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Gender-In
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Integrating Gender in Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment Research

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INTRODUCTION

Although European Union emphasizes the importance of gender issues, putting emphasis on gender mainstreaming in research, the lack of gender mainstreaming tools (Cavaghan, 2017), the fact that in research practice gender equality is treated as a horizontal and not cross-cutting priority as promoted by European Union (Vida, 2021), and the gaps between intentions and implementation of gender equality in practice (Mergaert and Lombardo, 2014), have led to only modest results in reducing gender inequality (Wieczorek-Szymańska, 2023). However, one can still identify positive steps in the direction of integrating gender in EU-funded research. In the calls for proposals and the relevant evaluation criteria, there is a – varying yet evident – level of emphasis on the need to address groups of women, design research projects based on these needs, assess the impacts of research on men and women, and engage women in research (Wong et al., 2018).

Answering the question of how to achieve a smooth and fruitful integration of gender in research is a challenging task. This report aims to provide some first insights into this topic, focusing on Cluster 6 (Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment) of Horizon Europe. The report draws on material from heterogeneous sources, including European Union documents, scientific articles, publications produced by KILDEN, and data from the GENDER-IN workshop held in Thessaloniki and GENDER-IN video webinars. The report begins with a synopsis of the themes included in Cluster 6 and continues with suggestions on how to integrate gender into research projects. The next section describes potential gender integration strategies for Cluster 6. Then, some successful examples of gender integration in relevant research and industry projects are provided. Section 6 discusses issues associated with the research design of gender-sensitive projects centered on topics included under the umbrella of Cluster 6, while section 7 provides policy recommendations. The report closes with some concluding remarks.

2. Cluster 6 in brief

Cluster 6 includes seven themes. The first one is labeled “Biodiversity and ecosystem services” and supports research and innovation activities attempting to maintain the ecological quality of ecosystems while achieving a socially fair twin (green and digital) transition. The second theme - “Fair, healthy and environment-friendly food systems from primary production to consumption” - aims to tackle sustainability challenges across food systems, thus facilitating the transition to resilient and sustainable food systems. The theme “Circular economy and bioeconomy sectors” aspires to promote climate neutrality and pollution elimination, setting the basis for just and fair circular and bioeconomy transitions. Within the fourth theme, “Clean environment and zero pollution,” topics aiming to prevent and minimize pollution are included. The theme “Land, ocean and water for climate action” targets challenges associated with sustainable land, water, and ocean resource management. The sixth theme (“Resilient, inclusive, healthy and green rural, coastal and urban communities”) promotes transdisciplinary research and innovation activities that are expected to facilitate sustainable, fair, and inclusive development of rural, coastal, and urban communities. The theme

emphasizes the need to focus on the gender aspects of research and innovation by incorporating a social sciences and humanities dimension. The final theme, labeled "Innovative governance, environmental observations and digital solutions in support of the Green Deal," supports the generation of innovative governance models, capitalizing on the environmental observations available and exploiting the potential of digital and data-based technologies to support communities and sectors.

3. Integrating the gender dimension into research projects

In its document "Guidance on Gender Equality in Horizon 2020," the European Commission (2016) stresses the importance of integrating gender/sex analysis in the content of research and innovation activities with the aim to produce knowledge, technology, and innovation of enhanced scientific quality and societal relevance. In a Policy Review titled: "Gendered Innovations 2: How inclusive analysis contributes to research and innovation" (European Commission, 2020) also provides some successful examples of gender and sex integration in research projects. In the Commission's glossary, sex refers to the biological characteristics of women and men, while gender is a term that describes the social and cultural constructions of females and males.

Although there are no standard procedures and recipes on how to integrate the gender dimension into a research project, conceiving gender as part of a research design represents a good practice (Korsvik and Rustad, 2018). Gender integration is portrayed in many frameworks, among which the most popular is the Interagency Gender Working Group's Gender Equality Continuum (Health Communication Capacity Collaborative, , 2016), which has been implemented by many research institutes, mainly those that focus their activities on agriculture and food security to assess the gender blindness/awareness of a project. Moreover, tools like the Gender Equality in Research Scale (Paez Valencia et al., 2019) have been designed to monitor gender integration in research. Nevertheless, in most instances, gender equality is framed and assessed as an ad-hoc issue.

In a toolkit provided by the European Union (2011), interested applicants for funding can access a guide on how to integrate gender in all stages of a research cycle. Figure 1 highlights the main ideas of the toolkit.

