

TARGET } Taking a Reflexive approach to Gender Equality for institutional Transformation

Lessons Learned from TARGET – Comparative Evaluation Report (D5.3a)

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Executive Summary

This comparative evaluation report summarises experiences with the implementation of the reflexive approach to gender equality developed by TARGET and implemented in seven research organisations – including research performing organisations, research funding organisations and a network of engineering schools. This reflection is more relevant than ever given that gender equality plans are now an eligibility criterion for research funding by the European Commission.

The TARGET approach goes beyond the formal adoption of a gender equality policy by emphasising an iterative and reflexive process towards equality at the institutional level as well as the establishment of a community of practice for gender equality within the institution. The approach is based on the assumption that actual change is the result of increased institutional willingness and capacity to identify, reflect on and address gender bias in a sustained way. The starting point and anchor of the process is a tailored gender equality plan for each institution.

The aim of the comparative analysis is to provide an overview of the achievements of the implementing partners regarding gender equality in the four years of project implementation and to discuss the anticipated sustainability of the results. The comparative perspective allows us to point out supporting and hindering factors for sustained structural change.

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List of Abbreviations

ANVUR	National Agency for Evaluating the University and Research System (Italy)
ARACIS	Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
CGE	Committee for Gender Equality
CoP	Community of Practice
CUG	Central Guarantee Committee for Equal Opportunities in Public Administrations for Workers' Wellbeing and Against Discriminations (Italy)
EC	European Commission
ELIAMEP	Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (Greece)
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ERA	European Research Area
FGB	Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini (Italy)
FRRB	Fondazione Regionale per la Ricerca Biomedica (Lombardy Foundation for Biomedical Research, Italy)
GAME	Giovani Ambasciatori Mediterranei (Young Ambassadors of the Mediterranean)
GEII	Gender Equality Innovating Institution
GEP	Gender Equality Plan
GES	Gender Equality Strategy
IHS	Institute for Advanced Studies (Austria)
MIUR	Ministry of Education, University and Research (Italy)
NAP	National Action Plan
PAP	Positive Action Plan
PI	Principal Investigator
R&D	Research and Development
R&I	Research and Innovation
RFO	Research Funding Organisation
RPO	Research Performing Organisation
RIF	Research and Innovation Foundation

RMEI	Mediterranean Network of Engineering Schools
UB	University of Belgrade (Serbia)
UCY	University of Cyprus
UH2C	Hassan II University of Casablanca (Morocco)
UH2M	Hassan II University of Mohammedia (Morocco)

1 Introduction

1.1 TARGET aims and objectives

TARGET aimed to contribute to the advancement of gender equality in research and innovation (R&I) by supporting a **reflexive gender equality policy** in seven **gender equality innovating institutions (GEIIs)** in the Mediterranean basin, including three research performing organisations (RPOs), three research funding organisations (RFOs) and a network of universities. They share as a common characteristic that they had little experience with gender equality policies and that they are located in countries which were characterised as relatively “inactive” in developing gender equality policies in research and innovation (R&I) before TARGET started in 2017 (Lipinsky 2014, Wroblewski 2021).

The TARGET countries have been characterised as relatively “inactive” in developing gender equality policies in R&I (Lipinsky 2014). When TARGET started, the widening gap between “proactive” and “inactive” countries was a worrying development, as some countries are being “left behind” – creating a situation which may have negative implications on the quality and excellence of R&I throughout Europe if nothing is done to rectify it (Wroblewski 2021).

Within the TARGET project, **gender equality in R&I has been defined as a three-dimensional construct** which encompasses the three substantive areas defined by the European Research Area (ERA) in 2012 (EC 2012): 1) removing barriers to the recruitment, retention and career progression of female researchers; 2) addressing gender imbalances in decision-making processes; 3) strengthening the gender dimension in research programmes. The TARGET approach to these areas is shown in the table below, which defines them according to the related visions.

Table 1: Areas/dimensions of intervention and related visions

Area/dimension of intervention	Vision
1 Removing gender-related institutional barriers to careers	There are no gender-related institutional barriers for careers: implicit gender bias and structural obstacles are abolished; abolished; there are inclusive work-life balance and anti-discrimination policies in place, including measures against gender-based violence and sexual harassment. Women and men are equally represented in all disciplines and academic levels
2 Addressing gender bias in decision-making	Decision-making is gender fair: women and men are equally represented in decision-making bodies; decision-making bodies are gender aware and gender competent
3 Including the gender dimension in teaching and research	Teaching and research include the gender dimension: gender is mainstreamed in higher education curricula, which also includes gender-specific subjects; research considers the gender dimension in content in all stages of the research process

TARGET supported GEIIs in developing the capacity for a reflexive gender equality policy that focuses on these areas. GEIIs cover **R&I in its broadest sense**, including all disciplines and encompassing both basic and applied research.

The TARGET consortium was made up of ten institutions. Alongside the seven GEIIs implementing **Gender Equality Plans (GEPs)** or a **Gender Equality Strategy (GES)**, three RPOs served either as supporting partners who provide tailored assistance to the GEIIs (FGB and NOTUS) or as project coordinator and external evaluator of the GEP/GES implementation (IHS).

Table 2: TARGET consortium: participants by type of institution, country and TARGET role

Participant	Type of institution	Country	TARGET role
1 IHS	RPO, private non-profit	Austria	Coordinator of the project and external evaluator of GEP/GES implementation
2 ARACIS	RFO, public	Romania	GEII, GEP implementation
3 RIF	RFO, private non-profit	Cyprus	GEII, GEP implementation
4 FRRB	RFO, public	Italy	GEII, GEP implementation
5 ELIAMEP	RPO, public	Greece	GEII, GEP implementation
6 UH2C	RPO, University, public	Morocco	GEII, GEP implementation
7 UB	RPO, University, public	Serbia	GEII, GEP implementation
8 RMEI	Network of universities	of European and Arab Mediterranean countries	GEII, GES implementation
9 NOTUS	RPO, private non-profit	Spain	Supporting partner, providing tailor-made assistance to UH2C, UB, RMEI
10 FGB	RPO, private	Italy	Supporting partner, providing tailor-made assistance to ARACIS, RIF, FRRB, ELIAMEP

1.2 TARGET approach

The TARGET approach goes beyond the formal adoption of a gender equality policy by emphasising an **iterative and reflexive process** towards equality at the institutional level as well as the establishment of a **community of practice (CoP)** for gender equality within the institution: actual change is the result of increased institutional willingness and capacity to identify, reflect on and address gender bias in a sustained way.

The process began with a Gender Equality Audit based on the Gender Equality Audit Tool (TARGET 2018a) in each GEII, which included the analysis of the status quo of gender equality and provided the empirical basis for identifying relevant gender imbalances or discrimination. Based on the audit results (TARGET 2018b), gender equality priorities were defined and incorporated into each

GEII’s gender equality plan or strategy. The next step was to set up a monitoring process to describe any changes in the relevant context and status quo of gender equality as well as the implementation of concrete gender equality measures (TARGET 2019a). The results of the monitoring should be used to initiate an internal gender equality discourse. How did the situation change? What worked? What didn’t work? Why? What were the reasons for the success or failure? Is there a need to set more concrete goals or develop the measures further? Questions like these should be discussed within the CoP and used to develop a strategy to communicate the topic to the members of the institution. Since the TARGET countries have been characterised as relatively inactive in developing gender equality policies in R&I, this gender equality discourse should be extended to the regional or national level.

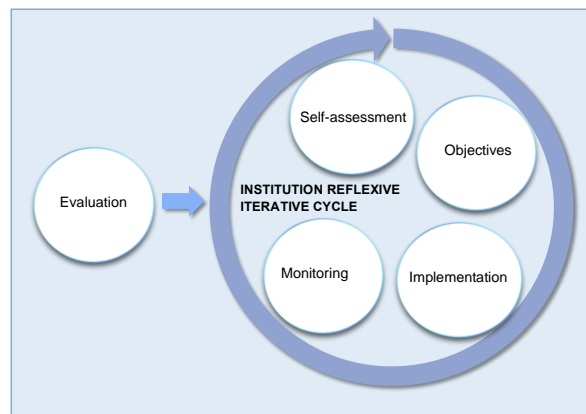
The TARGET “Gender equality monitoring tool and guidelines for self-assessment” (TARGET 2019a) provided concrete guidance for the GEIIs for the third stage of the project. As with the tools and guidelines presented before, we did not assume that there is a one-fits-all solution. We therefore also did not seek to provide a handbook of relevant monitoring indicators for the GEIIs to pick and choose from. Together with their supporting partner, each of the GEIIs adapted the tool to their own specific circumstances referring to the goals formulated in their GEP/GES.

1.3 Evaluation approach

The aim of the external evaluation of TARGET implementation was to provide feedback to GEIIs from the perspective of a ‘critical friend’. By doing so, it provided input for further development of the GEP as well as for the development of a sustainability strategy. The evaluation built on monitoring reports and institutional self-assessment as well as on

interviews with members of the CoP. This approach is based on the assumption that successful and sustainable implementation of GEPs/GES requires reflection on existing structures and practices with regard to an inherent gender bias, the development and implementation of alternative practices and the assessment of the gendered effects of such interventions (Martin 2006; Wroblewski 2015). Monitoring and self-assessment provide the basis for the evaluation in order to avoid resistance, lip service or pro forma action. This relationship between self-assessment and evaluation is key to the sustainability and success of the project. Self-assessment

Figure 1: Evaluation as an input for institutional reflexivity



will enable the institution to critically reflect on and successfully embed the GEP/GES within its organisation throughout the implementation process.

The evaluation followed a responsive and utilisation-focused approach (Patton 1997; Stake 2003) and analysed each GEII as a case study (Stake 1995). It included both formative and summative elements as it provided an independent assessment of the implementation process and any goal achievements and formulated recommendations for the further development of the GEP/GES.

