



Status Quo Assessment –  
Overview Report

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**Author list:**

Name	Organisation
<b>Florian Holzinger</b> <b>Sybille Reidl</b> <b>Sarah Beranek</b> <b>Helene Schiffbänker</b> <b>Marlene Hock</b> <b>Beate Friedl</b>	<i>JOANNEUM RESEARCH</i>

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## Glossary

<b>DFG</b>	German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft)	<b>IPs</b>	Implementing Partners (s. Chapter 3)
<b>EU</b>	European Union	<b>NRW</b>	North-Rhine Westphalia (German federal state)
<b>EIGE</b>	European Institute for Gender Equality	<b>R&amp;I</b>	Research and Innovation
<b>GE</b>	gender equality	<b>RTDI</b>	Research, Technological Development, and Innovation
<b>GEP</b>	gender equality plan	<b>SIPs</b>	Supporting Implementing Partners (s. Chapter 3)
<b>H2020</b>	Horizon 2020 programme	<b>S/IPs</b>	Supporting and Implementing Partners
<b>HE</b>	Higher Education	<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources	<b>UN</b>	United Nations



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The SPEAR project is working towards gender equality (GE) in European universities. The main objective is to develop and implement gender equality plans (GEPs) in the nine implementing SPEAR universities. The project follows a supportive approach in which all partners and change agents benefit from each other's experiences and learnings. Therefore, the project consortium consists of three Supporting Implementing Partners (SIPs) with some experience in GE and GEP implementation and six Implementing Partners (IPs) with little or no such experience (more information in *Short Overview on the SPEAR universities*).

The development and implementation of gender equality plans (GEP) within the SPEAR project is accompanied by an evaluation. The evaluation forms part of a learning and reflection process that seeks to support GEP implementation. The evaluation builds on an understanding of the evaluator as a critical friend. Therefore, the main motivation of the evaluation is not to control or audit, but to support the implementation process through reflection and learning.

The evaluation is an observation of gender equality in the 9 SPEAR universities at three points in time. In a Status Quo Assessment, it describes the starting conditions in each university at the beginning of the project. The Interim Evaluation collects first implementation experiences and tries to capture the strengths and weaknesses of the learning process. In the final evaluation round, we will focus on the effects and the sustainability of the implemented GE activities.

This report gives an overview on the 9 Status Quo Assessment Reports for all implementing SPEAR universities. These confidential reports describe the status quo of gender equality in each of these universities and should support each implementation team in the design, development and negotiation of a GEP for their organisation.

The Status Quo Assessment Reports did not have the goal to make a full and extensive assessment of GE in each university. Rather they tried to capture the most important features of GE and related topics in each university. They concluded with tailored recommendations for each SPEAR university and their implementation team on how to improve GE in their organisation. In this overview, we won't describe the recommendations, but rather focus on questions regarding the status quo in the universities: What role does the context of a university play? What structures and measures are in place? What kind of stakeholders are typically involved in gender equality work and how? What kind of culture can be observed in these universities? What are common experiences such as strengths, challenges, but also resistances?

All in all, this report aims to give a comprised picture of where these European universities stand at the moment of the Status Quo Assessment and what topics are currently relevant to them. Therefore, not all details that were part of the individual Status Quo Assessment Reports will be found here which does of course not make them less relevant to the individual actors. As a crucial part of the information for the report stems from personal interviews (see *Methodology*), it reflects subjective perceptions of the situation in the university. So if certain topics were not mentioned in a university or country, it does not necessarily mean that they are not present. With that in mind, one can get an impression of the most relevant features of the nine individual reports.

This report begins with a description of the methodology and a short overview on the SPEAR universities. The main part is divided into three chapters: Firstly, the gender equality framework conditions, meaning the context in which the universities are embedded in like the respective research landscape, legislation, external stakeholders and the gender regime are presented. Secondly, it describes the gender equality status quo by looking at what has



already been done and observed in terms of objectives, fields of action, structures, stakeholders, representation and culture. Thirdly, it comprises what was reported as relevant experiences with GE implementation; the strengths, potentials, weaknesses, challenges and resistances that the members of the universities perceive. The report closes with a conclusion that summarizes the impressions of the first round of evaluation in the SPEAR project.



## 2 METHODOLOGY

This comparative report is based on nine Status Quo Assessment Reports that were developed in the first evaluation round of the SPEAR project for each S/IP.

The Status Quo Assessment Reports have built on the following sources:

- The Status Quo Assessment Tool which gathered the current statistics on the participation of women and men at different levels and compiled an inventory of measures on gender equality in place in each university
- University documents that address gender equality
- Individual Face-to-Face Interviews on the status quo of GE in the university

The main and richest data source were semi-structured interviews with a variety of people working at each university. This allowed us to include many different perspectives of people inside of each university that are in contact with gender equality and/or the SPEAR project in their work; from central and faculty/department gender equality and HR agents over staff representatives to the university management.

The interviewees were selected in close collaboration with each implementation team, who was also responsible for inviting the interview partners and scheduling the interviews. All interviews were conducted by JOANNEUM RESEARCH between September and November 2019. Specific guidelines for different target groups were developed and used in the semi-structured interviews. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and then analysed with the software MAXQDA oriented on the method qualitative content analysis according to Mayring (1983 described in Gläser/Laudel 2010). The content of the interviews is treated confidentially and was pseudonymised for the report.

To further ensure confidentiality in this comparative report, interview references have been renamed so that individual interviewees' statements cannot be traced.

This comparative report follows a descriptive, summative approach to present the status quo at the nine SIPs and IPs. In other words, it is not primarily analytical, but shows in condensed form the differences and similarities between the universities. The reason for this approach is to enable those involved in the GE work at the SPEAR universities to use this report to get a quick overview of the situation at the other universities in the different aspects. This should allow them to compare and relate their situation with the others. However, where appropriate, we compared the universities/countries according to certain criteria (e.g. similar contexts in which the universities are embedded in) to identify potential regularities and peculiarities. As the comparative report uses the nine individual university reports as the basis, it comes with the same limitations. Namely, it does not represent every organisation's/country's gender status quo in an objective way with every detail, but rather displays the perspectives of the interview partners on their organization or country.



### 3 SHORT OVERVIEW ON THE SPEAR UNIVERSITIES

The nine SPEAR universities are located in seven countries from all over Europe. The Danish (SDU), Swedish (UU) and German (RWTH) universities hold the role of a Supporting Implementing Project Partner (SIP) in the project. The Portuguese (NOVA), Croatian (UNIRI), Bulgarian (SWU and PU), as well as Lithuanian (VU and VMU) have the role of an Implementing Project Partner (IP). As the SIPs are already more advanced in their GE work, they support the implementing partner in their mission of developing a gender equality plan (GEP) and will draw inspiration for themselves from their work with IP partners. 5 out of 6 IPs are located in post-communist countries (Bulgaria, Lithuania and Croatia) whereas all SIPs are from Northern or Central European countries with highly developed research and innovation (R&I) systems and a different trajectory in promoting gender equality in these fields. So the socio-economic, cultural as well as research and innovation related contexts are heterogeneous between the SPEAR universities and especially between the SIP and IP universities.

Apart from their country context, the universities are also diverse in their size and age. The oldest universities are the Uppsala University in Sweden founded in 1477 and the Lithuanian Vilnius University from 1579, while the majority have their origins in the 60s/70s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. When it comes to the number of students and employees, the RWTH and UU are biggest in size.

The following table provides a short overview on the universities who collaborate in the SPEAR project.

	COUNTRY	FOUNDED IN	NR. OF EMPLOYEES (APPROX.)	NR. OF STUDENTS (APPROX.)	ROLE IN SPEAR
<b>University of Southern Denmark (SDU)</b>	Denmark	1966	3.800	27.000	SIP
<b>Uppsala University (UU)</b>	Sweden	1477	7.100	44.000	SIP
<b>RWTH Aachen University (RWTH)</b>	Germany	1870	9.700	45.000	SIP
<b>Universidade Nova de Lisboa (NOVA)</b>	Portugal	1973	1.800 (academic)	20.000	IP
<b>University of Rijeka (UNIRI)</b>	Croatia	1973	1700	17.000	IP
<b>South-West University "Neofit Rilski" (SWU)</b>	Bulgaria	1976	480 (academic)	11.500	IP
<b>Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" (PU)</b>	Bulgaria	1961 (university status 1972)	900	14.000	IP
<b>Vilnius University (VU)</b>	Lithuania	1579	4.800	20.000	IP
<b>Vytautas Magnus University (VMU)</b>	Lithuania	1922 (re-opened in 1989)	1.100 (academic)	9.700	IP





## 4 GENDER EQUALITY FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS

Overall, it became evident in the Status Quo Assessment that the complex context in which organisations are embedded shapes the framework in which university GE actors operate. Concretely, it shapes which kind of gender issues exist and are present in the public and university discourse, as well as which approaches are possible and fitting.

### 4.1 International Research Landscape

In most of the 9 SPEAR universities, it was described that the highly competitive setting of the international research landscape puts increasing pressure on universities, but also on individual researchers. The universities have to compete worldwide with other universities (and sometimes the private sector) for the best researchers; putting the smaller and less prestigious universities (and countries) in an unfavourable position. It was pointed out that due to the international character of research and innovation, the recruitment of female professors proved sometimes difficult especially in male-dominated fields as there are currently not many women that qualify for a professorship in some disciplines and these women are often well-sought after by renowned universities with an international reputation. As pointed out above, in some countries such as Germany, Lithuania and Bulgaria, the interviewees also rate working conditions in the industry as better than at universities (e.g. in terms of salary, work-life balance), which puts universities in an disadvantaged position when competing for female researchers in Germany or for male researchers in Bulgaria<sup>1</sup>. Or to put it in other words: In some countries, an academic career is less attractive for one gender than for the other due to more promising alternatives.

