

Gender equality plan (GEP)

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Summary

Strengthened focus on gender equality in Horizon Europe

The European Commission is committed to promoting gender equality in research and innovation. This commitment forms part of the European Commission's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, which sets out the Commission's broad dedication to gender equality across all EU policies. In the research sector, several structural barriers to gender equality in research and innovation persist, and targeted measures are necessary to address these gender gaps. The European Commission is addressing these structural barriers through its primary funding instrument, Horizon Europe, which builds upon the previous Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020 (2014-2020). There are three main focus areas where gender equality is being strengthened in Horizon Europe:

- Having a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) in place is now an eligibility criterion for certain categories of legal entities from EU countries and associated countries.
- Integrating the gender dimension into research and innovation content is now a standard requirement that is evaluated according to the excellence criterion, unless the call description explicitly states otherwise.
- Increasing gender balance throughout the programme with a target of 50% women in Horizon Europe-related boards, expert groups and evaluation committees, and gender balance in research teams as a ranking criterion for applications that have been awarded the same score.

Background

The purpose of this Gender Equality Plan is to account for Vinnova's gender equality work, both in internal operations (employer perspective) and external activities (e.g. applicants). The plan is organised based on the thematic areas that the EU research programme, Horizon Europe, has set as a requirement for projects that are granted funds. The document is signed by top management and officially published.

The document is divided into internal and external sections, which means that information about the agency's internal work on equality and inclusion issues concerns the employer perspective, where responsibility for the work lies with HR. This work is governed by Swedish law. The external part refers to the Government's instructions regarding the gender mainstreaming mission that the agency has had since 2015. Responsibility for this work lies with Vinnova's Gender Equality Team.

Results and analyses of the objectives and measures taken by the agency are followed up and reported to the Government annually.

Criterion

Formal public document

The Director General signs the GEP and the work is followed up in the annual report to the government. The document is publicly available on Vinnova's external website.

Dedicated resources

The responsibility for implementing and following the various parts of this plan is divided between different roles and parts of Vinnova's operations. HR is responsible for internal gender equality work, whilst the Gender Equality Team is responsible for external work. The Communications Department is responsible for ensuring that Vinnova's internal and external communication, including automatic AI translation from Swedish to English, is gender-sensitive, inclusive, accessible and norm-critical.

Vinnova's management and the Director General are ultimately responsible for ensuring that the operations as a whole follow what is stated in this plan.

Data collection or monitoring

Internal

Vinnova produces annual statistics on gender distribution in management and other positions, salary differences, sick leave, parental leave, differences in employment rates, and the proportion of permanent employees. The statistics are reported to the independent organisation Nyckeltalsinstitutet, which compares Vinnova with other Swedish agencies and organisations and reports back to Vinnova. The statistics are then followed up in collaboration between HR, management and trade unions.

Vinnova maintains salary mapping in accordance with Chapter 3, Sections 8-10 of the Discrimination Act, and analyses salary differences between women and men to determine if salary differences are directly or indirectly related to gender. The mapping is carried out annually prior to the salary review. This is done to identify, address and prevent any unjustified differences in salary and other employment conditions between women and men from existing or arising. In connection with salary reviews, structured salary discussions are held between managers and employees.

External

Since 2018, the Government has instructed Vinnova to integrate a gender perspective into the agency's operations and promote gender equality when allocating funds for research and innovation. In addition, Vinnova shall also work to ensure that sex and

gender perspective are included in the research that the agency finances when relevant (see more on page [y]).

To achieve Vinnova's overall goal of equal distribution of funds and integration of sex and gender perspectives in the core process, Vinnova has adopted seven goals:

Funded project managers and project team

- Gender balance regarding approved project managers (40/60)
- An equal allocation of funds to women and men project managers (40/60)
- Gender balance in the project teams of approved projects
- An equal distribution of personnel costs between women and men in approved projects

Assessment

- Gender balance in appointed assessment groups in each assessment panel (40/60)
- Equal allocation of number of applications (40/60) to women and men evaluators in each assessment panel
- Ensure that women and men who assess projects assess equal amounts of funding applied for (40/60) in each assessment panel

Vinnova reports annually on the results of the measures that have been taken to ensure that the agency contributes to achieving the goals for gender mainstreaming.