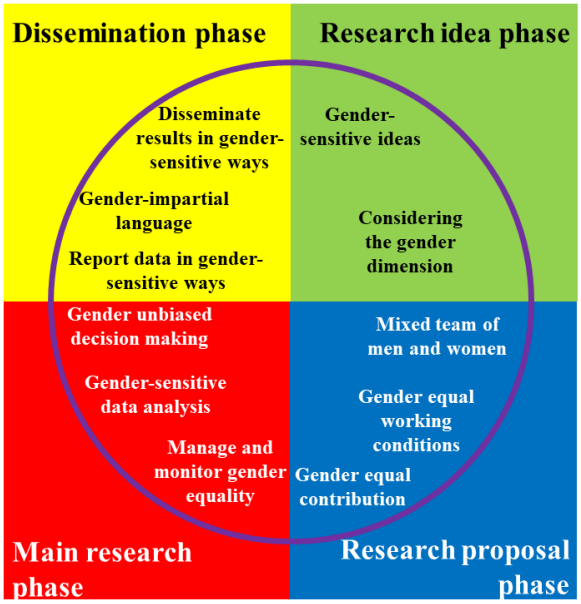

Figure 1. Integration of gender in all stages of the research cycle (Source: Author's work)

Viewing gender integration from a more practical angle, Danielsen et al. (2018) offer a typology comprising eight categories of gender integration strategies, further divided into sub-categories. The "research content categories" refer to gender roles in research projects, while the "research process strategies" motivate researchers to consider the gender dimension in their projects. Research content strategies include four sub-categories, variously approaching gender concerns in social units or systems that research projects target. Such social structures may comprise communities, households, or work organizations. The strategies proposed involve:

- Recognition strategies, which address the problem of unrecognized women's roles and responsibilities.
- Redistribution strategies that tackle the issue of women's restricted access to resources (both tangible and intangible) – an outcome of unequal relations between men and women.
- Agency strategies that focus on the power imbalance between genders and their negative impact on women's empowerment and well-being.
- Social inclusion strategies, which aspire to reduce the exclusion of women from different aspects of social and professional life, taking into consideration the intersection with other variables (e.g., class, age, education).

Research process strategies, on the other hand, comprise:

- Strategies to enhance the capacities of staff, thus allowing a fertile transition from gender theory to related practice.
- Strategies promoting gender-responsive research practices, thus addressing the gender-blindness that often characterizes mainstream research.

- Accountability strategies, which deal with the lack of practices ensuring the accountability of research projects to the gender strategy of the program.
- Evidence generation strategies, attempting to offer insights into the gender dynamics in agriculture (and allied fields) and uncover the benefits that a turn to a gender-responsive research mindset can have.

Despite the theoretical contributions to the issue, integrating gender in research projects remains a demanding task. Mendum et al. (2018) argue that the challenges faced in the attempts to meaningfully integrate gender in research emerge from the lack of a bias-free mentality, the false notion that gender as a social construct favors men, the limited representation of female researchers in research teams compared to their male counterparts, the fact that men are in many cases responsible for making the decisions about the household (thus being the actual research beneficiaries) while women undertake domestic tasks that reduce their available time to get involved in other activities. To boost gender integration in research, it is crucial to raise awareness of the importance of respect among individuals, promote the involvement of women in leadership positions and their active participation in interventions concerning agriculture and climate change, and enhance their decision-making competencies. Despite the fact that Mendum and colleagues focus on developing countries, not rarely, researchers working in European areas face the same or, at least, similar challenges.

4. Integrating gender in Cluster 6 research

In total, 16 topics of Cluster 6 explicitly mention the need to integrate gender in the research projects (Table 1). In some categories, like the one labeled “Innovating with governance models and supportive policies,” the reference to gender integration is quite specific, requiring programs, among other issues, to support the provision of equal gender opportunities and inclusion in novel business models and social innovation practices, or making clear that funded projects should involve gender studies and boost gender equality in research. Interestingly, in the area “Resilient, inclusive, healthy and green rural, coastal and urban communities,” there are also many suggestions on how to integrate gender in research, like focusing on gender-related vulnerability, understanding if and how urban farming can promote gender equality, of uncovering the interplay between gender and attractiveness of rural life.

