure, poster, roll-up, banner, PowerPoint presentation, Word document, newsletter, among others).

For the development of the logotype, a contest in the ATHENA universities was launched among students and professors that were asked to provide insights and/or examples of the project logo. The winner of the ATHENA logo competition is:



Congratulations!!

The logo chosen to identify the ATHENA project reflects some of the aspects linked to the concept of equality between women and men, a fundamental value of the European Union and vital to its economic and social development. It is represented in this case by various elements related to the thematic, such as a woman silhouette, gender symbols for male and female and research environment. All these elements have been arranged in a dynamic set that

***Desislava
Nedelcheva***

University of Ruse
Angel Kanchev,
Bulgaria

conveys the project concept.

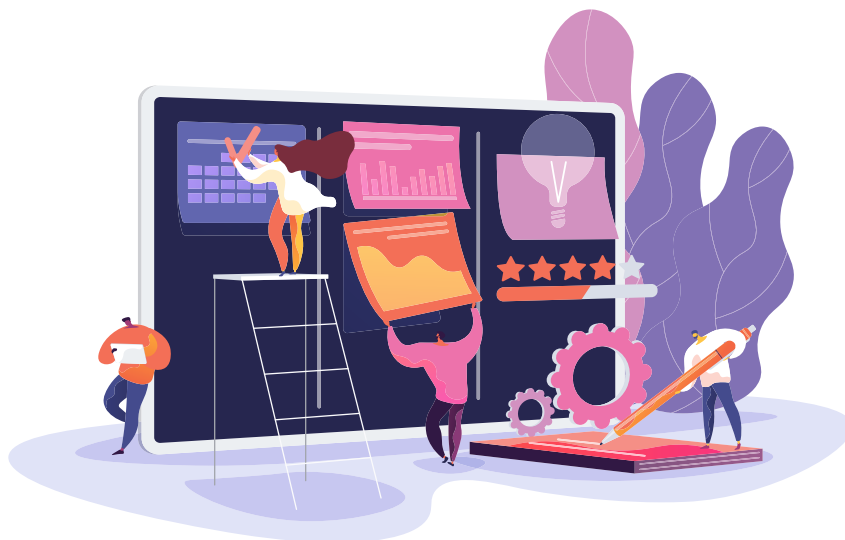
Besides this, the ATHENA website (<https://www.athenaequality.eu/>) and social networks are an important communication channel to promote the project and its objectives and update interested parties on progress, results and outcomes.



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Other projects & initiatives



Change Project

The main aim of CHANGE is it to support five research performing organisations (RPOs) to design and implement gender equality plans by involving key actors, called Transfer Agents (TAs), within each organisation who together with the core consortium partners transmit co-produced gender equality knowledge inside their institutions.

Project started in May 2018 and besides the effort to achieve impact in the implementing institutions it has begun with the outreach to other RPOs and RFOs in the form of performed expert interviews with RFOs' representatives and organized RFOs' and RPOs'

workshops in each project country. In this way created communities of practice are aiming to co-produce country-specific relevant gender equality knowledge for structural change in science and research in Austria, Germany, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Israel.

Team members attend on regular basis different conferences and network with sister projects. German CHANGE partners are currently preparing joint online conference of CHANGE, LeTSGEPs and SPEAR projects with the title: "Culture eats (a gender equality) strategy for breakfast? Structure eats (a gender- sensitive) culture for lunch?", which will be held online on 25th and 26th November 2021.

In April 2022, an International Stakeholder meeting will be organized in Aveiro (Portugal). Further information will be published in the [News section](#) of the CHANGE project.

CHANGE!

Consortium Composition

1. AUSTRIA. IFZ Graz 2. GERMANY. RWTH Aachen

GEP Implementation Partners

1. PORTUGAL. University of Aveiro 2. SLOVAKIA. University of Žilina 3. SLOVENIA. National Institute of Biology
4. GERMANY. Fraunhofer IFAM

Spear Project

SPEAR's central objective is to implement GEPs in its nine implementing RPOs. Based on a step-by-step guide to GEP implementation devised by the European Institute for Gender Equality, SPEAR follows a distinct methodological path committed to creative, open, mitigating, processual, accountable, SMART and sustainable changes (SPEAR's COMPASS).

With a total budget of €3 million SPEAR is coordinated by Eva Sophia Myers and Liv Baisner (University of Southern Denmark) as principal investigator. The project involves 11 partners from 9 European countries and runs for 4 years, from January 2019 till December 2022.

Expected impacts:

- Increased numbers of RPOs and HEIs implementing gender equality plans
- Increased participation of women in R&I and improvement of their career's prospects

- Improved gender balance in decision-making bodies in research organizations; and
- Strengthened gender dimension in research content

An advisory group representing key GE-stakeholders is affiliated.

Concerning recent achievements, we highlight the publication of Gender Equality Plans in 3 of the project partners' institutions (University of Rijeka, Plovdiv University and University of Southern Denmark)!

Consortium Composition

1. **DENMARK.** University of Southern Denmark 2. **SWEDEN.** Uppsala University 3. **GERMANY.** RWTH Aachen University 4. **HUNGARY.** Europa Media Non-profit Ltd. 5. **AUSTRIA.** Joanneum Research Forschungsgesellschaft mbH 6. **BULGARIA.** South-West University 7. **BULGARIA.** University of Plovdiv 8. **LITHUANIA.** Vilnius University 9. **LITHUANIA.** Vytautas Magnus University 10. **PORTUGAL.** Universidade Nova de Lisboa 11. **CROATIA.** University of Rijeka

GE Academy Project

GE Academy is an Horizon 2020 project developing and implementing a high-quality capacity-building programme on gender equality in research, innovation and higher education.

Consortium composition:

GE Academy consists of 12 organisations from 11 European countries.

Expected impacts:

- A better understanding of gender issues within the Research & Innovation community
- A better uptake of gender issues in Research & Innovation and consequently an improvement of the quality of the produced research and innovation
- A pan-European network of qualified gender trainers & experts
- A better understanding of gender

- issues within the Research & Innovation community
- A better uptake of gender issues in Research & Innovation and consequently an improvement of the quality of the produced research and innovation
- A pan-European network of qualified gender trainers and experts

GE Academy is currently running a series of online trainings on GEPs in practice (check it [here](#))!



Gender Equality
GE ACADEMY