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ATHENA Newsletter

Meet the ATHENA Advisory Board!

Independent experts have been and are commonly invited to take part in the advisory structures within research and innovation programmes of the European Union (EU). This practice has become quite common as their expertise and knowledge provide a highly valuable asset.

In the context of an H2020 project, a group of external experts might join an Advisory Board (AB) panel to participate in the integration of project-related

activities and provide external feedback on its progress and results. The involvement of external experts extends the project network and provides valuable input to the project partners.

ATHENA's AB is composed of eight members of national authorities representing the ATHENA countries and two representatives of scientific publishers. The AB performs various tasks, such as:

- Providing non-binding strategic advice to the ATHENA consortium on the design, implementation and monitoring of the Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) and concerning the networking and engagement activities;

- Reviewing the project outputs and progress of all the activities on an annual basis, ensuring that the GEPs are following national and EU advancements;
- Providing specific advice to the consortium for the capacity-building activities to the members of the Gender Equality Plans Implementation (GEPI) Committees;
- Attending one project meeting per year.

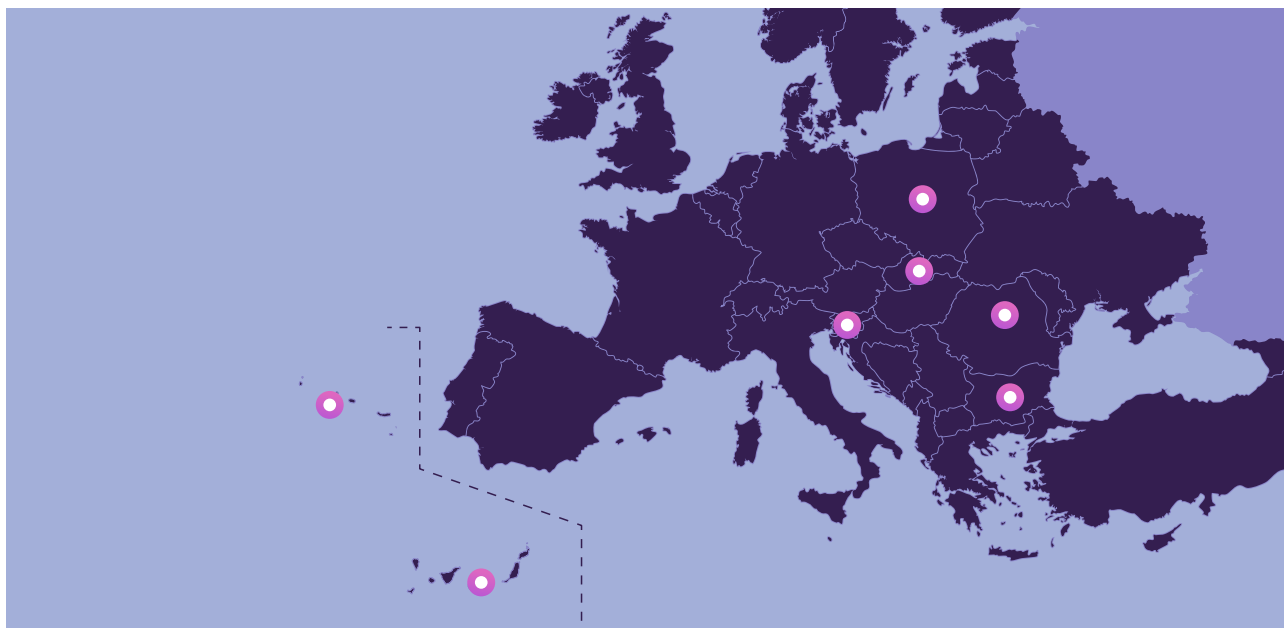
ATHENA's AB is composed of ten professionals with expertise on gender and women's studies, but also on relevant areas for gender equality, such as education, research and labour:

Name of the organisation	Country	Name of the appointed member
National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA) - Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities	Spain	Lázaro Rodríguez Arias
Ministry of Education, Science and Sport	Slovenia	Tomaž Boh
National Centre for Research and Development	Poland	Katarzyna Walczyk-Matuszyk
Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI)	Romania	Adrian Curaj
Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	Slovakia	Zuzana Brixová
Ministry of Education and Science	Bulgaria	Ivana Radonova
Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG)	Portugal	Sandra Ribeiro
Name of the Journal	Name of the appointed member	
European Journal of Women's Studies	madeleine kennedy-macfoy	
International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship	Colette Henry	

The first AB meeting was held in the framework of the ATHENA International Conference 'Looking towards gender equality in research and innovation', which took place last February 10th at the Elder Museum in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria

(Spain). The AB members met privately to have an internal discussion on the project advance and results and to provide a series of recommendations for institutional transformation and GEPs development and implementation.