Regarding the governmental instruction that the agency shall require integration of sex and gender perspectives in approved research and innovation projects, all applicants are required to present sex and gender analysis related to the content of the project in the proposal.

Social inclusion

In addition to the gender mainstreaming goals, Vinnova monitors the number of calls integrating aspects related to social inclusion. This is also reported to the Government annually.

Training and capacity building

Internal

Vinnova conducts annual introductory training for new employees on the agency's implementation of the gender mainstreaming mission and training in unconscious bias, how it affects the assessment process and how it should be recognised and managed.

Training for evaluators on gender equality assessment processes is conducted and is available digitally.

Vinnova's organisation has undergone training in accessibility and plain language. This has led to increased awareness and practical improvements in everything from document design to web content.

Training and tools in accessibility and norm criticism strengthen the organisation's ability to create inclusive and equitable solutions.

External

Upon request, Vinnova conducts training and capacity-building workshops with stakeholders and potential applicants on how to integrate sex and gender analysis in research and innovation project proposals. This is done using interactive methods such as NOVA – a toolkit for norm-creative innovations developed by researchers in collaboration with Vinnova – and Intersectional Design Cards – a toolkit that support intersectional design solutions, developed further by Stanford University. The aim of the training and capacity-building workshops is to support intersectional and gender-inclusive innovations.

Recommended Requirements

Work life balance and organisational culture

Internal

Vinnova's internal gender equality work is based on the principles of prevention and promotion following the Equality Ombudsman's four steps within five designated areas. These concern investigating, analysing, implementing and following up. The designated equality areas are working conditions, salaries and other employment conditions, recruitment and promotion, training and other skills development, and parenthood and work.

Work-Life Balance and Parental Support

Vinnova has made various adjustments to the work environment to facilitate parenthood and work-life balance. Since women in Sweden continue to take more parental leave, stay home to care for sick children, and handle preschool and school drop-offs and pick-ups (according to Statistics Sweden), this forms part of the agency's gender equality work.

At Vinnova, meetings are primarily arranged in hybrid format between 9 am and 3 pm, to make it possible to participate in the meeting on-site or digitally via video link. This makes work more inclusive and supports work-life balance, as it facilitates activities such as child drop-offs and pick-ups. The agency provides opportunities for remote work, hybrid working methods and flexible working hours. Since the pandemic, travel has decreased and there have been greater opportunities to participate in conferences digitally, which makes it easier for parents to participate.

Flexible and Hybrid Working Models

Overtime at Vinnova is very low. Managers have regular check-ins with their employees to, amongst other things, assess workload and how it is being managed. Flexible working hours are available, which aims to facilitate the balance between work and leisure, especially for employees with children at home. According to local agreements, there are also two hours of wellness time per week, which makes it easier for parents to exercise during working hours.

Equitable Career Development and Salary Setting

Vinnova encourages both women and men to take parental leave. Employees on parental leave can view advertised vacancies through the intranet and keep their computer at home during leave. All positions are also advertised on the external website, where it is possible to subscribe to job alerts. Employees on parental leave have salary discussions

with their manager in the same way as other employees. Assessment is made based on expected performance and takes into account the historical salary setting before the current leave. As a government employee, staff have the opportunity to reduce their working hours by up to 25% until the child is 12 years old. Employees who take parental leave receive a parental allowance supplement that amounts to approximately 90% of their salary. The parental allowance supplement also applies when caring for a sick child for up to ten days per year.

Inclusion of Individuals with Neurodevelopmental Conditions

In line with the ambition to achieve an inclusive work environment, Vinnova is working on how the organisation and work environment can become more inclusive for people with neurodevelopmental conditions. The work will initially focus on compiling research and benchmarking with other organisations to create knowledge on how to support people with neurodevelopmental conditions.

