



European  
Commission

# Fostering gender equality

Key figures from  
Horizon Europe



MONITORING &  
EVALUATION REPORT

Research and  
Innovation

## Fostering gender equality: Key figures from Horizon Europe

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# **Fostering gender equality: Key figures from Horizon Europe**

## ***R&I Monitoring Flash***

Sarah Neehus  
Roberto Volpe

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# 1. Introduction

**Gender equality is one of the key values and principles of the European Union.**

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union states that: *'Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited.'* The charter further specifies that: ***'Equality between women and men must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay'***<sup>1</sup>.

In accordance with Articles 2 and 3 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and Articles 8 and 157 TFEU, the regulation establishing Horizon Europe, the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (R&I), stipulates that activities developed under the Programme should aim to eliminate gender bias and inequalities, enhancing work-life balance and promoting equality between women and men in R&I, including the principle of equal pay without discrimination based on sex. The Horizon Europe legal base also requires that the gender dimension be integrated in R&I content and followed through at all stages of the research cycle. In addition, the activities under the Programme should aim to eliminate inequalities and promote equality and diversity in all aspects of R&I with regard to age, disability, race and ethnicity, religion or belief, and sexual orientation. Particular attention shall be paid to ensuring, to the extent possible, gender balance in evaluation panels and in other relevant advisory bodies such as boards and expert groups.

Gender equality and gender mainstreaming in research were prioritised by the European Research Area (ERA) since 2012 by means of the ERA Framework Communication<sup>2</sup> in which the European Commission laid out objectives for fostering institutional change by means of prioritising: (1) gender balance in decision making, (2) gender equality in careers at all levels and (3) a better integration of the gender dimension into R&I content. These priorities continue to be pursued in the current programming period of the R&I Framework Programmes, Horizon Europe.

The Council Conclusions on advancing Gender Equality in the ERA<sup>3</sup> raised attention to gender imbalances in research institutions and decision-making bodies. Member States were encouraged to develop ERA national action plans, also addressing the priority of gender equality<sup>4</sup>. Research performing and funding organisations were called to implement necessary institutional changes related to human resources management, funding, and research programmes, particularly through Gender Equality Plans (GEPs).

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<sup>1</sup> Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Article 21 + 23), available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX%3A12012P%2FTXT>

<sup>2</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. A Reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth. COM(2012) 392 final, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52012DC0392>.

<sup>3</sup> Council conclusions of 1 December 2015 on Advancing gender equality in the European Research Area, available at: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14846-2015-INIT/en/pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Which was then Priority 4 out of a total of six ERA priorities.

In 2020, the Communication named 'A new ERA for Research and Innovation'<sup>5</sup> further called for increasing gender equality with the aim to strengthen Europe's R&I potential. Persisting gender inequalities were acknowledged, calling for coordinated action with education policies and research funders to promote a gender-inclusive culture. In the Communication, the European Commission introduced a new approach, which includes most notably the development of inclusive gender equality plans and policies with Member States and stakeholders, building on Horizon Europe, opening the gender equality policies to inclusiveness and intersections with other characteristics and potential grounds for discrimination

The Ljubljana Declaration on Gender Equality in R&I of November 2021<sup>6</sup>, endorsed by a large majority of Member States and Associated Countries, further reinforced joint commitment to gender equality in R&I, promoting institutional change in R&I organisations by means of Gender Equality Plans. As per the Council Conclusions<sup>7</sup> regarding the 'Future governance of the ERA', four interlinked outcome deliverables reflect key priorities for promoting gender equality and inclusiveness in the new ERA:

- Develop a policy coordination mechanism to support all aspects of gender equality through inclusive Gender Equality Plans and policies, and a dedicated EU network on their implementation;
- Develop a strategy to counteract gender-based violence including sexual harassment in the European R&I system, and to assure gender equality in working environments through institutional change in any research funding or performing organisations;
- Implement a policy approach to strengthen gender equality that addresses gender mainstreaming with the aim to advance the new ERA;
- Develop principles for the integration and evaluation of the gender perspective in research and innovation content in cooperation with national Research Funding Organisations.

Effectively, the ERA Policy Agenda<sup>8</sup> aims to contribute to priority areas laid out in the Council Recommendation on a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe<sup>9</sup> by identifying areas for joint action between the Commission Services, Member States and observers participating in the ERA Forum<sup>10</sup>. Action 5 of the Policy Agenda is dedicated to promoting gender equality

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<sup>5</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. A new ERA for Research and Innovation. COM(2020) 628 final, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2020:628:FIN>.

<sup>6</sup> The Ljubljana Declaration on Gender Equality in Research and Innovation, [https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MIZS/Dokumenti/PSEU/Ljubljana-Declaration-on-Gender-Equality-in-Research-and-Innovation-endorsement\\_final.pdf](https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MIZS/Dokumenti/PSEU/Ljubljana-Declaration-on-Gender-Equality-in-Research-and-Innovation-endorsement_final.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Council Conclusions on the future governance of the European Research Area, retrieved 13 August 2024 from: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-14308-2021-INIT/en/pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> ERA Policy Agenda - Setting out voluntary ERA actions for the 2022-2024 period, available at: [https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-11/ec\\_rtd\\_era-policy-agenda-2021.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2021-11/ec_rtd_era-policy-agenda-2021.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe. COM/2021/407 final, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=COM:2021:407:FIN>.

<sup>10</sup> New body responsible for enhancing coordination of the ERA Policy Agenda – it constitutes a Commission expert group that encompasses Member States' and EFTA/EEA-associated countries. It also involves representatives from stakeholder organisations.

and fostering inclusiveness, taking note of the Ljubljana Declaration. Since 2023, the ERA Forum has a dedicated subgroup to enable an effective implementation of Action 5. The ERA Policy Agenda implementation is also supported by projects funded under Horizon Europe cross-cutting programme 'Widening Participation and Spreading Excellence' (WIDERA).

The Council of the European Union acknowledged the need to address persisting gender inequalities in research careers in December 2023 with the 'Recommendation on a European Framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe'.<sup>11</sup> In line with this, the Council called on Member States and Commission Services to encourage actions ensuring gender equality, gender balance, equal opportunities and inclusiveness for researchers, including the use and monitoring of instruments such as Gender Equality Plans. Moreover, it introduces a new 'European Charter for Researchers' that emphasises gender equality as a key principle, explicitly adopting an intersectional approach. The Charter covers a broad range of areas, from fostering gender balance in research teams and managerial bodies, integrating the gender dimension into R&I content, and combating gender-based violence.

Lastly, the Council of the European Union approved the conclusions of the ex post evaluation of Horizon 2020 in May 2024, welcoming the improvements made towards gender balance in Horizon 2020 but considers that women's participation in the programme should be reinforced, inviting to further explore measures to support women researchers, evaluators, entrepreneurs and innovators and recommending a continued focus on integrating the gender dimension in R&I content along with supporting the mainstreaming of gender equality.<sup>12</sup>

Gender equality and women's rights remain a focus in the 2024-2029 Commission. Specific duties for the Commissioner for equality include leading the work on mainstreaming equality considerations in EU policies, legislation and funding programmes, as well as working on improving collection of equality data.<sup>13</sup>

Equally, Commissioner for Startups, Research and Innovation Zaharieva laid out in her hearing that she would present actions on gender research, safer workplaces, providing more attractive career perspectives for women and increasing the share of women graduating in STEM fields.<sup>14</sup>

### ***1.1. Gender equality under Horizon Europe***

The European Commission has sought to strengthen gender equality throughout the EU Research and Innovation Programmes. Since the 5<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme of the European Community for research, technological development and demonstration activities (1998-2002), gender equality has increasingly been addressed. Horizon 2020 marked the

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<sup>11</sup> Council Recommendation of 13 December 2023 on a European framework to attract and retain research, innovation and entrepreneurial talents in Europe, available at: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15135-2023-REV-1/en/pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Council conclusions on the ex-post evaluation of Horizon 2020 and future outlook, available at: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-10183-2024-INIT/en/pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Mission letter for Hadja Lahbib, Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management, 1 December 2024. Retrieved from: [https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e0f32937-9ce9-40d7-880c-416321d00dc9\\_en?filename=mision-letter-lahbib.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e0f32937-9ce9-40d7-880c-416321d00dc9_en?filename=mision-letter-lahbib.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Hearing of Commissioner Ekaterina Zaharieva on 5 November 2024, retrieved from: [https://hearings.elections.europa.eu/documents/zaharieva/zaharieva\\_verbatimreporthearing-original.pdf](https://hearings.elections.europa.eu/documents/zaharieva/zaharieva_verbatimreporthearing-original.pdf)



institutionalisation of gender equality as a cross-cutting issue: The goal is to improve the European R&I system, **create gender-equal working environments** where all talents can thrive, and to **better integrate the gender dimension in projects** to improve research quality as well as the relevance to society of the knowledge, technologies and innovations produced.<sup>15</sup>

Gender equality is addressed in four main ways **under Horizon Europe**<sup>16</sup>:

- Increasing **gender balance throughout the programme**, with a target of 50% women on Horizon Europe-related boards, expert groups and evaluation committees (compared to 40% in evaluation panels and expert groups as well as 50% for advisory groups under Horizon 2020) and **considering gender balance among research teams as a criterion for ranking proposals** with the same score, which had already been introduced as a criterion throughout Horizon 2020.<sup>17</sup>
- As of 2022, having a **Gender Equality Plan (GEP)** is a criterion for eligibility for public bodies, research organisations and higher education establishments. The European Commission provided detailed guidance<sup>18</sup> (e.g. training sessions<sup>19</sup> and webinars<sup>20</sup>) to support organisations in meeting the Horizon Europe GEP eligibility criterion.
- Integrating the **gender dimension into R&I content** (i.e., sex and/or gender analysis) becomes a requirement by default - unless the topic description explicitly specifies otherwise, which is evaluated under the criterion of excellence.
- **Specific funding is dedicated towards:**
  - Actions supporting the development of inclusive GEPs through the Widening Participation and Strengthening the ERA programme part (WIDERA).<sup>21</sup>
  - **Gender studies and intersectional research**, particularly in Cluster 2 – Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society work programme.<sup>22</sup> Other parts of Horizon Europe, notably Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) and the

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<sup>15</sup> Extracted from the Europa website: [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/democracy-and-rights/gender-equality-research-and-innovation\\_en#gender-equality-in-horizon-europe](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/democracy-and-rights/gender-equality-research-and-innovation_en#gender-equality-in-horizon-europe).

