SPEAR

D3.3 Interim Evaluation - Overview Report

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MAY 2022

Project no.	824544
Project acronym:	SPEAR
Project title:	Supporting and Implementing Plans for Gender Equality in Academia and Research
Instrument:	H2020-SwafS-2018-1
Start date of project:	01.01.2019
Duration:	48 months

Organisation name of lead contractor for this deliverable: JOANNEUM RESEARCH

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Dissemination level		
PU	Public	X
CO	Confidential, restricted under conditions set out in Model Grant Agreement	
CI	Classified, information as referred to in Commission Decision 2001/844/EC	

DOCUMENT HISTORY

VERSION	DATE	NOTE	ISSUED BY
0.1		draft	

Glossary

EU	European Union	**R&I**	Research and Innovation
GE	gender equality	**RWTH**	RWTH Aachen University
GEP	gender equality plan	**SDU**	University of Southern Denmark
H2020	Horizon 2020 programme	**SIPs**	Supporting Implementing Partners
HE	Horizon Europe	**SWU**	South-West University "Neofit Rilski"
HR	Human Resources	**UNIRI**	University of Rijeka
IPs	Implementing Partners	**UU**	Uppsala University
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations	**VMU**	Vytautas Magnus University
NOVA	Universidade Nova de Lisboa	**VU**	Vilnius University
PU	Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarskl"		

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1 INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

This report gives an overview on the 9 individual Interim Evaluation Reports for all implementing SPEAR universities. These confidential individual reports describe the status quo of GEP development in each of these universities and feature a SWOT analysis as well as recommendations by the evaluation team.

In this overview, we won't describe the recommendations, but rather focus on questions regarding the GEP (development) in the universities: How were the GEP development processes designed? Which kind of GEP approaches are used? What are the strengths/success factors, weaknesses, opportunities, as well as threats/challenges regarding the GEP development and possibly the implementation?

All in all, this overview report aims to give a comprised picture of where these European universities stand at the moment of the Interim Evaluation. Therefore, not all details that were part of the individual Interim Evaluation Reports will be found here which does of course not make them less relevant to the individual actors.

This report begins with a description of the methodology (chapter 2) and a short overview on the SPEAR universities (chapter 3). The main part is divided into three chapters:

Firstly, the GEP approach (chapter 4), meaning the description of the approach the SPEAR universities used in their GEP development process and the GEP itself. More specifically, the chapter presents the top-down/bottom-up and structural anchoring elements.

Secondly, the following chapter consists of relevant topics that emerged during the interim evaluation (Chapter 5). While the individual interim evaluation reports contained SWOT tables representing the analysed contents of the interim evaluation in one specific SPEAR university, the overview report

focused on extracting the most important topics from these SWOT tables. This chapter describes what content was raised during the interim evaluation on these topics at all SPEAR universities.

Thirdly, the chapter Learnings (Chapter 6) lists the learnings that the SPEAR universities gained during their GEP development process and expressed in the interim evaluation. These learnings were not part of the individual interim evaluation reports, but are included in this overview report to make them accessible to other gender equality practitioners.

The report closes with a conclusion (Chapter 7) that summarises the impressions of the second round of evaluation of the SPEAR project against the background of sustainability.

2 METHODOLOGY

This overview report is based on nine Interim Evaluation Reports that were developed in the second evaluation round of the SPEAR project for each S/IP.

The Interim Evaluation Reports have built on the following sources:

- The Monitoring Template filled out by the respective SPEAR team

- Individual Online Interviews

- The Gender Equality Plan of the respective university (sometimes in a draft version)

Each implementation team selected the interviewees. In every university, there were two interviews conducted with SPEAR team members and in some universities, there were 1-2 stakeholder [1] interviews. The interviews were conducted by JOANNEUM RESEARCH mostly between May and June 2021; only in one university the interviews were conducted in September 2021. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and then analysed with the software MAXQDA oriented on the method qualitative content analysis according to Mayring (1983 described in Gläser/Laudel 2010). The content of the interviews is treated confidentially and was pseudonymised for the report.

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

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

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[1] In this report, we use quite a broad definition of stakeholders: Stakeholders can be all (groups of) persons affected by a GEP. Which stakeholders to involve in a GEP is highly dependent of the structure of the respective organisation. Internal stakeholders of a university GEP can be the GEP team, top and middle management, research and teaching staff, administrative/non-academic staff, students, etc. Also specific departments/units such as HR, PR/marketing or social partners can support a GEP. External stakeholders can include networks, audit organisations, gender experts/consultants or advisory boards, NGOs, gender research project partners or political actors.

3 SHORT OVERVIEW ON THE SPEAR UNIVERSITIES

To give you an idea of the nine SPEAR universities, you will find below the still valid description from the first evaluation overview report (status quo assessment).

