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D4.2 Gender and diversity standards

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¹ PU= Public, CO=Confidential, only for members of the Consortium (including the Commission Services), CL=Classified, as referred in Commission Decision 2001/844/EC



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Acronyms and Abbreviations

D	Deliverable
EC	European Commission
GE	Gender equality
GEP	Gender Equality Plan
GEPI Committee	Gender Equality Plan Implementation Committee
HE	Horizon Europe
RFO	Research funding organisation
RPO	Research performing organisation
T	Task
WP	Work package



1. Introduction

Purpose and scope

The ATHENA project is aimed at supporting member institutions in the development and implementation of their Gender Equality Plans (GEPs). To that purpose, work package (WP) 4 (named 'GEPs development and implementation') includes a specific task (T4.2) titled 'Definition of gender and diversity standards', whose aim is to provide the ATHENA consortium with a common approach to design their GEPs. The present document is a result of this task, which serves as guidance on the ATHENA common approach to assist ATHENA RPOs and RFOs in the development of their GEPs.

Document structure

This document includes:

- Description of the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) eligibility criterion under Horizon Europe and under which the ATHENA common diversity and gender standards is addressed (**section 2**).
- Description of the ATHENA common approach for the development of the GEPs (**section 3**).
- Main recommendations to ATHENA RPOs and RFOs for the development of their GEPs (**section 4**).
- The ATHENA common standards/targets on gender and diversity (**section 5**).
- Structured ATHENA template for drafting the GEPs (**Annex**).

2. The Gender Equality Plan (GEP) eligibility criterion under Horizon Europe

The European Commission (EC) and, more specifically, the Horizon Europe (HE) programme establish gender equality (GE) as a cross-cutting priority. The ambition for a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) for participating organizations under HE was announced by the European Strategy for Gender Equality 2020-2025². This announcement culminated with the introduction of the GEP eligibility criterion, which

² European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*, 2020, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ENTXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152>



requires the following type of institutions to have a GEP in place to access the funds financed by the HE programme:

- Public bodies (bodies funding research, national ministries or other public authorities, including public-for-profit organizations);
- Public and private higher education establishments;
- Public and private research organizations.

Thus, the HE Work Programme 2021-2022 establishes that to be eligible, the abovementioned entities from Member States and Associated Countries must have a GEP in place covering certain requirements and recommendations on process and content-related GEP building blocks. As for the mandatory process-related requirements, these represent standard minimum components of the GEPs. They are the followings:

- Publication: The GEPs should be formal documents published on the institutions' website and signed by high management. They should include a clear commitment to GE, set clear objectives and detailed measures/actions to achieve them.
- Dedicated resources: Dedicated resources should be provided for the design, implementation and monitoring of the GEPs. These dedicated resources may include funding for specific positions/bodies, such as Equality Officers of Teams for Gender Equality, or dedicated working time for administrative, academic and management personnel.
- Data collection and monitoring: Sex or gender-disaggregated data of personnel (and students for RPOs) should be collected and published as an evidence-base for the GEPs. This requirement also includes the preparation of annual reports informing the GEPs and should be based on the collected data and indicators.
- Training: Organize capacity-building and awareness-raising activities on GE and unconscious gender bias for both staff and decision-makers. The activities may also include communication activities and may addressed specific topics or specific groups.

The recommended content-related elements are key GE areas/themes that the GEP should address. These areas of action are the followings:

- Action area 1: Work-life balance and organizational culture
- Action area 2: Gender balance in leadership and decision-making
- Action area 3: Gender equality in recruitment and career progression
- Action area 4: Integrating the gender dimension into research and teaching content.
- Action area 5: Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment.



Further details on the specific process and content-related standards set by the EC may be found within the '*Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans*³'. As abovementioned, the ATHENA common approach, which is described in the following section, is based on those specific standards.

3. ATHENA approach for the development of the GEPs

The common ATHENA approach consists of defining common targets that the ATHENA RPOs and RFOs designing their GEPs should include within their Plans. These common standards may be then completed by specific standards and targets tailored to each ATHENA RPO/RFO needs.