<sup>16</sup> See the factsheet on gender equality provision under Horizon Europe, available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/51704c8d-ca5f-11eb-84ce-01aa75ed71a1>.

<sup>17</sup> See Horizon 2020 funding guide for cross-cutting issues, available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/cross-cutting-issues/gender\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/cross-cutting-issues/gender_en.htm)

<sup>18</sup> Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/ffcb06c3-200a-11ec-bd8e-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-232129669>.

<sup>19</sup> For example, in 2021 and 2022 the Commission offered a series of online training sessions on Gender Equality Plans, mainly targeting organisations in Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Croatia, Italy, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Romania, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Cyprus.

<sup>20</sup> For example, in June 2022, DG R&I organised a webinar aimed towards LEARs.

<sup>21</sup> For more information, see: [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/reforming-and-enhancing-european-research-and-innovation-system\\_en](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/reforming-and-enhancing-european-research-and-innovation-system_en).

<sup>22</sup> For more information, see: [https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/cluster-2-culture-creativity-and-inclusive-society\\_en](https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/cluster-2-culture-creativity-and-inclusive-society_en).



European Research Council (ERC) also provide significant fund for research in these fields.

- **Empowering women innovators**, particularly in Pillar III: Innovative Europe, including the European Innovation Council (EIC).<sup>23</sup>

#### **Highlights from this report**

- Participation statistics show **general improvement in gender balance in Horizon Europe compared to Horizon 2020**.
- For the first time **a majority (51.4%) of members of Horizon expert and advisory groups are women**, meeting the political commitment of 50% representation.
- 45% of expert evaluators are women, a moderate progress towards gender balance compared to Horizon 2020.
- The share of women project coordinators has also improved from 24% to 31%.
- Horizon Europe involves at least 76 000 women researchers (38%). The figure is higher than the share of women researchers in the EU as a whole (33.8%).
- **Women are well-represented in entry-level positions, however in higher academic ranks their representation diminishes.** This mirrors the situation in the European research system as a whole, where women are underrepresented in leading positions.
- **Among citizens of several EU countries, a majority of Horizon Europe researchers are women.** This is particularly common among researchers from widening countries (e.g. Portugal, the Baltics, Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia).
- Women are less represented in industry-oriented parts of the programme (both project coordinators and researchers), with the exception of the European Innovation Ecosystems scheme, in which most coordinators and researchers are women.
- Throughout Europe, women are particularly underrepresented in innovative entrepreneurship. Several funding schemes in Horizon Europe aim to increase gender balance in this field.

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<sup>23</sup> Several initiatives exist: for example, in 2022, in its Communication 'A new European Agenda' (COM (2022)), the European Commission proposed the launch of a Pilot European innovation gender and diversity index. The EIC funds a European pilot innovation gender and diversity index through the **project GENDEX** to collect data and monitor progress in women participation and diversity across the innovation ecosystem. For more information, see: [https://eic.ec.europa.eu/news/statement-gender-diversity-eic-2021-06-03\\_en](https://eic.ec.europa.eu/news/statement-gender-diversity-eic-2021-06-03_en). Additional examples are the new Women TechEU scheme and the Women Leadership Programme for EIC companies. For more information, see: <https://eic.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-06/EIC-work-programme-2022-06-09.pdf>.

## 2. Key indicators: women participation across the Framework Programmes

Although women still tend to participate in the Framework Programme less than men, monitoring data show substantial progress towards more gender balance.<sup>24</sup>

Indicators	Horizon 2020		Horizon Europe	
	N	%	N	%
Women expert evaluators in evaluation panels	32 415	42%	13 947	45%
Women participating in expert groups <sup>25</sup>	N/A	43%	112	51%
Women coordinators in FP projects	8 687	24%	5 009	31%
Women researchers in FP projects	417 230 <sup>26</sup>	37%	75 114	38%

**Table 1:** Performance of gender-related indicators under Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe. Source: Commission administrative and monitoring data (Gender in EU R&I Framework Programme Dashboard), cut-off date: 6 January 2025. For the share of women participating in expert and advisory groups, and the number of women researchers in Horizon 2020 projects, the source is the Commission Staff Working Document of the Ex-post evaluation of Horizon 2020 (pp. 43-45).

The percentage of women in European Commission expert evaluation panels and in Horizon Europe expert groups have increased compared to Horizon \2020: The percentage in European Commission expert evaluation panels currently stands at 45%, while in **Horizon Europe advisory and expert groups a majority of members are women**. As of January 2025, the percentage is 51.4%, delivering on the political commitment to ensure gender balance in these groups.

Furthermore, the share of women-led consortia in Horizon Europe has substantially increased, namely from 24% in Horizon 2020 to 31% in Horizon Europe. Even though the percentage varies significantly from one programme's part to another, this positive trend is

<sup>24</sup> European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Evaluation study on excellent science in the European framework programmes for research and innovation ('**Excellent Science**' evaluation study) – Annexes phase 2 – Supporting the interim evaluation of Horizon Europe, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/9552959>, Annex 2.12, p. 561;

Denham, S., Stančiauskas, V., Dėlkutė-Morgan, R., Kazlauskaitė, D. et al., Evaluation support study on Horizon Europe's contribution to a resilient Europe – Final report phase 2 ('**Resilient Europe**' evaluation study), Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/797281>, p. 100,

Viscido, S., Lotito, A. and Boekholt, P., *Horizon Europe and the digital & industrial transition – Interim evaluation support study – Final report ('Phase 2' study)* ('**Digital and industrial transition**' evaluation study), Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/845650>, p. 81;

Naujokaitytė, R., Cakić, M., Didžiulytė, M., Zharkalliū-Roussou, K. et al., Evaluation study of the European framework programmes for research and innovation for an innovative Europe – support study for the interim evaluation of Horizon Europe ('**Innovative Europe**' evaluation study), Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, p. 77.

<sup>25</sup> The figure comprises official expert groups and boards as well as special groups (exclusively Type-A groups due to data limitations on other groups) listed on the [Register of Commission Expert Groups and Other Similar Entities](#). For special groups, the gender of participants is not officially collected by Commission services. Absolute figures are not available for the number of women participating in expert groups at the end of Horizon 2020.

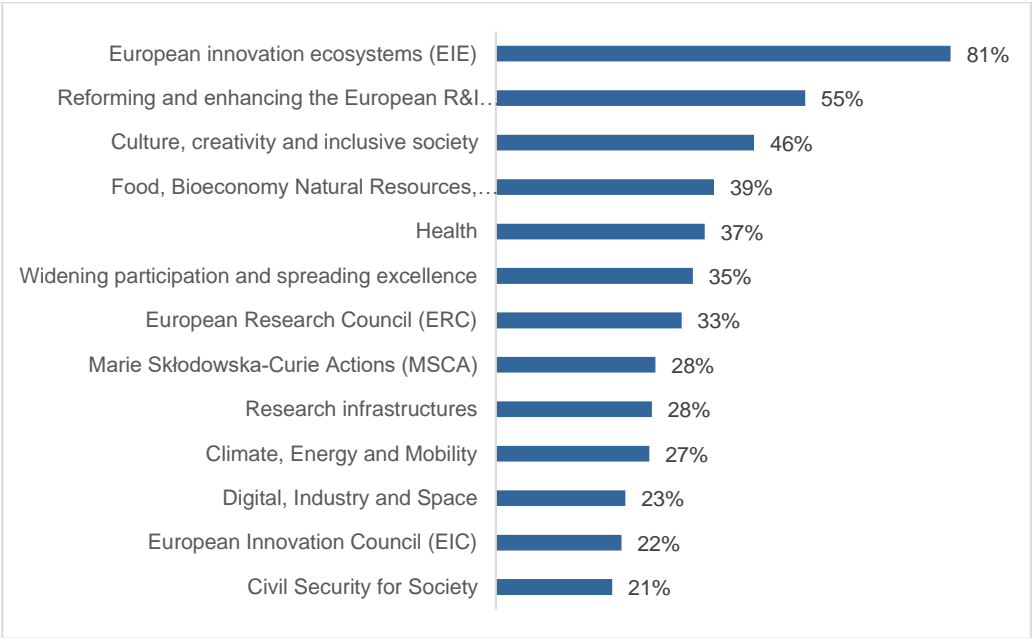
<sup>26</sup> There was a change in methodology between Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe – in Horizon Europe researchers participating in multiple projects are counted just once. This does not have a large influence on the share of women researchers but it makes absolute numbers not comparable between the two programmes.

equally observed across programme parts in which women's participation is the lowest, such as Cluster 4 under Pillar II <sup>27</sup>.