Nevertheless, other areas (e.g., “Innovating for sustainable bio-based systems, biotechnology and the bioeconomy”) are still quite far from fully describing how research teams should or can integrate a gender dimension in their projects. Finally, as Table 1 illustrates, there are some areas in which projects designers can choose how to integrate gender into research projects. In those cases (e.g., in the topic “HORIZON-CL6-2023-CircBio-01-2: One hundred circular model households: making European households sustainable through inclusive circular practices”), research teams can build varying strategies to achieve gender integration, focusing on those gender aspects that better suit their aims and ambitions.

Moreover, the existence of a Gender Equality Plan is mandatory for all public organizations, higher education institutes, and research bodies from the Member States and Associated

countries aspiring to take part in consortia submitting proposals within the framework of Horizon Europe (European Commission, 2022). Gender Equality Plans aim at preventing and halting gender imbalance and inequality within organizations through viable transformations in prevailing cultures, structures, and processes (European Commission, 2021).

Table 1. Calls and topics of Horizon Europe - Work Program 2023-2024, and suggestions for gender integration

Call and topic	Integration of gender
Biodiversity friendly practices in agriculture, forestry and aquaculture	
HORIZON-CL6-2024-BIODIV-01-7: Reintroduction of landscape features in intensive agricultural areas	Assessment of decision-making processes concerning the reintroduction of landscape features in areas of intensive agriculture, taking into consideration gender aspects
Enabling sustainable farming systems	
HORIZON-CL6-2023-FARM2FORK-01-1: European partnership on accelerating farming systems transition – agroecology living labs and research infrastructures	Considering gender aspects in reinforcing the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovations Systems for agroecology across Europe, access to knowledge and innovation on agroecology, and upskilling farmers and other actors
Transforming food systems for health, sustainability and inclusion	
HORIZON-CL6-2023-FARM2FORK-01-10: Eradicate micronutrient deficiencies in the EU	- Mapping and monitoring micronutrient deficiencies in different regions per gender groups in the European Union and Associated countries - Developing tools for education, training, and communication on healthy nutrition and adapting them to specific gender characteristics
HORIZON-CL6-2024-FARM2FORK-01-2: New healthy and sustainable food products and processes	Proposals for this topic should integrate sex and gender analyses
HORIZON-CL6-2024-FARM2FORK-01-7: Impact of the development of novel foods based on alternative sources of proteins	Assessing the social impacts of novel foods (insect protein, micro and macro algae-based products, microbial proteins, food/aquaculture by-products), considering gender aspects
Enabling a circular economy transition	

HORIZON-CL6-2023-CircBio-01-2: One hundred circular model households: making European households sustainable through inclusive circular practices	Taking into consideration gender aspects in the transition towards more sustainable, resource-efficient, and circular practices
Innovating for sustainable bio-based systems, biotechnology and the bioeconomy	
HORIZON-CL6-2023-CircBio-01-6: Bio-based solutions for humanitarian applications	The integration of gender-related aspects in the proposals is highly encouraged
Safeguarding and sustainably innovating the multiple functions of EU forests	
HORIZON-CL6-2023-CircBio-01-12: Optimising the sustainable production of wood and non-wood products in small forest properties and development of new forest-based value chains	Considering gender while assessing and developing innovative support structures, programs, and instruments for the sustainable use of wood and non-wood products
Resilient, inclusive, healthy and green rural, coastal and urban communities	
HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES-01-1: Enhancing social inclusion in rural areas: Focus on people in a vulnerable situation and social economy	Proposals should consider different types of vulnerability, including gender
HORIZON-CL6-2023-COMMUNITIES-01-5: Assessing urban farming impacts	Assessing current and forecasting future impacts of urban farming on social benefits provision, including gender equity
HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-01-2: Societal perceptions and benefits of rural life and jobs: will COVID 19 generate a long-lasting shift?	- Undertaking gender studies on societal perceptions of the rural - Understanding how gender may affect perceptions of the attractiveness of rural and farming life
HORIZON-CL6-2024-COMMUNITIES-01-3: Participation and empowerment of Arctic coastal, local, and indigenous communities in environmental decision-making	Explore and suggest ways to integrate traditional and scientific knowledge into efforts to solve problems, including gender aspects of socioeconomic development
Innovating with governance models and supporting policies	
HORIZON-CL6-2023-GOVERNANCE-01-4: Developing an interdisciplinary and inclusive pan-European academic network for food system science	The results of the projects are expected to facilitate a European Research Agenda that, among other issues, fosters gender equality in research. To this end, the activities implemented within the framework of the projects should support gender-equal training, mobility, etc.

