GRAN*te*D

GRANT ALLOCATION DISPARITIES
FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

GUIDELINES TO MITIGATE GENDER BIAS IN RESEARCH FUNDING

A short checklist for RFOs

**These guidelines are outcomes of the H2020 research project GRANteD
and various deliverables from this project.**

Through our research, we have developed a comprehensive overview on how to address and mitigate gender bias in grant allocation. These guidelines have been constructed based on identified risk areas revealed in our case studies across five Research Funding Organizations (RFOs). While focusing on the assessment process, which constituted the core of the GRANteD analysis, these guidelines take a broader process perspective, encompassing the entire funding cycle. Each phase of this funding cycle holds potential risks for gender bias, covering both formalized gender equality policies and their practical implementation (Table 2). A concrete example for mitigating risk within one policy can be found in Table 3.

To mitigate risk, activities on RFO level are a first step. Examples can be found in Table 1.

These guidelines are intended to empower other RFOs, by sharing insights gained from experiences, fostering gender equality, inclusiveness, and ensuring unbiased and equitable research funding processes. They are designed to assist RFOs in establishing policy targets, designing and reviewing policies, procedures, and practices. Furthermore, the guidelines aid in identifying policy gaps and areas requiring closer attention and action to reduce and mitigate the risks of gender bias.

MITIGATE GENDER BIAS ON RFO STRATEGIC LEVEL

Intervention level	Policies, Practices
Awareness for inequality raised within RFO Strategic equality goals and strategy defined Structures for equality work, including monitoring	Collect and analyse data to learn about status quo: include intersectional data, see e.g. UKRI, NSF, Vinnova Ensure support from RFO leadership Provide sufficient resources Gender equality addressed in RFO website and annual reports
Gender capacity for RFO staff / management	Trainings, reflexions, mutual learning with other RFOs External experts invited for capacity building
Communication gender equality targets	Make GE policy visible on RFO website and annual reports
Gender-sensitive allocation of funding budget	Analyse how available budget is distributed by scientific fields, by sub-target groups
Sustainability of gender equality policies in the RFO	Clear definition of accountability of GE actions within RFO, responsibility on GE anchored high in RFO hierarchy

MITIGATE GENDER BIAS ALONG THE FUNDING CYCLE – PROGRAM LEVEL

Phase in funding cycle	Action	Formalised policy to mitigate gender bias	Practice to mitigate gender bias
Initiation (of funding program)	Definition of the goals of the program	Policy that includes gender equality goals as part of each program description	Specify call goals from a gender perspective
	Designing call text	Gender sensitive calls	Use gender sensitive inclusive language and pictures, avoiding gender stereotypes in documents and web Include reference to GE policy
Launch of call	Communication of call text to applicants and reviewers, call promotion, FAQs	Inclusive invitation policy with attention to under-represented applicant groups	Specific invitation / offers to female researchers, minority groups (workshops etc.) Make sure that policy goals are clear and well communicated to applicants and reviewers
	Recruiting reviewers	Clearly defined criteria and process for recruitment of reviewers and composition of peer review panels	Active search for female reviewers / panel members and other members of minority groups
	Composition of assessment panel	Policy aiming for gender / intersectional balance in panels / decision-making bodies (research sector, ethnical background etc.)	Gender balance with at least 40 per cent each of women and men
	Definition of unbiased eligibility criteria	Academic age or active research years (instead of biological age)	Counting out parental leave years especially beneficial for mother applicants
		Parental leave and other leaves (care, sick, military etc.) taken into account	Counting out parental leave especially beneficial for mother applicants
	Definition of clear non-ambiguous assessment criteria	Avoid ambiguous assessment criteria	Explain how criteria are transferred into scores / grades
	Definition of weight of each assessment criterion	Communicate the weight of each criterion	Transparency of assessment enhances gender equality