In concrete terms, the evaluation aimed at:

- providing GEIIs – especially the team responsible for the implementation of the GEP/GES – with independent feedback on the implementation process;
- contributing to further development of GEPs through recommendations (with a specific focus on the sustainability of interventions);
- assessing goal achievement, output and outcome of the interventions implemented within TARGET.

In pursuing these aims, the evaluation oriented itself towards the main objectives of the TARGET project and focused on the following questions:

- Did GEIIs develop and approve a comprehensive GEP/GES which addresses the three main dimensions of gender equality?
- Did GEIIs develop and implement concrete measures to support gender equality?
- Did GEIIs establish sustainable structures for a reflexive gender equality policy?
- Did GEIIs build up competence for a reflexive gender equality policy?
- Did GEIIs establish a Community of Practice (CoP) for gender equality?
- Did GEIIs develop and implement activities which support a national or regional gender equality discourse?

The evaluation was based on the analysis of documents (e.g. GEPs/GES or other strategic documents), the audit result (D3.2) the monitoring information provided by the GEIIs (see D4.2, D4.3 and D4.4 – TARGET Monitoring Reports 2019, 2020 and TARGET final public reports 2021) as well as interviews conducted during either an on-site visit by the evaluation team (before COVID-19) or by virtual means (from March 2020 on). A key tool in the TARGET approach to monitoring is the logic model developed by GEIIs for the measures implemented in the context of the GEP/GES. The logic model is a simplified representation of a theory of change, which formulates the assumptions why specific input and programme activities will lead to the expected output, outcome and impact. Referring to a logic model supports the formulation of consistent and

coherent policies and reduces the risk of failure due to unrealistic expectations which implementation cannot meet. The logic model also supported the development of a targeted monitoring for each GEP/GES. The GEIs formulated the monitoring indicators based on the logic model and used the monitoring for the reflection on GEP/GES implementation (see also D4.1 – TARGET Monitoring Tool and Guidelines for Self-Assessment).

The evaluation approach emphasised the engagement of stakeholders in order to ensure the utilisation of evaluation results. Hence, the evaluation team provided an interim report in 2020, which focused on the first two years of GEP/GES implementation. The results of the interim evaluation were discussed with the TARGET team at each GEI in an institutional workshop.

The aim of the comparative analysis is to provide an overview of the achievements of the implementing partners regarding gender equality in the four years of project implementation and to discuss the anticipated sustainability of results. The comparative perspective allows us to point out supporting and hindering factors for sustained structural change.

2 Implementing institutions and context

2.1 Implementing institutions

The seven institutions supported in developing and implementing a targeted GEP represent different types of research organisations. In concrete terms, these included two research funding organisations (FRRB, RIF), one accreditation organisation (ARACIS), one non-university research performing institution (ELIAMEP), two universities (UB, UH2C) and a network of engineering schools (RMEI). A common characteristic of the seven organisations is that they had very little experience or no experience at all with gender equality policies before TARGET. However, the organisation and national contexts vary, thereby defining their scope of action as well as the focus of their GEPs. Brief descriptions of the implementing institutions and their national context are provided below to support the interpretation of TARGET achievements.

The **Lombardy Foundation for Biomedical Research (Fondazione Regionale per la Ricerca Biomedica – FRRB)** is an entity governed by public law, a non-profit organisation established in October 2011 by Regione Lombardia with the aim of promoting and supporting scientific research in life sciences in the Lombardy Region (since 2011, € 100 million have been committed in innovative R&D projects). The Foundation represents the main strategic platform for boosting progress, research, development and innovation within the health sector among the regional academic and industrial life sciences players located in the Lombardy Region. Its *raison d'être* is to serve as support for the implementation of the regional healthcare research policy in order to place Lombardy's regional system in a leading position in Europe. FRRB aims to invest local and European resources in innovative basic and translational research projects to generate positive impact on the local healthcare eco-system and citizens. FRRB is a small organisation with eight staff members (6 women, 2 men). There are two decision-making bodies at FRRB, namely the Board of Directors and the Director General. The Board of Directors is responsible for the budget decision and the approval of the yearly action plan. The Board has three members, all of whom are men. The President of the Board is a woman. The Director General takes all decisions regarding organisational and management processes. These activities are monitored by the Board of Directors. Until 2021, the position of Director General was held by a woman; in 2021, a man assumed this office. The members of both decision-making bodies are appointed by the Lombardy regional government. FRRB also has a scientific advisory board, which consists of seven members (3 women and 4 men) and is headed by a woman.

The **Research and Innovation Foundation (RIF)** was founded in 1996 at the initiative of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus with a view to promoting scientific and technological research in Cyprus. The RIF is a private non-profit legal entity that is registered as a Foundation and acts as the only national agency responsible for the support and promotion of research, technological development and innovation in Cyprus. The institution's funding is mainly provided by the Government. The Foundation's core objective is the promotion of scientific and technological research and innovation in Cyprus. The organisation is governed by a Board of Directors, which constitutes the key decision-making body, and a Director General. When the TARGET project started in 2017, RIF was organised into four units: "Strategic Planning", "Research and Innovation Projects", "Promotion and Advisory Services" and "Administration and Finance". The size of the organisation had ranged between 45 and 50 employees in the years prior to the project. In all four units, the percentage was in favour of females. There were two male and two female Heads of Units. The composition of the Board of Directors, however, was predominantly male. The Director General, IT staff and messenger staff were likewise predominantly male, while the positions of Scientific Officers, Accounting Officer, Assistant Accountant A', Assistant Accountant, Clerk A', secretarial staff, clerks and cleaning staff were primarily held by women. The key decision-making bodies (Board of Directors and Director General) were clearly male-dominated domains. Two further restructurings took place in 2020. Following the most recent restructuring, RIF is now organised into four departments: "European Department", "Operations Department", "Finance and IT Department", "Human Resources Department". The gender balance among Heads of Units remained stable.

ARACIS (The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) was established in 2005 as a consequence of Romania's participation in the Bologna process. Its mission is to carry out the external quality evaluation of education provided by higher education institutions and other organisations providing higher education study programmes. The Agency seeks to constantly ensure and improve quality in higher education in Romania as well as in its own activities. ARACIS does not directly offer financing for research, but once programmes are authorised/accredited by the Agency, they become eligible to apply for government funding from the Ministry of Education. The main decision-making body of ARACIS is the Council, supported by its Executive Office. The positions in the Council are assigned either based on criteria established by law and non-discrimination criteria (for professors) or by direct appointment by the higher education unions, employer associations and student federations. The President and Vice-President of the Executive Office are elected by the members of the Council; the General Secretary and the two Directors of Department are named by the President of the Office. In 2019, the

permanent staff at ARACIS comprised 24 women and 9 men, while the Council (decision-making body) was made up of 4 women and 16 men (of the 16 men, 2 were students). Besides its permanent staff and Council, the organisation has a Register of Evaluators, which includes professors from across the country, as well as a Commission of Permanent Experts, responsible for the evaluations carried out by ARACIS. The recruitment procedure is established by law. ARACIS has been a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and has been listed on the European Quality Assurance Register since 2009. In 2018, ARACIS underwent its second external review by ENQA. Regarding gender equality, ENQA commented on the persistent predominance of men at senior levels in the Agency's governance and management and recommended action to deal with this gender imbalance.

The **Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP)** is an independent, non-profit and policy-oriented research and training institute founded in 1988 and based in Athens, Greece. ELIAMEP's mission is to conduct research and training, and to provide a forum for open dialogue and deliberation on topical matters relating to European and foreign policy. On the basis of systematic research and a wealth of other knowledge-generating activities, ELIAMEP provides evidence-based information, analysis and policy recommendations to policy makers, researchers, journalists and the public at large, offers training opportunities to professionals working in relevant fields, raises public awareness and promotes public and political dialogue, and participates actively in international networks and partnerships. ELIAMEP promotes the free exchange of ideas, substantiated opinions and critical thought. It is guided by the principles of international peace, democracy and human rights. Over the years, ELIAMEP has developed into an influential think tank on foreign policy and international relations. ELIAMEP does not take an official position on any matter, nor does it serve as an instrument for state, party or private actors. Its work is funded exclusively through grants for specific projects, sponsorships, donations and fees for the provision of research services. A specific characteristic of ELIAMEP is that it comprises a small number of permanent full-time staff members and a large number of researchers and interns, usually affiliated with ELIAMEP on a project basis. At the time of the audit in 2018, ELIAMEP had 11 permanent staff (82 % women) and 24 associated staff (46 % women). ELIAMEP is governed by a 13-member Board of Directors (12 % women). Additionally, ELIAMEP benefits from the substantial support of a 4-member Honorary Council, a 17-member International Advisory Board and a 17-member Scientific Council. These bodies are made up of prominent representatives of the academic, business, foreign policy, military and media communities, who assume a consultative role and do not have decision-making capacity. ELIAMEP has two top management positions: a Director General and a Deputy Director.