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

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

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

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

Source: websites of the universities and SPEAR monitoring template (status 2020)

4 ON THE GEP APPROACH

First, it can be said that all the GEP approaches of the SPEAR universities were successful in the sense that they all produced university-wide gender equality documents, which were officially adopted by the time of the interim evaluation or shortly after. Secondly, it is clear from this document that while there are some commonalities between different universities and their GEPs, there is also diversity in the approach to gender equality - therefore it should be emphasised that there is no one right way for a GEP and that although examples can provide inspiration, GEPs need to fit the situation and context of each university.

Gender equality is, of course, at the core of most GEPs of SPEAR universities (e.g. via a gender mainstreaming approach), while many combine it with broader concepts such as wider diversity dimensions or equal opportunities in general. Some universities have for example already an equal opportunities strategy in place, but develop the GEP as a complementary document. Other universities mention these broader concepts as objectives and/or activities within their GEPs, for example activities on sexual orientation, ethnicity or age.

4.1 Top down / bottom up

All SPEAR universities chose an approach, which mixes top-down and bottom-up or participatory elements either in the GEP implementation or already in the GEP development process.

The development of the GEP document that represents the whole university was in some universities rather a top-down approach, with involvement of the members of the SPEAR team and the necessary committees, representatives and councils which provided feedback. However, the top of a university often already consists of many stakeholders and many of the SPEAR universities included bottom-up impulses to gather input with different strategies. For example, one university developed voluntary GEPs on the faculty level and based the overall university GEP on these locally anchored GEPs, while another one will do it the other way round and developed first a central GEP, which will be complemented by faculty/department GEPs. One university used data collection as a way to establish an internal stakeholder process, which included the collection of data, presentation of the analysed status quo and the collection of feedback. Another university decided to conduct an extensive data collection process using different methods (focus groups, quantitative questionnaire) and involving different groups of university members (e.g., administrative staff). Then, the GEP was also open to comments from all staff. Again, another university tested their GEP model in a pilot faculty to gather experiences from the local level.

In their GEPs and their implementation, the SPEAR universities often foresee bottom-up processes. The majority of them plans to engage the faculties or other units in collaborative activities and/or put (operational) responsibility and agency on the local level, by letting the faculties/constituencies choose the GE activities that they will implement themselves and/or planning faculty GEPs. In this way, the emphasis is on anchoring activities locally, ensuring that activities make sense in their local context and, for some, reflecting the decentralised structure of the university.

4.2 Structural anchoring

As the SPEAR project is aligned with the approach of the European Commission regarding gender equality in research organisations, all SPEAR universities follow an approach, which takes both the individual, as well as the structural level into account. In some countries, the universities are also supported by a strong legal and policy framework.

The focus on the structural anchoring within SPEAR is firstly reflected in internal gender equality structures such as permanent bodies dedicated to GE work (e.g., GE Committees, Councils, position for prevention of sexual harassment), which are also equipped with GE knowledge and resources. In many SPEAR universities, these structures can be found on the central level, but also on the local level i.e., on the faculty level (e.g., faculty GE officers/committees), connecting these two levels. They can also be a way to connect the different areas of the university (i.e., faculties and other units). The SIP universities already had these kinds of gender equality structures in place before the SPEAR project, while the IPs establish(ed) them in the course of the project. Some do have more than one GE body, e.g. one for GE experts, one for decision-makers, one network for everyone. Function and purpose of that body depends on who is part of it (e.g., gender experts vs. decision-makers).

For some universities, the establishment of such structures was still a plan at the time of the interim evaluation and these were sometimes not (yet) formally anchored into the governance structure of the university or clear in their design and interplay, for example on concrete responsibilities and processes (e.g. Who has the strategic responsibility, who the operational? Who is responsible at the central level, who at the local level? When do which units interact and report to whom? How are they held accountable? In which committees does the GE officer/coordinator have a voice/mandate?). Relevant actors (e.g., the HR department) may not be clearly defined in their roles or responsibilities may be clearly defined but not fulfilled by the responsible persons.

It strengthens the GE structures if they are closely located to the university management or if the management is part of these structures (e.g., Rectors, Vice-Rectors). Some locate the GE body within the HR department; others create a separate entity, which is directly subordinate to the senior management. Thus, the concrete implementation/design of the structures will be part of the final evaluation for many SPEAR universities. Some further strengthened the structural anchoring of the GEP by intertwining gender and/or the GEP with other strategic documents, policies, processes and goals (e.g., overall university strategy, monitoring system, study/research regulations), which can increase synergies, as well as sustainability. In addition, research in the area of GE can be formalised into structures, e.g., by establishing a specific gender research centre or laboratory. These bodies can support the GEP implementation as well with their expertise, support, awareness raising and capacity building.

Secondly, the structural lens is also often considered within (gender equality) activities, meaning that these activities do not only consider the individual level (e.g., of researchers), but also the structural level. This is of course the case for the universities, which follow an explicit gender mainstreaming (i.e., considering gender in all processes and decision-making) or bifocal approach (i.e., connecting individual development with organisational/structural change). However, activities aimed at structural changes can also be found at other SPEAR universities which do not follow a gender mainstreaming approach, for example in the form of a bifocal mentoring programme, gender budgeting, a protocol on gender based violence incl. sexual harassment, flexible working arrangements or more transparent and fair selection procedures.