Gender balance in leadership and decision making

Internal

The gender distribution among managers with personnel and budget responsibilities shows a preponderance of men at department level and a preponderance of women amongst unit managers. The senior management is within a 60/40 distribution. The Board has a 50/50 distribution. This is followed up and reported annually.

External

In funded projects, applicants are required to account for the distribution of power and influence between women and men in project implementation. See more under the section Gender mainstreaming assignment.

Inclusive gender equality in recruitment and career progression

Internal

Legal Framework and Non-Discrimination Principles

The Discrimination Act prohibits discrimination based on gender, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation and age. This includes the entire recruitment process and applies to both employers and potential employers. An employer may not discriminate against anyone who is an employee of the employer, enquires about work, seeks an internship or is available to perform or performs work as hired or borrowed labour.

Objective and Merit-Based Recruitment

Vinnova's recruitment process shall be carried out on objective grounds. Chapter 12, Section 5 of the Instrument of Government states that when employing staff, consideration may only be given to objective grounds such as merit and competence. According to the Public Employment Act (1994:260), competence shall be given priority. Decisions on promotions, appointments and selection of employees for various assignments shall be made on the basis of objectivity and impartiality.

Promoting Balanced Gender and Age Distribution

Recruitment at Vinnova should promote a balanced gender distribution and an age distribution that reflects the working population as much as possible, across different types of jobs, within different categories of employees and in management positions.

Vinnova reports the proportion of male and female employees to Nyckeltalsinstitutet in an annual report, where the goal is that the proportion of men and women should be at least 40/60%. Currently, the proportion of female employees is somewhat higher, and the distribution is therefore outside the target range.

Targeted Measures to Achieve Gender Balance

HR has therefore decided to announce in recruitment materials that men are particularly welcome to submit applications in connection with job advertisements. This is a measure to achieve a balanced gender distribution and will be terminated when this goal is achieved within the 40/60% range. Consideration should be given to the specific gender distribution within each staff and unit category before applying the measure, in order to determine the gender composition within these categories, as some subcategories of administrative officers are not dominated by women.

Process Improvements for Inclusive Recruitment

Vinnova has undertaken significant work in 2023/2024 to develop the recruitment process. In this work, the diversity perspective, including the seven protected grounds of discrimination, has been included in the various steps. In line with this, the agency has, removed the requirement for a personal letter, ensured a more competency-based and structured recruitment process, and introduced digital reference checks. The external website has been updated so that applicants feel more secure about what the process will entail.

Competence-Based Assessment and Transparency

Vinnova applies the competency-based recruitment method and there is a clear and documented process that the agency follows, with the aim to counteract discrimination. A recruitment team is appointed for each recruitment with participants from the HR unit and the recruiting unit. Managers and employees who are recruiting for the first time are trained in diversity, equality and the criteria for government recruitment. All positions

are advertised externally to give everyone the opportunity to apply. The advertising should not exclude individual target groups, and the advertisements should clearly state that Vinnova strives for a balanced gender distribution and the qualities that cultural and ethnic diversity bring to the organisation. The selection process for recruitment is carried out in several stages with the support of work samples, structured interviews and reference checks. In cases where Vinnova uses external consultants for advertising or recruitment, the agency requests that the supplier reports on how they work with gender equality and diversity. This is followed up to ensure compliance with Vinnova's routines and values.

In summary, Vinnova works on the basis of a competency-based recruitment process where career opportunities are equal for men and women. Even those in demanding positions are not expected to work more than full-time. There is the possibility for managers and employees who are parents to work part-time until their children are twelve years old and work part-time as well as working from home up to 50% of the time on an annual basis. Meetings are arranged to facilitate drop-offs and pick-ups at preschool and school. The purpose of the above provisions is to create opportunities for equal career paths for both men and women.