The **University of Belgrade** is the biggest and oldest state university in Serbia. The University of Belgrade consists of 31 faculties, 11 institutes and one university library, all of which are separate legal entities according to the Statute. This gives (financial, above all other) autonomy to university members (faculties, institutes) and allows them to do business independently like any other firm or company in Serbia. In reality, this means, for example, that the faculties operate according to the demands of the neoliberal market, which in turn has led to significant differences in profit and earnings between those faculties that are “more in demand” and their less profitable counterparts. Basically, the university does not have a mandate over the business matters of the faculties or institutes, which also leads to it having a somewhat decreased influence overall. At the University of Belgrade, women make up the majority (60 % in 2017/18 but also in the following years) of enrolled students at all levels of studies (Bachelor, Master and PhD). However, gender segregation still exists in scientific fields traditionally attributed to one gender or the other (technology and engineering as “male dominated” disciplines vs. philology as a “female” discipline). When it comes to the gender composition of the University of Belgrade’s teaching and research staff, the overall picture is generally more balanced than the student structure: the percentage of women employed – both on a full-time or part-time basis and including all teaching and research positions – in all faculties is around 48 %. In the gender structure across different academic ranks, there is a tendency towards a decreasing percentage of women as the academic rank (along with the level of power and financial compensation) grows. While there are more women than men at the entry level of academic careers (74 % of associate professors and 54 % of teaching assistants are women), this number steadily decreases up the career ladder, dropping to 40 % at the level of full professors. When it comes to the top level and decision-making, it is the role of the rector to provide governance and represent the university externally. Since its founding, which can be traced to the early XIX century, the university has had a total of 66 rectors, only two of whom have been female. The first woman rector of the University of Belgrade was elected in 2000, the second in 2018. In 2021, a new male rector was appointed.

Hassan II University of Casablanca (UH2C) is one of the largest public universities in Morocco. It was created in 1984 under the name Hassan II University of Ain Chock of Casablanca but renamed UH2C in 2014 after its merger with the Hassan II University of Mohammedia (UH2M). Consisting of 17 institutions located in 6 campuses in Casablanca and Mohammedia, the university offers a variety of programmes for undergraduates, Masters and Doctorate students in almost all study fields (356 courses and programmes). The university caters to around 100,000 students and has 2,165 research and teaching staff and 1,128 administrative and technical staff. It is managed by the president of the university and three vice-presidents. The management board conducts

consultation actions with the university council, which is made up of elected representatives of teaching and research staff, administrative staff and students. Each institution has a governing board, whose members are elected every three years. Heads of departments are likewise elected every three years. The gender composition appears quite balanced in the case of students and administrative staff, whilst women are underrepresented among teaching and research staff (35 % of whom are women).

Whilst gender segregation by discipline is not very prominent (for both students and teaching and research staff), women are severely under-represented in top-teaching and in decision-making positions. In 2017, women accounted for 23% of full professors and 16% of the university council members whilst presidency was completely male-dominated (president and three vice-presidents). In 2019, a woman was elected as president and another woman as vice-president.

The **Mediterranean Network of Engineering Schools (RMEI)** was created in June 1997 and currently includes around 90 schools from 17 Mediterranean countries (including EU Member States and Arab Mediterranean countries). It is also affiliated to the UNESCO UNITWIN Chair of Innovations for Sustainable Development. Its mission is to advance sustainable development in the Mediterranean region through education. The network embraces a diverse range of cultures, religions, political and socio-economic differences that exist among the Mediterranean countries. It envisions equitable and sustainable development for the Mediterranean region. RMEI strives to enhance the ethics of responsibility of young engineers through education and culture, given that education plays a key role in contributing to social transformations. The technical universities and grandes écoles in the RMEI network support their students in gaining the technical, societal and cultural skills necessary for the sustainable development of the Mediterranean. *Giovani Ambasciatori Mediterranei* (GAME; “Young Ambassadors of the Mediterranean”) is a Mediterranean network of students and alumni from RMEI engineering school members. It was founded in 2011 during the 1st Michelangelo Workshop, which was held at Fort Michelangelo in Civitavecchia near Rome. Its mission is to support students in their personal growth, help them to express themselves through art-based activities and assist them in the development of their characters and social skills to “break down silos” across disciplines, nationalities and perspectives. It offers opportunities for students to meet in different Mediterranean countries, familiarises engineering students with the Mediterranean cultures, makes students aware of their role in society, prepares them for the future and inspires practical and collaborative learning on gender equality.

2.2 National gender equality policies in R&I

When TARGET started in 2017, the implementing institutions were situated in countries which lack a national discourse about gender equality in R&I as well as concrete policies supporting research organisations aiming at structural change. Although there has been a political commitment to pursue gender equality objectives at European level for more than a decade, comparative studies show differing levels of engagement as well as divergent interpretations of gender equality at national level (Wroblewski 2021; Lipinsky 2014). Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Romania belong to the group of countries which have been labelled as rather inactive regarding gender equality in R&I. Some of the TARGET implementing institutions are also located in non-European Union countries. Serbia is an acceding country to the European Union, Morocco is in North Africa and the RMEI member schools are located in the Mediterranean basin (in particular North Africa and the Middle East). The implementing partners were selected for their potential to contribute to a national discourse about gender equality in R&I. This potential is linked to their roles as funding or accreditation organisations and as think tanks. The two participating universities are large, prestigious institutions embedded in national and international university networks.

At the start of the project, these countries were characterised by comparable framework conditions. These have changed to some extent over time. For example, Greece recently developed gender equality policies aiming at structural change in R&I for the first time. Similarly, Italy has intensified its gender equality policies in R&I in recent years.

The following sections outline the national context regarding gender equality in R&I for each of the TARGET implementing partners.

2.2.1 Cyprus

The situation of women in R&I has improved during the last decade in Cyprus. Nevertheless, Cyprus still ranks below the EU average for some indicators. According to the She Figures 2015, 2018 and 2021, the proportion of female PhD graduates remained stable at about 50 %, which is above the EU average. It is important to note, however, that a great number of Cypriot students earn their PhD abroad and are therefore not included in these numbers. In contrast, while the proportion of women in Grade A positions also remained stable at 13 %, it lies below the EU average (26 %). The situation is similar for female heads of institutions in the higher education sector. In 2012, only 11 % of such positions were held by women, with this number decreasing to 10 % in 2016 and 9 % in 2018. The EU average is above 20 % in all three years (24 % in 2019).

With the ERA Roadmap 2016-2020, Cyprus formulated a national strategy on gender in R&I for the first time (Wroblewski 2021). This was issued by the Cyprus Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination, and Development in 2017 (RC 2017) and defined three national priorities in relation to gender equality: 1) the empowerment of women by encouraging equal representation in decision-making bodies and high-level appointments, 2) the creation of a better work-life balance, and (3) the promotion of the gender dimension in research proposals and projects and equal participation opportunities in evaluation panels.

Actions to be promoted to achieve the first goal include encouraging RPOs to develop GEPs, integrating the gender dimension into structures and policies in science and research, organising workshops and seminars on gender equality, examining and adopting good practices from other EU Member States, contributing to the identification of gaps in gender equality legislation and promoting the correction of such gaps. Concerning a better work-life balance, Cyprus plans to promote the design of support measures and investigate the possibility of introducing flexible work and working time arrangements. Regarding the third goal, plans foresee the preparation of gender equality guidelines for the composition of project/proposal teams and evaluation panels and the promotion of gender equality as a sub-criterion in the evaluation process for the National Framework Programmes for R&I.

The ERA Roadmap builds upon existing initiatives to promote gender equality in R&I. The emphasis in gender equality measures in Cyprus lies on the elimination of stereotypes relating to women's ability to compete with men and their devotion to their careers. These measures range from promoting research with a focus on gender equality and participating in projects in this area to implementing laws aimed at fostering gender equality.

Research with a focus on gender equality is mostly supported by the University of Cyprus (UCY) through its Research Centre for Gender Studies. The emphasis here lies on issues related to the rights and participation of women and men in all aspects of human activity. Since 2012, UCY has offered an interdisciplinary postgraduate degree in Gender Studies (MA or PhD), which is open to graduates from all disciplines. The programme is coordinated by the UNESCO Chair in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, which was established by the UCY in 2009 and also conducts research related to gender equality and organises gender mainstreaming activities.

Cyprus University of Technology has included gender equality in its organisation by developing a GEP for 2014-2020 with actions such as promoting expertise on gender equality through seminars, training programmes and workshops, a procedure to combat sexual harassment and discrimination and the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data.

Finally, Cyprus has implemented laws relating to gender equality, which include the stipulation of equal pay for women and men and extensions to PhD terms in the case of maternity leave. There are no laws specifying quotas or other quantitative targets to increase the participation of women in decision-making bodies.

The ERA Roadmap also mentions the role played by the main research funding agency (RIF) through its participation in several projects that focus on gender issues, namely GENDERACTION, GENDER-NET Plus ERA-NET Cofund and TARGET. According to the ERA Progress Report 2018, other initiatives – such as the national RESTART 2016-2020 programme and other programmes co-financed by ESIF – take the dimension of gender into account, for example by having operators comply with relevant laws regarding gender equality, by having gender equality authorities participate in the Consultation Committee and Monitoring Committee or by including an evaluation of gender mainstreaming in programme evaluation plans. In addition, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth's Department of Higher and Tertiary Education seeks to create the appropriate conditions for providing tertiary education and training in academic and professional study programmes to the largest possible number of people.

The ERA Progress Report 2018 (EC 2019) shows an increase in the gender dimension in research (+10.4 percentage points) and the share of female PhD graduates (+6.3 percentage points) in Cyprus since the ERA monitoring in 2016. In contrast, there has been a decline in the share of women in Grade A positions in higher education (-4.7 percentage points).

2.2.2 Greece

Greece formulated a National Action Plan (NAP) for R&I within the ERA strategy (Ministry of Education, Research & Religious Affairs 2016). Priority 4 of this NAP stresses horizontal and vertical segregation and the fact that almost no gender equality policies had been implemented as of 2015. The description of the status quo (reference year 2015) depicts a lack of gender equality policies in general (ibid, p. 28): “In the private sector, where the pressure is linked to productivity, and the public sector, gender discrimination is not considered an important issue and the obstacles to the progression of women are attributed to the social division of labour between the sexes in general, connected with caring responsibilities rather than the individual workplace.”

The Greek NAP (p. 29f) formulates the following objectives:

- To improve/complete the existing institutional framework and develop policies and incentives to create a more favourable environment in terms of the recruitment and career progression of female researchers.