5 RELEVANT TOPICS FROM THE INTERIM EVALUATION REGARDING GEP (DEVELOPMENT)

In the individual interim evaluation reports, the content was analysed and presented in a SWOT analysis along the dimensions of strengths/success factors, weaknesses, opportunities and threats/challenges. For this overview report, the topics that came up in the individual reports were condensed and are described below. The topic descriptions make it clear whether the theme was primarily assessed as a strength/success factor/opportunity or rather as a threat/challenge/weakness.

The topics that emerged in the interim evaluation were:
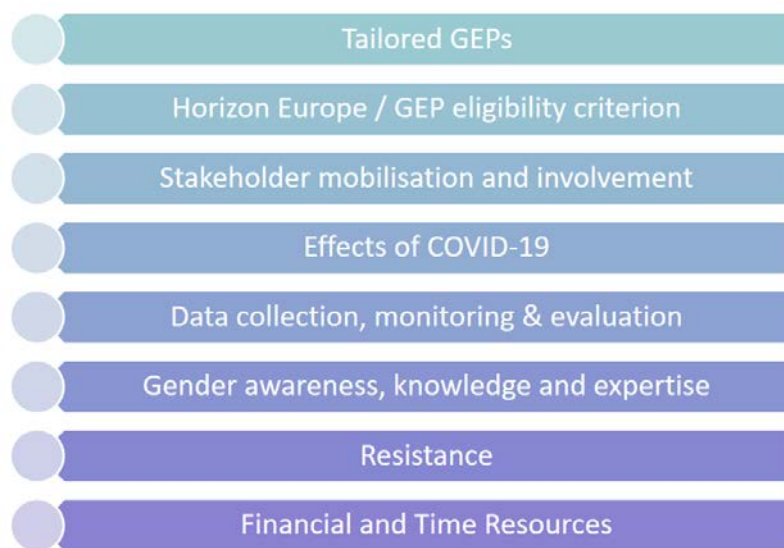
They are ordered from topics that came up more often as strength/opportunity (turquoise) to topics that came up more often as challenge/weakness (purple). However, this is only a rough assessment and should only serve as orientation, but is not a strict order.

5.1 Tailored GEPs

One great **strength** of the SPEAR project seems to be that the GEPs are highly tailored to the organisation and its context. This was achieved by building either the GEP development on a strong foundation of data collection (e.g., focus groups) and/or by integrating a local anchoring element in the core of the GEP. Meaning that the faculties/departments or other constituencies receive agency on what they would like to focus on in their gender equality activities, thus, have the possibility to choose what is most relevant for them and makes the most sense in their context. This is an opportunity to increase motivation, awareness, legitimacy and engagement. This can be achieved by having faculty GEPs, but also by settling the reporting of gender equality on that level. Hereby, it is a great strength if the responsibilities and processes are clearly defined, which some SPEAR universities were still working on at the moment of the interim evaluation.

Another important factor in tailoring the GEP is to develop the GEP in line with other key strategic documents, policies and structures such as the overall university strategy, quality system, statistical

follow up, etc. Also weaving in gender equality in other official university policies and regulations can enhance the structural anchoring. It can also mean in some universities that specific topics, which have a momentum, are put in the focus of the GEP e.g. recruiting and resource allocation.

5.2   Horizon Europe / GEP eligibility criterion

Horizon Europe's GEP eligibility criterion was a frequently discussed topic in most SPEAR universities and was perceived either as a **strength/success** or as an **opportunity**. Some have already experienced that the criterion provides legitimacy for efforts to develop a GEP. For example, discussions and negotiations with internal stakeholders were facilitated as it was used as a lever. Others expect legitimacy and opportunity for awareness raising for future internal action, as well as a domino-effect on the international level. However, it was also suggested that the impact of the GEP eligibility criterion depends on its enforcement, and that lax enforcement could even be counterproductive. Besides the GEP criterion, also the focus on the sex/gender dimension in Horizon Europe or similar regulations on the national level were seen as an opportunity.

5.3   Stakeholder mobilisation and involvement

Most of the stakeholder experiences that were mentioned in the interim evaluation appeared as **strengths** and **opportunities**.

One of the most crucial aspects in this regard concerns the visible support of the senior management, which is present in all SPEAR universities, but varies slightly in the degree of support or visibility. In the best case, powerful, active and convincing allies and frontrunner faculties support the GE work and are actively involved by the GEP team.