As for the researchers, the pressure on the individual increased strongly with the rise of globalisation and the increased introduction of New Public Management<sup>2</sup> to academia as one has to compete with researchers worldwide for tenure tracks, funding and publishing. This goes hand in hand with the observation of many SPEAR universities that the public funding has been cut in the last years due to the this New Public Management orientation with its focus on austerity policies. For the case of Lithuania, there was a higher education reform that made universities entrepreneurial and had them compete for already reduced state funding via performance indicators like the number of publications or ratings of students for teaching.

In many SPEAR countries, this had led again to more pressure to acquire external funding for the university, but also for the individual researcher. One interviewee describes this precarious employment development as the following:

“In the faculties it is then again very critical. There are faculties that have the money and can afford more positions that are permanent. But, there is also a tendency towards a fixed-term contract, simply because you often don't know what the faculty's money will look like in five years' time. This means that since the budget of the faculties and the university often depends on [...] funds, redistribution of student funds and other things, one simply doesn't dare to

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<sup>1</sup> While in German universities women are usually underrepresented, it is the other way around in Bulgarian universities (see *Gender Regime*).

<sup>2</sup> The term is used to describe approaches that aim to make public service and public institutions more business-like. Thereby supposedly improving their efficiency by applying private sector management models. (Hood 1991)



do much for an indefinite period of time, because one might end up in jobs that one can no longer afford.” (SQA\_Int\_58<sup>3</sup>)

Especially in the international competition between researchers, it was perceived as unfair that everyone is measured with the same quantitative indicators and criteria even though not all researchers have the same starting positions when it comes to prestige and resources (of their alma mater):

“It's just, you need to compete with somebody you cannot compete with. But you're asked to do it.” (SQA\_Int\_35).

All in all, this focus on competition for career options, funding and publishing through mainly quantitative excellence indicators results in highly competitive, flexible, stressful and individualistic working environments which puts less privileged people or people with caring responsibilities at a disadvantage.

The constant time pressure was also associated with a lower motivation to engage in GE/EO activities. Besides precarious working conditions, tight budgets leave also less room for actions and change; especially when it comes to institutionalized GE work:

“You can have very nice regulations and words and so on, but if there is no financing for anything, nothing goes on.” (SQA\_Int\_14).

The international research landscape and increasing influence of neoliberal orientation is something that applies to all universities and researchers, therefore, it was addressed in most universities, but to a varying degree.

## 4.2 History, Legislation and Policies

While the international research landscape is something that all SPEAR universities have in common (although it might affect the universities differently), the national context with its history, legislation and policies varies between the countries. Nonetheless, one can see similarities across countries.

**Historical influences** (i.e. events and developments) were stressed in the post-communist countries, as well as in Portugal. In some of the SPEAR post-communist countries such as Lithuania, Bulgaria and Croatia, after communism, it became popular for students to study abroad and stay abroad. In combination with current demographical developments like low birth rates, this can on the one hand result in problems attracting young people to academic careers. On the other hand, experiences abroad were also reported to lead to a broader awareness of GE and new perspectives on stereotypical gender roles in their home countries.

In Croatia, the communist era and the Croatian War of Independence (1991-95) were associated with the development of a sense of solidarity, as well as a “vigorous” (SQA\_Int\_37) civil society that advocated and continues to advocate for disadvantaged groups as the individual could not necessarily count on the system to do so; this shaped the attitude of GE actors. It was reported for Croatia that the phase before they became a member of the European Union (EU) was supportive regarding GE, as the additional funds and motivation to join made pushing certain topics and legislation possible that (partly) still sustain. After admission to the EU, the readiness of political actors to work on these kind of topics seems to have decreased according to one interviewee.

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<sup>3</sup> The interview sources are cited as the following: SQA=Status Quo Assessment, Int=Interview, Nr. of interview. Thus, the university affiliation of the respective interview partner is not revealed via the interview citation in this report, in contrast to the confidential individual Status Quo Assessment Reports.



In Portugal, the revolution in 1974 was marked as influential as Portugal faced the challenge of integrating people coming from former colonies, consequently other issues like poverty were prioritised over GE. More recently, the economic crisis (2009) had an impact on the universities in Portugal and Croatia in terms of tighter budgets while this was not mentioned in the other SPEAR countries. In Portugal, this had the concrete impact that no promotion for civil servants (e.g. researchers) was possible (until 2018). Still, the universities face limitations for recruiting and the implementation of measures, which negatively affects researchers' career perspectives.

Generally, it has to be said that even though the historical context was not addressed in all universities it does not necessarily mean that there are no influences. However, it seems that these influences were less relevant to the interview partners; possibly as countries like Denmark, Germany or Sweden had less radical political transformations within the last decades and were less impacted by the economic crisis of 2007-2009 (Ferreiro et al. 2016, p. 6-7).

Regarding the **legal basis and policies**, in accordance with EU legislation, all the SPEAR countries have national (anti-)discrimination laws in place that provide the basis for GE work in general. In all SPEAR countries, these laws and national strategies include the approach of gender mainstreaming in one way or the other, which can also be attributed to the influence of the EU. However, not all countries follow through with this promise in its policy implementation (e.g. Germany) (EIGE 2019a).

The interviews seem to reflect this gap: While in all universities, interviewees have referred to the legal basis of gender equality, only in Sweden the gender mainstreaming approach was highlighted. Others mostly referred to terms like equal rights/treatment/opportunities or anti-discrimination. In the interviews, the Danish approach was described to focus more on equal outcomes than equal opportunities. In Sweden, in 2017, the focus shifted from gender equality to all grounds of discrimination. Also in Portugal, a broader understanding of inclusiveness with e.g. one focus on sexual orientation was noticed by the interview partners.

In some countries, this anti-discrimination legislation entails also more detailed regulations for employers or public entities. Mentioned examples are the obligation for Swedish employers to prevent (sexual) harassment, or the federal legislation of the German state North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW) that requires all public entities with more than 25 employees to develop an Equal Opportunities Plan. Also in Lithuania, there is the requirement in the labour law that every institution with more than 50 employees has to implement a GE policy. These GE regulations seem to be more common in countries with a Social Democratic or *Conservative Equal Employment Regime*.<sup>4</sup> The case of Germany shows that a legal or policy context regarding GE can also vary within a (federalized) country, not only across countries. Interestingly, in NRW, only women are allowed in gender equality officer positions, which according to an interviewee might send the message that GE work is mainly for women and makes it more difficult to involve male allies.

When looking at the **legislation and policies targeting the national research sector** (e.g. research or university laws), there are differences between the countries. While it was reported that some have not adopted any specific

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<sup>4</sup> The two categories Social Democratic and Conservative Equal Employment Regime stem from von Wahls (2005) categorization on Equal Employment Regimes which combines Esping Andersens' categories of welfare states with a gender dimension. In her view, the Social Democratic category (e.g. Sweden or Denmark) relies on a collective perspective and puts a focus on social policy (e.g. centralised collective bargaining) and public services (e.g. childcare). The policies of the Conservative Equal Employment Regime (e.g. Germany or Austria) reflect the traditional 'male breadwinner model' and the idea of "protecting women" (e.g. not working night shifts). Regarding social policy the conservative rated countries vary as some provide extensive childcare (e.g. France), while others provide incentives for mothers to stay at home (e.g. Germany) (von Wahl 2005, p. 79-83).

legislation on GE in research (e.g. Bulgaria), there are also countries or federal states in which interviewees report of some (e.g. Denmark) to extensive regulations (e.g. Sweden, German State of NRW).

Efforts mentioned to promote the topic of GE in academia are national strategies regarding GE in academia/RTDI/HE, mandatory GEPs and/or GE Action Plans for universities (or public organisations) or mandatory reporting on the status quo of GE. One example is the Portuguese National Strategy for Equality and non-Discrimination 2018-2020, which addresses GE in HE and R&I. The measures relate to GEPs in RPOs, gender in research funding and gender in research content/teaching. In NRW (Germany), all universities have to develop target gender quotas regarding the appointment of professors. The concrete quota depends on the field of science and is set by the individual university, without concrete steps of sanctions (§37a university law NRW). The fact, that targets and regulations often generally do not include sanctions for non-compliance, was criticised in the interviews not only in Germany, but also other countries. In addition, extensive regulation can also be challenging for GE work, as these regulations need to be aligned with the university's orientation and strategy on GE which increases the effort and might decrease the scope of action if the university might want to go in another direction.

In some universities, it was reported that the surrounding research landscape is opening up to the topic of GE in academia. Some research foundations or research councils in Germany, Portugal, Bulgaria and Lithuania are starting to promote GE in research funding. One example would be the German Research Foundation (DFG) which has implemented research-oriented gender equality standards for its member organisations since 2008; in the process, a cascade model for gender monitoring and targets for the proportion of women in each status group were introduced. In Lithuania, the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics addresses Ethics in Research by providing guidelines and organising activities like events.

Apart from national / federal activities, the activities and measures of other universities in the same country were mentioned as influential to the interviewees' own GE work. Hearing about the GE work of more advanced universities can seem inspiring and motivating not to fall too far behind the others. The position of a frontrunner position can also be motivating.

Specific characteristics of the national research landscape and the organisational structure also shape the nature of GE issues: Non-transparent career advancement processes in the national academic system, as well as the importance of insider knowledge can cause bias and a lower representation of women in leadership positions. Even though university management elections have democratic advantages, the interviewees see also the risk of losing crucial GE actors (as they are not re-elected because of their GE commitment) and the complication of long-term continuous GE work.

