

UNIFIED GEP REPORT

AIM

The document aims to analyze the gaps and best practices related to gender equality and the **Gender Equality Plans (GEPs)** of three partner universities:

- University of Milano Bicocca (from now on, UNIMIB), Italy, in particular inside the Department of Human Science for Education;
- Vilnius University (from now on VU), Lithuania, in particular inside the Faculty of Communication;
- Universidad San Jorge (from now on USJ), Zaragoza, Spain, in particular inside the Department of Health Sciences.

A Gender Equality Plan (from now on GEP) is a set of commitments and actions designed to promote gender equality within an organization through structural change. By defining specific **actions**, each university outlines its strategy to achieve **organizational well-being and gender equality**. Additionally, having a GEP is a mandatory requirement set by the European Commission for participating in Horizon Europe calls, the European Union Framework Programme for Research and Innovation for 2021-2027.

Concerning the aim of the GEPs, the universities share the commitment to promoting gender equality in various aspects, such as career advancement, hiring and remuneration, diversity and inclusion, combating and preventing harassment and gender-based violence, and ensuring equal opportunities for all members of the community, irrespective of gender, disability, cultural background, or social status.

At **UNIMIB**, the primary goal is to foster organizational well-being and achieve gender equality across the university. This commitment ensures that all members of the university community feel supported and valued. **VU** emphasizes its societal responsibility by promoting openness to diverse individuals and identities. The university is dedicated to preserving personal dignity and creating an inclusive environment where everyone feels respected and accepted. **USJ** is committed to guaranteeing equality and equal opportunities for all its workers. The university strives to avoid discrimination, whether based on sex or any other factor, ensuring a fair and inclusive workplace for everyone.

Nevertheless, each University Partner has its specific focus and approaches to address gender-related issues.

UNIMIB aims to address unconscious prejudices and promote a culture of diversity by identifying and correcting gender inequalities. It emphasizes countering biases and integrating diversity into research and higher education through strategies focused on cultural change.

VU aims to create a diverse study and work environment by ensuring equal opportunities through organizational policies. It seeks to achieve gender balance in decision-making, reinforce gender equality in research and studies, and implement a policy-oriented approach for long-term structural changes.

USJ focuses on practical applications like ensuring equal pay, promoting work-life balance, and preventing occupational hazards. It emphasizes non-discriminatory practices in hiring, training, career promotion, remuneration, communication, and daily operations.

FIRST REMARKS

Regarding **UNIMIB**, the Italian Government mandates GEPs for participation in PNRR-MIUR calls. The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) is Italy's response to the global Covid-19 emergency and the obstacles that have blocked the growth of the country's economic, social and environmental systems in recent decades. The PNRR is part of the European recovery mechanism named Next Generation EU. As outlined in the PNRR-MUR Guidelines for System Initiatives of Mission 4: Education and Research. These plans must include a dedicated budget for gender equality activities, measures for monitoring and evaluation, and clear implementation responsibilities within the organizational structure. Similarly, **VU**, as a partner in the Horizon 2020 project "Supporting and Implementing Plans for Gender Equality in Academia and Research" (SPEAR), was required to develop a general GEP for the university by the end of 2021. In parallel, several VU faculties, including Faculty of Communication, introduced their GEPs in 2021-2022. The GEP of the Faculty of Communication focuses on creating and disseminating guidelines for integrating gender perspective in research and studies, as well as promoting gender equality principles in general communication. However, the Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania obliges all enterprises having more than 50 employees to introduce Equal opportunity policy from the middle of 2017. At **USJ**, the university, which is a company that employs more than 50 people, is obligated to adopt and implement GEPs following the Organic Law for Effective Equality between Women and Men (3/2007). This ensures the institution actively promotes gender equality

within its workforce. ("European Institute for Gender Equality | European Institute for Gender Equality". European Institute for Gender Equality. Viewed on the 22 of July 2024. <https://eige.europa.eu/>).