Most SPEAR universities reported of actively finding and involving stakeholders, which have a similar focus such as HR, a parenting academy, work environment committees etc. It can be helpful to foster the ties between the stakeholders, which can be also formalised in a specific working group or similar. An internal network of allies can create synergies, foster communication, promote awareness in all areas of the university and push the GE activities. For example, frontrunner faculties can inspire others. It can be counted as an opportunity if there is a potential of allies at the university who are interested in GE, but not yet so involved and networked. Some SPEAR universities, thus, already had a broad involvement of interested people in the GEP development process by offering the opportunity to discuss (e.g., focus groups) and feedback (e.g., workshops). One university has specifically chosen a GEP approach that centres on dialogue and communication at eye level, i.e., with extensive stakeholder involvement. In addition, external stakeholders can help promote GE through exchange in specific settings (e.g., Communities of Practices, Advisory Boards) or with specific relevant stakeholders such as political actors or academic councils.

As for **challenges and weaknesses**, it was reported in one university that even though there is commitment, parts of the top management could drive and communicate GE more actively. It can also be a challenge to get all faculties/constituencies and departments on board, meaning, creating commitment and support on that level. It also proved difficult to attract researchers from disciplines other than gender studies to the gender dimension in studies and research. Changes in personnel are also a challenge as they have the risk of losing valuable (management) support or knowledge/expertise and can slow down the process. Excluding some stakeholders from GE(P) communication and

involvement can be necessary due to limited resources, but might create difficulties in the future. If roles and responsibilities of crucial stakeholders (such as HR) are not clear, synergies may not be exploited and the speed of progress might be affected.

Communication and dissemination were less discussed topics during the interim evaluation. This could play a bigger role in a later phase of the GEP process. However, it can be said that communication that reaches (almost) everyone is also a challenge. Low-threshold communication, which considers different levels of gender awareness is key. For example, one SPEAR university also developed a booklet to clarify the terminology of the GEP in English and their native language to facilitate the understanding of the document.

5.4   Effects of COVID-19

In some SPEAR universities, the topic of COVID-19 was not addressed in the interim evaluation in relation to the GE work or GEP development. For others, the pandemic seems to have brought some challenges and obstacles, but also had some positive effects.

The majority of SPEAR universities reported delays in activities such as discussions that are better conducted face-to-face (e.g., faculty council meeting). However, all delays were minor and did not affect the overarching GEP development processes. Integrating gender equality in already existing processes and task areas (e.g., career competence development) seems to be a strategy to make it more resilient of being dropped due to an increased workload.

Some experienced difficulties regarding their stakeholder engagement. They reported new complexities with the coordination of different stakeholders, as well as the building of (new) relationships as they mostly met online and there was less informal communication, e.g., coffee breaks. Shifting all communication to the internet did not work well for all participants. Some just preferred face-to-face meetings, did not have privacy in their office to participate in online focus groups or got tired of online meetings. The SPEAR teams found strategies to accommodate those stakeholders, e.g., by making face-to-face exceptions or postponed trainings. However, online communication also proved to be an effective and efficient way to engage with stakeholders, as it eliminates the time spent travelling from one meeting to the next and facilitates participation for those with busy schedules and/or long commutes (e.g., meetings with stakeholders, gender courses for students). The recording of virtual seminars made it easier for students with care responsibilities to reconcile university and family. In addition, online classes provided fewer opportunities for individuals to perpetrate physical gender-based violence/sexual harassment.

An increased (domestic) workload, as well as mental exhaustion was also reported – especially for working mothers. One SPEAR university reported of a change in research content due to the pandemic in their country, i.e., more funding schemes related to gender equality, inclusion or diversity, which will make more gender knowledge available in the future.

5.5 Data collection, monitoring & evaluation

The topic of data collection and monitoring was a strength and success factor or opportunity in some aspects, in others a challenge or a weakness.

As for **strengths and opportunities**, all SPEAR universities foresee sex/gender disaggregated data collection[2], monitoring and evaluation in their GEP. Within the scope of the GEP implementation, many SPEAR universities plan to expand and systematise their data collection and analysis and/or implement surveys among their staff/students (e.g., on well-being, culture, career opportunities). On the one hand, this can inform the GE work on an ongoing basis, but could also provide the opportunity to stimulate research in the field of gender. It can also be counted as an opportunity if the results of the extensive data collection efforts are made available to the staff/students as this could promote accountability and stakeholder interest. One university also plans a content analysis in study programs and topics of final thesis regarding the integration of the gender dimension. Some universities made the experience that the data already available was a strength in the sense that it enabled to identify discrimination and inequalities, which represented the basis for the targets and objectives in the GEP development.

In all of the SPEAR GEPs, monitoring is foreseen, thus many already included indicators or plan to develop them throughout the whole plan for all objectives and activities, which will enable the measurement of progress. Some chose to plan to align the monitoring of the GEP with the overall university strategy monitoring to enable synergies and more efficiency. In another university monitoring and evaluation activities are listed in the first action area, proposing various activities, e.g., gender-sensitive analysis of procedures, policies and guidelines that affect students' educational situation and linking the content and design of education with evaluations. Including an evaluation of new gender equality indicators can also be counted as an opportunity.