### 4.3 External Stakeholders

Relevant stakeholders comprise actors that shape the GE work of an organisation, either directly through their involvement in activities or indirectly. First, we will describe the external stakeholders that influence the GE work from outside of the organisation. Secondly, we will address the internal stakeholders in the chapter 5.3 Gender Equality Status Quo: Structures & Internal Stakeholders.

We divided the external stakeholders into political stakeholders, stakeholders from the research landscape and the civil society as these three groups have emerged from the interviews.



On an international level, the UN (United Nations) and EU are key **political stakeholders**. Two of the nine SPEAR universities are oriented towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which makes the (UN) also a stakeholder influencing the strategical action and the awareness from the outside. The EU – as a political actor – affects the universities on the one hand through their influence on legislation and policies (see 4.2) and funding programmes (see 4.1), but it was also reported in most universities that it legitimizes the topic of gender on university level when the EU stresses the importance of the topic. These various ways of influencing the GE situation in the countries and universities highlights the position of the EU as a stakeholder and its power.

In the Lithuanian context, the BASENET Forum – an Association of Baltic States – is an important stakeholder that tracks the trends of European gender equality in science policy and promotes changes in the Baltic science systems.

Regarding other public entities, the government or Ministries<sup>5</sup> in general were highlighted in Sweden, Croatia and Germany. In Germany, they mostly referred to the state government as higher education is part of the federal responsibilities. The influence of the policy context can be supportive or hindering; while in Sweden and Germany – two countries with a relatively extensive political GE framework – it was labelled more positively; in Croatia, the traditional, conservative climate in the political sphere and its administration is seen less supportive in its influence on gender work in the university. In general, the national ministries or authorities that are responsible for education and science were mentioned either neutrally or as responsive towards GE work.

However, the distribution of responsibilities regarding gender issues between political entities and the university can also be hindering, e.g. when the ministry is responsible for certain areas (like wages) or if certain measures have to be approved by the ministry; which can limit the scope of the universities' GE work. That is to say, even with a legal/political framework for GE in place, the practical application (in the respective area) can be quite different. Some of the interviewees explained that these institutions are often not called upon even if necessary (e.g. due to cultural reasons) or they generally doubt their effectiveness as gender does not seem to be a priority.

In almost all universities, interviewees report of specific political bodies that explicitly address gender as stakeholders of their GE work such as GE or EO agencies/commissions/ombudsman. These national / federal bodies deliver frameworks, recommendations, or survey support or are generally supportive towards the GE work at the respective university. For example, the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman in Lithuania works to bring more transparency in employment conditions by providing an employee survey to public and private sector organizations. Naturally, this can support organisational GE work as these kind of entities can have the possibility to promote national structural changes regarding gender equality (in academia).

When it comes to **stakeholders in the research landscape**, one external factor especially relevant for internal GE work was the exchange with other universities, either nationally or internationally. Nationally, the interview partners often referred to specific universities that they cooperate and connect with; either due to a similar focus (on technology) or their size and reputation. This can favour the GE work in a competitive sense (“**Good peer pressure**” (SQA\_Int\_75)) or produce concrete outcomes e.g. the joint development of guidelines on EO. Interviewees from most universities also reported of national network initiatives on GE or with GE actors (e.g. the BuKoF, a network initiative of GE officers in Germany) or of rectors from other universities. Internationally, the H2020 projects or general international exchange do provide advice, inspiration, feedback, as well as legitimacy

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<sup>5</sup> The ministries most frequently named in the interviews were those responsible for science and education, but also those responsible for labour and social policy. In some interviews, ministries were described in general.



for the internal work for many interviewed GE actors. Furthermore, when it comes to supportive framework conditions, the H2020 projects were also named. It was particularly emphasised that the EU not only provides international exchange but also resources for structural change. Also, the gender criteria in the European funding schemes were said to have some effect on the gender awareness of researchers.

Similar to the effect of the EU funding programmes described above, the interview partners have commented positively about the national funding agencies, foundations, programmes or councils in Sweden, Germany, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Portugal that implemented gender criteria or recommendations for panels. Therefore, these national stakeholders like the German Research Foundation or the Lithuanian Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics are relevant stakeholders that shape the conditions in which the GE work of the SPEAR universities take place.

External **stakeholders from the civil society** were only mentioned sporadically and peripherally. The two type of civil stakeholders that were mentioned were NGOs, as well as leftist political groups that can raise gender awareness and audit organisations. Two of the SIPs use external organisations to evaluate and certify their organisational (GE) work, e.g. family-friendly working conditions.

#### 4.4 Gender Regime

The Gender Regime perspective looks at the interrelation between (welfare) policies, political institutions and actors, as well as the predominant gender roles in society. In the SPEAR project, it seems that in the Scandinavian countries, the respective gender regime tends to be more supportive regarding university GE work than in the other countries. One country was described as having come “a long way in recent decades, legislatively, culturally” (SQA\_Int\_56) or having “a milder climate” (SQA\_Int\_49) in comparison to other countries; Denmark and Sweden were the two countries where care responsibilities / childcare issues were not problematized in the interviews. This overall impression is similar to the results of the Gender Equality Index of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), which ranks Sweden and Denmark in the top positions in terms of gender equality (EIGE 2019b, p.1). However, in the interviews, it was stressed that progress regarding gender equality can be hindering as well if people get the impression that there is no gender inequality anymore, thus apparently no need for GE units or activities. This can lead to unfavourable media coverage, impede the basis for negotiation and acceptance for GE activities in the organization (especially women only measures) and might even trigger resistance across the university.

In all the other SPEAR countries, the respective gender regime was described as less positive. One crucial and influential part is the public discourse and media coverage on gender. In all these countries, the term “gender” is often portrayed negatively (e.g. “Gender-Gaga” (SQA\_Int\_62)), leading to negative public attitudes towards GE per se. In Bulgaria, it also tends to be widely associated with the third sex and evokes homo- or transphobic public reactions. This negative view on gender issues makes GE work more difficult and stressful as the GE actors have to deal with more resistance towards their activities. However, inside the universities, it can be less critical, e.g. UNIRI was described as “quite a safe haven” (SQA\_Int\_37) when it comes to gender equality work and gender research in Croatia. Also in Denmark, the municipalities were described as less gender sensitive than the university itself as they sometimes hold the belief that gender inequality does not exist anymore.

In most of these countries, this negative image of gender goes hand in hand with a traditional division of labour, which marks care and housework as a woman’s responsibility. Especially younger generations of women do not want to follow this anymore:



“[...] we have different expectations. But men, not always. And I think this is the problem. They expect things from us that we don't want anymore. We don't want to be dependent on a man. We are persons like them, and we want equal rights. Not more, not less”. (SQA\_Int\_83)

However, these social values are deeply rooted and continue to shape the perception of women in the workplace - also in post-communist countries where most women are historically used to work full-time due to communist work policies:

“That we are seen as persons that have other responsibilities apart from our work, and men are not seen in this way”. (SQA\_Int\_83)

The time invested in care and household responsibilities continues to lie mostly on women's shoulders. On policy level, in many countries, this is reflected in a relatively long maternity leave<sup>6</sup> (EP 2019, p.1) and focus on informal childcare<sup>7</sup> (Eurostat 2018). For example, in Bulgaria, childcare was mainly seen as the family's responsibility. Therefore informal childcare is provided mostly by the parents or extended family; mostly by the women of the family. In Denmark and Germany, the municipalities are responsible for formal childcare; while this was rated positively in Denmark, interviewees in Germany found the provision of childcare to be complicated and not sufficient. The perception of working women as main carers and supplementary earner can result in a gender pay gap and makes the reconciliation of work and family more difficult for women, while men often can concentrate on their career advancement:

“But I think that the main problem is the gender role of women. I wouldn't say that the university is not giving us the opportunity to develop our knowledge, our capabilities etc. but I'd say it comes down to: We decide to stay at home or spend more time with children, and men in our society still don't do that as much women, they're more focused on their work, which gives them the opportunity to be better than us.” (SQA\_Int\_38)

“It's not normal to stay at home and be a housewife. Most of [...] women work. But after this, you have to do all the other work.” (SQA\_Int\_73)

Some interviewees report a particularly gender hostile environment due to a conservative government (e.g. all male and representing “chauvinism” (SQA\_Int\_19)) and/or the strong influence of the Catholic Church on the society and education, perpetuating traditional gender roles and beliefs. These traditional views on gender are considered to be hindering when it comes to raising awareness and acceptance for and of GE activities.

The overall gender regime is also reflected in academia: The universities in post-communist countries in SPEAR tend to have different gender issues in academia than Western/continental European universities. The latter have more issues regarding representation of women and horizontal segregation. Amongst others, because the traditional gender roles often connote STEM as a male field, thus, making more boys/men interested in MINT than girls/women:

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<sup>6</sup> Maternity leave in the SPEAR countries: Bulgaria (58 weeks), Croatia (24 weeks), Lithuania (18 weeks), Sweden (2 weeks), Portugal (10 weeks), Germany (14 weeks), Denmark (18 weeks). The different regulations of parental leave are not included in these numbers (EP 2019, p.1-2).