### 3. Project coordinators

At programme level, the share of women coordinators<sup>28</sup> currently stands at 31% (5 009). This constitutes an increase of 7 percentage points compared to Horizon 2020.

Horizon Europe is the first EU Research and Innovation Programme that allowed for self-identification as *non-binary* when filling in project proposals. This represents a significant step forward towards greater inclusivity in the Framework Programme.<sup>29</sup> Among Horizon Europe project coordinators, 24 indicated non-binary as their gender, representing 0.1% of the total.



**Figure 1:** Share of women coordinators in Horizon Europe projects by Programme part. © Horizon Europe EC administrative and monitoring data. Data cut-off date: 13 January 2025.

Looking at women coordinator figures across programme parts, the highest share of women coordinators is associated with *European innovation ecosystems* standing at 81% (221). This

<sup>27</sup> The percentage of women-led consortia in Cluster 4 ‘Digital, Industry and Space’ increased by about 5 percentage points between 2014 (Horizon 2020 ‘LEIT’ programmes) and 2022, Digital and Industrial Transition, Final Report, p. 81.

<sup>28</sup> Defined as the ‘main contact’ in the organisation coordinating the project. The only exception is the ERC, where the Principal Investigator (PI) is treated as coordinator. please note the ERC Synergy Grants may have multiple PIs who were all counted.

Only very limited information is known about the main contact in organisations, which limits the breadth of the analysis as opposed as what is possible for project researchers (see section 4).

<sup>29</sup> Excellent Science, Final Report, Annex 2.12, pp. 561- 562.

very high share is influenced by calls where all (or almost all) coordinators are women, such as the [Women TechEU initiative](#).

A very high share is seen also in the *Reforming and enhancing the European R&I System* programme part, with 55% (49) and in Pillar II's Cluster 2, *Culture, creativity and inclusive society* with 46% (30). The lowest share was recorded in *Civil Security for Society* with mere 21% (30). The *European Innovation Council (EIC)* and *Digital, Industry and Space* do only marginally better (22%, 419; 23%, 252 respectively).

## 4. Project researchers

In contrast to the women coordinators' figures presented in the previous section, the share of women researchers participating in Horizon Europe projects has increased more moderately compared to Horizon 2020: 38% of all researchers involved in projects are women, compared to 37% in Horizon 2020. Among Horizon Europe researchers, 208 indicated nonbinary as their gender, corresponding to 0.1%, vis-à-vis 75 879 women (38%) and 124 549 men (62%).

Despite the limited progress in increasing the share of women researchers from Horizon 2020 to Horizon Europe, it is important to stress that this figure is *still higher* than the average share of women researchers across the EU in 2021, which stood at 33.7%.<sup>30</sup>

**Women in research are less represented at the most advanced career stages.** While there are more men than women in EU-funded research projects across all career stages, this imbalance is even more pronounced among senior researchers and associate professors as well as professors and directors of research.<sup>31</sup>

Figure 2 showcases that the share of women researchers in Horizon Europe projects is most balanced among early career researchers ('first stage', 46%; 11 290).<sup>32</sup> Overall, an inverse relationship can be observed between the share of women researchers across all research categories along with their seniority – **although women may be well-represented in entry-level positions, as women advance to higher academic ranks, their representation in these senior positions diminishes.**

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<sup>30</sup> European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *She figures 2024 – Gender in research and innovation – Statistics and indicators*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2025, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/592260>, p. 138

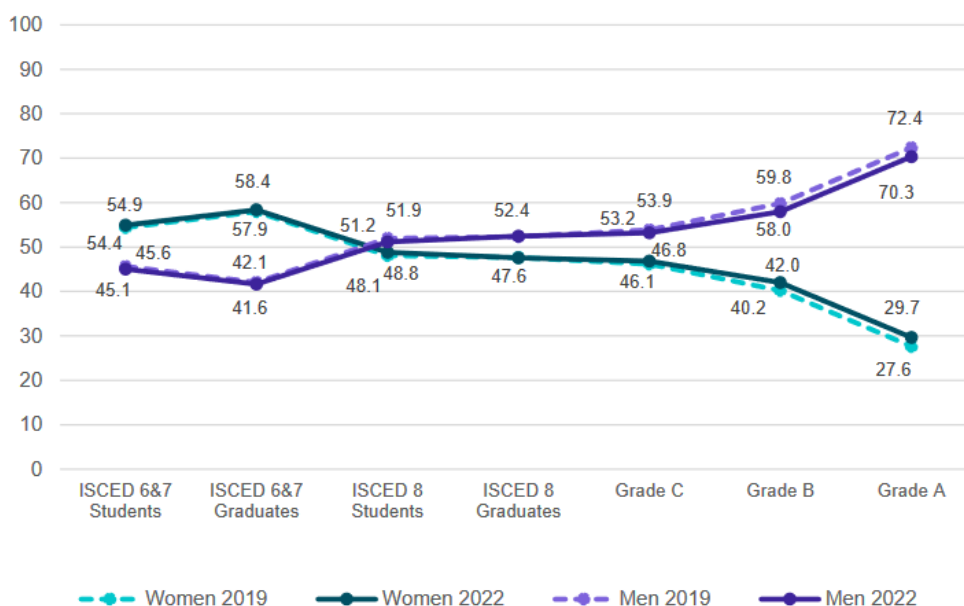
<sup>31</sup> Category A researchers – Top Grade Researchers, see Frascati Manual, p. 249 retrieved from: [https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2015/10/frascati-manual-2015\\_g1g57dcb/9789264239012-en.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2015/10/frascati-manual-2015_g1g57dcb/9789264239012-en.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> Category D – First stage researcher, see Frascati Manual, p. 249 retrieved from: [https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2015/10/frascati-manual-2015\\_g1g57dcb/9789264239012-en.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2015/10/frascati-manual-2015_g1g57dcb/9789264239012-en.pdf)



**Figure 2:** Share of women researchers in Horizon Europe projects by career stage. © Horizon Europe EC administrative and monitoring data. Data cut-off date: 13 January 2025.

The figures presented in this report closely mirror the general situation across Europe, where the number of women researchers display a similar pattern across varying career stages. As shown in the 2024 She figures report, throughout the EU participation of women is highest at the lower career stages, whereas only about one quarter of Grade A researchers (e.g. full professors, directors of research) are women.<sup>33</sup> Notably, the gender gap in top-level positions is both visible in science and engineering and in the social sciences, being only slightly narrower in the latter.<sup>34</sup>



**Figure 3:** Proportion (%) of women and men in a typical academic career, students and academic staff in the EU, 2019 and 2022. From She figures 2024, p. 234 (<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/592260>)

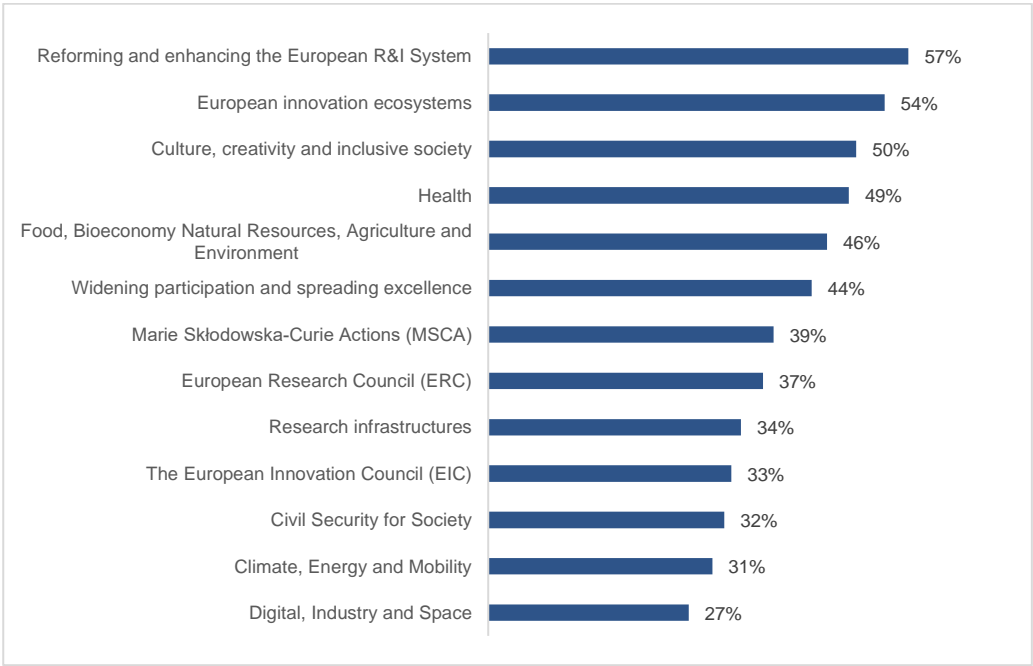
<sup>33</sup> She figures 2024 (2025), p. 230

<sup>34</sup> She figures 2024 (2025), pp. 233-234

Looking at the distribution of researchers across Horizon Europe programme parts (Figure 4), there are more women than men in research functions in *Reforming and enhancing the European R&I System* (57%; 1 297), *European Innovation Ecosystems* (54%; 636) and *Culture, creativity and inclusive society* (50%; 5 160). The good gender balance in this programme part reflects its focus on humanities and social science, areas where women researchers tend to be well represented in European academia<sup>35</sup>.