HORIZON-CL6-2023-GOVERNANCE-01-5: Revitalisation of European local (rural/peri-urban) communities with innovative bio-based business models and social innovation	The proposals should consider gender aspects to ensure the inclusion of marginalized groups in innovative business models and social innovation
HORIZON-CL6-2023-GOVERNANCE-02-1: Supporting the All-Atlantic Ocean Research and Innovation Alliance and Declaration	The development of synergies in youth and gender programs is one of the expected outcomes of the proposals
HORIZON-CL6-2024-GOVERNANCE-01-3: The role of mainstream media, social media and marketing in fostering healthy and sustainable consumption patterns and how to encourage good practices	Gender studies is one of the Social Sciences and Humanities disciplines that should be involved in the proposals

Source: European Commission, 2023

5. Examples of gender integration initiatives in research related to Cluster 6 topics

A wide variety of recent projects can illustrate how gender can be successfully integrated into research. An example is the project "GenderGAP: A gender perspective on the impacts of the reform of EU's Common Agricultural Policy" (2005-2008), which received funding from the Austrian research program TRAFO (Transdisciplinary Forms of Research). In the project, the research team developed solutions referring to the change in women and men farmers' activities and the emergence of novel decision-making styles. To achieve the expected results, researchers promoted a series of soft changes, like communicating the diverse roles of male and female farmers in the transition to sustainable agriculture, and some more "hard" initiatives, such as the need to offer high-quality training programs to women farmers, who often lack access to the spaces of knowledge (Smetschka and Gaube, 2020; Smetschka et al., 2014).

A more recent project focusing on social innovation in marginalized areas (H2020 SIMRA– Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas), among other interesting research questions (see http://www.simra-h2020.eu/index.php/objectives/) investigates the role of gender in social farming, and the levels of agency that women farmers enjoy in some of the selected by the research team cases (Della Torre et al., 2020). In a similar vein, the Horizon 2020 project "upscaling the benefits of push-pull technology for sustainable agricultural intensification in East Africa" (https://upscale-h2020.eu/)" focuses on the ways also examining how the intersection between gender and smallholder farming affects technology adoption (Chidawanyika et al., 2023).

In a project supported by the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, researchers aimed to uncover how gender interplays with climate change and migration in Nepal and expose gaps related to gender-responsive policies. The results indicated that a critical first step before drawing any policy is to understand the different needs and priorities of men and women farmers and design capacity-building strategies that can empower both genders, thus paving the way toward gender equality (Paudyal et al., 2019). In their research, which was

partially supported by Horizon 2020 (HABITABLE-Linking Climate Change, Habitability and Social Tipping Points: Scenarios for Climate Migration), Upandhyay et al. (2023) also investigated the gender-related impacts of climate change in agricultural communities of Indian Himalayan regions. Their analysis revealed that women are more vulnerable to climate change due to the existing inequalities and their reliance on agriculture and other climate-sensitive economic activities.

In a project co-funded by European Union's Horizon 2020 focused on integrating sustainable socio-economic development in climate resilience-related laws and policy frameworks in Dominica, social inclusivity and gender integration, were identified as pivotal factors for achieving sustainable development and enhancing climate resilience (Natoli, 2021). Other projects, addressed the gender equality issue through a more direct way. For instance, in the Horizon 2020 project STRENGTH2FOOD, researchers assessed the levels to which production schemes that involve a geographical indication promote public goods, among which gender equality is included (Guareschi, 2023).

In Greece, research on gender in agriculture showed that the women in many cases remain invisible farmers and that rural spaces are characterized by gendered dichotomies (Charatsari, 2014). Farm women are viewed and treated as auxiliary farm staff, while agriculture remains a male-dominated field. Hence, in many family farms men are the decision-makers and the farm leaders, while women undertake home-related roles (Charatsari and Papadaki-Klavdianou, 2017). Despite the positive steps (Tsiaousi and Partalidou, 2021), there is a long way to go to achieve full gender equality in Greek farming.

The idea of considering and integrating gender in the efforts to promote a just and fair rural development has also penetrated non-research fields. For instance, farms wishing to receive the 2020 Sustainable Agriculture Standard from the Rainforest Alliance should meet some gender equality criteria. Gender equality promotion should be confirmed in a written statement, while a committee charged with the tasks of applying, monitoring, and assessing gender equality measures must be established. Among the duties of the committee, the development and implementation of gender risk assessment tools, the launching of gender awareness-raising activities, and the undertaking of action in cases of gender discrimination and violence are included (Morgan, 2023).