<sup>7</sup> Percentage of children in no formal childcare until the age of 3 / between 3 years and compulsory school age in the SPEAR countries: Bulgaria (84%/22%), Croatia (83%/45%), Lithuania (79%/19%), Sweden (51%/5%), Portugal (50%/6%), Germany (70%/11%), Denmark (37%/5%) (Eurostat 2018)



“But this is also a general cultural problem, isn't it? We were at an open day at a grammar school and the headmaster said, "We have this great club, the kids make rockets, racing cars etc. and the boys always think that's cool. And then we also have a sewing club, and the girls are well accommodated there". Who says that nowadays?” (SQA\_Int\_59)

In the former, there is generally a higher representation of women, as well as a lower horizontal segregation due to the history of working women (She Figures).<sup>8</sup> As there are even more women than men in higher education in Bulgaria, the interviewees often spoke of a “feminization” (SQA\_Int\_66) of the education system and academia. However, leadership positions are still dominated by men. This development can be attributed to the flexible working hours, slow career progress and low salaries in the public sector. This combines with the overall impression from the interviews that a modified "male breadwinner" family model combined with work-life balance problems is still prevalent for women in Bulgaria. The manifestation of gender stereotypes can play a role in this context as well (here on Lithuania):

“The situation of a female scientist is the manifestation of such stereotypes. It assumes a role of a support staff.” (Žalėnienė 2013, p. 290)

Thus, these statistics on the overall representation of women in academia do not mean that there are no gender issues, but rather that these issues present themselves differently.

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<sup>8</sup> More detailed information on horizontal and vertical segregation in the SPEAR activities can be found in the chapter Status Quo: Statistics.





## 5 GENDER EQUALITY STATUS QUO

### 5.1 Central Objectives

Central objectives of the analysed universities can be distinguished based on whether they focus on equal opportunities, gender equality or diversity approaches. While the majority of universities analysed use more or less an equal opportunities or diversity oriented approach, under which GE is sometimes grouped, a few universities are more committed towards a dedicated gender equality strategy. In contrast to that the Bulgarian universities have no explicit GE related objectives in place, and focus more on general non-harassment, non-discrimination policies and work life balance issues.

### 5.2 Central Fields of Action (incl. Measures)

Based on the status quo assessment tool we have compared the gender equality policy priorities of each SPEAR university. For the status quo assessment each university provided an overview of their currently implemented gender equality policies in 5 policy areas: structural integration of GE and policies, (2) flexibility, time and work life, (3) presence and visibility, (4) gender-inclusive organisational culture and (5) gender dimension in research and education. The results are depicted in the following graph:

Figure 1 : Central fields of actions (number of measures)

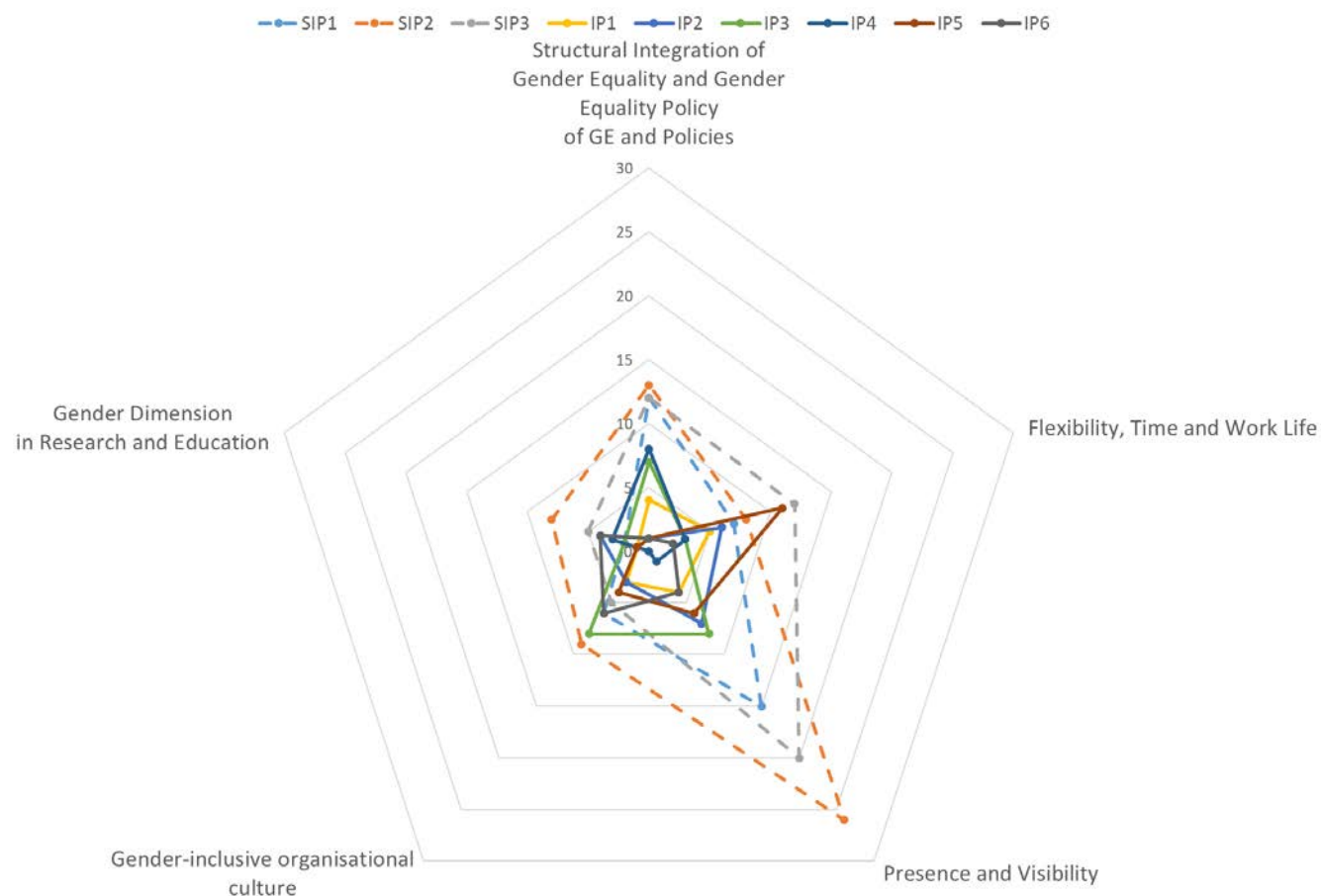


Figure 1 shows very clearly on the one hand that the so-called SIPs have a GE policy mix that is composed of a more complex and diversified set of measures than the so-called IPs. On the other hand the graph also makes evident that all SPEAR universities have already established some form of GE policies and measures and have

specific priorities which are reflected in the number of measures that they have implemented in the 5 policy areas. Therefore, IPs are not a homogeneous group, but have quite distinct patterns of policy priorities and related experiences with implementation processes. For instance, IP5 has a strong focus on policies which promote work life balance and childcare whereas IP3 concentrates its activities at the moment more on policies to promote a gender-inclusive organisational culture and to increase the presence and visibility of women researchers.

A main difference between the SIPs and IPs can be found in the structural integration of GE and related policies. SIPs have a more advanced policy set in this area than all other IPs – although some IPs have developed some measures to integrate GE in their organisational structures and policies. Interestingly, all the SIPs have a very strong focus on policies and measures to increase the representation and the visibility of women in their organisation: these measures are centred on recruitment, retention, promotion and increasing visibility of women. Therefore, they aim to increase the number of women among researchers, to keep them in the career pipeline and support their career advancement. This strong focus on recruitment, retention and promotion might be related to specific policy objectives defined by national R&I frameworks but also reflect that in the Danish, Swedish and German national innovation system the share of women in R&I is considerably lower than for example in the Bulgarian, Lithuanian or Croatian innovation system. In the countries with a high share of female researchers a strong focus on recruitment, retention and promotion of female researchers might not make the same sense as for the Danish, Swedish and German context.

The GE policy fields with the least number of implemented measures in SIPs as well as IPs are gender dimension in research and education and gender-inclusive organisational culture. In both policy fields, also SIPs report a lower number of measures compared to other fields. It seems that these fields need more attention on the policy and implementation level.

The five policy areas that we have used to assess the status quo of policy implementation in each SPEAR university do not exactly mirror the three ERA objectives: more women in R&D, more women in leadership positions, integration of the gender dimension in research content and curricula. Some policy fields address more than one ERA objective for example promoting a gender-inclusive organisational culture could introduce measures that are central to achieving objective 1 and 2 whereas the structural integration of GE and related policies is an important prerequisite for all 3 ERA objectives. Comparing the number of measures per policy field it was already indicated that the policy field “Gender Dimension in Research and Education” – which overlaps significantly with the third ERA objective - has a lower number of measures compared to the other GE policy fields that are more related to the first and second ERA objective on gender equality in R&D.



### 5.3 Structures & Internal Stakeholders

First, as already mentioned in the chapter above the integration of GE and related policies into organisational structures differs quite significantly between the SPEAR universities. While the IPs will develop their first GEP in the SPEAR project, the SIPs already have one in place. Most of the IPs (with one exception) lack in formal and structural anchoring of GE, which is also reflected in rather unclear responsibilities when it comes to implementation of GE. In most cases GE is not embedded in the responsibilities of the rectorate and therefore lacks a top down support. In these cases, GE is often not an important policy objective or was only introduced into the organisation quite recently. GE is mostly part of organisational units that also deal with other issues like EO in general or ethics. Additionally, these universities often have work-life-balance policies implemented that are coordinated by a specific unit, but not necessarily under the umbrella of GE. At those universities, GE related knowledge is almost exclusively held at the disciplinary level of social sciences or humanities faculties, which deal with gender from a scientific/research perspective. These centres for gender studies provide knowledge and support for SPEAR and could be the nucleus for a more formalized GE structure in these universities. To what extent the translation of this knowledge incorporates really into the rest of the university or into the GE related organisational activities remains largely unclear.