STEPS TO MITIGATE GENDER BIAS – PROGRAMM LEVEL PART 2

Phase in funding cycle	Action	Formalised policy to mitigate gender bias	Practice to mitigate gender bias
	Broader merit indicators beyond metrics (team support, mentoring etc.) included	Consider introducing narrative CVs	Make sure that policy goals are clear and well communicated to applicants and reviewers Provide capacities for reviewers applying new policies (e.g. how to assess narrative CVs without h-index)
	Addressing gender dimension in research content	Define clear indicators for Gender dimension in research content	Gender dimension taken into account in research assessment
Formal assessment process	Assessment process clearly structured	Clear formal guidelines for panel work, for how to make decisions etc	e.g. suggestion to organise calibration sessions at the beginning of the panel meetings
	Role of chair clearly defined	Make chair accountable for implementing gender policies and provide training	Ensure chairs (or observers) are well informed and feel accountable for implementing GE policies, feedback discussions and reporting up
	Transparency of the fundng process towards the applicants clearly defined	Make information on assessment, decision-making and feedback easily available to applicants	Organise information seminars related to calls, some of which can be targeted to woman applicants only, include FAQs in web information Appeal/rebuttal option for applicants: check if female applicants deal with it differently
Support material		Prepare detailed assessment guidelines for the reviewers and panel chairs, including gender equality, unconscious bias, intersectionality	Find forms how to best make reviewers aware of guidelines, e.g. assessment handbooks, briefings

STEPS TO MITIGATE GENDER BIAS – PROGRAMM LEVEL PART 3

Phase in funding cycle	Action	Formalised policy to mitigate gender bias	Practice to mitigate gender bias
		Preparing detailed guidelines for Conflict of Interest (CoI) regulations	Have clear implementation guidelines, e.g. how to handle CoI
Capacities building	Building gender capacities for reviewers, chairs, applicants	Providing specific capacity building material and training online and offline for (assessing) new policies: narrative CV, gender in research	Make available clear examples / case studies on how to implement policies Participation in online or offline gender equality training could be mandatory for reviewers.
	Panel meetings	Clarify in policies who is responsible for monitoring that assessment criteria are applied correctly and equally during panel meetings	Be aware of using gender stereotypes in panel discussions: "He is a genius" Make sure that when focuson publications is given up, they are not simply replaced by the number of grants.
		Applying new excellence criteria: GiRI	Make sure that gender in research content is assessed and not gender in team composition
Decision making	Formal re-ranking policies in place		Make sure that no gender re-ranking is practiced during the negotiation phase, but only at the very end of the decision making process
Monitoring of assessment process	Data collection	Data on applicants collected, monitored, published: applications, success rates; also time series by gender (other intersecting inequality dimensions), by scientific field (strong gender segregation)	Publish and comment monitoring results on the website and annual reports
		Gender and intersectional data on panel members /remote reviewers collected and monitored	Publish and comment data on panel members and remote reviewers on the website and in annual reports

Phase in funding cycle	Action	Formalised policy to mitigate gender bias	Practice to mitigate gender bias
Evaluation	Analysis of goal attainment Reporting evaluation outcomes	Analysis if GE goals were achieved; consequences in case of failing Reporting on GE to RFO management and / or to national authority	Publish and comment data on follow-up of GE goal attainment on the website and in annual reports

STEPS TO MITIGATE GENDER BIAS ALONG THE FUNDING CYCLE – GENDER IN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION CONTENT (GIRI) AS AN EXAMPLE

Step in funding cycle	Topics covered in this step	GiRI aspects
Initiation of GiRI approach in the RFO	Securing RFO internal commitment to implement GiRI policy	Awareness-raising/training for RFO staff and management on how/where to address GiRI along the funding cycle
	Preparing documents	GiRI integrated in call texts GiRI (in various research steps) implemented in application guidelines
	Capacity-building	Organising trainings / space for reflection for reviewers, chairs, applicants, RFO staff Invite external gender experts if needed as trainers
	Formalising GiRI implementation	Guidelines for applicants and for reviewers Instructions for peer review panels: how to pick up remote reviewers' GiRI assessment
Launch of call	Call promotion FAQ setup	GiRI highlighted in call promotion FAQs for GiRI implementation provided
Assessment	Briefing remote reviewers and panel members	Instructions on GIRI for remote reviewers Awareness-raising on GiRI for panel members in briefing session prior to panel meeting
Monitoring	Interim and final reporting setup	Definition how GiRI is addressed in interim and final reporting
Evaluation	Measuring GiRI effectiveness (in various funding programs)	Evaluation how applicants addressed GiRI Monitor how formal GiRI policies have been applied in practice: feedback from reviewers collected and analysed Monitor GiRI training activities and identify further capacity building needs

A gender equality plan – mandatory to be eligible for Horizon Europe - aims to mitigate risks and therefore needs to cover all phases of the funding cycle. More information can be found in the <u>GEAR tool for RFOs</u> and in the <u>GEAR tool funding cycle</u>.