The focus of the following analysis is to identify the actions and implementations strategies of each plan, comparing the agendas of the various partner universities to highlight commonalities and differences between the institutions in terms of GEP structure, objectives and strategies of implementation.

STATE OF THE ART

At **UNIMIB**, a strategic calendar is set every three years, guided by insights from their Gender Balance Sheet. The GEP together with the Balance Sheet helps shape the university's policies and goals, ensuring a balanced and inclusive environment.

VU takes a slightly different approach, crafting a strategic plan every four years. The university's diversity and equal opportunities strategy, which encompasses implementation of the GEP, is an additional document to the entire university's strategy. To ensure progress and accountability, the Community Wellbeing Division, along with certain departments, initiates and monitors GEP implementation efforts every two years. The Faculty of Communication holds responsibility for implementing the GEP, tailoring it to fit the unique needs and context of their academic environment in the Faculty.

At **USJ**, the focus is on a company-level equality plan that provides a comprehensive set of recommendations. These guidelines are intended for the university's adoption and are designed to align with the equality policies of associated companies. This plan ensures that the university maintains a strong commitment to equality across all levels.

ACTORS

All partners' GEPs focus on reaching the teaching staff and the technical-administrative sector. Additionally, UNIMIB and VU include the student population (specifically VU's Faculty of Communication), while UNIMIB also targets the university's top management.

AREAS

TInGLE Project – Through an intersectional and gendered lens towards equality in Academia
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All the partner universities' GEPs share common goals such as promoting work-life balance, ensuring gender balance in leadership, integrating gender equality in recruitment and research, fostering a supportive organizational culture, and combating sexual harassment. Their plans include some similar areas of intervention:

1. **Work-life balance:** helping employees manage their professional responsibilities alongside their personal lives. It includes a flexible and supportive of workers' well-being work environment.
2. **Recruitment and career progression:** ensuring that individuals of all genders have the same chances for employment, promotions, and career development without discrimination. This involves fair treatment, eliminating biases, and implementing policies that support diversity and inclusion in the workplace.
3. **Organizational culture and communication:** fostering an environment where all genders are treated equally, persons of all genders (identities) have equal opportunities, and are valued and respected. It involves promoting inclusivity, open communication, and policies that encourage diversity and provide support to all employees, ensuring a respectful and equitable workplace.
4. **Sexual harassment and gender-based violence:** ensuring a safe and respectful workplace for all employees, implementing policies, procedures, and training to prevent, address, and eliminate any form of sexual harassment or gender-based violence.

UNIMIB and **VU** also share other common areas (**USJ** has already achieved and committed to maintaining the listed areas):

1. Leadership and decision-making: ensuring that all individuals have the same chances to attain leadership positions and participate in decision-making processes, free from bias and discrimination.
2. Gender in research and teaching: ensuring that all genders have equal opportunities to participate, contribute, and be recognized in academic research and educational activities, promoting an inclusive and unbiased environment.

However, **UNIMIB** is more detailed in breaking down specific areas like teaching and research, while **VU** combines related areas into broader categories. **USJ**, instead, also includes training, to

provide equal opportunities in the process of competence development, and occupational health, to prevent risks, as areas of their activities.

COMMON ACTIONS:

1. **Work-Life Balance and Inclusiveness:** UNIMIB encourages the harmonization of personal time and work, sharing care responsibilities, promoting a caring work environment, and the right to disconnection. VU establishes equal opportunities for all staff to achieve an appropriate work-life balance regardless of gender. USJ implements measures for work-life balance and adapts work schedules to the school calendar.
2. **Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination:** UNIMIB focuses on equal gender representation and the adoption of equal opportunities policies. VU establishes gender-neutral recruitment procedures and equal pay opportunities. USJ uses non-discriminatory language and clear promotion processes.
3. **Non-Discriminatory Policies:** UNIMIB adopts equal opportunities policies in institutional offices. VU establishes gender-neutral procedures for staff selection, recruitment, and promotion. USJ uses non-discriminatory language in job advertisements and promotion criteria.
4. **Training and Awareness:** UNIMIB raises awareness of gender issues and promotes female participation in research. VU consolidates understanding of gender equality. USJ promotes equal opportunities training and develops training programs.
5. **Combating Sexual Harassment and Gender-Based Violence:** UNIMIB increases visibility and prevents sexual harassment and violence. VU implements discrimination, mobbing, and sexual harassment prevention. USJ disseminates the Protocol for the Prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment.
6. **Gender Mainstreaming in Research and Communication:** UNIMIB promotes gender mainstreaming in research. VU promotes gender mainstreaming in research and innovations, and studies. USJ promotes gender mainstreaming in internal and external communication activities and related processes.

Other common areas across the partner universities:

1. **Specific Support for Student-Athletes and Paralympic Athletes:** UNIMIB plans specific services for female and Paralympic student-athletes.
2. **Economic and Incentive Measures:** UNIMIB plans economic incentives for families. USJ includes terms of bonuses and impacts of maternity/paternity in compensation.

3. Development of Policies and Procedures: **VU** established an institutional network of gender equality / equal opportunities coordinators operating in the faculties. **USJ** uses non-discriminatory language in job advertisements and the creation of welcome handbooks.
4. Institutional Representation and Career Progression: **UNIMIB** mitigates the impact on recruitment and career progression and counters segregation. **USJ** facilitates internal promotion and ensures maternity/paternity leave does not negatively impact evaluations.
5. Specific Communication Initiatives: **UNIMIB** uses communication aimed at raising awareness in schools and among teachers. **VU** published *Guidelines for Gender Sensitive Language*. **USJ** plans dissemination of equal opportunity plans and reviewing communication language and images.
6. Recognition and Rewards: **UNIMIB** promotes a gender-sensitive culture through various activities. **USJ** establishes a clear and transparent remuneration policy.

UNIMIB includes detailed actions regarding care responsibilities, sports participation, economic incentives, and academic research participation. **VU** focuses more broadly on gender-neutral policies, institutional practices, and work-life balance. **USJ** emphasizes non-discriminatory language, clear promotion and remuneration policies, and measures for work-life balance rights.

IMPLEMENTATIONS:

At **UNIMIB** all the actions present on the GEP are activated except for:

- 5.8 Create an organizational culture and a culture of sensitive knowledge, in gender mainstreaming perspective
- 5.10 Promoting a gender-sensitive and non-discriminatory culture through activities aimed at staff teachers of schools of all levels

At **VU** all the actions present on the GEP are activated except for:

- 2. Establish institutional practices, procedures, and instruments enabling effective gender equality implementation
- 1.3 Analysis of study indicators (achievements, drop-outs, resumption, etc.) from a gender perspective

planned as the next steps → Implementation plans 23-25 are still in progress.

At **USJ** the register of companies' equality policies is still in progress, while the activities not fully achieved until now are:

- 3.5 Guarantee in the evaluation of the teaching and research activity of the faculty that the maternity/paternity variable does not constitute a negative impact factor.
- 4.2 Include the definition and terms of all bonuses in the compensation policy.
- 4.3 Include in the variable compensation annex how maternity, paternity, accumulation of breastfeeding hours, etc. affect the payment of objectives.
- 5.3 Implementing measures to adapt the working day and work organization for both PTG and PDI.
- 6.1 Dissemination of the new Equal Opportunity Plan to the entire staff.
- 6.2 Review of language and images used in both internal and external communication. In detail. An effort has been made to adapt and revise the language of all internal and external documents using non-discriminatory language, which has been achieved. However, the use of neutral language is not widespread.
- 6.3 Dissemination of the contact information of the Equal Opportunity Committee as well as its responsibilities.
- 8.2 Include the following in your annual physical exam-specific tests: prostate cancer and breast cancer screening or other similar tests.

Summing up? Conclusion? what next?...