A major strength/opportunity is regular reporting cycles that fulfil the objective of monitoring. For some, this is still in development. Two universities enacted the requirement for all faculties or departments to report regularly (e.g., annually) on their gender activities. One university hereby opted for a two-year-cycle, meaning that there will be one detailed reporting in one year, followed by a shorter one in the second year. The same university will integrate the element of critical friend visits, meaning the central GE body visiting the faculties every second year to discuss GE in a dialogue. To ensure compliance of faculties with GEP objectives and their support for GE work strong accountability measures are necessary that hold faculties and their leadership accountable for their GE work and its results. If faculties do not reach their targets or do not live up to their obligations in terms of GE work, they need to explain the reasons for this which has been introduced in some SPEAR universities. Stronger accountability measures like incentives or sanctions are not in place in any of the SPEAR universities.

In terms of **challenges and weaknesses**, at one university gender equality reporting is integrated into the university's general annual reporting, but the disciplinary domains are asked only one question regarding gender mainstreaming. Even though integrating the gender monitoring into one overall university monitoring can increase efficiency, the concrete design needs to reflect the relevance and complexity of the gender equality work but also its connectedness to other strategic topics in the

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[2] Sex/gender disaggregated data collection varies from SPEAR university to SPEAR university and includes various areas and objects of interest, e.g. distribution of staff/students on various levels and in various processes such as promotion, but also regarding research funding or well-being.

organisation. Furthermore, a too complex monitoring can also become a burden for the organisation and even a source of resistance. It can also be a weakness if GEP targets and/or monitoring indicators are defined too vaguely as it might be unclear how to measure and interpret the indicator and it also can limit accountability. Furthermore, to increase accountability, it is important to define the governance structures and monitoring processes clearly (e.g., between the central and local units). However, for many, the concrete design (e.g., concrete responsibilities regarding data collection and monitoring), formalised anchoring and implementation of a monitoring system will take place after the interim evaluation and thus be part of the final evaluation.

5.6 Gender awareness, knowledge and expertise

The gender expertise and knowledge within the individual SPEAR teams, but also the SPEAR project team as a whole can be highlighted as a great strength and resource. For some universities, a common understanding and awareness among decision-makers is also a **strength** and **opportunity** for future action.

However, a lack of awareness and/or knowledge in some parts of the university is a **challenge** for most SPEAR universities – for IPs and SIPs alike. Some experience this with specific faculties, others with decision-makers/management or local GE representatives. For some activities, specific knowledge is necessary, which might not always be present in the GE team such as knowledge how to implement gender fair resource allocation. Having no (strong) focus on gender studies in a university can make it harder to build up the awareness, knowledge and expertise. In some countries, SPEAR universities experience low gender awareness and knowledge in society, as well as in the political and academic sphere. In consequence, there is often no support, but rather more barriers for internal GE work.

5.7 Resistance

The majority of the SPEAR universities – both SIPs and IPs – reported of some form of resistance against gender equality (activities) or the GEP in the interim evaluation.

For some, the resistance concerns the whole country (incl. populist, anti-gender, anti-feminist, anti-LGBTQIA* movements, and attacks on universities/academia). Also, within the organisations, passive and active resistance was observed. Resistance was influenced by the lack of knowledge on GE, but also by conservative/catholic values, a lack of resources and heavy workload. In universities applying an intersectional approach also resistances by some colleagues were reported because they were overwhelmed by the requirement to deal with multiple grounds of discrimination at the same time. One university also perceived gender fatigue amongst their staff. Depending on the source of the resistance(s), different approaches are needed to counter it. For example, resistance due to overload can be qualitatively assessed and treated differently than resistance due to lack of knowledge. Sometimes, however, it may not always be clear what the "real" sources of resistance are, as those involved may be reluctant to name them for reasons of social desirability.

Entire faculties, male colleagues in female-dominated faculties, professors as well as heads of departments were named as groups, which showed some form of resistance.

5.8 Financial and Time Resources

In most SPEAR universities, resources or more often the lack of financial and time resources came up as a **challenge or weakness** – also in connection to sustainability. One main challenge that awaits many SPEAR universities is the question of how to institutionalise gender equality work not on a voluntary, but on a paid and long-lasting basis after the SPEAR projects end. Two universities, for example, decided to try for further external funding, i.e., by the national level or the EU level to compensate for scarce internal resources. However, depending on external funding for gender equality work is also not a sustainable solution.

Regarding present resources, it was often distinguished between the local and the central level:

On the central level, there is often no clear budget indicated in the university GEP, which might create challenges in the implementation phase. For example, in some cases, it was not clear how much time resources the GE positions e.g., GE officer or committee or specific activities will receive. Due to resource constraints, some universities have made compromises or do not pursue some issues further, for example not involving all parts of the university to the same extent or conducting trainings with less tailoring to the needs of target groups or less intensive data collection. In some universities, it was reported that time resources are a challenge for central GE practitioners, as there is often more work to be done than time available, which can result in overworked personnel.