In the cases of the SIPs, the integration of GE into organisational structures is highly formalized and very complex structures have been established that define clear responsibilities to promote GE on the one hand and, on the other hand, allow for the penetration of the different organisational units of the universities. This is particularly relevant given that the high autonomy of faculties in individual universities often hinders the central implementation of GE policies and measures. Therefore, these universities often apply a combination of a top-down and a bottom-up approach whereas the latter means that faculties are asked to define their own targets and measures and have their own GE structures which interact with the central GE units. Some universities for example have a central GE coordination position (e.g. a GE Board or GE Office) as well as GE teams/officers on a faculty level. These formalized and explicitly specialized GE/diversity offices are in some cases again supported by additional units that foster GE/EO on a central level (e.g. Diversity Office, EO Advisory Board). For example, in one SPEAR university, in addition to the gender equality office, there is, a gender advisory board that assists with recommendations and expert knowledge from an outside perspective. The role of the **HR department** is crucial to not only understand how professional GE measures and related activities are organised but further reflects on the status of GE within the organization. Namely, it seems as if the more professionalized (e.g. included in HR tasks, clear responsibilities) the focus on GE is organised, the higher the awareness and acceptance of GE within the organisation.

In addition to GE infrastructure, the implementation of GE policies and measures also depends on the coordination and collaboration with internal stakeholders. The **internal stakeholders** are all entities and actors that are connected in various ways to GE work and implementation; i.e. these are not only the stakeholders responsible for or supporting implementation, but also those who indirectly influence it or are affected by its work.

In all the SPEAR universities, the **university management** was described as a key player when it comes to GE work; either because GE is part of their strategic responsibilities or because their decisions affect the GE work e.g. when deciding on budgets. GE often seems to fall into the area of responsibility of Vice-Rectors or a particularly high personal commitment was observed among the respective Vice-Rector(s). Generally, the managements of most of the SPEAR universities are perceived as supportive or highly committed which is an asset to the GE implementation. However, in one case, interviewees were not always sure if this extends to all topics relevant to promote GE or only to certain topics like reconciliation of family/work. There are two cases in which people from



the top management are in the SPEAR team and thereby actively drive and support the implementation of the SPEAR project.

Some universities seem to be highly decentralised in the sense that the **central management** (e.g. Rectorate) cannot decide over the GEP without the consent of the faculties. The governance structure of the universities has an influence on the extent of implementation of GE activities and the approach each SPEAR team uses. In some cases a participatory approach is applied to engage the different stakeholders and especially the decentralized units.

There are various ways how the **Human Resources (HR)/personnel department** can be connected to GE work. Most of the HR departments that deal with recruitment / promotion procedures, job descriptions, personnel strategies and/or employee trainings do not consider GE in these activities. Consequently, in most cases the HR department and its activities are not linked to an overall GE focus or strategy. Nevertheless in a few cases GE units or departments are located in HR or supported by HR. In both scenarios, it seems that HR provides the framework in which GE actors can act even if HR does not directly work on the issue of GE. Another scenario is that the HR department is predominantly concerned with the administrative tasks of HR work, such as the collection of HR data, or is not mentioned as a relevant stakeholder at all. According to the status quo assessment, the latter seems to be more prominent in the SPEAR consortium – especially with the IPs.

Most of the SPEAR universities reported in their interviews of **faculties/departments or individual researchers** that work scientifically on the topic of gender (e.g. other H2020 projects) or on topics that can be useful for GE work (e.g. pedagogical units to promote gender in teaching). This gender expertise can be either concentrated in specific professorships or distributed across many different departments of the university. Concretely, these areas can contribute to the GE work by raising awareness amongst researchers and students (e.g. in courses), as well as providing knowledge to the operational GE units.

Apart from gender knowledge, the willingness and motivation to work practically with GE made some departments or faculties relevant as stakeholders, e.g. some departments declared themselves ready to serve as case studies or as allies in the implementation phase. This concerned not only academic units like faculties or research departments, but also central units like the PR/marketing department or the library.

Ethic Committees (on the central and local level) were also mentioned as relevant stakeholders as these deal with ethical issues (e.g. scientific misconduct or general non-discrimination clauses.). GE is sometimes interpreted as one of these issues even if there is not always an explicit connection.

**Staff** is in general a crucial stakeholder as on the one hand, they are the main target group of GE activities, but on the other hand can work as allies or sources of resistance that shape the culture of the organisation. Especially executives (e.g. head of departments, faculties) were considered crucial for the implementation of GE. In one university in a post-communist country, also young researchers who studied abroad are described as supporters as they are perceived as more open minded and less influenced by contemporary discourses about gender equality in these countries. **Staff representation bodies** like unions or work councils were highlighted at three universities. These bodies work in the interest of the employees and support them regarding working conditions (e.g. stress, health, pay), which are important topics for GE work. At one university, they are also part of some personnel decisions (e.g. recruiting). In one university, they have additionally established a kindergarten to help with the reconciliation of work/family. Therefore, they can be important allies in the development and implementation of GEPs.

Most of the interviewees did not highlight the role of **students** in the GE work. This might be attributed to the focus of the individual university e.g. if one focuses on academic staff, then students are not part of the scope. If students were mentioned, they often were seen as target groups that are included in the GEP (development) or addressed by GE activities. At the three oldest universities, student representative groups are mentioned or already actively involved in the GE work at the university. Thus, it seems that the long existence and their culture favoured the establishment of student representation structures.

## 5.4 Statistics

All of the analysed universities are characterized by a leaky pipeline phenomenon. While women are clearly the majority at the lower employment grades (scientific employees) they are underrepresented at the highest hierarchy levels of professorships. It can be stated for all universities that provided data for the reports that the higher the career level the lower the share of women. Besides this evident vertical segregation, a horizontal segregation is observed for most of the universities, with a higher or equal share of women in social sciences, humanities and medicine and on average a lower share of women in natural science disciplines and technical disciplines.

Taking a closer look at the ratio between male and female professors at the discipline/faculty level, it can be stated that even in disciplines that are characterized by a higher proportion of female employees, men still predominantly occupy top positions even though they represent the minority in the field. All faculties of all universities presented a smaller share of women at the professorial level than at the overall faculty. The opposite scenario, where women are overrepresented at top positions in disciplines where they clearly are the minority only occurred at one (technical) university in the field of Humanities.

Besides the described similarities or common features among all the universities, differences were observed, regarding where the so-called “leak” of the pipeline occurred. The “breaking point” of the pipeline also differs in terms of disciplines. In that matter, differences additionally occur especially on a country level: In analysed post-communist countries, the break appeared at a later career level (usually after grade B) while in the rest of the countries (social democratic/conservative) the number of women decreased at an early career level (usually after grade D).

In Bulgaria for example, the interviewees often described this phenomena as a so-called *feminisation of academia*. Most of the interviewed staff portrayed this as a problem, since the wages at universities are below the average wages in the private sector, which is reported to be dominated by men. This *feminisation of academia* is in this sense not understood as something positive but rather as a devaluation of the public academic and educational sector that makes it less attractive for men to work there. Nevertheless, the impression of a devaluation of the universities and the academic system might as well be caused by or related to the above-mentioned tendencies of the new public management approach and its related resource constraints. Most of the interviewees explained this overrepresentation of women in academia with the possibility of flexible working hours at most of the universities, considering that in most of the analysed post-communist countries, women face a double burden, bearing most of the care responsibilities while working full-time.



## 5.5 Culture

The working culture of almost all SPEAR Universities can be described as male gendered in the sense that it reflects the stereotype of an ideal and historically often male researcher and values male connoted traits and areas more highly than female connoted ones, e.g. research more highly than teaching. Especially in the SIP universities the stereotype of the always working and highly competitive researcher is quite common and reproduced in a working atmosphere that was often described as stressful and high pressured with relatively low solidarity among colleagues, which eventually culminates in an **individualized working culture**. Especially in post-communist countries as well as in Germany and Denmark, the dominant working cultures at the analysed universities are often characterized by a high **trust in meritocracy** and a **strong belief in hierarchical structures**. These values of competitiveness, hierarchies and notions of a life-fulfilling vocation are still more associated with the male gender and male biography and reproduced in socialisation and stereotypes. Even in universities where women are in the majority of academic staff (Bulgaria, Lithuania) the university working culture is often still characterised by these still rather male connoted values in the sense that is highly competitive and hierarchical organised.

This **highly competitive culture** in most of the analysed universities is often determined by quantifiable indicators for assessing research quality and excellence (like publications, grants, awards). In order to keep long term positions researchers have to be better and outperform their colleagues. With regard to filling positions with the most suitable candidate, there is wide spread rejection or at least **scepticism towards quota** regulations at almost all universities<sup>9</sup>. This became evident in male dominated fields especially when it came to hiring professors. Since positions for professorships are usually limited, applications are even more competitive. In almost all countries, most of the average university staff is convinced that their hiring process is transparent, solely based on objective criteria and merit and that only the best and most excellent candidate is selected for the position.

All of this factors above are considered hindering the **balance of work and private sphere**. Since women still tend to do more care work in all of the SPEAR countries, this mostly affects female academic staff. However, **reconciliation** of work and private life was addressed differently at the analysed universities. The observation that this topic was hardly addressed in the two Nordic countries Denmark and Sweden may have to do with the fact that childcare facilities are provided on a large scale by the state and therefore institutionalized. In contrast to that, in Germany, the challenge of reconciling family and academic work was quite often mentioned critically in the interviews while in most of all post-communist countries this was not considered an issue in relation to GE or in general. At the Bulgarian universities for example, the organization of childcare is considered an individual task for mothers or families and is often placed within the family context. Therefore (publicly funded) childcare is not frequently used or provided by the university but instead organized informally - by the family. Unlike in Germany, where it was often stated that the state or local authorities do not provide sufficient childcare, the university is more committed to providing childcare for its staff to make up the deficit.

