

## ATHENA WEBINAR: Synergies among R&I organisations and policy makers for gender equality

This past Friday's ATHENA webinar on [Synergies among R&I organisations and policy makers for gender equality](#) facilitated the exchange of experiences, best practices, challenges, and obstacles related to the promotion of Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) between policymakers and research organisations. Key speakers from Spain, Portugal, Italy, Bulgaria and Slovenia shared their insights, emphasising on the importance of integrating the gender dimension in Research & Innovation and of doing it from an intersectional approach.

The event took place online on the 27th of October at 14:00 h CEST and was live-streamed on [YouTube](#). Michelle Perello, from Consulta Europa, moderated the encounter and was joined by the following speakers:

**Kika Fumero:** Policy advisor and Gender Consultant on equality, gender-based violence and human rights. Former Director of the Canarian Institute for Equality.

**Silvia Ruedo Pascual:** Director of the Women and Science Unit. Ministry of Science and Innovation of the Government of Spain.

**Ivana Radonova:** Member of the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of EU team at the Ministry of Education and Science.

**Sandra Garcia:** Regional Directress for the Promotion of Equality and Social Inclusion of the Azores Government.

**Tomaž Boh:** Acting Director-General of the Science Directorate of Slovenian Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation.

The webinar also featured two members from two of ATHENA's sister projects: **Cristina Solera**, from [MindtheGEPs](#) and **Giovanna Badalassi** from [LeTSGEPs](#).

During the first half of the event, the panellists identified and discussed the shortcomings and opportunities they encountered while launching and implementing GEPs within their respective institutions.

Silvia Rueda Pascual spoke about the integration of GEPs in Research & Innovation as an effective way of changing the very nature of knowledge, by increasing women's participation and incorporating their needs and perspectives into the field. Moreover, she insisted on the importance of raising awareness through education, training and dissemination campaigns in order to transform gender stereotypes, combat gender based violence and foster gender equality. Following Silvia Rueda, this zero-tolerance and intersectional approach is essential to move towards a more participatory and diverse model, one that actively listens to women and believes in their talent and potential. Likewise, the new Spanish law on Science was identified as an important milestone in the achievement of equality between men and women, by bridging gender gaps and giving greater visibility to women researchers and to their pivotal role in STEM and STI.

Kika Fumero shared her experience as former Director of the Canarian Institute for Equality. As she explained the policies she had implemented over the years, she spoke about the importance of using social media as a tool to better communicate with civil society. According to her, every GEP action should be carried out from an intersectional approach and its findings should be made accessible to all. This is the only way to tackle different realities and to ensure that no one is left behind. By creating safe spaces for debate it is possible to design public and private policies aligned with society's needs. Following Kika Fumero, co-education is fundamental for the prevention of gender based violence  
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(GBV), female genital mutilation (FGM) and human trafficking for sexual exploitation; actions she's implemented while working for the Canarian Institute for Equality.

Sandra Garcia, announced that they were closing the proposal for the first regional plan for equality and non-discrimination of the Azores. A plan based on the need to enforce actions to raise awareness and to support public and private policies that strengthen the role and increase the visibility of women. In other words, to turn equality of opportunity and dignity into a reality. This strategic document and new political instrument, following Sandra Garcia, will allow them to address a wider range of issues related to gender equality and to discrimination as a whole. Moreover, she also spoke about the importance of financially supporting other GEP initiatives, both public and private, in order to join forces and increase their outreach. Despite being nine islands, all different in size, they have managed to create an important network, and it is working closely with their partners, which has allowed them to make a difference.

Tomaž Boh shared his experience from the point of view of the Slovenian Ministry regarding the implementation of gender equality policies. An issue that for him is closely connected with the challenge of enabling a wider group of women researchers in scientific careers. During the past two years, GEPs have become an important part of the strategies and policies of Slovenian research institutions. This focus on gender equality has become very noticeable, as parity is now a requirement for all advisory bodies in the field of research and innovation. Likewise, important advances have also been made to secure equal opportunities for women researchers, by enabling them to finish their research projects when they return from their maternity leaves. As such, Tomaž Boh believes it is also important to support other initiatives and experts working on these matters, as they are essential actors in the promotion of GEPs within and beyond the field of Science and Innovation.

Last but not least, both Cristina Solera and Giovanna Badalassi from ATHENA's sister projects, MindtheGEPs and LeTSGEPs, spoke about the major findings of their projects. Cristina Solera explained how by not only focussing on academia, they were able to take into account greater contexts and to capture the multiple barriers that exist in research in regards to gender inequality. Following Cristina, there has to be a continuous interplay between structural actions and cultural actions in order to not only to change the numbers, but also the mindsets. Giovanna Badalassi spoke about the outcomes of the LeTSGEPs project which was just coming to an end. She brought up the issue of time and budgeting in research and how it had a direct impact on gender equality. Following Giovanna Badalassi, these factors have been long overlooked and are often forgotten when designing and implementing GEPs. Their final findings on these topics will be discussed at LeTSGEPs' final joint conference on the [23rd of November](#).

A roundtable then followed where the speakers had a chance to discuss their final thoughts in regards to their experiences in the promotion of gender equality plans from the perspective of policy makers and of research institutions. The webinar highlighted how GEPs are also a matter of increasing the competitiveness of our institutions and of changing the existing model to empower and encourage women talent in R&I and beyond.