As in the European research system as a whole, women are less represented in programme parts where engineering – and more in general STEM subjects – are the main focus of the activities.

Similar to women coordinator figures presented in the previous section, women representation among researchers in Cluster 3 - *Civil Security for Society* (32%; 1 649) as well as in Cluster 4 - *Digital, Industry and Space* (27%; 11 645) is lower compared to other programme parts. Still, there are more women as a proportion of all researchers than the share of women coordinators in *Civil Security for Society* (32% versus 21%), *Climate, Energy and Mobility* (31% versus 27%) and *Digital, Industry and Space* (27% versus 23%). In these three collaborative clusters, **rarely women have a leading position in research teams**: a woman is flagged as 'leading researcher' in the organisation in less than one quarter of all cases.



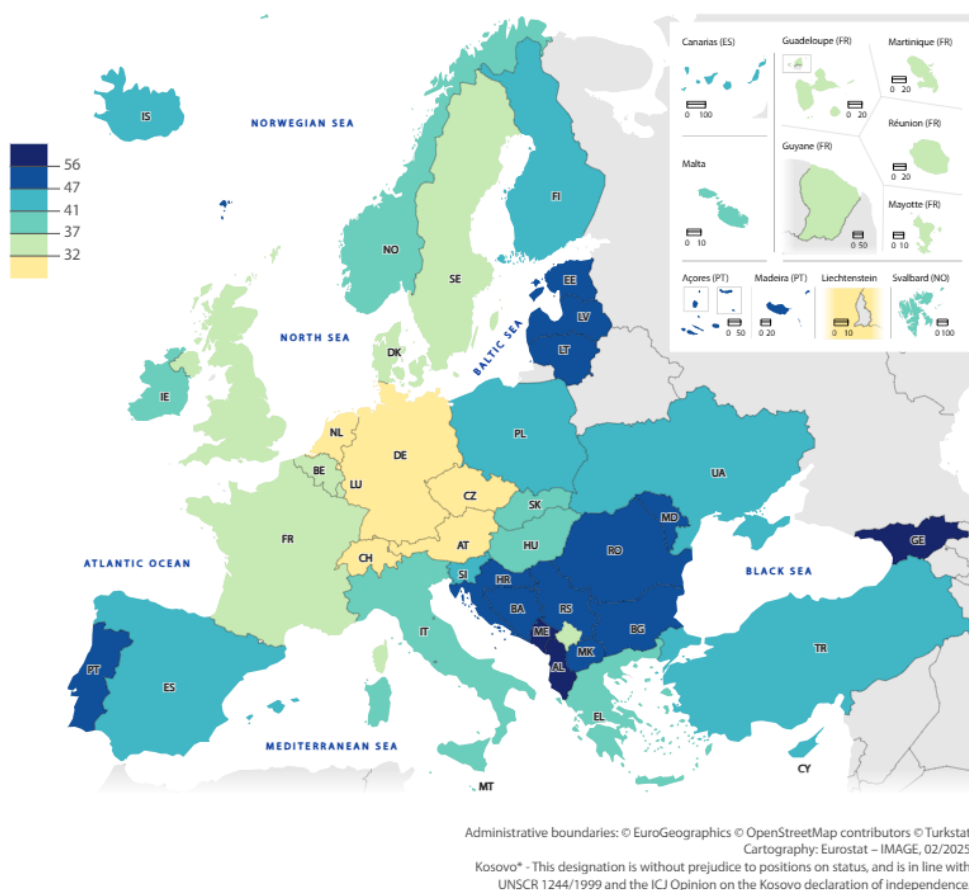
**Figure 4:** Distribution of researchers participating in Horizon Europe by gender and programme. © Horizon Europe EC administrative and monitoring data. Data cut-off date: 13 January 2025.

The most common countries of nationality among women researchers in Horizon Europe are Spain (9 553) and Italy (9 223). Around 41% of Spanish nationals involved in projects are women, and a similarly high percentage is observed for Italy as well. Among citizens of Germany, instead, less than 30% of all Horizon Europe researchers are women – the lowest

<sup>35</sup> She figures 2024 (2025), pp. 232

share among EU Member States. As shown in Figure 5, the gender gap in participation is particularly pronounced for citizens of Central European countries.

Relative participation of women researchers is particularly high in Widening countries<sup>36</sup>, where the gender gap in participation is often reversed. Women researchers are a slight majority among nationals of several countries (Portugal, Estonia, Romania, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Croatia, showing the highest share at 53.5%). In associated countries the share of women researchers is even higher, particularly for citizens of countries in the Western Balkans: over 60% of Horizon Europe researchers from Albania, Georgia and Montenegro are women.



**Figure 5:** Percentage of women researchers in Horizon Europe projects by country of nationality, EU Member States and associated countries (plus Switzerland) © Horizon Europe EC administrative and monitoring data. Data cut-off date: 13 January 2025.

*Not shown among associated countries: Armenia (45 researchers, 54%), Canada (278 researchers, 39%) and New Zealand (38 researchers, 29%).*

<sup>36</sup> Widening countries are defined in the Horizon Europe regulations as countries with relatively lower performance in R&I. From the Member States, these are Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.



## 5. Empowering women innovators

Industry-oriented programme parts tend to have the lowest participation of women in leading roles. In the EIC Accelerator, just 17% of CEOs of selected companies were women; moreover, 19% of the companies are women-led<sup>37</sup>, a percentage that increases to 30% if only 2024 calls are considered<sup>38</sup>. Similarly, only about almost 24% of start-ups associated with the European Institute of Technology (EIT) innovation projects throughout the 2021-2022 period were women-led.<sup>39</sup>

**The figures reflect underrepresentation of women in the start-up and scale-up landscape at large.** Across the EU, women are reported to only form part of 2% among founders of unicorn companies<sup>40</sup> whereas there is an estimated USD 1.7 trillion finance gap for women-owned SMEs.<sup>41</sup>

In venture capital funding, the discrepancy is pronounced: in 2023, all-men founded companies secured 75% of capital raised in 2023, whereas all-women founded companies merely secured 7% - the remaining 18% were secured by mixed companies.<sup>42</sup> A significant funding imbalance persist for all-women teams, receiving 2 to 6 times less investment than all-men teams, despite securing a similar number of deals.<sup>43</sup> Closing this considerable gender gap is crucial for the EU in harnessing women entrepreneurs' potential, leading to increased economic output and innovation.<sup>44</sup>

Ultimately, this indicates a **need for further improvement towards gender equality in view of securing investments, raising capital and providing necessary backing to safeguard financial stability** – equally through the EU Research and Innovation Framework Programmes.<sup>45</sup>

Under the Innovative Europe pillar of Horizon Europe (comprising the EIC, the EIT and the European innovation ecosystems programme), multiple initiatives are aimed at supporting women innovators, from education to mentoring, as well as dedicated support schemes and selection rules. Several examples are presented in Section 7.2.

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<sup>37</sup> Defined as having either a woman CEO, CSO, or CTO. Data on CSO and CTO only partially available.

<sup>38</sup> EISMEA monitoring data as of 2 October 2024.

<sup>39</sup> Innovative Europe, Final Report, p. 78.

<sup>40</sup> The JRC Technical Report 'In search of EU unicorns - What do we know about them?' examines the gender of founders and finds a pronounced gender equality gap in the creation of innovative start-ups. Notably among the founding teams of unicorn companies in the EU, there are 3 founders per company (N=94) 2% of which are women based on an analysis of Crunchbase data. Innovative Europe, Final Report, p. 78.

<sup>41</sup> Financial Alliance for Women, 2022, available at: <https://financialallianceforwomen.org/the-opportunity/#growthpotential> Accessed on 5 December 2023, data based on World Bank findings. Innovative Europe, Final Report, p. 78.

<sup>42</sup> Atomico (2023), The State of European Tech 2023.

<sup>43</sup> Atomico (2022), The State of European Tech 2022.

<sup>44</sup> European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Science, research and innovation performance of the EU, 2024 – A competitive Europe for a sustainable future, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/965670>

<sup>45</sup> Innovative Europe, Final Report, p. 105.

## 6. Gender equality plans (GEPs) as eligibility criterion

Since 2022, **gender equality plans (GEPs)** became an eligibility criterion for public bodies, research organisations and higher education establishments participating in Horizon Europe projects<sup>46</sup>.

A study published by the Commission in 2024<sup>47</sup> identified several positive outcomes of GEPs in research organisations. The study shows that GEPs have contributed to positive advancements in institutional gender equality, notably in collecting gender equality-related indicators such as women's representation, increased gender mainstreaming efforts across institutions, and increased awareness on gender equality among management and staff.