Many analysed universities showed resistances towards **top-down approaches** in regards to GE measures and activities. The Swedish and Danish universities are characterized by a strong orientation towards the autonomy of faculties and departments and consequently by a disapproval of **centralization** of GE work. According to that the working culture varies at the different faculties and fields. While on the one hand a high awareness of GE and willingness to improve was reported in Sweden and Denmark, on the other hand, some interviewees felt that GE is

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<sup>9</sup> This was not a topic in Sweden since quotas are against the law there.



already achieved and that enough has already been done. Therefore, they often do not consider it necessary or see the necessity to follow the rules or act upon GE measures implemented by central units.

The impression that GE has already been achieved was also reported in Bulgaria, however, in contrast to Sweden and Denmark the awareness towards GE proved to be on a relative low level as there is hardly any discourse on GE and traditional gender roles are widespread. This was also the case in Lithuania where similar to Bulgaria the focus of policy implementation is rather on harassment issues and discrimination as such than on GE or EO.



## 6 RELEVANT EXPERIENCES WITH GE IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter describes on the one hand the experiences that the S/IPs have made in their GE work history – the positive, as well as the negative. On the other hand, it lists aspects that may present a challenge or a potential for the future GE work.

### 6.1 Strengths & Potentials

As the points that were raised in the interviews and categorized as strengths and potentials in the reports vary from university to university and country to country, these are not analysed with SIP/IP or country cluster categories for the whole chapter, but only where it seemed adequate. Instead these points were grouped into the following topics: support and cooperation within the university, features of the organisational structure, GE approach and specific measures, awareness and culture as well as synergy effects or effects from outside the university (e.g. national context).

The most frequently stressed factor when it comes to the potential of GE work was the **(financial) organisational support and cooperation**. Financial funding was particularly relevant in terms of personnel resources, e.g. the possibility to finance a unit that is dedicated towards GE/EO/diversity and enabling the professionalization of GE actors - meaning not having to do the GE work in addition to their daily tasks.

**Organisational support** was emphasised in particular with regard to the management level. Leadership support has proved fruitful for GE activities in many of the SPEAR universities. At the same time, collaboration between different types of organisational stakeholders working on similar issues was stressed, enabling stakeholders to join forces (e.g. collaboration of people who deal with working environment with the finance department and PR, but also the collaboration with student representative organisations). Furthermore, the **distribution of gender sensitivity and knowledge across different parts of the university** was noted as a strength as it enriches the GE work with different perspectives, an overview on issues, as well as internal network connections. These **internal network connections** are already a successful outcome in itself, but hold high potential for future GE work:

“Our idea was to create a supportive environment at the university to change stereotypes and the attitudes of people towards gender equality, and I think that now we have this supportive environment at the university. And probably this is the main outcome. A lot of people involved, a lot of people not being gender-blind but open-minded, a lot of people interested in the topic, supportive.” (SQA\_Int\_41)

In addition, raising awareness, especially via **personal meetings** has the potential to open up new cooperation which can enable the GE actors to reach more parts of the university, e.g. faculties that were not interested in the topic before. Generally, a **high awareness of gender issues** and **strong (gender) expertise of GE actors** were pointed out as clear strengths. However, gender equality work is in some organisations mainly seen beneficial for women’s issues only and therefore appreciated mainly by women.

In the SIPs, the **highly elaborated GE structures** were considered a strength with enormous potential. They provide a basis on which future GE work can be built (e.g. knowledge on issues, institutionalised processes, instruments and strategies/plans), as well as a network of many supportive GE actors, often on different levels inside the organisation.





In general, a broad **GE approach** that covers a wide range of fields of actions, and targets **both the structural and the individual level** has the potential for sustainable change. Focusing on one issue (e.g. work/family balance) can lead to great progress in this area, but also risks marginalising other issues. When looking at different approaches a **mix of top-down and bottom-up** seems to be the one with the most potential as too much top-down might not reach all parts of the university or can even lead to resistance, while bottom up-only engagement might not be as effective for larger parts of the university.

**Empirical evidence** from the respective organisation seems to have enormous potential for stakeholder engagement in GE work:

“It's really crucial to map out what's going on and then interpret those numbers for them. I mean, that's another essential part of it, right? That the numbers don't tell the stories themselves, but if you can help [...] pretty much anybody to understand the numbers, then you're already like halfway there. Because that is going to illuminate essentially what's going on.” (SQA\_Int\_56)

Many interviewees highlighted **certain programmes or measures** as working particularly well and thus as a strength of the organisation. At UU, for example, they attract female engineering students with innovative engineering programs and with their image of not being a specialised technical school. At RWTH, they reported that they were able to raise the number of women in the closer selection of professorships by applying proactive recruitment measures. At UNIRI, flexible working arrangements make the reconciliation of work/family easier, especially for women. In addition, the participation in the SPEAR project with data collection, PR measures (e.g. website) and analysis of the issues in relation to awareness raising in the organisation was positively emphasised.

In some interviews, the **synergy effects** from other measures/programmes, as well as the **effects from the national context** were observed as a strength. The legislation can provide a solid framework for GE work (e.g. mentioned in Sweden and Germany). Especially, if there are more concrete regulations that target GE directly or the working conditions. For example, it was mentioned as a strength if the legislation requires companies/public entities of a certain size to introduce GE policy documents, data collection or GEPs as this has a structural effect and puts GE work on a solid basis – also for negotiations with internal stakeholders. For RWTH, for example, one enormous strength is the elaborate legislation by the federal state on gender equality in RTDI, as well as the national research landscape, which opens up to gender via gender criteria in funding programmes (e.g. Excellence Initiative) and a focus on gender equality in the German Research Association (DFG), which implemented research-oriented gender equality standards for all of their 97 member organisations. Particularly the former enables access to financial resources that would otherwise not be available, but also raises awareness among people that are involved in the selection procedure:

“But some people have actually only realized through these processes, that these proposals are written, these inspections are prepared and carried out, that this is really an issue and that they really have to deal with it. That at least on that day they must know exactly what they are saying, but also take it with them. Of course, there is the whole range of those who just say it, but there are also many who really take it as a push.” (SQA\_Int\_58)

Other already established organisational measures or gender-related research (e.g. H2020 projects) can also create positive synergy effects. The former can be fruitful when stakeholders that are involved in one organisational activity can be involved in the GEP process as well. An example for this is the parallel development of a university or HR strategy which could be aligned with the GEP development. The exchange within the SPEAR project with the other S/IPs (e.g. in the CoL and CoP sessions) was also described as inspiring and helpful for their GE work.



This will be further investigated in the interim evaluation. The latter is stated to create progress on the organisational work environment and culture (e.g. through knowledge and evidence), but also vice versa improving the scientific advancement (e.g. provide new ideas for research topics): “It's a double benefit“ (SQA\_Int\_39)

## 6.2 Weaknesses & Challenges

The content on weaknesses and challenges seems to vary between SIPs and IPs as these organisations are in different stages of GE work (implementation). Therefore, in the following, we first describe the weaknesses and challenges that were predominantly present in the IPs, then the dominant topics of the SIPs, followed by the topics that were brought up from interview partners on both sides.

One weakness/challenge that united many IPs was, firstly, a **low level of gender awareness** either generally or in some important parts of the university (e.g. management). In many cases, the knowledge is unevenly distributed across the faculties, with a tendency to more knowledge in the social sciences and humanities and less awareness in male-dominated fields (natural sciences, engineering). Often GE is perceived as either only about equal representation, as a women's issue or as unnecessary because gender inequality is not recognised. The latter is especially the case in areas where female researchers outnumber their male colleagues. So, it is a challenge to raise awareness and find allies for GE work, as well as to keep them motivated and involved in the SPEAR project. If there is also little awareness in other universities of the respective country, national networking on gender issues becomes a challenge. The stakeholder involvement is also often connected to the **organisational structure**; that is, depending on the structure, the number and type of stakeholders that need to be engaged varies. This **structure and stakeholder involvement** can, thus, represent a challenge when designing and implementing GE structures. It was reported that hierarchical and/or heterogeneous, decentralised structures require more effort to develop a GEP as one needs to get everyone on board. A third common point was the **data management** on GE / gender statistics. Many IPs have some sex-disaggregated data available but often not collected in a systematic and comparable manner, and don't have standardised processes or tools in place. Therefore, it will be a challenge to decide for a targeted gender statistics approach and implement the data collection and analysis processes with the necessary stakeholders in the university. Fourthly, **limited (personnel) resources** in general, but particularly for GE work are a weakness that influences the scope of the activities.

The weaknesses and challenges that were addressed most frequently in the SIP interviews were, firstly, the question of how to **translate activities from the central to the faculty and department level**, as well as **from theory into daily practice**. Also with elaborate GE structures, it appears as a challenge to reach entities like individual departments or teams via activities and to establish a gender sensitive culture in daily organisational life. It seems that a decentralized university governance structure, as well as a highly stressful, time-consuming working culture makes it even more challenging to motivate people to deal with GE. Thus, many universities experience varying levels of awareness and implementation motivation across different areas of the university. Secondly, the SIPs have already a certain strategy, approach and activities in place, which are reflected and also sometimes challenged by different actors with different views within the university. So, there might be actors that call for the inclusion of additional target groups (e.g. administrative staff), other topics or would prefer a diversity/EO approach over a GE approach. As the SIPs already have a structure that has evolved over time, naturally, there are many stakeholders and units involved in GE work. This is a great advantage, but can also be challenging when it comes to **coordinating with the different actors and their approaches** and developing a coherent direction for the university's overall GE work, as well as **keeping an overview of a complex structure**. Thirdly, some interview



partners of the SIPs pointed out that the concrete effects of GE activities are often not measurable or that there is no **impact assessment** in place, so GE actors are not able to assess what works well, what does not work well and lack information to back up claims in negotiations with stakeholders.