Given the relevance for eligibility within the HE programme, the common ATHENA approach for the development of the GEPs is based on the abovementioned requirements and recommendations from the EC, as well as on the main following project outputs generated so far:

- *D2.3 - Gender Equality reports* summarizing the results of work in WP2 (Gender audit, national assessments, outcomes from the staff surveys, interviews and focus groups and recommendations for the development of the GEPs).
- Feedback from the trainings to the Gender Equality Plan Implementation (GEPI) Committees carried out under *T3.2 – Capacity building for GEPI Committees* within WP3.
- Measures identified in best practices presented in the deliverable *D4.1 – GEPs best practices compendium*.

Section 5 details the ATHENA common gender and diversity standards, which are recommended to be considered together with the recommendations and key resources included within the *D4.3- ATHENA Toolkit for transforming the institutional culture in terms of gender aspects*. These standards will be reflected in the table of objective and actions included within the project GEPs (see the table within the GEPs template in the Annex of the present document).

³ European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans*, 2021, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/876509>



4. Main recommendations for the development of the GEPs

When designing the GEPs, the following main recommendations should be considered:

- The GEPs should include specific commitments, objectives, actions and resources dedicated to improving GE within the ATHENA institutions and its activities.
- The commitment of RPOs and RFOs highest positions (deans, vice deans, etc.) towards GE is crucial for the success and sustainability of the institutional change and the GE strategy. It is crucial to ensure top-level support.
- The GEPs should be developed paying attention to relevant national laws and regulations on GE that apply to the institution (addressed within *D2.2 Report on national status in gender equality in Bulgaria, Spain, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia*).
- GE should be considered both in terms of institutional internal procedures and outcomes as well as the impact of its broader research or academic outputs.
- Audit and assessment of base situation of ATHENA institutions carried out under WP2 reveals that intersectionality is very limited. Data on intersectionality is often missing within the ATHENA RPOs and RFOs. Therefore, ATHENA RPOs and RFOs are highly encouraged to collect and analyse basic intersectional data (for instance, age, race, etc.).
- ATHENA institutions need to take into account the whole community of working personnel and students (this last for the case of RPOs).
- ATHENA RFOs need to also consider the evaluation procedures of received applications as well as the outcomes and impact of funding decisions. In addition, related policies that have an impact on gender equality in R&I should be also considered. RFOs are encouraged to develop procedures to assess and monitor the gender dimension in the projects granted.

Additionally, ATHENA RPOs and RFOs are encouraged to review the impact of COVID-19 on GE within the institution. This may be done by reassessing relevant policies to ensure that deviations on GE are properly mitigated. To this purpose, any of the followings may be included within the GEPs:

- Work-life balance strategies to address the needs associated with care responsibilities and home working for personnel and students;



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- Review of human resources policies to consider the impacts of the new working practices and conditions of women and men and consider their experiences to promote new workload agreements towards co-responsibility, horizontality, workers' autonomy and collaborative leadership.
- Evaluation adjustments for career progression to ensure unequal burdens and impacts are accounted for;
- Additional support for specific groups, such as early career researchers or those on temporary contracts, who may be particularly affected.

5. ATHENA common gender and diversity standards

The ATHENA common gender and diversity standards are organized according to the five content-related thematic areas recommended by the EC. These standards are accompanied by relevant actions related to institutional design that should be also considered (see section 5.2). Section 5.1 presents, for each area, the common ATHENA standards. The standards should be reflected within the GEPs developed under the project, as they refer to the objectives to be pursued commonly by the ATHENA institutions. Section 5.1 also includes examples of potential actions that may be undertaken to address the standards. These actions complement actions included within *D4.1 – GEPs best practices compendium*.

5.1 Action areas and its common standards

Action area 1 – Work-life balance and organizational culture

Table 1. Common standard and examples of actions for Action Area 1

Common standard
✓ Ensure work-life balance in the working conditions of both men and women within the institution.
Examples of actions
Implement rules/plans for flexible working time; regulate principles of remote work and implement solutions; facilitating parents to combine work with private life (establishing a kindergarten, etc.).

