

Integrating gender in Horizon 2020

Europe has invested in integrating gender equality in participation and gender dimension in research into Horizon 2020. To fail to fully integrate gender into the annual work programmes represents a forfeiture of investment. This article lays out the promise represented in Horizon 2020 and Work Programme 2014-2015, the failure of Work Programme 2016-2017 with respect to gender, and the solutions for future work programmes.

Horizon 2020 put Europe at the forefront of policy measures for harnessing the power of gender analysis for innovation and smart growth, thus rendering Europe a global leader in solving 21st Century societal challenges. Eyes around the globe turned to Europe for leadership in this area. It is essential that Europe retains this leadership role.

Lessons learnt

The first phase of Horizon 2020 was successfully launched in December 2013 with a work programme for 2014-2015 that included 12 focus areas and 65 calls in 2014 alone. In the first six months, 16,000 proposals were submitted, rising to 30,000 in September 2014.

The recent European Commission assessment analysed how the 'key features and novelties' of Horizon 2020, which include gender equality in participation and gender dimension in research content, were embedded in Work Programme 2014-2015 and how experts and applicants responded to them.¹

The assessment recommends 30 corrective measures, four of which are specific to gender:

- 'Continue to address the gender dimension upstream when preparing future work programmes and increase awareness among applicants, National Contact Points (NCP) and evaluators on what the gender dimension in research content means and encompasses';
- 'Identify new and more gender-related topics as well as specific studies in order to develop a better understanding of the role of gender in Horizon 2020 domains/challenges such as climate change, energy, cities, etc.';
- 'Go beyond generic language and propose more meaningful wording in future Horizon 2020 topics; as part of this include the gender dimension under the 'impact' part of topics'; and
- 'Develop guidelines/methods for monitoring and assessing the inclusion of the gender dimension in the various domains of Horizon 2020'.

In January 2015 the Commission released scoping papers for the various themes to be included in Work Programme 2016-2017, based on advisory group reports.² Excepting the theme 'Science with and for



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Society', in all of them there is an almost total absence of a comment on gender. For example, in the nine pages of text on 'Health, Demographic Change and Wellbeing' the word 'gender' occurs only once.

This omission contravenes the Commission's own guidance document for 2016-2017,³ which importantly states: 'This work programme will aim to identify new and more gender-related topics, to strengthen the quality of the integration of the gender dimension in research and innovation content, including in formulating the expected impacts statements. It will also identify specific studies which will bring a better understanding of the role of gender issues in addressing the various societal challenges.' Opportunities for innovation are being missed.

What gender means in H2020

The consultation in 2014 involving the advisory groups was centred on eight questions,⁴ only one of which referred to gender, but in a significantly different way than described above. The question narrowed down the role of gender to a component of responsible research and innovation (RRI): 'How should cross-cutting activities such as social sciences and humanities, responsible research and

innovation, including gender aspects, and climate and sustainable development be addressed?'

But the difference between gender in RRI and gender in Horizon 2020 is enormous, and framing gender in this way influenced advisory groups' discussions.

RRI is a new EU policy initiative,⁵ at present unclearly defined as an approach that combines ideas from 'ethics, Open Access, science education, public engagement, and gender'.⁶ By contrast, the role of gender in Horizon 2020 is about conducting or learning from scientific studies showing when, how and why biological, social and environmental conditions act as determinants of differences between females and males (in humans, animals, plants, etc.). Horizon 2020 held the keys to unlocking the creative potential of sex and gender analysis for research and innovation.

Improving integration

The main lessons for the next phase of the Horizon 2020 programme are: 1) gender issues should be flagged more frequently and in more gender-related topics; 2) continued efforts are needed to address the gender dimension in the preparation and implementation of the next work programme; 3) more meaningful descriptions of the relevance of gender are needed to improve take up by applicants; and 4) better guidelines for experts, advisors and NCPs are required.

It is significant that Canada and the USA are preparing sex and gender training for each specific area of science and technology. This will be available to researchers and grant evaluators. Only if Europe carefully implements the gender dimension in research promised in Horizon 2020 can it retain its competitive edge globally.

The Commission established the H2020 Advisory Group on Gender (AGG) in February 2014 to advise itself and other AGs on the integration of the gender dimension in research content. In March 2015, the AGG issued a note, 'For a better integration of the gender dimension in Horizon 2020 Work Programme 2016-2017', and while this is not yet in the public domain, it does go some way towards clarifying what may constitute a proper approach to considering the role of gender in research content:

- Explain why gender matters in your area: think of and present the gender dimension as



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providing added value in terms of creativity, excellence and return on investment, both from private and public perspectives. Gender is an emerging and important subject of research in many scientific and technological fields. It constitutes, as such, a valuable source of innovation;