- To come up with ways of exploiting scientific knowledge that has been produced on gender issues in undergraduate courses and at postgraduate level as well as measures to encourage researchers to integrate a gender perspective in the design of projects.

In both regards, Greece plans to orientate its policies towards the gender initiatives taken in the context of Horizon 2020. Furthermore, a more systematic collaboration with the General Secretariat for Demography, Family Policy and Gender Equality Gender Equality will be pursued to create synergies with policies aimed at promoting equal access of women in the labour market, education and lifelong learning.

Concrete measures mentioned in the NAP include a quota regulation for advisory boards (each gender should represent at least one third of members). The quota – which was foreseen but not established in law – should be applied by the National Council for Research and Innovation, the Sectoral Research Councils, the Regional Research and Innovation Councils and the Scientific Councils of Research Centres. Furthermore, at least one third of members of proposal review committees should be women. The NAP also aimed at strengthening the gender dimension in research by encouraging public research bodies to implement GEPs and disseminate information regarding the “gendered innovations” approach. Universities should be encouraged to address gender issues in teaching and research in doctoral programmes.

The ERA Progress Report 2018 places Greece in Cluster 3, which is below the EU average. The country had a share of female PhD students of 49 %, just above the overall score of 48 % for the EU Member States. On the headline indicator, the share of women in Grade A positions in the higher education system, Greece obtained a score of 22 % (compared to 24 % for the EU-28.) For the gender dimension in research content, Greece’s score was about 10 % lower than that of the Member States overall. Greece had witnessed small growth in the period from 2014 to 2016, where it lay slightly above the EU-28 trends for the headline indicator and share of female PhD students. Its inclusion of a gender dimension in research content, however, has, on average, seen annual decreases in recent years, while the EU-28 trend was positive (+2.5 %).

The ERA Progress Report 2018 attributes the changes to the increase in the rate of female graduates, which currently exceeds that of men. However, the research sector continues to be characterized by imbalances in both the horizontal (between different scientific disciplines) and vertical (levels of hierarchy) dimensions. The institutional and legal framework that regulates issues such as access to employment, working conditions and protection against discrimination has considerably improved overall in recent years. The legal provisions regarding research are less complete, and no systematic measures have been taken to guide research on gender issues. It

should be noted, however, that even in cases where legal provisions do exist, they have either never been activated or have been implemented too slowly. A law that was passed in March 2019 defined as a central goal the promotion of substantive gender equality, alongside the prevention and combatting of gender-based violence.¹ While it did not cover the area of research and higher education and did not mention GEPs, it encouraged public and private enterprises to develop a gender equality and equal opportunities policy. The need for universities to develop GEPs was indirectly introduced with another law that was passed in 2019 that was aimed at restructuring some universities. That law foresees the establishment of Committees for Gender Equality (CGE) in all Greek universities. It envisions such committees as consultative bodies to assist university administrations in their efforts to promote gender equality. One of the main responsibilities of the CGEs is to develop Action Plans to promote substantive equality in the educational, research and administrative structures of higher education institutions.²

2.2.3 Italy

Italy has a legal requirement for national, regional and local public authorities and non-profit institutions (including RPOs) to adopt a triennial “Positive Action Plan” aimed at removing the obstacles that hamper the full realisation of equal opportunities at work (see De Micheli & Vingelli forthcoming). In 2006, the Italian National Code of Equal Opportunities between Women and Men made it mandatory by law (Legislative Decree 198) for all public administrations, including the 96 state universities, to produce a Positive Action Plan (PAP) in order to remove obstacles preventing the full realisation of equality between women and men. An Italian university’s PAP is prepared and implemented by an internal Central Guarantee Committee for Equal Opportunities in Public Administrations for Workers’ Wellbeing and Against Discriminations, established in 2010, whose mandate consists mainly of advisory and monitoring tasks and covers all forms of discrimination, economic treatment, career advancement, security and access to the labour market. The committee’s task in universities is to ensure a level playing field and equal opportunities for staff as well as in access to education and research. Its remit is also to prevent or remove any form of discrimination related to disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, race or ethnic origin. Equal opportunity is now a foundational issue for each university that is reflected in their statutes and functions as a general and guiding principle. While these specific provisions mean that many universities now pay greater attention to gender equality, only a small number of them enshrine

¹ Law 4604/2019 on “Promotion of substantive gender equality, prevention and combatting of gender-based violence”, *Government Gazette*, Issue 1, no. 50, 26 March 2019.

² Law 4589/2019, *Government Gazette*, Issue 1, no. 13, 29 January 2019.

gender studies in their general principles or offer corresponding training/study programmes. In its Positive Action Plan, a university outlines the positive actions planned for the following three years to promote gender equality. In 2018, the Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR) published recommendations for developing positive actions to pursue gender equality at universities, while Directive 2/2019 of the Ministry of Public Administration added the PAP as an annex to the Performance Plan, also mentioning the gender budget reports among the requirements for public administrations. A PAP, which not supported by a common template, takes a narrative form and is similar to a GEP. Until recently, there were no guidelines, budget, building blocks or sanctions relating to the GEP requirement.

The Ministry of Education, Universities and Research submitted an ERA Roadmap 2016-2020 which included a priority 4 (gender equality in R&I) (MIUR 2016). Hence, gender equality policies for R&I have been formulated which put specific emphasis on women's participation in decision making and on improving work-life balance. Regarding women in decision making positions, Italy formulated the goal of increasing the share of women in Grade A positions to 30 % by 2020. To support work-life balance policies, the ERA Roadmap stipulates that at least 0.1 % of the institutional state funding of public research organisations (including universities) should be allocated to measures to improve the work-life balance. The following target has been formulated in this context: by 2020, 30 % of state-funded research organisations should have implemented measures that foster a work-life balance.

According to the recent ERA Progress Report (EC 2019), Italy failed to reach its target to increase the share of women professors to 30 %. In 2018, the share of women in Grade A positions lay at 22 %, which is slightly below the EU-28 average (24 %). The report also states that Italy has established specific provisions requiring RPOs to implement structured GEPs (EIGE 2016) and that RFOs have implemented measures regarding gender equal opportunities for scientists and/or the gender dimension in research content in their evaluation criteria. In 2014, Italy's unadjusted gender hourly pay gaps for the total economy and for the scientific research and development (R&D) field were among the lowest in ERA countries. Data showed a 6.1 % pay gap for the total economy and a 6.4 % pay gap for scientific R&D services.

While the new requirements for a GEP establish the integration of the gender dimension into R&I, it is important to note that Italy has been a frontrunner in gender medicine (or gender-specific medicine)³, pursuing the establishment of gender studies since the end of the 1990s. In 2018, Italy

³ The study of the influence of biological (defined by sex) and socio-economic, environmental and cultural (defined by gender) differences on the health conditions of individuals.

adopted a “Plan for the Dissemination and Implementation of Gender Medicine”, which aims “to provide a coordinated and sustainable framework to disseminate Gender Medicine throughout the country and to ensure the quality and appropriateness of the services provided by the national healthcare system”.

In 2019, the National Agency for Evaluating the University and Research System (ANVUR) aimed to incentivize universities and RPOs towards gender-responsive logics in their performance and budget cycles and published guidelines for implementing gender budget initiatives. The Conference of Italian University Rectors (CRUI) also published specific methodology guidelines for implementing gender budgets in universities (2019), providing practical suggestions to incentivize the implementation of the process and fully integrate the gender equality perspective into the strategic process. Finally, in July 2021, CRUI published and disseminated guidelines (Vademecum) for the preparation and drafting of GEPs in universities.

2.2.4 Morocco

Morocco has made advancements in establishing the legal foundations for equality between women and men. Article 19 of the new Constitution of 2011 enshrines for the first time the principle of equality between men and women in the protection of all human rights. It provides that the State shall endeavour to achieve equality between men and women, and it sets up an authority to promote equality and fight against all forms of discrimination. The Constitution consolidates the achievements of previous legislative reforms that have contributed to greater equality between men and women and to eliminating discrimination against women. These reforms include the revision of the Commercial Code in 1995, the adoption of the new law on civil status in 2002, the new Code of Criminal Procedure in 2003, the continuing reform of the Penal Code since 2003, the changes in the Labour Code in 2003, the reform of the Family Code in 2004 and the reform of the Nationality Code in 2007. The adoption of the law 103-13, in 2018, to fight against violence against women is another step in this process.

Despite the recognition of equal rights between women and men, progress as regards gender equality is slow. Traditional gender stereotypes and severe gender inequalities persist in society. The observation of this inequality is apparent in many sectors of activity, notably in the (higher) education sector.

In the field of education, the main policy priority has been ensuring the right to equal access, especially in poor rural areas where girls are at a great disadvantage when it comes to compulsory schooling. Several measures have been adopted under the framework of the National Education

and Training Charter and the Urgence Plan (2009-2012) (Kingdom of Morocco, 2008), the Governmental Plan for Equality 2012-2016 (Kingdom of Morocco, 2012); the Strategic Plan 2015-2030 drawn up by the Higher Education Council (Kingdom of Morocco, 2015) and the new Plan for Equality 2017-2021 (Kingdom of Morocco, 2018). They include establishing the school as a safe space for learning values and behaviours related to gender equality, fostering the promotion of women to management positions and building the institutional capacity to adopt gender equality as a principle of governance throughout the education system – addressing, among other aspects, curricula and teaching approaches, budget and management (Elammari, 2018).

However, all these measures refer only to compulsory education. Gender equality is completely absent in the objectives set for higher education. Despite the adopted laws that are aimed at changing the situation of women, no concrete gender-focused policies in research and innovation have been implemented. In addition to social, family, and cultural barriers (transmission of patriarchal culture), women are not encouraged to work in positions of responsibility. Inequality becomes the normalised default. The integration of the gender dimension in teaching and research content is also scarce. In this regard, it is worth noting that the UH2C gender research groups organised in 2015 Morocco's first National Congress on Gender in Higher Education (General States of Research and Education on Gender) in collaboration with UNESCO. The congress issued a Joint Statement to foster gender in research and curricula, which was signed by the president of UH2C and several deans (Gillot, Nadifi, 2018).