For both SIPs and IPs, the **decision for a GE/EO/diversity approach and for the topics and activities to focus on** is a continuous challenge as this is dependent on various factors like national context, stakeholders etc. which can change over time. For some, the GE approach is currently not an option, as gender has negative connotations in public discourse, while for others it is important to explicitly include the concept of gender, as the preoccupation with diversity/EO may leave little attention for gender issues. This is further complicated by a traditional gendered division of labour of varying degrees in many SPEAR countries. All this can limit the scope of action and seems to increase the efforts of GE actors; i.e. they need to carefully anticipate what might cause resistance and sensitize stakeholders. Therefore, prioritising topics and defining the concrete steps is challenging as there are no clear right or wrong answers and potential pitfalls. **Making GE structures sustainable** was also perceived as a challenge; especially in the light of university elections and (EU) projects with an end date and thus limited resources. Also, through a change in personnel, allies might get lost and gender-awareness and budgets have to be built up from the start which can hinder a coherent and continuous work on GE. Therefore, it is crucial to implement structures and gain commitment that will last.

One piece of this puzzle is the **structure of wages and promotions**. Interviewees from almost all SPEAR universities reported of non-transparent structures and/or a potential gender pay gap which often has not been analysed or not analysed in detail. **Unequal representation of male and female staff members** (horizontal and vertical segregation) is also an issue in many SPEAR universities. Hereby, most universities orientate their GE work towards the recruitment of more women for STEM and leadership positions across all disciplines. However, this is not the case in all SPEAR countries. In Bulgaria, for example, there are more female than male dominated areas, which presents a different starting situation than in most Northern and Central European countries. It might present a challenge to take this into account when developing the orientation of the GE work. **Making men allies** is also a common challenge as many men seem to have the impression that GE is a women's issue or do not see the relevance (for them personally). Having more men on board might increase the chances of changing daily practices and working culture, as well as possibly reduce the risk of resistances.

### 6.3 Resistances

When it comes to resistances, it was either addressed which form these resistances take, from whom these resistances come from, as well as the context in which they occur.

In the SPEAR universities, two **different forms of resistance** were observed: open and active resistance, as well as passive and covert resistance. Open, active resistance against GE activities was rarely experienced by the interview partners. However, in one university, the GE actors directly received complaints about certain measures or executives actively worked against fathers taking leave by not providing them with the necessary framework (e.g. having to perform at the same level as employees who were not on leave) or directly imposing career consequences on these fathers. The impression was that direct complaints to GE actors have increased; partly due to the negative connotation of gender in the media. In Bulgaria, GE actors are confronted with a situation where gender is used **“like a dirty word”** (SQA\_Int\_71), which makes the use of the term practically impossible without anticipating resistances.



More often than open resistance, hidden or passive resistance was reported. At some of the universities where no open resistance was reported (mostly located in Scandinavian or post-communist countries), the term gender or gender mainstreaming evokes negative associations in the (public) perception, as the following interview extract illustrates:

“The biggest problem is this sort of... it is never an open statement, but if you say you're doing gender then it's always like there's some sort of frivolity in it or something that everybody already knows of what there is to think about.” (SQA\_Int\_32)

Generally, the interview partners from some of these universities report that their university is more open-minded and gender friendly than the rest of society; which makes GE work a little bit easier than in other organisations in the same country.

The interview partners also put the resistance in **context**: Often the resistances can come out of a place of unawareness of gender issues (e.g. because of a high representation of women), can result from feelings of neglect or of perceived unjust favouritism toward women or from the incorporation of traditional/sexist gender views (e.g. women shouldn't be in top positions), so people don't see the need for GE activities (anymore). This can lead to a lack of support or resistance to particular types of interventions, e.g. interventions with a top-down approach. Another example would be superiors who see no need for their personal development and are therefore generally averse to training interventions; thus are perceived to likely express resistance to gender-sensitive coaching methods or training on gender bias.

In only one university, women were stated as a **source of resistance** in relation to quota regulations because they fear being treated differently and to be perceived as less excellent or qualified:

„Also some women might see it as a threat to their perceived competence. If we accept this narrative that women who received their places [thanks] to quotas are not as competent as men.” (SQA\_Int\_77)

In the other universities, it was noted that more men than women express resistance. When resistance by men was mentioned, it was related in particular to men that feel discriminated against (e.g. by women-only measures). Some also feel threatened by the thought that they may have to make personal sacrifices, e.g. by giving up opportunities such as a promotion due to GE measures like active recruitment/quotas, or by giving up parts of their research time and related resources to female colleagues. So, measures aimed at a gender-equal distribution of financial resources can also be perceived as threatening by men:

"Talk about ideas, behaviour and the more soft values, that's OK, but don't touch the money" (SQA\_Int\_25)

The reaction of men who feel discriminated against or threatened was mainly mentioned in the SIPs that already have an elaborate GE work. Thus, it can be assumed that this source of resistance begins to grow with the expansion of GE work if the awareness of GE work does not reach the whole university.

When looking more closely where the resistances mostly come from, it can be seen that they can often be attributed or anticipated in **specific parts of the university**.

In one university, resistance only came from the (male-dominated) academic side (both employees and students), not from administration where more women are employed. In many cases, specific faculties are described as conservative and therefore less responsive to GE or as resistant because they think that their field is gender-neutral or because they deal with similar topics (e.g. power dynamics) in their research and consider themselves as experts.



In the leadership, resistance seems to be rather against certain actions or the orientation of the gender equality work. One example would be the fear of “over-bureaucratization” (SQA\_Int\_57) through a GEP and the question of whether the central units are able to recognize and take into account the specific needs of each faculty and department. Especially in relation to obligatory activities coming from the central units, interviewees expected resistance if people get the impression “that somebody is going to come and tell them how they should do their work.” (SQA\_Int\_09). It also seems to be a problem to set the wheels of change in motion, as people are mostly not actively against it, but also do not put much effort into it; some do not see a need for action beyond the written commitment to equal treatment of women and men. In the interviews, they identified the risk that if a strategic document such as a GEP remains only a statement, stakeholders may not see the need for more proactive efforts.

The smaller forms of resistances are sometimes not seen as a problem as they can be overcome:

“There might be some debates ... but in general no I don’t think so [...] No maybe they can make a joke or something (laughing), but not that they would protest. No, definitely not, the culture is changing.” (SQA\_Int\_18)

In sum, it seems that based on the experiences of the interviewees, resistance is perceived more as a male issue. Whereas resistance uttered by female colleagues is not in the focus of attention. In addition, resistance tends to arise from unawareness, from the feeling of being threatened by the activities or, in the case of women, from the risk that they might be treated differently because of certain GE activities. We were not able to identify strategies to deal with resistances in the status quo assessment but will focus on this topic in the upcoming interim and final evaluation.



## 7 CONCLUSION

This report presented the findings of the Status Quo Assessments in the nine SPEAR universities in a summative and comparative way in order to provide an overview on the similarities and differences across the different countries and organisations. In this chapter, we will give a short description of the main aspects of this overview and how these aspects can be linked to GE implementation in universities.

All in all, it can be said that the international and national context of the research landscape, the political and legal situation, as well as the gender regimes provide **framework conditions** in which the GE work of each university takes place. Firstly, it became evident, that the EU plays a crucial role in shaping the context in which the universities and their GE workers operate. This influence is exerted on three levels; (1) on the national legislation and policies of the member states as a basis for all GE work (e.g. anti-discrimination), (2) on the research and organisational development work conducted in the universities via funding programmes (e.g. structural change projects, gender dimension in research) and lastly, (3) on the perspective of university stakeholders, as EU projects can foster exchange between gender agents and help raise awareness and legitimize the topic with other stakeholders. These three levels seem to be present in most of the interviewees' perspectives, even though, in countries, where GE is of high priority in the national governance (e.g. Sweden), the first level was not mentioned as much. Concerning the third level, in all SPEAR universities, it was positively stressed that structural change projects like SPEAR enable fruitful learning between universities as they provide valuable resources for GE work and therefore increase the scope of action. When looking at the different (national) contexts and status quos/starting points in the nine SPEAR universities, however it remains unclear if the EU sufficiently considers these differences enough. The interviews suggested a (narrow) focus on Northern/Central European academia and related experiences which are reflected for example in the ERA goal 1, which does not apply in many Eastern European countries that see a feminization of academia. Another example is the focus on gender mainstreaming which makes it rather difficult to gain a broader acceptance for GE in those countries where the term "gender" is highly negatively connoted. In these countries it seems to be much harder for GE actors to implement EU requirements or project specifications, as it requires more persuasion and argumentation to convince stakeholders to implement GE.