Staff Statistics – December 2025

Table 1. Age distribution

Age Range	Number	Percentage
25-29	3	1%
30-34	15	6%
35-39	21	9%
40-44	28	12%

Age Range	Percentage
25-34	8%
35-44	20%
45-54	42%
55+	30%

Table 2. Countries of Birth

	Total (%)
Sweden	3
Nordic countries (excluding Sweden)	15
Europe (excluding Nordic countries)	21
Rest of the world)	28
Total	100

Table 3. Gender distribution of positions

Position	Gender	Percentage
Whole of Vinnova	Women	64%
	Men	36%
Vinnova Board	Women	50%
	Men	50%
Senior Management	Women	44%
	Men	56%
Department Heads	Women	29%
	Men	71%
Unit Managers	Women	67%
	Men	33%
Case Managers	Women	60%
	Men	40%
Administrators	Women	94%
	Men	6%

Integrating gender into research and teaching

External

Ensuring inclusion of Gender dimensions in Research and Innovation Projects

According to Vinnova's instructions, the agency shall work to ensure that a sex and gender perspective is integrated into funded research when relevant. Vinnova contributes to this instruction by introducing a mandatory question in the application form, where all applicants must state whether a sex and gender perspective is applicable within the framework of the applicant's project. Regardless of whether the applicant answers yes or no to the question, the answer must be justified. Applicants' justifications are assessed under the Potential criterion and monitored to evaluate and identify gaps in pre- and post-assessments, programmes and project results. Project results are also monitored as to how sex and gender aspects have been integrated during project implementation.

Evaluator Guidance and Capacity Building

Evaluators in Vinnova's calls for proposals receive information and training on how sex and gender perspectives are assessed in the agency's calls for proposals. A microsite, "Gender Equal Innovation", What is gender equality in innovation? | Vinnova, is available on the website that guides applicants regarding the gender equality aspects that Vinnova assesses.

Gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

Internal

Vinnova has zero tolerance for all forms of offensive discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment. There are guidelines on diversity and equal treatment, as well as guidelines and routines for gender-based violence. The guidelines are published in an easily accessible manner on the agency's intranet and are known to managers and employees. Once a year, the guideline is raised and discussed in connection with department meetings, for example together with dilemma exercises. The work is followed up through employee surveys, employee interviews and risk assessments. Reports and any investigations that follow are documented. All work is carried out in collaboration with the main work environment representative and with trade unions.

Vinnova's Additional Requirements

Gender mainstreaming assignment

External

Government Mandate and Vinnova's Long-Term Commitment

Vinnova was commissioned by the Government to mainstream gender equality in its operations in 2015 but had already been actively working on gender equality issues linked to research and innovation since its establishment in 2001.

According to Vinnova's governmental instructions, Vinnova shall gender-mainstream the agency's operations and promote gender equality when allocating funds for research and innovation. The agency shall work to ensure that a sex and gender perspective is included in the research that the agency finances when relevant.

Framework for Gender Mainstreaming: Who, What and How

Building on these instructions and the Swedish gender equality policy goals and based on Vinnova's opportunities to address gender equality challenges in the innovation system, Vinnova has developed a gender mainstreaming framework focused on three areas: Who, What and How.

Vinnova's goal is that the activities in the core process should contribute to:

- Who: Equal gender distribution regarding approved project managers, project teams and allocated funds.
- What: The results from approved research and innovation projects should contribute to increased gender equality by integrating sex and gender perspectives in the project's implementation when relevant.
- How: Assessment groups should be gender balanced, and gender aspects (Who and How) taken into account in the assessment process.

Who

To follow up on the goal in the focus area Who, Vinnova compiles the proportion of funded projects led by women and men and the gender balance of project teams.

What

Within the focus area What, applicants are required to present sex and gender analyses of their project proposals, and the proportion of applications that indicate that sex and gender perspectives are relevant within the framework of the applicant's project idea is

monitored. AI-assisted classifications of the qualitative analyses in applicants' proposals are performed and analysed to identify the quality of applicants motives, gaps in programmes, scientific fields and types of actors (academia, public sector, private sector, civil society).

How

Regarding the goal in the focus area How, gender balance amongst evaluators is monitored, as well as the number of applications evaluated by women and men.

Final report questions, distributed at the end of the project period, have been implemented that enable follow-up and evaluation of the projects' activities and results linked to gender equality aspects assessed in the application process.