Regarding the higher education sector, the situation is ambivalent. On one hand, there are positive developments when it comes to the presence of women among students and graduates. Since the creation of the country's first modern university, women's access to higher education has evolved significantly in Morocco. In the academic year 2020-2021, women were overrepresented among higher education graduates (53%), although their presence decreases by level of degree: 54% in Bachelor programmes; 47% in Master programmes and 39% in PhD programmes (Kingdom of Morocco 2021). On the other hand, Nafaa and Bettachy (2014) from University Hassan II Mohammedia highlighted in the framework of the SHEMERA project how this situation changes when it comes to teaching, research and decision-making positions. While women are well represented in administrative functions (41%), women remain underrepresented in top teaching and management positions. Women account for 33% of teaching staff at the lowest university positions but only 18% of full professors. Women are likewise not very visible at university management level. Until 2017, only one woman had achieved to be president of a university, and there were only few women as deans or directors. In 2019, two female presidents were elected:

one at Hassan II University of Casablanca (UH2C), one of the institutions participating in TARGET, the other at Hassan I University of Settat. In the framework of this project, UH2C adopted an Equality Charter and established a Gender Equality Committee within the university council, which is being replicated at the faculty level.

2.2.5 Romania

The Romanian higher education sector comprises 50 public and 8 private universities. According to the She Figures 2018, Romania has the highest share of women in Grade A positions (54.3 % in 2016), a figure which has increased in recent years (48.4 % in 2013). The share of women in Grade A positions is significantly higher than the EU average (23.7 % in 2016). However, women are underrepresented among heads of institutions in the higher education sector. In 2017, only 15.5 % of institutions had a female head, which is significantly below the European average (21.7 %).

Similar to the high representation of women in Grade A positions, women make up 50 % of members of academic, or R&D boards, commissions, councils, committees, foundations or assemblies, which usually hold a large degree of decision-making power. However, no such board was headed by a woman in 2017. The EU-28 averages stand at 27 % of women among board members and 20 % among leaders.

The Romanian ERA Roadmap (MENCS 2016) refers to the high share of women in Grade A positions and concludes that there is no need for specific gender equality policies as long as women's representation in top positions does not decline. Romania does not address structural barriers to the integration of gender in research and teaching content in the context of the ERA Roadmap 2016-2020.

In the ERA Progress Report 2018 (EC 2019), the European Commission confirms this position by stressing the country's performance on the headline indicator (share of women in Grade A positions) and the indicator for inclusion of the gender dimension in research content. However, a comparative assessment of national ERA roadmaps placed Romania in the group of countries without a gender equality priority (Wroblewski 2021). Hence, Romania has not implemented specific gender equality policies in R&I since 2016.

There are currently explicit attempts to abolish gender studies at Romanian universities. In June 2020, an amendment to the National Education Law no 1/2011 was submitted to parliament which prohibits "units, in educational institutions and in all spaces for vocational education and training, including in units providing extracurricular education 'activities' in order to spread the theory or opinion of gender identity, understood as the theory or opinion that gender is a different

concept from biological sex and that two are not always the same”. Critics formulated an *amicus curiae* brief and argue that the law undermines the freedom of research (and, implicitly, the autonomy of universities) and unjustifiably and disproportionately restricts the freedom of expression, which are guaranteed both by the Romanian Constitution and by European and international laws on human rights. In October 2020 (when this report was formulated), the case had still not been decided by the Constitutional Court.

2.2.6 Serbia

In 2013, a total of 21,044 people were employed in R&D in Serbia. At 51 %, the proportion of women in this area was above the EU-28 average (25 %) (MPN 2016). According to the ERA Progress Report (EC 2019), 55 % of PhD graduates in Serbia are female, which is also well above the EU-28 average of 48 %. The annual increases were close to 7 % and thus over 6 % above the EU-28 trend. The European Commission could not calculate the proportion of women in Grade A positions in the higher education system (ERA Progress Report 2018). However, , Serbia lies below the EU-28 average with regard to the inclusion of the gender dimension in research content. The corresponding average annual drop in scores of 17 % means that Serbia has lagged even further behind the other EU Member States since the last ERA monitoring in 2016.

In 2016, Serbia formulated a new “Strategy on Scientific and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia for the Period 2016-2020 – Research for Innovation” (MPN 2016), which is based partly on its “Strategy on Scientific and Technological Development for the Period 2010-2015” and other strategic documents at both Serbian and EU level. The strategy is a national roadmap for integration into the European Research Area (ERA) and states that science should be based on a competitive system that supports outstanding scientific achievements and their relevance for economic development, the competitiveness of the Serbian economy and the development of society as a whole (MPN 2016, p. 2). The overarching goals are economic growth, social and cultural progress, and an increase in living standards and quality of life (ibid.). The efficiency and effectiveness of the scientific research system should create new knowledge and technologies and solve complex social and economic problems. Therefore, highly qualified research staff should be trained. The strategy defines specific goals:

1. Encouraging excellence and the relevance of scientific research in the Republic of Serbia;
2. Strengthening the connection between science, the economy and society to encourage innovation;
3. Establishing an effective management system for science and innovation in the Republic of Serbia;

4. Ensuring excellence and the availability of human resources for science, the economy and social affairs;
5. Improving international cooperation in the field of science and innovation;
6. Increasing investment in research and development through public funding;
7. Encouraging investments by the business sector in research and development.

One measure to achieve the 6th objective is gender-related: “Gender and minority equality will be improved at all levels of decision-making and gender budgeting will be implemented in accordance with the Gender Budgeting Guidelines at the national level in the Republic of Serbia.” The relevant performance indicators are the percentage of gender representation at different decision-making levels and the share of women in the total number of researchers. Apart from that, no further mention is made of gender or women’s issues. The new ‘Strategy on Scientific and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2021-2025 – The Power of Knowledge’ does not include any new objectives regarding gender issues.

2.2.7 RMEI countries

RMEI member institutions represent several Mediterranean countries in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. European countries like Greece, France, Italy and Spain have committed themselves to gender equality in the context of the common ERA strategy, which includes gender equality objectives. However, the commitment to gender equality at national level varies: while Spain, for instance, formulated a comprehensive gender equality policy in its national ERA Roadmap, Italy’s national ERA Roadmap is rather inconsistent (Wroblewski 2021).

Non-European member countries have not formulated comparable gender equality objectives or policies. Consequently, the home countries of the RMEI members differ significantly regarding the status quo and relevance of gender equality. According to the Global Gender Gap Index 2020, which covers the four main dimensions of Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment, RMEI countries are represented both among the top performers and the low performers. Spain holds rank 8, France rank 15, Italy rank 76, Tunisia rank 124, Egypt rank 134, Morocco rank 143 and Lebanon rank 145 out of 153 countries. The situation is slightly different when only the educational attainment sub-index is considered: France now holds rank 1 (together with 25 other countries), Spain ranks lower compared to the overall index (rank 43), whereas Italy performs better (rank 55). Similarly, Egypt (rank 102), Tunisia (rank 106), Lebanon (rank 111) and Morocco (rank 115) all perform better in educational attainment than in the overall index.

Furthermore, the political and economic situations in countries like Egypt, Tunisia and Lebanon were difficult even before the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. The economic situation is illustrated in the Human Development Index (2018)⁴: while Spain, France and Italy hold ranks 25, 26 and 29 respectively, Lebanon holds rank 93, Egypt rank 116 and Morocco rank 121. The differences in the political situation are mirrored in the Democracy Index (The Economist 2020): Spain and France are listed as full democracies, Italy as a flawed democracy, Morocco and Lebanon as hybrid regimes, and Egypt and Palestine as authoritarian regimes.

⁴ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-index-hdi>

3 TARGET goal achievement

This chapter of the report provides an overview of the achievements made by the TARGET implementing partners during the last four years. Based on this description, the lessons learned from the TARGET approach will be discussed in chapter 4.

3.1 Development of a comprehensive GEP/GES

All implementing RFOs and RPOs developed a comprehensive GEP which addressed all three gender equality dimensions. All GEPs formulated objectives and measures aiming at a) removing gender-related institutional barriers in career progression, b) reducing gender bias in decision making, and c) strengthening the gender dimension in research and teaching. Due to the differences in organisational structure, size and field of activity (RFOs, accreditation organisation, university and non-university RPOs), the GEPs exhibit varying foci and measures. However, in all cases measures have been developed to reach the objectives and concrete responsibilities and time frames have been defined.

The GEPs are evidence based (drawing on audits identifying the main challenges regarding gender equality) and embedded in a reflexive process. The individual GEP development steps were discussed with the CoP and the GEPs themselves approved by top management.

FRRB has already revised its GEP based on results of the monitoring and following the recommendations formulated by the European Commission in the context of Horizon Europe. Other implementing partners plan revisions for 2022.

In comparison to the RFOs, the accreditation organisation and the RPOs, RMEI faced different conditions as a network of engineering schools. The network is not in a position to directly influence its member institutions and formulate gender equality objectives for them. Accordingly, RMEI chose to formulate a gender equality strategy (GES) for itself which aims at imitating a gender equality discourse within the network and supporting change agents in member institutions through capacity-building activities and the possibility to share experiences. RMEI thus formulated a gender equality strategy when revising its mission statement. In concrete terms, it linked its mission, which focuses on sustainable development, explicitly with gender equality. The revised mission statement is mandatory for all engineering schools in the network, and some of them even formulated an explicit commitment to gender equality when communicating the revised mission statement within their institutions.