The experts suggested measures for better monitoring of the GEPs and highlighted that certain topics should be considered a key aspect of the GEPs, such as the balance between personal and professional life.



ATHENA project partners have finalised their Gender Training Programmes for internal staff in their institutions!

Developing Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) also involves awareness-raising and training actions on gender equality and unconscious bias for staff and decision-making positions. Moreover, the ATHENA consortium considers that training actions are key to increasing sensitivity to gender equality at the same time as giving people the skills and knowledge to be engaged towards it.

In this context, ATHENA research performing organisations (RPOs) and research funding organisations (RFOs) implementing GEPs have developed a step-to-step Gender Training Programme. First, each institution designed and put in place a gender training programme (a 'train the trainers' activity) aimed at qualifying the GEPI Committees for them to be able to promote the

institutional transformation in terms of gender aspects.

After this first step, the GEPI Committees designed and deployed a training programme for the whole institutional community, i.e. the internal staff (researchers, professors, administrative staff, human resources staff) and, in the case of the RPOs, students.

The training programme is composed of at least five modules, which focus on different topics and address different groups in accordance with each institution's needs. Some of the topics that were included in the modules were:

- Unconscious bias (mandatory topic addressing the staff and decision-makers);
- Gender-responsive budgeting;
- The gender dimension in Research;
- Work-life balance and organizational culture;
- Gender equality in leadership positions and decision-making;
- Gender equality in career progression and recruitment;
- How to combat gender-based violence and sexual harassment;
- Tools for an inclusive language.

Project partner	Gender Training Programme Title
JSI	Gender equality at JSI
UJK	Equal opportunities in science and research
UB	A Gender Equal University: Beyond Stereotypes and Biases
URAK	Sustainable equality of women and men in the science
ULPGC	Advancing towards gender equality at the ULPGC
UVSK SAV	Gender equality in science
FRCT	Gender equality at FRCT

Overall topics of the different Gender Training Programmes

As for the modality, they have been delivered both face-to-face and online, and more than 1200 people in total have attended these modules.

The Gender Training Programmes have been successful in each RFO and RPO. Participants showed their interest in the different topics addressed and they asked to be involved in

upcoming events. Furthermore, these sessions proved that there is still a lack of awareness about some aspects of gender inequality, highlighting the need for this kind of trainings.



ATHENA institutions are currently in the stage of implementing their Gender Equality Plans

The main objective of the ATHENA project is to support its partner institutions in the development and implementation of their Gender Equality Plans (GEPs). After a thorough drafting process that also involved the high and middle management of each institution, ATHENA's RPOs and RFOs have approved their GEPs and they are currently in the process of implementing them.

All the GEPs were developed following a common project approach which consisted of defining common targets that the ATHENA institutions designing

their GEPs should include within their plans. Some of these GEPs have recently been officially adopted, such as the Jožef Stefan Institute.

The GEPs implemented will be closely monitored and assessed following the ATHENA Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) system. The ATHENA institutions have developed indicators for the M&E of the GEPs following the project guidelines. There will be annual online meetings to analyse the progress made throughout the year and to discuss possible

difficulties when implementing the GEPs.

Furthermore, project partners will be meeting in January 2023 for a 2nd Mutual Learning Workshop, where they will exchange experiences about the challenges encountered when implementing their GEPs, taking it as an opportunity to learn from each other.

If you would like to learn more about our partners' GEPs, you can have a look at our [ATHENA website!](#)



ATHENA partners started the monitoring process activities within the Gender Equality Plans implementation

Parallel with the publishing and implementation of the Gender Equality Plans (GEPs), ATHENA partnering RPOs and RFOs started monitoring process activities within the GEPs implementation and the applied practices on gender bias.

In the ATHENA project, the methodology for impartially monitoring and evaluating the progress made on gender equality is defined as formative (accompanying), helping the partners to adapt their GEPs if needed.