Evidence from survey results and case studies highlight how GEP implementation has strengthened gender-related research topics, driving more inclusive and diverse approaches to innovation. The report also presents emerging evidence that the implementation of GEPs or similar measures can increase the productivity of institutions, such as through an increase in publications or funding awards.

Moreover, according to Horizon Europe evaluation studies, the requirement of developing and implementing Gender Equality Plans has directly led to increased awareness and action towards gender equality<sup>48</sup>. Analysis shows that as late as 2021 most research performing organisation in Europe did not have a GEP in place<sup>49</sup>.

As of 2025, most Horizon Europe applicants report to comply with the requirement already at proposal stage – whereas the obligation technically applies only from the moment the grant is signed. As of 13 January 2025, among all Horizon Europe applications originating from public bodies, higher education institutions and research organisations, 80.6% (238 074) had a Gender Equality Plan in place at proposal stage. The figures suggest a positive trend: as of January 2024, around one quarter of all applications did not report a GEP at proposal stage<sup>50</sup>.

From a different perspective, over two-thirds of applying organisations (12 997, 67.2%) declared to have a GEP in place in at least one of their Horizon Europe applications. This means that around 6 300 organisations never reported a GEP: these are mostly entities that applied for Horizon Europe funding only once (1.4 times on average). Conversely, 98% of

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<sup>46</sup> Horizon Europe Work Programme 2021-2022, p. 13 retrieved from [https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2021-2022/wp-1-general-introduction\\_horizon-2021-2022\\_v2.0\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2021-2022/wp-1-general-introduction_horizon-2021-2022_v2.0_en.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Andriescu, M., Pépin, A., Mounou, A., Buckingham, S. et al., *Impact of gender equality plans across the European research area – Report*, Pépin, A. (editor), Mounou, A. (editor), Gilloz, O. (editor), Svíčková, K. (editor) and Tenglerova, H. (editor), Publications Office of the European Union, 2025, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/074644>

<sup>48</sup> European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Evaluation study on excellent science in the European framework programmes for research and innovation – Annexes phase 2 – Supporting the interim evaluation of Horizon Europe, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/9552959>, pp. 543-544

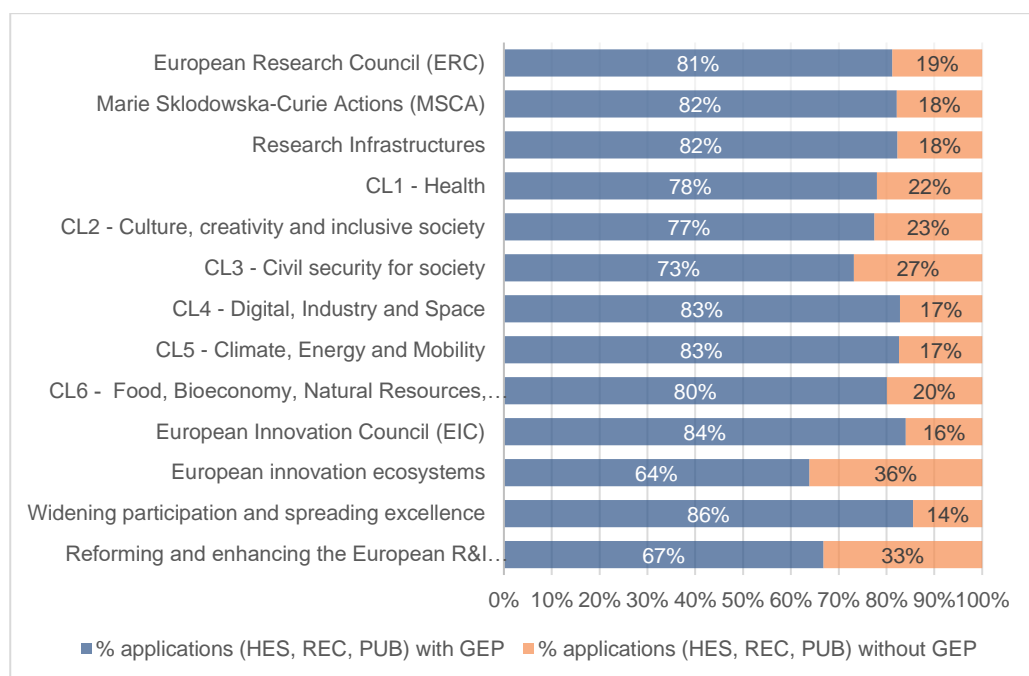
<sup>49</sup> Information available in the Gender Equality in Academia and Research (GEAR) tool and reported in a report from the ERAC Standing Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation (ERAC SWG GRI). Available at: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-1202-2021-INIT/en/pdf> Excellent Science, Annex 2.12, p. 550.

<sup>50</sup> Excellent Science study, annexes, p. 541-542.

organisations that have submitted 5 or more funding applications did report a GEP at least once.

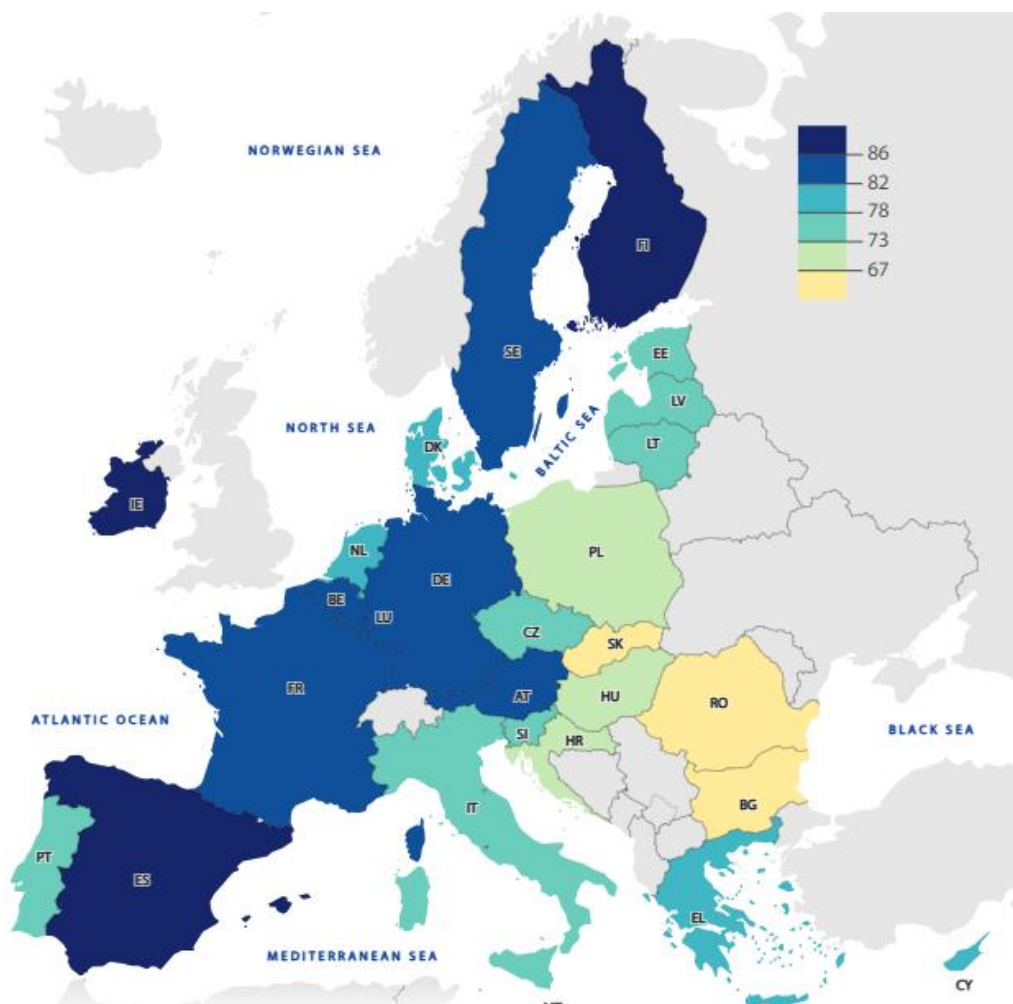
Applications from universities (85%) and research organisations (80%) are more likely to declare that a GEP is in place. For public bodies, the percentage is much lower (60%), with almost 40% of all applications not including a self-declaration.

The different propensity of organisations to report a GEP also influences the shares by programme parts (Figure 6). Under the programme part *Widening participation and spreading excellence*, which has high representation of universities and higher education, over 85% of applications declare GEP compliance. At the opposite, under the *European innovation ecosystems* programme, which has a relatively high representation of public organisations, a GEP is reported for less than two-thirds of all applications. Overall, across programme parts the shares are rather similar, with clearly lower values only under *Civil security for society* collaborative projects and the *Reforming and enhancing the European R&I system* horizontal scheme.