- Make it explicit: indicate in the topic how exploring gender aspects is relevant and should be taken into account. If gender is not specifically mentioned in a topic, there is a risk that the gender dimension will not be considered at all in the proposals. If gender is mentioned in a topic, the evaluators will assess the gender dimension alongside the other relevant aspects of the proposals;
- Foster the production of new knowledge on gender: consider what is already known in your area in terms of the gender dimension and identify what is missing. If you think that gender knowledge still needs to be generated, signal it and indicate which gender aspects should be explored;
- Gender implies a multidisciplinary approach: multidisciplinary approaches are encouraged in Horizon 2020. Reflecting on gender issues in relation to health, transport, energy, security, etc. is a great opportunity to foster co-operation between scientists with gender expertise and others. It helps concepts to cross the borders of scientific fields and research methods to evolve; and
- Include gender in the impact statement: the statement on expected impacts is an important part of the topic description which the evaluators will assess, and gender needs to be considered if, for instance, the funded action will impact on boys or girls, women or men, gender relations, socioeconomic positions, and the status of men and women. These considerations should also include contributions to gender equality.

Gender equality in participation

The improved participation of women in EU framework programmes in scientific roles has been a longstanding goal of the European Platform for Women in Science (EPWS).⁷ With 12,000 members that bring



together networks of women scientists and organisations committed to gender equality in research in all disciplines, the EPWS represents the voice of women scientists on research policy who believe that the ambitious objectives of Horizon 2020 will only be reached if all European scientists, including women, and all European organisations are able to take part. The EPWS was very active during the preparation of the Horizon 2020 proposal to make sure that gender was properly integrated into the programme and believes that the guidance document mentioned above and Article 16 of the Horizon 2020 regulations⁸ create conditions that can allow true progress to be made in advancing women scientists.

The omission of gender in the advisory board's recommendations for 2016-2017 came as a disappointment; in February 2015 the EPWS expressed concerns to the Commissioner for Research and Innovation, the DG Research director general, and several MEPs on the discrepancy between what is written about gender in the EU regulations, the Commission's Horizon 2020 guidance document, and in the theme-specific H2020 working papers for 2016-2017.

The Commission responded in an encouraging but not fully committal way that the discrepancies will be corrected. The response promises to carefully consider the relevance of gender aspects in the respective areas, but the EPWS will remain cautious and adamant that gender equality in participation and gender dimension conditions should remain well and fully integrated in the future Horizon 2020 work programmes. Participants at the fourth Gender Summit in June 2014 shared similar concerns, and these issues will be raised again at the forthcoming Gender Summit in November 2015.⁹

Full integration is possible

A novelty of Horizon 2020 is that proposals can include the cost of gender training in the budget and the cost of preliminary research to add sex and gender to current research.¹⁰ One of the most extensive academic sources that explains in a systematic way what sex-gender analysis in the research process, and in technological innovations, means, how to conduct it, and what the benefits are, is available at the Gendered Innovations website.¹¹ This is the most complete body of information currently available, which is continuously expanded to accommodate new research areas.

In conclusion, our aim here has been to make sure that the next phase of the framework programme, as well as those that will follow, builds on the lessons learnt from the just-completed phase and remains in line with the EU's Horizon 2020 regulations. The gender dimension adds value in terms of creativity, excellence and return on investment, both from private and public perspectives. Gender analysis is an emerging and important methodological tool that leads to innovation for many scientific and technological fields.

Next steps

Moving forwards, there must be a return to the stated goals of Horizon 2020 with respect to gender equality and gender analysis in research. Furthermore, it must be emphasised to applicants that funds are available to investigate the gender dimension of their research. The US National Institute of Health specifically offers supplementary funding to include sex and gender analysis in current research (PA-15-034).

Finally, it is necessary to have each funding area prepare field-appropriate training for researchers and proposal evaluators. The



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Canadian Institutes of Health Research will be launching such training soon which can also be used in Europe. Europe should prepare similar training for engineering, transportation, ICT, etc., and evaluators should be required to hold a certificate of completion for this.

- ¹ www.rpk.pprnt.poznan.pl/site/dlfiles/1.Sandra_Almeida.pdf
- ² www2.ul.ie/pdf/97179975.pdf
- ³ www.upc.edu/euresearch/upc-community/industrial-leadership/leit_-ict/leit_-ict/draft-strategic-programming-document
- ⁴ The EC's consultation of the Horizon 2020 advisory groups on the strategic priorities for research and innovation in Work Programme 2016-2017 can be found at: ec.europa.eu
- ⁵ www.sis-rii-conference.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/RomeDeclaration_Final.pdf
- ⁶ ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/responsible-research-innovation
- ⁷ www.epws.org
- ⁸ inea.ec.europa.eu/download/legal_framework/regulation_12912013_establishing_h2020.pdf
- ⁹ gender-summit.com/gs7-about
- ¹⁰ EC H2020 Vademecum, www.h2020.cz/files/pracna/H2020-Vademecum-Section-on-Proposal-Submission-and-Evaluation
- ¹¹ ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/gendered-innovations/index_en.cfm

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