It can be hypothesised that in decentralised universities, there is more work needed regarding the assessment of needs, design of tailored measures addressing different organisational cultures and stakeholder work, which needs a team rather than an individual. A team can also increase the sustainability aspect in cases of personnel change (i.e., keeping the knowledge and process alive). In two SIPs, resources on the central level were a clear **strength/success-**factor, for example to convert the former temporary central gender equality unit into a permanent one, ensuring time and financial resources at that level.

Similarly, the faculty/constituencies level can be a **challenge** and an **opportunity** regarding the question of resources. Two universities might have the possibility of obtaining more resources for gender equality through the faculty budgets. More often, limited resources at faculty level were also found to slow down local stakeholders in driving change at local level. It seems that often there is no dedicated budget at this level. While local stakeholders are generally seen as valuable multipliers, for some tasks (e.g., trainings), they are often not sufficiently equipped with the necessary knowledge and time resources to acquire that knowledge/expertise. Too little time resources can hinder their engagement even if there is a high motivation.

In addition, the SPEAR project itself was described as a resource for the GEP (development process) as it provided not only financial resources, but also support and legitimacy for GEP development as a Horizon 2020 project.

6 LEARNINGS OF THE SPEAR UNIVERSITIES

The learnings that were directly expressed in the interim evaluation were not part of the SWOT analysis for the individual reports. However, in order to allow for a greater learning effect between SPEAR universities and for all other interested parties, the learnings have been included in this overview interim evaluation report and categorised in this chapter:

- **GEP process**:
  - ¬ In case of limited resources or support, some partners reported that it might be beneficial to not address all faculties/constituencies or departments at once, but establish one or more pilot units (e.g., by developing their own GEP with support) for learning potential and more awareness within the organisation.
  - ¬ Gathering data on the status quo is essential to get a deep understanding of the situation and what is needed to tailor the GEP to the issues.
  - ¬ "Hard numbers" can be a good way to start as it is quite concrete and people put a lot of weight onto numbers, e.g., statistics, analysis of salaries.
  - ¬ If the top (management) actively supports the GEP development process, it can be more efficient than individual researchers initiating a GEP. In most cases researchers lack the power and resources, which slows down the process.

- **Stakeholder work:**
  - ¬ One learning that was mentioned several times was that the visible support and (active) involvement of the top management is very helpful for the GEP and its implementation – on the one hand, to accelerate the process of structural anchoring, on the other hand to gain support within the organisation at all levels.
  - ¬ If the units develop their own GEPs or activities (with support), it can increase the feeling of ownership, may better fit the context and the specific disciplinary jargon. Thereby, a close cooperation and support between the central GE unit(s) and the local one is considered crucial. However, one has to be aware not to lose the connection with the overall goals and strategic direction.
  - ¬ Involving many stakeholders from different parts of the organisation as change agents and/or in the GEP team can help to ensure continuous participation (i.e. sustainability) when it comes to personnel changes.
  - ¬ Participatory elements and/or collective decision-making can prolong the process of developing a GEP, but supports its relevance and sustainability.
  - ¬ When reaching out to stakeholders, a flexible approach can pay off. It can help to have many meetings in all areas of the organisation and to identify who is interested and who 'is important', sometimes students or stakeholders outside the university can be valuable if the staff is not interested. Focusing on areas where there is willingness and resources can be a good starting point. In addition, connecting these stakeholders with each other can create synergies and distribute gender knowledge and expertise.
  - ¬ One university experienced that one-to-one meetings (online or in person) are more productive than joint meetings as there is more opportunity for informal conversations and they (i.e. decision-makers) tend to be less 'on guard' and more positive and welcoming.

- When reaching out to stakeholders, it proved useful to prepare a strong and precise argumentation strategy for the meetings (e.g., on why gender sensitive language is necessary).
- Strong internal allies on all hierarchy levels who are also able to get men interested in GE are very helpful.
- A clear and easily understandable GEP format is good for presenting it to stakeholders.
- Involving people in the organisation conducting research on gender can reduce the workload and share the responsibility between the GEP team and them, e.g., when developing a position/statement.

- **Resistance**:
  - One university addresses individual resistance (e.g., of decision-makers) by explaining in detail the objectives of the GEP as well as their role in the GEP implementation process and how GE practitioners ensure relevance to them and their area of responsibility (e.g., department). If there is a belief that GE work is not necessary, it can help to discuss the status quo and needs of their area of responsibility in a dialogue.
  - At one university, some stakeholders were concerned that the GEP might face passive resistance in the local units due to increased workload. For them, it was important to choose activities that were relevant to the local context and/or already addressed in some way and they get support by the central unit.
  - At another university, some professors were convinced of the relevance of GE work by the successes of the university management (e.g., better rankings) - according to the logic: if they have shown good judgement in the past, it will be similar with the GEP.
  - Again, at another university, it has proven helpful to include statements in the GEP that address stakeholders' concerns. In this particular case, there was concern that the GEP would limit academic freedom. Therefore, a passage was included in the GEP to support the free pursuit of knowledge in education and research and advocating academic integrity, diversity and quality.
  - A vast network of gender equality allies within the organisation can (emotionally) support members who are confronted with strong resistance.