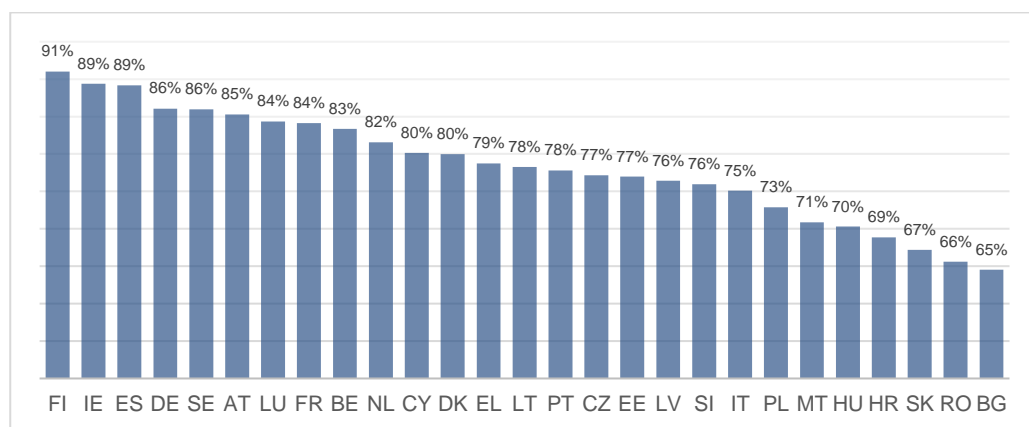


**Figure 6:** Share of Horizon Europe applications with Gender Equality Plans © Horizon Europe EC administrative and monitoring data. Cut-off date: 10 February 2025.

Despite the high share of GEPs reported under the *Widening participation and spreading excellence* programme, the share of applications with a GEP in place is comparatively lower (75%) in Widening Member States, against an overall EU share of 82%. The share is lower even than for non-EU applicants, which declare a GEP in 78% of all cases. Among Widening MS, Cyprus and Greece had the highest share of reported GEPs (80% and 79% respectively), while for Bulgaria and Romania the share barely two thirds of applications declared one.



**Figure 7:** Distribution of Horizon Europe applications that have developed a Gender Equality Plan, Member States only. © Horizon Europe EC administrative and monitoring data. Cut-off date: 10 February 2025.



**Figure 8:** Distribution of Horizon Europe applications (among HES, REC, PUB) that have developed a Gender Equality Plan. © Horizon Europe EC administrative and monitoring data. Cut-off date: 10 February 2025.

To further extend and facilitate the use of Gender Equality Plans, the European Commission provided support and guidance<sup>51</sup>, which has been funded through the Horizon Europe programme part *Reforming and Enhancing the EU R&I System* in the WIDERA Work Programme.<sup>52</sup>

All figures presented above come from self-declarations. The European Commission checks compliance with GEP legal requirements on a random basis. The Commission conducted a pilot check at the end of 2023 among a randomly selected set of beneficiaries and affiliated entities of projects that are funded under the current Framework Programme with the aim to test and fine-tune its methodology in preparation of conducting annual sample-based compliance checks.<sup>53</sup> The findings of the pilot check revealed deficiencies in GEPs in 59% of the checked entities, resulting in the launching of grant termination procedures for three entities<sup>54</sup>.

## 7. Integration of the gender dimension in R&I activities in Horizon Europe

### 7.1. Integrating the gender dimension into R&I content

Throughout Horizon Europe, the European Commission further reinforced the priority of integrating the gender dimension into R&I content.<sup>55</sup> In particular, the Horizon Europe legal basis sets the strengthening of the integration of the gender dimension in R&I content as an operational objective across the whole programme. Also, guidance was provided to assist applicants to adequately comply with the requirement of integrating the gender dimension in R&I content<sup>56</sup>, providing researchers and innovators with methodological tools for sex, gender and intersectional analysis. The phase 2 evaluation study on Excellent Science, as well as the Gendered innovations report<sup>57</sup> also present concrete case studies, showcasing projects funded under Horizon 2020 and addressing key research and innovation areas for Horizon Europe clusters, missions and partnerships.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, it is important to note that the development of principles for integrating and evaluating the gender perspective in R&I content also stands as a key deliverable of the ERA Policy Agenda 2022-2024.

In Horizon 2020, specific topics were flagged as relevant for the integration of the gender dimension in the content of respective actions. Horizon Europe has adopted a reversed approach: the integration of the gender dimension is a by default and mandatory requirement

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<sup>51</sup> Including e.g. FAQs, workshops. For further information please consult [the EU Funding & Tenders Portal](#)

<sup>52</sup> European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Horizon Europe guidance on gender equality plans*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2021, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/876509>

<sup>53</sup> Digital and Industrial Transition, Final Report, p. 81.

<sup>54</sup> Results reported by Commission services on 13 December 2024.

<sup>55</sup> Article 7(6) Horizon Europe (HE) Regulation stipulates that the Programme shall *ensure 'the gender dimension in R&I content'*; Recital (53) HE Regulation states that [...] *'The gender dimension should be integrated in R&I content and followed through at all stages of the research cycle'*

<sup>56</sup> Excellent Science, Final Report, Annex 2.12, p. 554, Digital and Industrial Transition, Final Report, p. 83.

<sup>57</sup> European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Gendered innovations – How gender analysis contributes to research – Report of the expert group 'Innovation through gender'*, Publications Office, 2013, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/11868>

<sup>58</sup> European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, *Gendered innovations 2 – How inclusive analysis contributes to research and innovation – Policy review*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2020, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/316197>

for all Research and Innovation Actions (RIAs), Innovation Actions (IAs), and Cofunds - unless its non-relevance for a specific topic is specified in the topic description. Therefore, in line with this development, the so-called 'positively gender-flagging of topics' prevailing under Horizon 2020 was discontinued. Under Horizon Europe, only topics that derogate from the default integration of the gender dimension are flagged, provided that such a deviation is justified by the nature of the topic.

As of January 2025,<sup>59</sup> 977 out of 1 214 topics of type RIA, IA and COFUND<sup>60</sup> integrate the gender dimension in their content, corresponding with 80.5% of all topics. As a benchmark, an estimated 23% of Horizon 2020 projects took the gender dimension into account <sup>61</sup>.

The mandatory integration of the gender dimension does not apply to programme parts such as MSCA and ERC, where research topics are defined 'bottom-up' by researchers themselves and cannot therefore be 'flagged' for relevance in advance. These programmes however also contribute to advancing research and knowledge creation in the scientific field of gender studies – for instance, the ERC ERIS tool<sup>62</sup> presents a comprehensive list of ERC projects specifically focused on gender-related components.

## **7.2. Funding towards promoting gender equality and gender research**

The mandatory integration of the gender dimension into R&I content across the whole programme makes Horizon Europe a frontrunner among EU MFF 2021-2027 programmes.

In order to measure the effective implementation of this commitment, the Commission has developed a methodology to measure expenditure related to gender equality throughout the duration of Horizon Europe. Overall, this methodology aims to improve gender mainstreaming in the Commission's budgetary process by tracking contributions made by policy design and resource allocation to gender equality objectives. It expands on existing methods (namely the general criteria proposed by the OECD for 'Rio markers') and comprises a form of budget expenditure **scoring**:

- Score 2: interventions whose principal objective is to improve gender equality;
- Score 1: interventions that have gender equality as an important and deliberate objective but not as the main reason for the intervention;
- Score 0: non-targeted interventions (interventions that are expected to have no significant bearing on gender equality);
- Score 0\*: score to be assigned to interventions with a likely but not yet clear positive impact on gender equality.

According to this methodology, between 2021 and 2023, Horizon Europe allocated a total of EUR 215.3 million to actions for which the improvement of gender equality is a principal objective ('score 2' actions).

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<sup>59</sup> Reference date: 13 January 2025

<sup>60</sup> The figure does not include IAs and RIAs for joint undertakings, for which no flagging system exists.

<sup>61</sup> Horizon 2020 Final Evaluation, SWD 2024(29) final.

<sup>62</sup> <https://erc.europa.eu/projects-statistics/advanced-analytics-tool-eris>.

Examples of such contributions include funding for gender-related research under Horizon Europe Pillar I (e.g. Marie-Sklodowska-Curie Actions and the ERC), under Pillar II (e.g. gender biases in AI, radicalisation and violence against women, women's health, backlash against women in politics, women in rail), and under Pillar III (the [Women Leadership Programme](#) (EIC), the [EU Prize for Women Innovators](#) (EIC/EIT), the [Supernovas](#) (EIT), [Girls Go Circular](#) (EIT) and WIDERA (e.g. implementation of inclusive gender equality plans).

At the same time, approximately EUR 4 841.4 million were allocated to actions that have gender equality as an important and deliberate objective but not as the main reason for the intervention ('score 1' actions). In total, **EUR 5 056.7 million can be directly linked with gender equality-advancing efforts**, corresponding to 11% of Horizon Europe commitments<sup>63</sup>.

However, **the effective integration of the gender dimension can only be truly assessed at the end of a project**. In line with this, until final project reviews provide evidence on whether and to what extent gender has been effectively integrated, the methodology uses a cautious approach: a default score of 0\* is assigned across Horizon Europe, except for topics and actions where scores of 1 or 2 can already be clearly assigned.