Area 1. Work-life
balance and
organizational
culture



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Action area 2 – Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

Table 2. Common standard and examples of actions for Action Area 2



Common standard
✓ Implement mechanisms/measures to maintain equal access to leadership positions and ensure transparency in this area.
Examples of actions
Training and coaching programs for women and academic leadership; gender quotas across various management positions; etc.

Action area 3 – Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

Table 3. Common standards and examples of actions for Action Area 3



Common standards
✓ Maintain high standard of transparency of vacancy announcements when recruiting new employees, to ensure the appropriate language of announcements that will encourage both men and women to apply.
✓ Mitigate the disparities and accelerate women professional careers through access to mentoring programs, training, ensuring access to funding or support aimed at greater participation of women and men in research and grant acquisition.
Examples of actions
Mentoring programmes; establishing codes of conduct for recruitment and promotion; involvement of GE expertise in recruitment and promotion committees; unconscious bias trainings for recruiters; use of standardized CVs and undertake of blind assessment of CVs; monitoring of attrition and retention.



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Action area 4 – Integrating the gender dimension into research and teaching content

Table 4. Common standard and examples of actions for Action Area 4



Common standard	
✓	Support the integration of the gender perspective into the research content or teaching activities.
Examples of actions	
Trainings for researchers and academics on how to include the gender dimension into research design and teaching curricula; training for RFOs on incorporating the gender dimension into their funding programme; establish regular monitoring of gender perspective in the institutional research; actions on promoting and disseminating research that has successfully integrated the sex/gender dimension.	

Action area 5 – Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

Table 5. Common standard and examples of actions for Action Area 5



Common standard	
✓	Implement mechanisms for effective identification and response to discriminatory actions and/or sexual harassment.
Examples of actions	
Establish appropriate regulation and clear official procedures (codes of conduct, policy outlining how the institutional members can report instances of gender-based violence, support for victims); allocation of appropriate staff monitoring the subject at institutional level; communication activities to establish a culture of zero tolerance towards any kind of gender-based violence.	

5.2 Relevant actions to be considered for institutional design towards gender equality

This section includes relevant actions (see table 6) to be considered when developing and implementing the GEPs. Many of the actions herein follow the mandatory process-related requirements set by the HE programme eligibility



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criterion. Thus, ATHENA institutions implementing their GEPs are highly encouraged to address them within their institutional strategies towards GE.

Table 6. Important actions to be considered for institutional design towards GE

Actions	
✓	It is recommended to set up a Gender Equality Body/Committee/Board leading the implementation of the gender equality policy/plan within the institution (this action is related to the mandatory process-related requirement on dedicated resources; ATHENA GEPI Committee members already perform this function).
✓	Allocate specific budget for the GE strategy (from the development and implementation of the GEP to its monitorization, evaluation, dissemination and sustainability actions).
✓	Annual reporting based on sex/gender-disaggregated data collected and indicators to inform the GEPs evaluation of progress (mandatory process-related requirement).
✓	Activate a section/site at the institutional website for publication of the GEPs, stating the institution's commitment to GE, the objectives and desired outcomes of the GEP, relevant baseline data and targets and details of the actions that will be taken, including the allocation of dedicated resources (mandatory process-related requirement).
✓	Training actions for awareness-raising on gender equality engaging the whole institution (staff, leaders, students (in case), etc.) and covering the topic of unconscious bias should be undertaken (action being implemented in ATHENA institutions under the T3.3 gender trainings) (mandatory process-related requirement).



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Annex - ATHENA template for the GEPs

Drafting a GEP implies the integration of general principles and measures on GE. The GEPs should be well structured, drafted in a holistic and integrated manner but accommodating the specific needs and contexts of the ATHENA institutions.

This section includes the project template to draft the GEPs that has been circulated among the ATHENA institutions. As described in the table of contents, the GEP template is structured into eight main sections, for each of which specific guidance on the content to be addressed has been provided.

The GEP template and its guidance may be useful for other RPOs/RFOs or even other type of organizations that are interested and/or are already in the process of drafting their GEPs.