3.2 Implementation of GEP/GES measures

All implementing partners started to implement their GEPs/GES immediately after they had been approved. Some partners had to postpone or modify some measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic or, in some cases, for internal reasons.

FRRB implemented almost all the measures contained in its initial GEP. These were then reflected on at an early stage in the project, which led to an adaptation of the initial GEP. This adapted version of the GEP has been fully implemented (although some actions did have to be postponed or implemented in alternative formats due to COVID-19). The measures implemented included the integration of gender equality objectives into internal regulations and procedures, training activities for staff and members of the CoP on gender equality in general, gender bias and gender medicine as well as an adaptation of calls to better accommodate gender equality. The latter comprises the inclusion of gender criteria in call for research projects, changes to parental leave regulations for principal investigators (PIs), the development of a guideline for reviewers and the establishment of a database to monitor gender representation among PIs in funded projects.

RIF started implementing measures after GEP approval. Some planned measures have had to be postponed for several complex reasons. The implementation of the electronic data system, for example, took longer than expected, while GEP implementation was slowed down in 2019 due to a change in the management's position towards gender equality and restrictions regarding personnel capacities. RIF integrated gender criteria into calls for proposals, organised training workshops for staff and researchers and provided information material for reviewers to reduce gender bias in the evaluation of research proposals. During the last year of TARGET implementation, RIF organised focus groups with Cypriot researchers to identify the main barriers and challenges for women in R&I. Results of the focus groups and related recommendations will be presented to the Cypriot R&I community in early 2022.

ARACIS started the process of GEP development with a delay caused by several changes of the external gender expert who was supposed to support TARGET implementation. Accordingly, it took some time to find a stable solution. The external gender expert acted as a mediator between the project and the organisation. Activities related to the GEP have been implemented from 2019 onwards. ARACIS incorporated a commitment to gender equality in its internal strategic documents and added a gender criterion to its evaluation methodology for curricula. The agency also worked with gender experts from Romanian universities to formulate a recommendation to universities to strengthen the gender dimension in curricula.

ELIAMEP implemented all measures detailed in the GEP, although some of these did have to be adapted or postponed due to COVID-19 (e.g. planned workshops were held online after the outbreak of the pandemic). Concrete activities at ELIAMEP include a revision of its internal rules of operation (inclusion of a gender equality statement in all relevant internal documents, use of gender-sensitive language), the appointment of a gender equality officer in 2019, the systematic collection of sex-disaggregated data on recruitment, promotion and retention, the organisation of workshops and training activities for researchers and staff as well as comprehensive national dissemination activities.

The University of Belgrade focused with its GEP on two main priorities: Data collecting and monitoring, related to all three gender equality areas (careers, decision making and curricula and research content), and awareness regarding gender bias, especially related to the representation of women in top management and decision-making bodies and structures. Main objectives were focused on creating a data system for an annual gender report, awareness-raising activities, establishing a gender equality structure and promoting gender in teaching. Related activities have been implemented – some of them with a delay for technical reasons or due to COVID-19 restrictions. Furthermore, the issue of sexual harassment became a priority during the TARGET implementation period. The TARGET team at UB successfully addressed the topic and developed the Rulebook on the Prevention of and Protection from Sexual Harassment at the University of Belgrade, which was adopted in July 2021.

At UH2C the focus of GEP implementation was on formulating a formal commitment to gender equality and the establishment of structures. A TARGET working team and a steering committee, which also acts as the CoP, have been set up. The Charter for Equality approved by the university council represents the commitment of UH2C to gender equality objectives: to fight all forms of discrimination or violence, to increase women's participation in decision-making and research and to strengthen the gender dimension in teaching and research content. It was followed by the creation of a gender equality committee at the university council. To implement the Charter the TARGET team developed an action plan which contains concrete measures. The implementation of some of these measures had to be postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions. Implemented measures include two training workshops focusing on leadership capacity building (one for female researchers, one for female officials working in the university presidency), a survey among researchers to collect gender sensitive data, and two workshops (one for discussing the results of the survey; one for discussing how to strengthen gender equality in teaching linked to the ongoing reform of the curricula at the university)

RMEI introduced gender equality as an explicit objective in its mission statement. The revised mission statement was adopted by the general assembly and linked gender equality to sustainability, which forms the core of RMEI's mission. RMEI established a working group on gender equality, which organised a series of workshops to build capacity for a reflexive gender equality policy among its members (change agents) as well as several national events to increase awareness for gender equality in RMEI member institutions.

3.3 Establishment of a sustainable infrastructure for gender equality

In all implementing institutions, a specific person or team was responsible for TARGET implementation. In most cases, the GEP/GES also foresaw the establishment of structures for a continuous gender equality policy. In others, the need to assign responsibility for gender equality to a specific position became clear when reflecting on the experiences made during the four years of the project.

At FRRB, the GEP procedure that was established is one of the infrastructural elements which will remain in place even after TARGET ends. To continue GEP implementation from 2022 onwards, the position of a gender equality officer has been created. A staff member has been assigned to continue GEP implementation and monitoring as well as the organisation of related activities. These tasks are formally included in the job description and will be evaluated on a regular basis. Furthermore, the adapted data collection system will be continued and serve as a basis for the monitoring of gender equality criteria in calls.

RIF also established an electronic data system which provides the basis for a continuous monitoring of women's representation in internal human resources processes as well as in funding. The commitment to gender equality formulated in the GEP and the new guidelines (e.g., on the use of gender-sensitive language) are two further infrastructural elements that will remain in place after the TARGET project ends.

ARACIS established the position of an internal gender expert to replace the external gender expert who supported gender equality policies during TARGET implementation. The gender expert will take up office in January 2022. Furthermore, the working group on gender equality, which is composed of ARACIS members and representatives of universities, will continue beyond the TARGET project.

ELIAMEP established an infrastructure for gender equality which will remain in place after TARGET ends. This infrastructure includes the GEP procedure, the revision of internal rules of operation (which include a general statement regarding gender equality as well as principles like

the use of gender-sensitive language or gender balance in decision making). The systematic collection of sex-disaggregated data will likewise be continued.

UB established a gender equality committee to support gender equality policies which will continue after TARGET finishes. The adapted data collection procedures will also remain in place and thus provide the basis for an ongoing gender analysis and annual gender reports. However, the position of the gender equality officer who supported TARGET implementation will not be prolonged after the funding period. It thus remains unclear if or which resources for the implementation of gender equality measures will be available from January 2022 onwards.

At UH2C, the gender equality charter and gender equality commission will remain in place when TARGET ends. The gender equality commission set up at the university council is in the process of being replicated at faculty level (6 out of 18 faculties have set up or approved to set up this commission). These commissions will continue to lobby for an action plan, concrete measures and resources. The extent to which these activities will be successful depends on the priority given to gender equality goals in the future, i.e. on top management support (presidency, university council and deans).

RMEI established a working group on gender equality which comprised change agents from 12 member universities. While the working group will continue, the extent of its activities will depend on the successful acquisition of funding. The activities of the working group supported the establishment of gender equality structures at member institutions (e.g. a gender equality committee at the University of Rabat in Morocco or the Gender Equality Centre at the University of Sousse in Tunisia).

3.4 Capacity building for a reflexive gender equality policy

TARGET organised five capacity-building workshops for the TARGET core team at implementing institutions. These workshops aimed at building up competence for the development of a GEP based on a comprehensive approach of gender equality and an evidence-based, reflexive process. To complement these activities, three co-creation workshops were organised to focus on specific questions from implementing partners which arose in the context of the revision of their GEPs. Furthermore, two study visits were organised (one for RFOs and one for RPOs) in order to allow an exchange of experiences with institutions which have a long tradition of gender equality policies. And last but not least, capacity building also included the last consortium meeting, where sustainability strategies in each GEII were discussed.

FRRB's participation in capacity-building activities was characterised by a broad involvement of staff including the director. Due to the small number of staff members, it was possible to include them all. FRRB used the opportunity to formulate questions which arose in the GEP revision context for two capacity-building workshops and to obtain input from external experts on these issues.

At RIF, the local TARGET implementation coordinator participated in most capacity-building activities. Due to the restricted personnel resources for TARGET implementation, capacity building within the organisation remained limited. Although all staff members have been informed about the project and the GEP, it was not possible to arrive at a common understanding of gender equality which includes structural change and the gender dimension in research content.

At ARACIS, capacity-building activities were mainly addressed at the external gender expert rather than ARACIS staff. The internal gender expert, who takes up office in January 2022, did not participate in capacity-building events like the co-creation workshops or final project meeting. According to the interviews conducted in spring 2020 at ARACIS, staff interpret gender equality as gender balance in all fields and hierarchical levels and do not see a relevance of gender equality objectives for their field of responsibility.

The ELIAMEP TARGET core team participated in all capacity-building workshops and formulated questions for one co-creation workshop. Through the constant discussion of TARGET implementation in monthly staff meetings, a common understanding of gender equality, the GEP and related measures emerged. In the interviews conducted, it was striking that all staff members referred to their own responsibility for gender equality in their everyday work. It is also common sense that considering the gender dimension in research content is an integral element of gender equality in R&I. However, although they accept this dimension of gender equality, researchers expressed a need for specific support to implement it in their research. This situation provides the basis for future capacity-building activities at ELIAMEP.

At UB, the TARGET core team participated in capacity-building workshops, the co-creation workshops and the study visit for RPOs. UB also formulated specific questions for one of the co-creation workshops (anti-sexual harassment policies). The gender equality officer ensured that the knowledge thus acquired was incorporated into the development of gender equality policies including awareness-raising activities. She also incorporated the gender expertise available at the university into the process (e.g. the Centre for Gender and Politics) and thus supported networking within the decentral organisation. However, if the position is not retained, such important activities for the establishment of an internal gender equality discourse will not be continued in a systematic way.