#### *Examples of actions addressing gender equality*

The EU Missions funded 9 projects in 2022 integrating the gender dimension, amounting to EUR 193 million (under Mission Cancer, Mission Ocean and Waters, and Mission Soil); and 10 projects in 2023 amounting to EUR 243.5 million (under Mission Cancer, Mission Ocean, Mission Cities and Mission Soil, as well as in Joint calls).<sup>64</sup>

In **Cluster 2**, two topics in the 2021-2022 Work Programme directly addressed gender equality.<sup>65</sup> Eight projects were funded under these topics with a total budget of **EUR 20.6 million**. These projects cover aspects relating to gender equality, countering anti-gender discourses, promoting gender-inclusive democracy, advocating for inclusive feminism, addressing discrimination, exploring feminist movements as well as focusing on gender empowerment and innovative approaches.<sup>66</sup>

For WP 2023, there were two topics scoring 2 associated with a total funding of EUR 12 million on cultural and creative approaches for gender-responsive STE(A)M education, i.e., blending Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines with arts, humanities and social sciences as well as intersectionality and equality in deliberative and participatory democratic spaces.

Under Pillar III, several initiatives target the further engagement of women innovators, namely:

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<sup>63</sup> The total contribution that can be directly linked with gender equality-advancing efforts was divided by the total programme funding committed at the end of 2023 (EUR 44 039.9 million), as reported in the Horizon Europe Performance Statement, retrieved 1 December 2024 from [Horizon Europe - Performance - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#). Figures may be subject to ex post revision as the methodology is improved.

<sup>64</sup> Horizon Europe Performance Statement, retrieved 8 July 2024 from [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-statements/horizon-europe-performance\\_en#contribution-to-horizontal-priorities](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-statements/horizon-europe-performance_en#contribution-to-horizontal-priorities)

<sup>65</sup> HORIZON-CL2-2021-DEMOCRACY-01-03: Feminisms for a new age of democracy and HORIZON-CL2-2022-TRANSFORMATIONS-01-05: Gender and social, economic and cultural empowerment

<sup>66</sup> Resilient Europe, Annex: Benchmark Study No 2: Gender equality and inclusion practices, p. 393.



- The EIT Label programme fosters inclusive education with the aim to attract a greater number of women students. The share of women among students and graduates of the EIT Label-associated Masters (MSc) and Doctoral degrees (PhD) is 35%. Equally, in non-degree education the share of women participating in education catering to entrepreneurial education run by the EIT KICs was 57% in 2021-2022.<sup>67</sup>
- The **Women TechEU scheme**<sup>68</sup>, offers first-class coaching and mentoring to women founders as well as targeted funding to advance their businesses. The 2022 Women TechEU call under the EIE attracted 467 applications with topics in the realms of health, biotechnology and ICT. The Women TechEU programme supported 184 deep-tech companies that were funded by women in 2021-2022<sup>69</sup>, encompassing topics associated with early cancer detection, speech therapy, in-vitro fertilisation, solutions for carbon capture and conversion, sustainable consumption in the fashion industry, solar technology and waste recovery, among others.<sup>70</sup> The budget was increased to EUR 12 million in equity-free grants for 2023 and 2024 and is open from 15 January 2025 until 17 March 2025.<sup>71</sup>
- the **EIC Women Leadership Programme**, which is open to women researchers and entrepreneurs from the EIC Community as well as EIT Supernovas which constitutes a cross-KIC activity among EIT Food, EIT Manufacturing and EIT Urban Mobility, offering specific training sessions along with interactive exercises as well as networking events and individual mentorship and business-coaching schemes. The programme aims to facilitate an inclusive entrepreneurial environment, fostering women participation in bringing innovations to the market.<sup>72</sup> The programme was established as a pilot in 2021 and has so far facilitated skills enhancement and networking support to five cohorts of more than 200 women researchers and entrepreneurs.<sup>73</sup>
- the **EU Prize for Women Innovators**<sup>74</sup>, which aims at championing the most pioneering innovations led by women entrepreneurs, notably with focal points in health, biotechnology, and ICT domains.<sup>75</sup> Since 2019, 1 223 women applied for the EU Prize for Women Innovators – the number of applications increased every year from 155 in 2019 to 330 in 2023.<sup>76</sup> In 2025, exceptional women entrepreneurs are competing over the

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<sup>67</sup> Innovative Europe, Final Report, p. 78.

<sup>68</sup> [https://eismea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/european-innovation-ecosystems/women-techeu\\_en](https://eismea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/european-innovation-ecosystems/women-techeu_en).

<sup>69</sup> Excellent Science, Final Report, Annex 2.12, p. 556.

<sup>70</sup> [https://eismea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/european-innovation-ecosystems/women-techeu\\_en](https://eismea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/european-innovation-ecosystems/women-techeu_en)

<sup>71</sup> [Women TechEU project – Third Open Call - European Commission](#)

<sup>72</sup> Innovative Europe, Final Report, Annex 4.6, p. 154.

<sup>73</sup> <https://eic.eismea.eu/community/stories/open-call-eic-women-leadership-programme-6th-cohort-elevating-women-leadership>

<sup>74</sup> The prize is managed jointly by the European Innovation Council, the SMEs Executive Agency, and the European Institute for Innovation & Technology.

<sup>75</sup> Innovative Europe p. 103

<sup>76</sup> [https://eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-prizes/european-prize-women-innovators-powered-eic-eit\\_en#statistics-2019---2023](https://eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-prizes/european-prize-women-innovators-powered-eic-eit_en#statistics-2019---2023)

following categories: (1) Rising Innovators, (2) Women Innovators and (3) EIT Women Leadership.<sup>77</sup> Between 2019 and 2021, the 12 winners came from 10 different countries.<sup>78</sup>

- the **EEN2EIC**<sup>79</sup> which extends Enterprise Europe Network-supporting activities in general specifically to women entrepreneurs, widening countries and Seal of Excellence holders. Thus far, the EEN2EIC Community assisted 650 companies interested in applying for the EIC Accelerator (430 from Widening Countries, 220 women-led companies and 486 Seal of Excellence-awarded companies).<sup>80</sup>

## 8. Gender equality in European Partnerships

The European Partnerships under Horizon Europe equally support the Framework Programme's efforts in fostering gender equality by:

- Adopting gender equality policies, action plans and guidelines;
- Monitoring and improving the gender balance of the Partnerships' governing bodies, staff and evaluation experts;
- Monitoring the gender balance of participants (e.g. researchers, event and training participants) and implementing initiatives to attract more women;
- Integrating the gender dimension in Research and Innovation content, whenever possible as an evaluation criterion.

The first report on the performance of European Partnerships under Horizon Europe (May 2022),<sup>81</sup> found very limited contribution to gender equality<sup>82</sup>. According to the report, only one partnership (Europe's Rail Joint Undertaking) contributed to gender equality in 2022.<sup>83</sup> Europe's Rail JU has indeed demonstrated a commitment to support the role of women in the industry.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, the Biennial Monitoring Report 2024 on partnerships in Horizon Europe found that 31 out of 43 partnerships reported to have made efforts to ensure gender

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<sup>77</sup> [https://eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-prizes/european-prize-women-innovators-powered-eic-eit/eu-prize-women-innovators-applications-and-winners-2019-2022\\_en](https://eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-prizes/european-prize-women-innovators-powered-eic-eit/eu-prize-women-innovators-applications-and-winners-2019-2022_en)

<sup>78</sup> [https://eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-prizes/european-prize-women-innovators-powered-eic-eit/eu-prize-women-innovators-applications-and-winners-2019-2022\\_en](https://eic.ec.europa.eu/eic-prizes/european-prize-women-innovators-powered-eic-eit/eu-prize-women-innovators-applications-and-winners-2019-2022_en)

<sup>79</sup> <https://een2eic.eu/>.

<sup>80</sup> <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101075818/reporting>

<sup>81</sup> European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Performance of European Partnerships – Biennial Monitoring Report (BMR) 2022 on partnerships in Horizon Europe, Publications Office of the European Union, 2022, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/144363>

<sup>82</sup> European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Dinges, M. and Coatanroch, G., Horizon Europe and the green transition – Interim evaluation support study – Final report ('Phase 2' study) ('**Green Transition**' study), Dinges, M.(editor) and Coatanroch, G.(editor), Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/67934>, p. 63

<sup>83</sup> Performance of European Partnerships: Biennial Monitoring Report 2022 on Partnerships in Horizon Europe, p. 45, Europe's Rail Fiche, p. 291.

<sup>84</sup> For example, by introducing the PhD topic 'Change Making for Gender Equality in Rail'. Green Transition, Partnership Evaluation: Europe's Rail Joint Undertaking, Independent Expert Report, p. 31. Link: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/3737899>

balance in representation and decision making, corresponding with 68% among the institutionalised, 72% among the co-programmed and 77% among co-funded partnerships.<sup>85</sup>

The European Institute for Technology (EIT) adopted a Gender Equality Policy 2022-2027. Beyond that, all EIT Knowledge Innovation Communities (KICs) drafted their own Gender Equality Policies and Action Plans which are in line with the Commission's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025.<sup>86</sup> Notably EIT RawMaterials (RM) included improving gender balance in the RM sector as a KPI.<sup>87</sup>

Overall, the share of women involved in the European Partnerships' activities is usually below 30%. To put into context, this figure is significantly below the share of women employed in science and technology in the EU in 2022 (52%)<sup>88</sup>, the overall share of women among scientists and engineers (41%)<sup>89</sup>, and the share of women researchers presented in section 4.