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Gender Equality Plan

[Insert name of the institution]

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1. Introduction

This introductory section of the GEP is aimed at providing an overview and the essential information about the GEP adopted in the institution. It should address the following information:

- Presentation of the GEP and expression of the institution's commitment to gender equality.
- Brief description of the integration of gender equality in the organisation and other relevant institutional forms of supporting gender equality, including already existing measures and bodies related to gender equality.
- Relevant documents/information about other institutional documents which are somehow related to the GEP (for instance, ethical strategy documents) so the need for synergic actions within other fields of the institutional work may be highlighted.
- Relevant national/regional legal context and regulatory framework.
- Date of entry into force and application period.
- Summary of the contents/structure of the Gender Equality Plan.

2. Development process and GEP management

This section is aimed at introducing the process undertaken for GEP negotiation, adoption and implementation. It should address the following information:

- Description of the process for the GEP negotiation, development, adoption and implementation, acknowledging the ATHENA project and the H2020 programme.
- Description of the involved members of the institutions in the development of the GEP.
- Description of the participatory techniques used (staff surveys, interviews, focus groups, discussions, etc.).
- Define who is the person or Body responsible for the implementation of the GEP in your organization and which resources will be dedicated to the implementation (human, financial, etc).

3. Diagnosis

This section is aiming at providing an overview about the main conclusions of the diagnosis of the situation of gender equality in the institution. Thus, the following information should be provided:



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- Relevant data/main results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis of GE in the institution carried out on WP2 activities (main results contained within the D2.3 – Gender equality reports).
- Describe the main gender bias identified within the WP2 assessment.
- The most important gender equality measures already implemented in the institution, if applicable.
- Main interventions/priority areas identified in the diagnosis.

4. Objectives

This section should clearly define the objectives of the GEP. The objectives should describe the main goals pursued, within which the specific objectives and measures will be framed.

This section should include the following:

- Description of the general objective and specific objectives. The specific objectives will be based on the common standards mentioned within section 5.1 and will be broken down into the five GEP recommended content areas (i.e., Work-life balance and organizational culture; gender balance in leadership and decision-making; Gender equality in recruitment and career progression; Integrating the gender dimension into research and teaching content; Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment).
- Link the objectives with the diagnosis, showing the connection of each objective with the results of the diagnosis of the situation of GE in the institution.

5. Actions

This is the main section of the GEP, which is devoted to designing an action plan to promote GE. This section should address the following:

- Description of actions to be undertaken under each specific objective.
- Actions should be structured covering the five ATHENA common standards (thematic areas recommended by the EC).
- Include a table of specific objectives and actions in line with the ATHENA table template below.



Table X. ATHENA table of specific objectives and actions

Action No.	Thematic/content area	Issue to be addressed (specific objective)	Action	Start/end date	Responsibility	Impact assessment	Success stories	Problems encountered during implementation	Strategies to solve the problem
1	Work-life balance and organisational culture								
2	Gender balance in leadership and decision-making								
3	Gender equality in recruitment and career progression								
4	Integrating the gender dimension into research and teaching content								
5	Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment								



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6. GEP monitoring, reporting and assessment

This section should set some guidance for the periodical monitoring. It is recommended to include the following information:

- Commitment to periodical monitoring and reporting of the implementation of the GEP.
- Description of the monitoring methodology carried out for GEP evaluation and impact, indicating how often indicators will be reviewed and progress reports will be drafted.
- Criteria used to monitor, report and assess the GEP and the different measures included in the Plan.
- Responsible person, team, body or department for gathering the necessary information for the periodical monitoring, reporting and assessment.
- Responsible person, team, body or department for supervising the periodical monitoring, reporting and assessment.

7. Dissemination strategy of the GEP

This section includes a dissemination strategy of the GEP. Following the *Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans*, the GEP should follow the following mandatory requirements:

- Be published in the institution's website. The published GEP should be signed by the high management.
- Awareness raising trainings should be implemented, addressing the topics of unconscious bias and/or other specific topics.

It is also recommended (but not mandatory) to include within the GEP the following:

- The GEP should be disseminated among the whole institutional community. Thus, the dissemination strategy should identify different dissemination actions tailored to the different institutional target groups.
- It is important to include actions to disseminate the GEP to external stakeholders (organisation of public events inviting external stakeholders, attendance to conferences, etc.).

8. Annex

- Include any relevant document/information (training plans, evaluation of previous GEPs, etc.).