Apart from the EU-context, several challenges seem to arise from the competitive logic of academia fuelled by the new public management. Researcher report that they have to compete internationally for publications and funding through mostly quantitative performance indicators which increases the pressure on all the individual researchers. Furthermore, it disadvantages researchers from less prestigious and resourceful universities, as well as researchers with care responsibilities (i.e. mostly women) and lower mobility. Therefore, this competitive system solidifies or even reinforces existing inequalities between individuals but also between organisations or R&I systems – especially in environments in which gender inequality and unequal distribution of care work is strongly institutionalised and hardly questioned. Regarding the provision of childcare, the SPEAR countries roughly divided into three groups. The Scandinavian group, in which childcare is provided publicly and was not addressed as an issue in the interviews (apart from night shifts). Then there is the group in which childcare is also seen as a public responsibility, but where it was rated as insufficient and not supportive enough for researchers with (small) children – especially mothers (e.g. Germany). The last group features mostly post-communist countries, where the reconciliation of work and family is described as an open issue for women. Here, public childcare was not criticized in the interviews, but was rather mainly regarded as the parents' (especially the mother`s) or extended family's (private and individual) responsibility. The flexible working hours in the academic field is understood as making it easier for women to shoulder both the professional and the private responsibilities. This could explain the feminization of academia in these countries that was emphasized in the interviews. For the universities' GE work



of both groups, it is a challenge if there is a shortcoming in public childcare or if there is a focus on informal childcare. As in all (SPEAR) countries women still tend to take on more of the care responsibilities, this affects mostly female academics. On the one hand flexible working arrangements can help to organise both care and professional responsibilities. On the other hand as women are still more often faced with a double burden, flexible working arrangements can disguise this instance by shifting the responsibilities from a structural level (public organisation of care) to an individual task (of women). This is especially the case when the only purpose of flexible working hours is to compensate for the lack of (public or institutionalized) childcare facilities. Therefore flexible working hours are a good start, but it does not lift the weight of the women's shoulders.

In respect to the status quo of GE at the nine SPEAR universities we have noted that the central GE objectives are varying across the universities: Some chose a dedicated GE approach, but the majority includes further aspects beyond gender such as an equal opportunities or diversity approach. From the IPs, there are also universities that so far have not decided on an explicit approach. The distribution of measures and policies along the five policy areas (Structural Integration of GE and Policies; Flexibility, Time and Work Life; Presence and Visibility; Gender-inclusive Organizational Culture; Gender Dimension in Research and Education) shows that all the SPEAR universities have established at least rudimentary GE policies and measures according to their specific priorities. While the SIPs present a more diversified palette of policies and more measures that target the structural integration and the presence and visibility of female researchers, the IPs' policies seem to be oriented along university specific priorities; consequently show a heterogeneous picture regarding their focus and policies. Comparing the distribution to the ERA goals<sup>10</sup>, it is apparent that the ERA goal 3 on gender dimension in research and teaching is the one with the least action, while policies that target ERA goal 1 or 2 (e.g. Flexibility, Time and Work Life) are quantitatively represented more strongly. However, one has to keep in mind that some policy areas target more than one goal (e.g. gender-inclusive organizational culture), while structural integration of GE is a prerequisite for all three alike. Yet, it has to be said that the number of policies does not equal the impact as one thorough structural measure might have a stronger effect than several smaller policies.

As to be expected, the SIPs have already established elaborate structures and clear responsibilities of GE work and integrated GE into organizational structures. They mostly use a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches, using central units that coordinate strategically (e.g. GE teams/offices/boards) and faculty units (e.g. faculty GE board, faculty GE officer) that spread messages from the central units to the different parts of the organization and communicate faculty-specific gender issues back. Some of these central GE units are part of the HR department, while others are mainly subordinate to the rectorate. The challenge of locating GE offices in the frame of HR departments is that all GE problems might be seen through the HR lens and therefore some issues like gender in research and teaching are simply not in the focus of attention or cannot be discussed in committees dedicated to HR issues.

Until the status quo assessment, the IPs lacked formalized GE structures with clear responsibilities, as for many GE has not been a major priority or has only recently been introduced. In many of the IPs, GE is located in units that deal with ethics or EO in general; thus, provide organizational measures such as flexible working arrangements that benefit GE, but are not explicitly labelled as such. Gender knowledge is also often located at the disciplinary level of social science or humanities faculties/research centres that deal scientifically with gender. These units provide support and knowledge to the GE work, but it remains mostly unclear how this will be transferred to the

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<sup>10</sup> The ERA (European Research Area) goals are: (1) More women in R&D, (2) more women in leadership positions, (3) integration of the gender dimension in research content and curricula.



rest of the university or translated into organizational GE activities. The IPs mostly cannot refer to a strong national GE framework that legitimizes their efforts to promote gender equality. Rather, they are often/sometimes confronted with societal conditions that are detrimental and counterproductive as GE is not a policy priority or even negatively connoted. Therefore, it appears to be even more important to build up collaborations and alliances with stakeholders within the university. The gender studies research groups or centres at these universities could be the core around which such collaborations could be established and formalized.

Having a look at the statistics, it also became evident that horizontal segregation is an issue in all the SPEAR universities to some extent; with a higher or equal share of women in social sciences, humanities and medicine and on average a lower share of women in natural science disciplines and technical disciplines. Similarly, vertical segregation was also observed in all analyzed SPEAR universities, but to a varying degree. Overall, it can be stated that even in disciplines with a high share of women, the top positions are predominantly occupied by men. When comparing the universities and their “leaky pipelines”, it can be observed that the “breaking point” or “leak” is at different stages. In analysed post-communist countries, the break appeared at a later career level (usually after grade B) while in the rest of the countries (social democratic/conservative) the number of women decreased at an early career level (usually after grade D). This “later break” could be explained on the one hand with the general higher share of women in academia (i.e. feminization of academia – the pool for recruitment is female dominated) in these countries, on the other hand due to a full-time working culture of women, flexible working hours, higher salaries outside of academia that seem to attract more men and a lower prestige of academia as a working field (e.g. in contrast to Germany). The high female representation provides a basis in form of a talent pool, but still men dominate the leading positions. This again may be partly explained by the open issue regarding family responsibilities, which mostly lie on women’s shoulders and lead to scientific career breaks. At least for Lithuanian universities, Žalėnienė et al. also note that the gender pay gap is “pushing women at a disadvantage” (2016 p. 249) and the social stereotypes “meaning prejudices and organisational barriers to the career-oriented women” (ibid, p. 249) play a crucial role. For the case of Bulgaria, Kirova (2015) explains the low rate of women in leading positions also rather as a consequence of “settled social-cultural gender stereotypes than to professional-organizational or institutional barriers before science career of women” (Kirova 2015, p. 42). Thus, it may be concluded that the reasons are in a complex interplay, sometimes not clear and may be varying from case to case.

Coming to the working culture in the SPEAR universities, it can be described in almost all universities as “male dominated” in the sense that men are considered as the default researcher. Especially in the SIPs, the stereotype of the always working and highly competitive male researcher was frequently expressed in the interviews and produced a working atmosphere that was reported to be stressful and high pressured with lower solidarity among colleagues. Even in countries with a high representation of women (e.g. Bulgaria) the culture was still portrayed as male dominated in the sense that it is highly competitive and hierarchical organised.

The **relevant experiences of the S/IPs with GE implementation** are of course very different, but nevertheless pertinent issues can be found. A solid legislation provides the basis for all GE implementation. Further supportive context factors, like gender sensitive frameworks in national funding schemes, were also considered beneficial to the own GE implementation. Within the universities, a frequently mentioned strength/potential is the internal organisational support and the networks with internal stakeholders. This was further elaborated as financial support, but also symbolic support and cooperation from/with the management and other relevant stakeholders (e.g. HR, deans) – both making it easier to gain acceptance for GE activities and implement them throughout the organisation. Building and maintaining an active network of stakeholders can especially represent a challenge, firstly, in the case of regular personnel changes (e.g. due to elections) and, secondly, for hierarchical and/or decentralized universities



as the number of stakeholders that need to get on board is higher than in centrally organised universities. A high GE awareness and knowledge was also mentioned to provide a valuable basis for GE activities; especially with actors connected to the GE units, but also throughout the organisation as it facilitates the acceptance of activities and reduces the likelihood of resistances. Vice versa a low gender awareness was characterized as a challenge or weakness for GE implementation. Gender awareness was one big piece of the puzzle for translating activities from the central to the faculty/department level. Regarding GE structures, clear responsibilities and elaborate structures were non-surprisingly considered a strength. More concretely, a mix of structural and individual activities, as well as a mix of top-down and bottom-up seems to work well. However, elaborate structures bring with them the challenge of keeping track of a complex set of actors and activities and coordinating the entire system. In general, it is a constant challenge for both SIPs and IPs to decide on a GE/EO/diversity approach and to focus on specific fields of action.

The resistances in the SPEAR universities mostly come from male employees or students and are rarely expressed in an open way (e.g. complaints to GE units on activities), but rather hidden or passive. This means that there is no open opposition to certain actions or GE as such, but people are less open or proactive about GE activities. One observation was that resistances can often be pinpointed by the GE actors to specific parts of the organisation, e.g. male-dominated faculties. Interestingly, resistances were mostly observed by interviewees from the SIPs; possibly as there are more activities and therefore more potential points of friction. Another hypothesis that was expressed in the interviews is that SIPs may reach a certain sensitive point when people with power actually feel their privileges are threatened, e.g. when the GE actors start redistributing funds in the context of gender budgeting. Or it might indicate that the gender agents at the SIPs understand and define resistance differently, e.g. because they are more specialised in the different types and forms of resistance or work with different measures and policies or stakeholders. Besides that, top-down approaches from central units and/or mandatory activities seem to evoke the most resistance.

All in all, it should be stressed that the factors identified are subjective assessments, while the supporting and hindering factors of the development of the GEP will be identified in hindsight. It will be a topic that will accompany the second and third round of evaluation in the SPEAR project as the status quo assessment will provide the starting point for a continuous, long-term evaluation.



## 8 LITERATURE

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