6. Strengthening the integration of gender in the design of research projects in Cluster 6

6.1 Setting aims and developing research questions

To fully integrate gender into research in Cluster 6, research teams should first focus on the interplay between gender and different research areas. Since each research field is characterized by a number of specificities that create particular, and often unique, contexts, the aims can vary greatly. Nevertheless, a common point of departure should be understanding if (and how) gender is significant for research and how research can affect gender dynamics and promote gender equality.

Especially when different research areas converge, a critical task is to conceptualize and analyze how the prevailing gender norms and related values in each involved discipline may influence the degree to which research results are beneficial for men and women belonging to the target population. For instance, in projects aiming at developing digital solutions for the bioeconomy sector, as Roos et al. (2021) argue, two male-dominant research fields (technology development and bioeconomy) are combined, thus generating gender equality concerns.

Korsvik and Rustad (2018) provide a set of research questions concerning topics that fall within Cluster 6, which address aims related to understanding the bioeconomy transition process (e.g., to what extent is gender an issue that should be taken into account in the sustainable bioeconomy transition?), uncovering the interplay between gender and climate action (e.g., how does the intersection of different variables with gender create or hinter opportunities for climate action?), or responsibly developing greenhouse emission mitigation measures (e.g., what types of impacts do have these measures on the lives of men and women?). In their turn, these questions open up new perspectives that can generate novel analyses. For instance, by examining the outcomes of greenhouse emission reduction measures, researchers can shift their focus on the ways responsibilities allocated by gender can lessen – or, instead, reinforce – gender stereotypes.

The GENDER-IN workshop offered a more extensive list of aims and relevant research questions (Table 2), starting from the gender equality in research governance processes and the praxis of research and continuing with the need to understand how gender interplays with research, e.g., how it affects the foci of researchers, the aims that they pursue, their levels of affinity with the research objectives, and their preferences for specific research designs. Interestingly, workshop participants also stressed the need to trace the roots of gender-related imbalances in research by focusing on how tertiary education prepares students, some of whom will undertake research roles in the future. It goes without saying that research positions require individuals to have high levels of skills and expert knowledge. However, a pivotal question is whether higher education institutes supply students with skills and knowledge free from gender bias.

Another promising research path would be to effectively assess the pros and cons of gender-sensitive and gender-neutral approaches in research. According to participants, such an assessment would provide researchers with a toolkit that facilitates the selection of project-appropriate methods. In a similar vein, a collection of “good practices” and “best practices” in the process of gender integration in research could offer opportunities to understand what works well and what should be avoided in the design and implementation of a research project.

Finally, understanding the points of departure and assessing the outcomes of a research project can render a broad range of insights since it can facilitate the design and initiation of context-specific activities that aim to improve the current states of the target populations, as well as evaluate the life-related impacts of research on end users. Although, in the latter dimension, the focus of participants was centered on technologies produced in the framework of research projects, other non-technological solutions can and must also be assessed.

Table 2. Suggested research aims and associated questions for projects targeting issues falling into Cluster 6: Workshop's participants contribution

Proposed aim	Research questions
Evaluating gender equality in research governance	- How can we promote a balanced representation of genders on the boards of academic/research institutes and policy organizations? - Is research a male-dominated domain?
Finding ways to promote gender equality in research arenas	- What actions should be taken to engage more women in research? - How can we secure a fair and equal salary for men and women researchers? - Do the voices of men and women researchers have equal weight?
Understanding the approaches used by researchers based on their gender	- How does gender affect researchers' awareness of and interest in environmental issues? - Does gender have an impact on environmental empathy? - To what extent does gender affect the research priorities set at the initial phases of a research project? - Is the design of research tools gender-specific?
Understanding how the dominant lines of thinking in higher education contribute to (or reduce) gender bias in research	- Do university institutes provide gender bias-free education? - To what extent do the curricula offered by higher education institutes reproduce gender stereotypes? - How does gender bias in curriculum development affect future researchers?
Developing robust methods that aim to understand the potential benefits and shortcomings of different gender integration approaches	- How to choose between a gender-sensitive and gender-neutral approach in research? - What are the benefits and drawbacks of these approaches? - How to assess the impacts of the two approaches?

