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First validation of scenarios with key stakeholders

Synthetic descriptions of the concept scenarios



Concept scenario 1/New EU-wide GECAS

STRATEGIC CHOICE BEHIND SCENARIO SETUP

The first concept scenario foresees the introduction of a brand-new EU-wide GECAS, which represents the most ambitious choice of the three that have been proposed. It was developed trying to encompass most of the features emerged in interviews and co-creation activities with the view to maximise impact in terms of gender equality and inclusiveness.

The ambitious setup of this concept scenario, on the other hand, risks making it more difficult for less experienced institutions, or institutions who are less able to mobilise financial and human resources and adequate competences. Resistances and backlash from different internal stakeholders may also be stronger, because the wide set of requirements makes it difficult to just “tick a few boxes” (that is, settle for mostly formal, on-paper achievements).

This concept scenario fully covers, by design, all four mandatory GEP (Gender Equality Plan) building blocks requested to access funding under Horizon Europe, as well as all five recommended GEP content areas (find them here: [Gender Equality Plans as an Eligibility Criterion in Horizon Europe](#)).

MAIN FEATURES

Among the most significant features of this concept scenario (for the full list, please check the reading materials sent along with the questionnaire), its focus on **both process and outcome** in the implementation of Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) can be highlighted, as well as its strong emphasis on **participatory processes** around GEP design and implementation, the adoption of a **gender+, intersectional perspective**, broadening the set of potential inequality grounds that are actively addressed, the possibility to apply at the level of **the whole organisation and/or at Department/Faculty level**. **Support** to applicants would be indirectly provided by the European Commission, as the authority promoting the scheme (through mutual learning, capacity building activities, etc.) and more directly – in the application process – by national authorities.

A set of **features are unique to this concept scenario** (as compared to the other two):

- A scoring system is used to assess the level of achievement, allowing to differentiate the level of the certificate
- The assessment process combines self-assessment and external review from a committee of trained evaluators, expert in the field
- Besides certificates, a limited number of awards related to specific achievements are issued each year
- RFOs are included as potential users of the scheme
- Areas and criteria for intermediate and advanced levels are to be regularly reviewed every 4 years
- Mechanisms are foreseen for recognising certifications issued by other schemes



ARCHITECTURE

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

What



Certification scheme

There is a direct link to the existence of a GEP through the coverage of building blocks and recommended areas as defined by the EC for Horizon Europe (eligibility criterion). Having the certificate is a proof of compliance with the eligibility criterion:

The GEP is certified (set-up and impact). Process building blocks need to be present:

- ✓ Public Commitment of Institution
- ✓ Dedicated resources
- ✓ Data collection and monitoring
- ✓ Capacity building

Content needs to cover the following recommended areas:

- WLB and organisational culture
- Gender balance in leadership and decision-making
- Gender equality in recruitment and career progression
- Integration of the gender dimension in research and teaching content
- GBV and sexual harassment

Both process and outcomes are considered. A Gender+ approach is used (integrated in indicators). Participatory approaches for design and implementation of measures are expected.

How



- ✓ Validity for 4 years, renewable

Renewal after 4 years to maintain the same level depends upon evaluation of previous actions and revision of planned actions.

- ✓ Combination of self-assessment and external review (through a committee of trained experts - not through peer review)

- ✓ Harmonised approach to cover the whole EU

- ✓ Voluntary scheme

- ✓ Progressive

The recommended areas and the criteria for the levels used in the scoring system would be reviewed every 4 year cycle, to adapt to the changed situation in terms of GE.

How levels



Scoring system with credits

A score based on achievements towards institutional change (with a direct link to the GEP). The score/credits obtained defines the level. The levels could be a three levels system like in Athena SWAN or it could have more levels.

The minimum threshold will expect that a GEP is in place. However, thereafter further progress is subject to a score system that allows institutions to decide whether to expand to other areas or go further in depth in existing areas.

Who



Higher education institutions and RPOs from the EU and associated countries.

Possibility for a department or faculty to apply, but still with the endorsement of the institution of what the faculty is doing.

Extension to more countries would be envisaged in the future.

Extension to research activities of private companies could also be included in a next step; this could be done in cooperation with one or more schemes targeting the private sector.

The scheme would also be open to RFOs: this would be a specific certification for RFOs, based on the same principles as for RPOs; but adapted to RFOs (looking at the research funding activities).

Certification authority



An independent non-profit organisation is set-up with associations of RPOs as associates.

It could be considered to include Member States as Associates to foster commitment. Governance is organized with members of these associations in the decision-making organs. This non-profit organization has a scientific organ that validates the tools and criteria used by the scheme and the assessors.

Role of national authorities



National authorities integrate the scheme into their own R&I policy frameworks and play an active role in:

promoting the scheme

AND

organising support activities for RPOs who apply for the scheme

Synergies with existing initiatives



RPOs who already have a certificate or award could apply based on 'equivalences' with the most important existing schemes (national or international).

automatically

OR

through a simplified procedure and would (partly) define the score and therefore the level of the award.

Could be granted:

Award (Prize)



A limited number of awards every year; awards are based on a review of the certified institutions.

Grounds to grant the award are changed regularly and include e.g. innovative or inspiring practices, impact achieved, assistance given to other applicants, ... They would complement the Prize the EC plans to launch.

Roll-out options



Start with the scheme in all the EU and associated countries

Extension to more countries and to the private sector after (X) years.