- **External influence:**
  - Policies and regulations (e.g., HE GEP criterion) can be drivers of change and reduce resistance by showing stakeholders that a GEP is necessary. However, when developing a GEP, both the overarching goals and expectations of the EU, as well as the practical starting point of the university in question need to be taken into account.
  - The GEP development process can be used to strengthen national and international networking on gender equality and thereby enable cooperation, support and learning effects. In addition, many SPEAR universities can be considered frontrunners in their countries in terms of GEPs and influence other universities by communicating about their GEP.
  - Media presence and external dissemination regarding gender equality can support the internal GE work.

- Governance/structural anchoring:
  - ¬ A close cooperation and support between the central GE unit and the local units can be helpful in finding individual solutions. Also, further support, e.g., in the form of a gender expert at the local level can be beneficial to promote their efforts (e.g., faculty GEP).
  - ¬ One university experienced that formalising activities and processes can be helpful to really get going. Previously, local GE practitioners were motivated, but there was more discussion and planning than implementation.
  - ¬ Well thought-through and coordinated processes can enable more output with less workload, e.g., data collection processes.
  - ¬ Collegial responsibility and contributions to the development of the University such as GE work can be counted in individual performance evaluations (e.g., merit in promotions, points in PhD programmes). On the one hand, this upgrades the work and recognises the commitment; on the other hand, it is a motivation to get involved.
  - ¬ If there are structures established that are similar to GE (e.g., diversity, equal opportunities), they can join forces. If one of the topics is better accepted, it can support the other.

7 CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter, we decided to reflect the results of the interim evaluation in terms of sustainability. On the one hand, sustainability is not a separate topic, but rather the result of an interplay of various topics and conditions. And on the other hand, the sustainable implementation of gender equality is a central goal of a GEP. Thereby, it is deeply connected to the topics of resources, structural anchoring, stakeholder involvement, monitoring/accountability and gender competence/awareness:

Resources

Having the necessary resources available is crucial and a lack of resources can slow down or hinder progress. As already stated above, the SPEAR universities have the great success factor of the SPEAR project resources in terms of time, expertise and financial matters. A major challenge for many SPEAR universities is the question of how to institutionalise gender equality work on a paid and permanent basis after the SPEAR project has ended. But, beyond securing financial resources to continue GE work, it is equally important to keep connected to national and international networks and communities aiming at exchanging experiences and expertise on gender equality work.

Structural anchoring

Permanent structures like a GE office and a GE committee make sure that activities are institutionalised and in consequence more resilient to resistance and changes like changes in personnel, processes, responsibilities, budget cuts etc. These structures should be clearly anchored in the governance (preferably close to the university management) and university structure (power, duties, rights, responsibilities, processes, resources, quality management) and as a separate staff unit in order to remain thematically broad. If a new staff position for gender equality is created, it should, if possible, consist of a team to be able to fulfil the broad requirements of this position and increase sustainability in case of personnel change.

The university management should be part of a GE committee or board to ensure governance. In this regard, accountability can be stressed, meaning, that it should be clear who is responsible for which task/area (e.g., central GE unit, middle management, top management) and then be held responsible. The GEP should be aligned to main university documents (e.g., university strategy, monitoring) in order to allow for synergies and mainstream GE. However, it must be ensured that gender equality is sufficiently taken into account in these overarching documents and processes. Although measures might be needed on the individual level, they should primarily aim at changing the structures, culture and processes in order to achieve sustainable results, or they should target both levels at the same time (e.g., bifocal approach).

Overall, all SPEAR universities have already established or plan to establish a structural anchoring of their GEP work. However, the details and concrete design was for many IPs still open at the time of the interim evaluation. It might be beneficial to have an exchange between SIPs and IPs on their experiences with structures and processes (Who should be involved in which committee? Which topics should be discussed in which committee? Who reports to whom? Who should be responsible? How to establish linkages and synergies between other strategic areas? Etc.). Yet, this is also highly dependent on the already existing structures and the overall organisational setup as well as on the regional/national context/ecosystem of the university. For instance, in more decentralized universities

responsibility and accountability need to be organized in different ways than in more centralized universities.

Broad stakeholder involvement (including top management support)

Structures and activities work better if they are supported by the various stakeholders within the university, which makes stakeholder involvement and communication crucial. In this regard, it can be beneficial for sustainability if gender equality is (actively) supported by an internal network of allies – in all levels of hierarchy. While top management is useful in embedding gender equality in the governance system, awareness and support at the local level is also crucial for cultural change. The more people are involved, the more resilient the GE work becomes when faced with personnel changes or resistance. Making the GEP process participatory seems to increase the likelihood that staff/students will identify with the chosen GEP objectives/targets and that such a network of internal allies will be formed. Therefore, relying solely on top management support might be insufficient for triggering and sustaining structural and cultural change in research organisations.