Developing lists of good and best practices in research focusing on gender-related issues	- What have been the strategies implemented by different projects to integrate gender? - What lessons can we learn from (un)successful examples of gender integration in research? - How do gender role models affect research?
Shedding light on the "zero points" from which research has to depart	- Are there male-dominated sectors of economic and social activity? - Are there fields (e.g., farming) where women are considered "second-order" professionals? - How can the research chart progress in these sectors/fields?
Uncovering potential gender-related impacts of research and technology development on male and female members of the target populations	- What are the impacts of technologies and other solutions produced within the framework of Horizon projects on women and men end users? - How can novel technologies support female participation in male-dominated fields?

6.2 Choosing what data to collect

Although the selection of data is, at least to some extent, guided by the research questions pursued, there is always a degree of freedom in choosing to use qualitative, quantitative, or mixed data. Obviously, there are no standard recipes on what types of data can better serve the purposes of a research project. Nevertheless, the type of data upon which a research team relies can affect both the extracted results and the acceptability of research take-home messages.

As Kristjanson et al. (2017) argue, some scholars view quantitative analyses as more rigorous and bias-free than their qualitative equivalents. However, qualitative data can help researchers uncover and understand patterns that allow a complete picture of the complexity inherent in the relation between gender and topics such as agricultural development and climate change. In addition, qualitative research designs offer the opportunity to identify gender-dependent variables, thus letting more complete analyses on gender dynamics come to the fore. Nevertheless, sometimes the use of coefficients and statistical significance assessments can easily convince the target audience of a research project (including policy-makers) about the need to take action to promote gender equality. Hence, either pure quantitative or mixed (qualitative and quantitative) data can offer deep and broad insights into the topics under study (Behrman et al., 2014).

7. Policy recommendations

To promote gender equality in research and innovation projects that the European Union and/or other institutes fund, the European Union (2020) offers a set of recommendations involving:

- The need to achieve a gender balance in the teams participating in funded projects through increasing women's engagement and participation in research programs.
- The pursuit of gender-balanced decision-making processes and structures.
- The promotion and accomplishment of institutional change in organizations involved in EU-funded research and innovation projects.

Other recommendations include:

- The need to emphasize on the process of bringing together the views and specificities of the different actors involved in funded projects to co-produce "gender equality knowledge" from the early stages of projects' implementation (Dahmen-Adkins et al., 2019).
- The formation of a solid and effective gender equality system that will take into consideration local knowledge and align the direction of funded projects with local priorities (Ghosheh, 2019).
- The need to re-emphasize (and, perhaps, re-design) gender mainstreaming processes (Vida, 2021).
- The promotion of gender equality in research and innovation organizations through the exploitation of micro-agents, i.e., individuals who work in those organizations, and (can) use their sphere of influence to stimulate and foster positive gender-related change in their organizations (Dahmen-Adkins and Peterson, 2021).
- The clarification of the "sex and gender analysis" concept that can help avoid confusion and develop a mutual understanding of what it means to integrate gender in research beyond the simple focus on the involvement of women in research teams (Jordão and Diogo, 2022).
- The collaboration between the international community and national governments to enhance gender mainstreaming (Huyer et al., 2015).
- The incorporation of gender aspects into all the stages of the project cycle, including a specific budget for implementation, monitoring, and evaluation (Gumucio and Rueda, 2015; Huyer et al., 2015).

8. Conclusion

Horizon 2020 is an initiative that, beyond economic goals, promotes a new and promising research equality agenda (Vida, 2021). Concerning gender, the Horizon Europe sets as

mandatory the design of a Gender Equality Plan for the organizations applying for funding while promoting the integration of gender dimension in research and increasing the gender balanced participation in Horizon Europe boards and committees (European Commission, n.d.). Nevertheless, there is a lack of clear strategies supporting gender equality and ensuring gender integration in relevant projects. The present report offers some suggestions on how to integrate the gender dimension into research projects, with particular emphasis on Horizon's Cluster 6, presents some examples of projects that have already achieved such an integration, and offers an orientation to planning relevant projects that might assist future researchers. Finally, it proposes some recommendations for policy action.

Integrating gender in research is a complicated challenge. The suggestions offered herein can be viewed as a first step toward meeting this challenge, albeit without addressing case-specific issues. Effective gender integration requires a thorough consideration of the contexts within which gender is socially constructed and the intricate relations between gender and other variables.

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Greek Association of Academic Women (ELEGYP) Website: https://www.elegyp.gr/el/gender-in.html
Kilden's Website: https://kjonnsforskning.no/en