Formative evaluation is undertaken early in the development of the plan to inform the providers and stakeholders about the trends in

results, whether the goals of the program are likely to be fulfilled and to identify the barriers and facilitators of implementation.

This living character of the monitoring and assessment concept is necessary as the implementing ATHENA RPOs and RFOs developed their self-tailored GEPs, and the monitoring and evaluation concept should be adapted to these plans and concrete actions and their evolutions.

In this step it is investigated whether the way a measure is implemented corresponds to the respective goals and objectives, which factors promote or constrain its implementation, which

practices contribute to successfully implemented measures and actions, what benefits they might provide for the participating universities and the influence they may have on other (local, regional, or national) RFOs and/or RPOs.

The main elements monitored by this process refer to the activities/measures, outputs/outcomes indicators and timeline defined in the GEP action plans leading to the specific objectives of each self-tailored Plan.

The first internal monitoring report will be produced in January 2023 and will be used to assess the successful activities carried out by

each GEP, the obstacles and the potential improvement to be done.

The reporting aims to provide sufficiently detailed information to check the advancement of the GEP in light of its objectives and timetable. The results should indeed help the partner organizations tailor and modify their GEPs to perform better achievements.

For monitoring and evaluation processes, the following activities have been provided within ATHENA Consortium:

1. Each ATHENA partner implementing a GEP provided quantitative and qualitative indicators according to their self-tailored GEPs action plan.
2. The Guideline on monitoring and evaluation and common template for defining outputs and outcomes indicators was provided and distributed among the partners by UJK according to the logic model.
3. Then, after the preparation of the logical matrix of each GEP,

the indicators were analysed by the UJK and the CNR team and the final version was delivered to the GEPVISION platform. The GEPVISION tool has been configured by CNR.

4. In parallel with the implementation of the GEPs, data on achieved outputs and outcomes are systematically collected and completed on the GEPVISION platform when the respective action is completed.
5. Athena partnering organizations will submit their first internal monitoring report on the achieved results, based on the collected data on qualitative and quantitative indicators using a template prepared by UJK and instruments enabled by the GEPVISION tool.

The annual reporting should feed into a review of progress against the aims and objectives of the GEP by leadership and its stakeholders. The review should enable the organization

to understand progress, identify where activities are having an impact, and where obstacles persist throughout the life of the GEP.

In other words, on one side, the monitoring reports aim to help GEPI Committees and the implementing organisations to understand the progress made thanks to the implementation of the GEPs. On the other side, if needed, it should identify the remaining challenges and barriers and provide tailored solutions to address them properly and change the GEP accordingly.

The results should indeed help the partner organizations tailor and modify their GEPs to perform better results.

For these reasons, monitoring and evaluation instruments have firstly to be seen as tools supporting effective actions and creating accountability. Secondly, by providing indicators against which actions can be assessed and resources allocated, they also enhance knowledge of ongoing changes.

The ATHENA project consortium is implementing its sustainability strategy to ensure the replication of GEPs and project outcomes

Concerning the 'Database of Stakeholders', the database aims to collect and organize data pertaining to stakeholders that can be engaged in ATHENA for the purposes of dissemination

and exploitation. Throughout the duration of the project, the database will be periodically updated, and only project members will have access to it. It is an instrument that has been

organized using EUSurvey, and the ATHENA consortium can at any time add new stakeholders.

At the proposal stage, the ATHENA consortium conducted

a comprehensive analysis of key networks and organisations to which they will disseminate project activities and outcomes. The list of previously identified networks and organisations has been supplemented by a thorough analysis under the stakeholder identification and involvement task. The process of engaging the identified stakeholders entails contacting each potential organisation and outlining the terms of reference for ATHENA activities, as well as the dissemination and response expectations for the organisation. The engaged stakeholders are already involved in actions designed to ensure the long-term viability of Gender Equality Plans (GEP) throughout the duration of the project and beyond.

The ATHENA project aims to engage diverse stakeholders within the Quadruple Helix framework (QH). Among the QH stakeholders, ATHENA will consider in greater detail:

1. Academia & Research: universities, research performing organisations, research funding organisations, and sister projects;
2. Administration & public sector: local, regional and national authorities (policymakers);
3. Business and industry: STEM-related businesses, and start-up incubators, among others;
4. Civil society: Women's NGOs, networks, sister projects, and women's associations.