The UH2C TARGET coordinator participated in most capacity-building activities. Based on that input and supported by TARGET, she drafted and revised the action plan and led the discussions about the institutionalisation of gender equality policies within the TARGET working team, the TARGET steering committee and the gender equality committee at the UH2C. Furthermore, the links with gender-related research groups at the university were strengthened. However, participation in capacity building was restricted to the UH2C coordinator and hence not fully exploited. Furthermore, the sustainability of results in terms of capacity building depends to a large extent of continuity of support from top management for further development of a gender equality policy at UH2C.

The RMEI project coordinator participated in all TARGET capacity-building workshops as well as the co-creation workshops and the study visit for RPOs. Based on input gained thereby and supported by TARGET, she revised the RMEI mission statement, established the working group and started awareness-raising and capacity-building activities within the network. RMEI activities in the TARGET implementation context – mainly the organisation of workshops – aimed at building capacity among working group members. They serve as change agents and aim at initiating a gender equality discourse within their home institutions and thus contribute to the development of gender equality policies in the long run. However, they did not undertake the whole process of developing a GEP like the other implementing partners – given the requirements and complexity of such a process, they would need corresponding support when developing structured policies.

3.5 Establishing a Community of Practice

The TARGET approach aimed at establishing a CoP at each implementing institution to support the change agent responsible for project implementation and GEP development. The aim was to avoid a situation where responsibility for gender equality is assigned to one single person rather than a group of stakeholders who share an interest in pursuing gender equality. All partners established a CoP but chose varying approaches and had different experiences in doing so.

FRRB aimed from the start to have a CoP which involves external stakeholders in the field of biomedical research in Lombardy. Hence, the FRRB CoP is composed mainly of representatives of regional hospitals, universities and research centres. The director of FRRB has consistently participated in the CoP. FRRB also aimed at actively involving R&I policy makers in the CoP, an endeavour which has proven difficult.

RIF aimed at establishing an internal CoP for TARGET implementation, which proved difficult when top management support was reduced. Hence, the responsibility for gender equality remained firmly on the shoulders of the local project coordinator and could not be anchored or mainstreamed in the organisation. The focus groups organised in the final phase of TARGET implementation not only contributed to a better understanding of the challenges and barriers for women, they also led to the formation of a network of the focus group participants, a kind of CoP, which proved to be helpful and supportive for the local project coordinator.

TARGET implementation at ARACIS has been pursued by a core team consisting of the external gender expert and one staff member supported by the vice president. ARACIS aimed at establishing a CoP first by addressing ARACIP, an organisation responsible for pre-university education. This attempt failed due to a lack of gender expertise at ARACIP. In spring 2020, a workshop was organised with gender experts from Romanian universities, which proved a more fruitful dialogue and was finally formalised through the establishment of a working group made up of members of ARACIS and representatives of universities.

ELIAMEP did not establish a formal group which met on a regular basis and acted as the CoP. Instead, the TARGET core team chose a more informal way of establishing the CoP. TARGET project implementation and gender equality have been included as a topic in monthly staff meetings, which are attended by most researchers. Each step in the development of the GEP has been discussed in this forum, i.e. the audit results, the draft GEP, etc. This constant engagement led to an increasing awareness of gender equality among staff as well as a shared understanding of gender equality and related objectives. In the second half of the TARGET implementation, ELIAMEP established a network of gender experts and representatives of Greek universities to share experiences with GEP development and implementation. This has been supported by the changing national gender equality policies which required the establishment of gender equality committees at each university.

At UB, the CoP has been involved in specific tasks during TARGET implementation. In the audit phase, a small CoP was – mainly those stakeholders who were relevant for data collection processes. After the audit phase, a broader CoP was addressed to present and discuss the audit results. The CoP has not, however, been constituted as an ongoing forum for discussing gender equality issues. The established gender equality committee, whose 12 members represent the different faculties and staff groups, might develop into a CoP. However, this will depend on the resources available for continuing the activities.

UH2C established a steering committee, which acted as the CoP. This group was large, included a balanced representation of professors from different faculties and disciplines as well as members of university management (vice-presidents in charge of cooperation, pedagogical affairs and training, research, deans), and met regularly during TARGET implementation.

In the case of RMEI, the TARGET working group also constitutes the CoP. The creation of the CoP was enabled by adopting a synergetic approach with other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), integrating gender equality into climate change, water, waste and energy, sustainability and peace interventions for the region, and mobilising the network's human resources – from academic leaders to students. Members of the CoP represented 12 RMEI member institutions and committed themselves to conduct a gender analysis at their home institution and to contribute to the development and implementation of the RMEI GES..

3.6 Contributing to a regional gender equality discourse in R&I

As TARGET implementing partners operate in countries which did not focus on gender equality in R&I at a national level until 2017, it was assumed that finding allies who also engage in gender equality issues and becoming visible as a pioneering institution might offer additional support for GEP development and implementation. TARGET therefore formulated the objective that implementing partners contribute to a national gender equality discourse in R&I.

FRRB aimed at involving policy makers in the CoP to initiate a gender equality discourse in R&I in the region. Since this approach did not prove successful, FRRB decided to use the CoP to formulate a policy paper focusing on gender equality in biomedical research which has been published in 2021.

RIF is the only RFO in Cyprus and thus an important player in national R&I policy. However, gender equality is not a priority in Cypriot R&I policy. If it is recognised, it is associated with requirements formulated by the European Union. RIF acts as an intermediary between the European and the national levels in the field of R&I policy but has not been able to establish gender equality as a national priority. The combination of the GEP requirement formulated for Horizon Europe and the focus groups has, however, increased the relevance of gender equality issues in R&I at national level.

ARACIS has been exposed to a difficult situation when implementing gender equality policies due to a lack of gender equality discourse at national level both in general and in R&I. Since 2017 ARACIS has become increasingly aware of its strong position in the national R&I policy field and its potential to initiate a gender equality discourse. Its main contribution to this emerging

discourse was the discussion of the integration of the gender dimension in its evaluation methodology. The recently adapted evaluation methodology and establishment of a working group on gender equality with gender experts from Romanian universities create a basis for a future gender equality discourse in R&I in Romania.

ELIAMEP actively participated in the national gender equality discourse by sharing its experiences with GEP development and implementation at various national events. It also developed a guideline for universities on how to develop a GEP based on the TARGET tools. This guideline aimed at supporting the newly established committees for gender equality in developing GEPs. These dissemination activities will be continued in the coming years through a series of training workshops funded by EEA/Norway grants.

UB's contribution to the national gender equality discourse in R&I in Serbia was supported by the fact that it had a female rector during the TARGET implementation period who also was the coordinator of the UB TARGET team. The university has often been referred to in the media as a progressive institution because of its female rector. She used the attention created by this fact to refer to gender equality whenever possible and to introduce UB as a good practice example. At the final TARGET event in December 2021, UB aimed to present its experiences with the GEP to policy makers and other Serbian universities, using the new GEP requirement of Horizon Europe as a springboard for the dissemination of TARGET.

The contribution of UH2C to the national gender equality discourse in R&I was supported by the fact that in the period of TARGET implementation a woman was elected as president of the university. Until 2017, only one woman had achieved this position in Morocco. In 2019, a female president was elected first at the UH2C and then at Hassan I University of Settat. This change was widely disseminated by the media, feminist movements and progressive NGOs and political parties. The female president of UH2C was very active in raising gender awareness, both in academia and in the society at large (in 2021 she was appointed Ministry of Solidarity, Family and Social Inclusion). Concerning national events, UH2C co-organised the "Symposium on the gender dimension in university curricula and research" in cooperation with UNESCO, the Research Institute for Development (IRD) and the Center for Studies, Research and Training on Gender and Equality Morocco (CEG-Morocco) and participated in a conference organised by RMEI at the University of Rabat. With the final national conference in December 2021, UH2C aimed at presenting the charter and its achievements to policy-makers and other universities.

Since RMEI represents a network of engineering schools in 17 Mediterranean countries, it did not aim at contributing to a national discourse about gender equality but sought instead to increase

awareness for gender issues among its member institutions. 12 of these member institutions have actively engaged in awareness-raising activities, and several of them organised local events to support gender equality. Probably the most sustainable contribution to a discourse is the creation of structures. At the University of Sousse – ENISO (National Engineering School of Sousse, Tunisia) a Gender Equality Centre and at the University of Rabat (Morocco) a gender equality committee has been established. In both cases the establishment of the structure was accompanied by a national event and media attention. In other countries national events with participation of academics and policy makers were organised which also got media attention. For example, the national event in Egypt (November 2021) has been organised by RMEI in cooperation with Cairo University and the Arab Academy for Science Technology and Maritime Transport. The Minister of Environment and two former ministers attended the conference as well as several representatives from industry.

4 Lessons learned

In this chapter, we discuss the lessons learned from TARGET implementation. To do so, we compare the TARGET approach with the achievements made during the four years of project implementation, focussing thereby on three questions: Did the approach to GEP developed and implementation work? How sustainable are the results achieved? Did TARGET implementing partners contribute to a national discourse about gender equality in R&I?

4.1 Lessons learned regarding the TARGET approach

The experiences of TARGET implementing institutions show that development and implementation of a GEP which initiates sustainable institutional change is a prerequisite endeavour. The key prerequisites for the success of such a process are: (1) formal top-level commitment, (2) time, (3) resources and (4) space for reflexivity. TARGET defined GEP development and implementation as an evidence based, cyclical and reflexive process. In concrete terms, this means that implementing institutions formulate their gender equality objectives based on a comprehensive audit and develop related measures as well as a targeted monitoring system. Key elements of this approach to supporting GEPs which aim at institutional change are reflexivity and the establishment of a CoP.