Overall, two great strengths/success factors of the GEP (development processes) of the SPEAR universities were the top management support and the participatory/bottom-up elements, meaning the processes and time used to involve stakeholders. The latter provided the possibility to integrate topics that are relevant to the stakeholders and can be a valuable basis for the engagement of stakeholders in the GEP implementation phase.

How to keep them engaged and informed (which communication channels, which forms of participation, e.g., networks) was not widely discussed in the interim evaluation and might be a topic to exchange on within the SPEAR project. Especially for the top-level management it is important to keep them engaged beyond rhetoric or mere verbal and symbolic support. Engaged top-level management needs to create a sense of urgency for gender equality work in their organisation, prioritize gender equality and consequently need to make financial and personnel resources available that are adequate in terms of the efforts needed to initiate and sustain an organisational change process. Additionally, leadership needs to show that it is willing to act according to its verbal statements and announcements and display a high degree of gender awareness in all its activities (not only in those related to GEP implementation). Therefore, the verbal support for gender equality needs to be translated into concrete actions.

Engaging men as a stakeholder group can prove difficult. In SPEAR, there are some universities, in which men are overrepresented (in powerful positions), but there are also universities in which this is not the case. However, in both cases, men can prove difficult to engage: On the one side, they might oppose GE efforts due to a perceived threat to their (future) position or belief of meritocracy. On the other hand, they might oppose it because they think that gender equality has already been achieved due to the high percentage of women. One topic, which seems to be prevalent in many of the SPEAR universities (irrespective of the proportion of women), is the topic of active fatherhood and men taking on more care and household responsibilities. One university also addresses the underrepresentation of men in some areas. Powerful and convincing allies such as (deputy) vice rectors helped with getting more men involved in one university. Nevertheless, it seems important that men are considered explicitly as a target group of gender equality work and to engage them actively into the implementation of gender equality plans for instance in awareness raising and capacity building activities or through increasing the representation of men in areas where they are underrepresented.

Monitoring/Data collection/evaluation

In order to be able to measure the progress, adjust and renew the plans and activities, as well as increase accountability a data collection and monitoring system with clear reporting processes and responsibilities should be implemented. Furthermore, the monitoring indicators should reflect the objectives of the GEP and should be measurable – either quantitatively or qualitatively and not too vague. In one SPEAR university, concrete target values for specific personnel categories are set through a cascade model. This creates a high sense of urgency and accountability in the organisation – not only on the central level but also on the level of faculties who need also to report whether they have reached their targets.

It can be beneficial to unite the gender monitoring / data collection with the monitoring and data collection efforts of the whole university to allow for synergy effects and more efficiency. Besides reporting the results of the monitoring exercise in a Gender Equality Report, the main results could also be included or even mainstreamed into annual (performance) reports. Including gender equality into these reports shows their relevance for the organisation and potentially the interlinkages with other strategic areas of development in the organisation.

Additionally, there should be processes on how the results of the monitoring feed back into the strategic and operational GE work and who is responsible for it. As for SPEAR, monitoring and data collection plays an integral role in the GEPs, which can be rated as a great strength, but often the details were still work in progress during the interim evaluation.

Another important feature to learn about GEP implementation processes and improve their sustainability are **evaluation exercises** which can be conducted in different forms through self-assessment, peer-review or external consultancy (or a combination of these). Regular, critical evaluations ensure that implementation processes can be improved based on their learning and also increase the reflexivity of these efforts.

Gender awareness/competence

This topic has been explicitly and implicitly touched upon in nearly all points above.

A high level of gender awareness is a pre-condition or foundation for a successful and sustainable organisational change towards more gender equality. However, this foundation needs to be renewed, updated constantly and should not be taken for granted. In addition, gender awareness and competence development within an organisation is not static, but needs to be developed along the structural and cultural change processes and the topics and issues addressed in these processes. As most of the SPEAR universities are developing their first GEP, awareness raising and competence development measures are prevalent in their GEPs. Nevertheless, awareness raising is not only a "beginners" issue. As new topics for gender equality work or concepts like intersectionality or inclusion emerge, this also needs to be reflected in gender awareness raising and competence building activities. It is a never ending organisational story or effort, but one that needs to be dynamic, flexible and adjustable.

It can also prove fruitful to target some (male-dominated) areas of the university explicitly, e.g., STEM or law faculties/departments. There, one can often find disciplinary cultures, which can make GE (work) more difficult. Tailoring activities and arguments for awareness raising and competence building to their context will increase efficacy. In addition, fostering cross-faculty/departmental exchange can promote a more organic change in culture, e.g., combining STEM or law with societal

challenges such as climate change and/or more creative/artistic approaches in projects/curricula, implementing overarching activities that foster networks or personal networking.

Overall, one can conclude that in order to get sustainable results there is not one specific recipe, but efforts in all of these areas - tailored to the needs and context of the organisation.