Regarding the "Workshops report 1", eight GEPs have been developed as a result of the ATHENA project, so eight local workshops with strategic stakeholders have been organized. Each workshop was

an event open to all stakeholders identified in the Database, including professors, researchers, public authorities, and others.

The purpose of Workshop 1 was to present to the stakeholders the barriers and challenges and the solutions to overcome those encountered during the development of the GEPs and the activities that will be implemented thanks to the adoption of the GEPs. Thus, the stakeholders from the Database have been involved in the further replication of the gender equity achievements under the ATHENA project to other appropriate communities.

The speakers/moderators have been representatives of the ATHENA project, and have been involved in the development of the GEPs and other project documents. The venue was in a face-to-face format, virtual format or hybrid format. According to the project description, at least 20 stakeholders were expected to attend each event, and ATHENA partners were able to engage 305 of them in total. A second Workshop will be held in 2024 to demonstrate how promoting gender equality can unlock research potential, boosting organizational performance and unlocking research potential.

About establishing synergies with the EURAXESS initiative and network, the synergies and connections include the organisation of a webinar, entitled 'Gender equality and researchers' mobility – Synergies from EURAXESS initiative' to 1) present the EURAXESS network, and more specifically their two initiatives for researchers: the Charter & Code (C&C) and the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R); 2) jointly discuss on the relevance of gender equality measures as an

element of attractiveness for researchers and to engage them in a mobility experience.

The EURAXESS Webinar took place on 20 June 2022, online via 'ZOOM Webinar'. Key speakers, apart from Michelle Perello, the ATHENA project coordinator, were contacted and invited to attend the webinar:

- Angela Balzano | MINDtheGEPs coordination team member—University of Turin;
- Slaven Misljencevic | EURAXESS Policy Officer – European Commission;
- Michele Rosa-Clot | HRS4R Portfolio manager – European Commission.

The discussion session was enriched with the participation of:

- Ivana Radonova, ATHENA Advisory Board member from the Ministry of Education and Science of Bulgaria
- Mark de Vos, EURAXESS Bridge Head for Denmark.

Originally, it was planned to attract 40 participants, but we have managed to attract over 50 attendees from 16 countries in Europe, Asia, and North America.

The event was considered successful, not only for the number of participants but also for the content of the presentations and the discussion held at the end of the event.



1st mutual learning workshop

the process of creating the FRCT gender equality plan – from diagnosis to development

athenaequality.eu



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101006416

Consulta Europa organised the first Mutual Learning Workshop

The first Mutual Learning Workshop (MLW), whose topic was 'Shared experiences on the process of developing the ATHENA Gender Equality Plans (GEPs)', was held online on 6 July 2022 and mainly organised by Consulta Europa.

The MLW was intended for GEPI Committee members and project partners and pursued the objective of sharing and commonly learning from the experiences of each ATHENA institution in the process of developing their tailored GEPs. The purpose of this exercise was to learn about the primary obstacles and how to overcome them, as well as the key considerations for the next phase of GEP implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

The ATHENA institutions that developed their GEPs were invited to make a 15-minute presentation commenting on

how gender equality (GE) was integrated into the institution; how the GEP was negotiated, developed and, in case, adopted; which were the involved members in the development of the GEPs; main measures adopted and how they were selected; main barriers/challenges; main milestones to be highlighted; how the monitoring and evaluation of the GEP will be undertaken; and how the GEP will be disseminated within the institution and externally.

The event was open to both project partners and members of the GEPI Committee and attracted a total of 44 attendees.

Michelle Perello, the project coordinator, opened the event and presented the project progress. Then, each project institution that has developed its GEP intervened in a 15-minute presentation sharing how its institutional process of GEP development was undertaken.

During the joint discussion held during the workshop, the following most relevant conclusions emerged:

- It was stressed the importance of achieving sustainability of the GEPs. This importance is even greater in times of crisis (war in Ukraine, covid-19, price inflation...).
- The relevance of counting with a GE office at an institutional level, which includes the allocation of both human and economic resources.
- It is a priority to annually collect sex/gender-disaggregated data and indicators to inform the GEP's evaluation and progress.
- The whole organizational staff should be involved towards GE. Most of the staff at ATHENA RPOs/RFOs are researchers and professors. It is key to also involve administrative staff.