However, the starting point for this endeavour is an explicit formal **top management commitment** to a process which aims at initiating institutional change. This commitment was expressed by the TARGET implementing institutions when submitting the proposal. The challenge was to sustain it throughout the whole process and renew it in case of changes in management. Changes in top management slowed down the process, and specific actions by local project coordinators were necessary to renew the institutions' commitment to gender equality objectives in general and to TARGET implementation specifically.

TARGET experiences also showed that the development of a GEP through an evidence-based, reflexive process takes **time**. Reflexive elements like the discussion of audit results in the CoP or the joint reflection on developments regarding gender equality may look at first like elements which slow down the process compared to the adoption of a predefined standard GEP. However, the reflexive process contributes to the acceptance of gender equality objectives and concrete measures within the organisation and thus to both institutional change and the sustainability of the GEP and its interventions.

Top level commitment and time devoted to the GEP process have to be complemented by **sufficient resources of different types**. The provision of financial resources is important but not sufficient to secure successful GEP development and implementation. Although financial means to implement specific measures are important, they have to be accompanied by personnel resources for GEP development and implementation as well as gender and organisational development expertise. It is also necessary to assign concrete responsibility for GEP development to a person or team and allocate sufficient resources in terms of working hours for this task. The financial resources provided for implementing partners in TARGET covered specific measures as well as personnel costs. In addition, TARGET provided expertise in gender equality and organisational development through the supporting partners, who assisted the implementing partners in tailoring tools to the specific needs of their organisations (e.g. the gender equality audit tool or the monitoring tool) and in setting up the CoP. The competence to moderate such a process proved to be key for building up gender competence in the organisation beyond the core TARGET team. Furthermore, the involvement of gender scholars, gender practitioner and experts in organisational development highly supported the establishment of a CoP and capacity building.

The **Community of Practice** emerged as a building block of a reflexive gender equality policy. Discussions in the CoP supported several objectives at the same time. They contributed to a shared understanding of the challenges to be addressed with the GEP by discussing the results of the gender equality audit and the GEP at different stages in their development. The continuing involvement of the CoP in the GEP development and implementation process also contributed to building up gender competence in a broader group of stakeholders. This led to increasing awareness of gender equality issues within the organisation as well as to increasing ownership of the process, especially in cases where top management was effectively involved in the CoP. Experiences with TARGET implementation also showed how important it is to moderate the process constantly and communicate on a regular basis with the CoP.

4.2 Lessons learned regarding the sustainability of results

TARGET aimed at supporting the establishment of structures for gender equality in implementing institutions. The development of a **comprehensive GEP/GES** which addresses the three main gender equality objectives in R&I (increasing women's representation in fields and hierarchical positions where they are underrepresented, abolishing gender bias in decision making and integrating the gender dimension into research content and teaching) represents a formal commitment by an organisation to gender equality objectives – especially when the GEP/GES is formally approved. All implementing partners in TARGET succeeded in having a comprehensive

GEP/GES approved. The fact that the GEPs/GES were approved by top management and made available within the institutions and beyond makes it unlikely that they will disappear after the end of the TARGET project. However, this does not necessarily guarantee that GEP/GES implementation will continue.

To secure the continuing and effective implementation of the GEP/GES, **supporting structures** should be established. TARGET implementation was supported in each case by the local TARGET team, who were responsible for conducting the gender equality audit, developing the GEP, communicating gender equality objectives and the GEP within the institution and to top management as well as for moderating the CoP process. In some cases, implementing institutions formalised this position or support structure by establishing a gender equality officer. In other cases (e.g. UB and UH2C) a gender equality commission has been formally approved. A problematic aspect in terms of sustainability is the extent to which the mandate, members and resources of these structures depend on top-management elections or top-management direct decisions.

Some implementing partners also established structures which are preconditions for a reflexive gender equality policy which were not in place prior to the TARGET project. These include in particular the creation of electronic data processing systems, the development of transparent internal processes and the establishment of cooperation structures within the organisation and beyond. The latter is linked in most cases to the CoP.

TARGET aimed at building up **capacity for a reflexive gender equality policy** within the implementing organisations. The TARGET core team participated in capacity-building activities and became familiar with the procedure of conducting a gender equality audit, developing a GEP, related measures and a monitoring system as well as establishing a CoP. If responsibility for the further development and implementation of the GEP is transferred to another person or team, it is unclear to what extent the capacity build up will be sustained.

In contrast, the increasing awareness for gender equality issues among members of the CoP and the related **gender competence** which has been built up will be more sustainable as not all CoPs will leave the implementing organisation or its surrounding environment. However, gender competence alone is not enough to continue the GEP process: there also has to be a structure responsible for the process with the required competences.

4.3 Lessons learned regarding the influence on the national discourse about gender equality in R&I

When TARGET implementation started in 2017, the implementing institutions were located in countries which did not have policies to support gender equality specifically in R&I. In Greece and in Italy, this changed during the TARGET implementation period. The increasing engagement for gender equality in R&I at national level represented an additional push for the implementing partners and allowed them to become visible as gender equality pioneering institutions.

The Horizon Europe GEP requirement also increased the interest in institutional gender equality policies and exchange between TARGET implementing partners and other RPOs in the country. In some cases, this supported an extension of the CoP through the integration of external stakeholders. ARACIS, for example, established a working group with representatives of universities in the third year of the project. Similarly, RIF extended its CoP by creating a network of women researchers in the final phase of the project.

FRRB, in contrast, aimed at integrating external stakeholders in its CoP from the start. In concrete terms, it has addressed the main stakeholders in the field of biomedical research in the region and successfully integrated them into the CoP. A common position paper on gender equality in biomedical research in the Lombardy region is a strong and visible contribution to a regional gender equality discourse in R&I.

Without an external push like the changing policy environment in Greece or the Horizon Europe GEP requirement, it remained difficult for implementing partners to contribute to a national discourse about gender equality in R&I. This applied in particular to the two universities in the consortium and to RIF. Experiences with TARGET implementation will be presented to policy makers and other universities at the end of the project. The aim of these national dissemination events is to present the institutional gender equality policy (GEP), to raise interest from other universities to pursue a similar approach and to raise gender awareness among R&I policy makers, including the need for specific national policies and measures. However, it has proven difficult to propagate GEPs in R&I in countries characterised by a lack of gender equality discourse.

5 Recommendations

The development of a reflexive gender equality policy is a challenging and presuppositional endeavour, especially for institutions which start the journey and cannot rely on a supporting national gender equality discourse in R&I or related support structures. The experiences of TARGET implementing partners show, however, that committed institutions with highly engaged change agents and the necessary resources can achieve a great deal – even in difficult contexts. Nevertheless, TARGET implementation is also characterised by different forms of resistance, which affect individual institutions to varying degrees. For instance, decreasing support from management during the project lifetime, lack of support from colleagues, changes in key personnel for project implementation or the emergence of other challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic and anti-gender discourses at national level hampered GEP development and implementation. Such challenges highlight the central role of change agents for gender equality in the TARGET institutions, who used the obligations that arose from the project and from other European gender equality policies (e.g. the GEP requirement formulated in Horizon Europe) as push factors to continue their efforts for gender equality.

The question that now arises is how comparable framework conditions can be established outside an EU-funded project. We see opportunities for action on three levels that may influence each other, namely the institutional, the national and the European levels.

Institutions which develop a GEP have to meet specific preconditions which go beyond a formal commitment. They should be aware that a GEP process requires:

- a concrete mandate to a change agent to pursue the process and the provision of sufficient resources
- willingness to engage in a longer-term process that challenges existing structures and aims at structural change
- reflection on gender bias in structures, processes, teaching and knowledge production as well as willingness to change existing practices
- willingness to draw on gender and organisational change expertise from within the institution or beyond
- involvement of a variety of stakeholders in the process (establishing a CoP for gender equality) to build gender competence in the organisation with the support of gender experts.

TARGET experiences illustrate the relevance of the national context – i.e. the gender equality discourse in R&I – for the development of institutional gender equality policies. This also shows the following **need for action at national level**:

- formulating gender equality as a priority in national R&I policy (linked to the ERA policy agenda and the GEP requirement formulated in Horizon Europe)
- establishing a discourse about gender equality in R&I with all relevant stakeholders (RPOs, RFOs, policy makers, NGOs) to achieve a common understanding of gender equality challenges and objectives
- highlighting experiences of pioneering institutions with GEP development and implementation
- creating a platform for national stakeholders to exchange experiences with GEP development and implementation (with a specific focus on change agents in institutions)
- Providing concrete support for GEP development to research organisations, where appropriate in form of joint initiatives with other countries.

The Council of the European Union (2021) and the European Commission (2021a) call for such activities at national level when implementing the ERA policy agenda (e.g. the development of NAPs). However, instruments like the GEP requirement formulated in Horizon Europe represent a push factor but are not enough to initiate a gender-sensitive culture in R&I. Countries with little experience of gender equality policies in R&I need particular **support from the European level** when developing gender equality policies for the first time. Such support can take the following form:

- providing know-how and good practices regarding gender equality in R&I in general and GEPs in particular
- establishing an exchange platform for institutions and change agents regarding gender equality in R&I with a focus on GEP development and implementation. Such a platform should aim at making expertise from experienced countries usable for those which are just starting the journey and support the contextualisation of experiences.
- monitoring GEP implementation in the context of Horizon Europe to avoid a situation where GEPs are available but remain paper tigers and thus do not contribute to structural change.

The implementation of the new ERA policy agenda in combination with the GEP requirement formulated in Horizon Europe provide a window of opportunity to strengthen existing gender equality efforts and motivate institutions and countries to increase their commitment to gender

equality in R&I. There is much experience available – including that gained from TARGET implementation – to provide a starting point for institutions interested in starting out on this journey. However, achieving structural change requires a joint and coordinated effort between European, national and institutional stakeholders.

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