In terms of participation of women among project researchers, there are however significant differences between partnerships. In Joint Undertakings, the share of women researchers is relatively high in health-focused JUs (EDCTP3, IHI) as well as in the Circular Bio-based Enterprises JU. In digital and manufacturing-oriented JUs the share of women among researchers is much lower, being even under 20% in Clean Aviation JU, Chips JU and Smart Network and Services JU (Figure 9).

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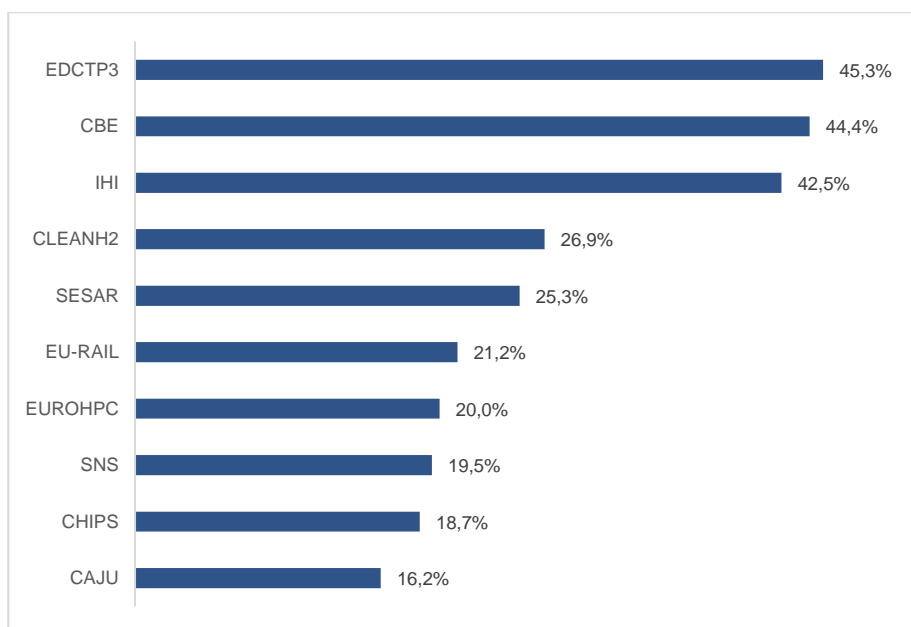
<sup>85</sup> European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Performance of European partnerships – Biennial monitoring report 2024 on partnerships in Horizon Europe – Technical addendum, Publications Office of the European Union, 2024, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/826135>, pp. 47-49

<sup>86</sup> [https://eit.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-12/gender\\_equality\\_policy\\_eit\\_december\\_2022.pdf](https://eit.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-12/gender_equality_policy_eit_december_2022.pdf) .

<sup>87</sup> Biennial Monitoring Report (2024) p. 112

<sup>88</sup> Eurostat (2024). Women make up 52% of science & technology employment. Retrieved 25 February 2025 from: [Women make up 52% of science & technology employment - News articles - Eurostat](#)

<sup>89</sup> Eurostat (2025). 7.7 million female scientists and engineers in the EU. Retrieved on 25 February 2025 from: [7.7 million female scientists and engineers in the EU - News articles - Eurostat](#)



**Figure 9:** Share of women researchers in Horizon Europe joint undertakings. © Horizon Europe EC administrative and monitoring data. Cut-off date: 13 January 2025.

Nonetheless, some governing bodies of the following European Partnerships did well in ensuring gender balance:

- The Innovative Health Initiative (IHI): Women represent 63% of the Governing Board members, 50% of the States' Representatives Group, 63% of members of the Science and Innovation Panel and 51% of expert evaluators.<sup>90</sup>
- The Circular Bio-based Europe Joint Undertaking (CBE JU) with 50% of management positions and 48.8% of evaluators being women in 2022.<sup>91</sup>
- The European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnerships (EDCTP2<sup>92</sup> and GH EDCPT3<sup>93</sup>) have funded projects mainstreaming the gender dimension in their research activities, notably by including the gender perspective in the ethics review and research design, as well as addressing gender gaps in clinical research;

<sup>90</sup> Resilient Europe, Interim evaluation of the Innovative Health Initiative (IHI) and its predecessor the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI2), Independent Expert Report, p. 38.

<sup>91</sup> Green Transition, Partnership Evaluation Report: 'Circular Bio-Based Europe Joint Undertaking', Independent Expert Report, p. 36. Link: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/636121>

<sup>92</sup> Resilient Europe, Second European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership Programme (EDCTP2) updated second interim evaluation, Independent Expert Report, p. 15. Link: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/017474>

<sup>93</sup> Resilient Europe, European Partnership for the Global Health EDCTP3 Joint Undertaking, Independent Expert Report, p 18.

- The EIT Urban Mobility<sup>94</sup> explicitly referred to the gender dimension in some topics such as the Women in Urban Mobility project.

Other partnerships, such as ERA4Health, the European Biodiversity Partnership (Biodiversa+) and EIT Urban Mobility, utilise the ex-aequo criterion by assigning a higher score in the evaluation if the projects integrate the gender dimension.

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<sup>94</sup> Green Transition, Partnership Evaluation: EIT Urban Mobility (EIT-UM), Independent Expert Report, p. 21.  
Link: <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/9939305>

## Appendix: Definition of gender equality indicators

Indicator	Definition
<b>Share of project coordinators by gender</b>	<p>Gender (man, woman, non-binary) of the ‘main contact’ in the organisation coordinating the project, as declared in project proposals.</p> <p>The only exception is the ERC, where the Principal Investigator (PI) is treated as coordinator rather than the main contact. ERC Synergy Grants may have multiple PIs who all account towards the indicator.</p> <p>In Horizon 2020 the definition was similar except for Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions, for which the gender of MSCA Fellows was used. Only limited data on Fellows is available in Commission monitoring systems (periodic reporting) for Horizon Europe at the date of publication of this report.</p>
<b>Share of Horizon Europe applicants with gender equality plans at proposal level</b>	<p>Share of public organisations, higher education institutions and research organisations in Member States and Associated Countries declaring to have a gender equality plan in place amongst all those which submitted a proposal. The question in the proposal template is: ‘Does the organisation have a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) covering the elements listed below?’</p>
<b>Share of Horizon Europe topics that do not integrate a gender dimension in their content</b>	<p>Percentage of Horizon Europe research topics which are exempted from the mandatory requirement to integrate a gender dimension into their research and innovation contents, set as a default in Horizon Europe.</p> <p>The requirement exists only for the following types of actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research and Innovation Actions</li> <li>- Innovation Actions</li> <li>- Co-fund actions.</li> </ul> <p>The indicator does not take into account bottom-up actions (ERC, MSCA, EIC...) as well as e.g. Joint Undertakings, for which no ‘Gender Negative’ flagging exists.</p>
<b>Share of women expert evaluators in Horizon Europe evaluation panels</b>	<p>More precisely, the percentage of the number of contracts (rather than the number of distinct individuals) for expert evaluators for which experts have declared their gender. The indicator is available only at the level of the entire programme, it cannot be disaggregated by programme part.</p>
<b>Number and share of women participating in Horizon Europe boards and expert groups</b>	<p>The figure comprises members of official expert groups and boards as well as special groups listed on the <a href="#">Register of Commission Expert Groups and Other Similar Entities</a>. The list includes only ‘Type A’ groups, meaning groups that are composed by individuals and appointed directly by the Commission rather than by constituent organisations or Member States.</p>

<p><b>Total Horizon Europe contribution to projects integrating the gender dimension in their content</b></p>	<p>The indicator is measured at the level of the budget expenditure of the programme. Each Horizon Europe action and topic is assigned a score representing its contribution to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Score 2: interventions whose principal objective is to improve gender equality</li> <li>• Score 1: interventions that have gender equality as an important and deliberate objective but not as the main reason for the intervention</li> <li>• Score 0: non-targeted interventions (interventions that are expected to have no significant bearing on gender equality)</li> <li>• Score 0*: score to be assigned to interventions with a likely but not yet clear positive impact on gender equality.</li> </ul> <p>The score is verified at the level of final project reviews. When a score of 1 or 2 cannot be assigned ex ante, a default score of 0* is assigned across Horizon Europe.</p>
<p><b>Number and share of researchers by gender</b></p>	<p>Share of researchers by gender out of all researchers participating in Horizon Europe projects.</p> <p>The indicator counts distinct individuals, which are identified based on reported persistent identifiers (e.g. the ORCID) whenever possible. The data is taken from the most recent source available (periodic reporting or grant agreement information). Many ERC researchers are not yet included if the project has not submitted a periodic report.</p> <p>In Horizon 2020, data on individual researchers was available only for few programme parts (notably ERC and MSCA). For all other parts, the number of researchers by gender in projects was only reported as an aggregate number, not allowing to check for the number of distinct individuals. For this reason, exact comparisons with the previous FP are not possible, particularly in terms of absolute numbers</p>

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This monitoring report presents an overview of gender equality in EU R&I programmes, particularly in Horizon Europe. It focuses both on main indicators of equality within the programme – such as gender balance of research teams, leading positions, expert evaluations and expert groups – and then on how concretely the programme addresses the issue of gender equality in R&I, such as through requesting adoption of Gender Equality Plans, promoting gender mainstreaming in research, and addressing gender gaps in innovative entrepreneurship.

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