SDG 5

Analyses of how Vinnova has contributed to achieving the gender equality policy targets are also based on the applicant's classification of the project's contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 5 and its subcategories.

Alignment with National and EU Gender Equality Policies

A particular focus has also been to ensure that the systematic gender mainstreaming work is well aligned with the EU Commission's gender equality strategies and, the gender equality policy of the European Research Area (ERA).

In 2022, the gender mainstreaming plan added social inclusion as an area to be developed.

Social inclusion

To achieve social sustainability, there is a need to go beyond gender. Social inclusion has two dimensions: one concerns widening participation in the innovation ecosystem. The other dimension is about ensuring that societal challenges and solutions are inclusive, and innovation processes co-created together with relevant target groups and end users.

To meet complex problems and harness the innovation potential of the entire population it is important to ensure that the research and innovation being funded benefit society.

Integrating Underrepresented Entrepreneurs into the Innovation Ecosystem

Vinnova is advancing initiatives to strengthen innovative environments in the peripheral areas of major cities and integrate them into national system innovation ecosystems. The measures aim to channel ideas from underrepresented and underserved entrepreneurs into established innovation structures, fostering crosspollination and broadening Sweden's innovation base.

Assessing Social Inclusion in Funded Projects

Vinnova assesses social inclusion in terms of potential and implementation, such as stakeholder engagement, whether and how well end-user needs are involved and taken into consideration in the proposal. Considerations of social inclusion in project teams applying for funding cannot be assessed due to anti-discrimination laws.

Procurement

External

Anti-Discrimination Requirements in Procurement

Procurement of services includes a requirement for the supplier to counteract discrimination according to the following wording: The supplier shall, throughout the entire contract period, counteract discrimination or differential treatment of personnel, subcontractors and/or other partners on the basis of gender, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age.

Promoting gender equality through Procurement Practices

The framework agreement for analysis and evaluation services sets requirements for the suppliers' team composition, where the implementation team for a service must be characterised by equality with regard to gender balance and the distribution of power and influence between women and men. In a template used for call-offs from this framework agreement, there is a heading for gender equality as a reminder to the purchaser of services to consider gender equality as a cross-cutting perspective in analysis and evaluation services. Gender equality is also included as an assessment basis in one of the optional award criteria used when calling for services where renewed competitive tendering is used as the call-off model.

Communication

Internal

Accessible and Inclusive Communication

Vinnova's internal and external communication is based on accessibility work and the Accessibility Act. Vinnova has established a digital profile with clear contrasts, easy-to-navigate structures and adaptations for assistive devices. Continuous testing and evaluation regarding how well the communication meets accessibility criteria is conducted.

Norm-Critical and Inclusive Visual Communication

When selecting images and illustrations, Vinnova has a norm-critical perspective in mind. This means avoiding stereotypical images of researchers, entrepreneurs and innovators and instead ensure that different groups and identities are represented in a respectful and inclusive way. Written communication shall also be inclusive by being written in an understandable way that benefits everyone, especially people with cognitive challenges. Furthermore, headings, links and other elements are correctly formatted to support the use of assistive devices such as screen readers, and all externally published video material shall have subtitles and, where possible, audio interpretation or descriptions.

External

Gender Balance in Conferences and Seminars

A gender equality policy for participation in conferences and seminars has been developed and states that gender representation must always be considered when Vinnova participates in or arranges conferences and seminars. Regardless of whether Vinnova arranges, participates as a speaker or finances other people's conferences and seminars, the proportion of women and men speaking should be 40-60%. Deviations must be justified, documented and sent to Vinnova's Communications Manager.

When Vinnova arranges conferences and seminars, women and men must be invited to participate in an inclusive and non-discriminatory manner, for example through equal speaking time, speaking space and active engagement.

Communication on Gender Equality in Research and Innovation

Vinnova takes pride in communicating about successful projects that have had gender equality as a core objective in their project proposal, such as AI for gender equality, or where gender equality and inclusion have had successful outcomes in a project. Connected to International Day of Women in Science and STEM, and International Women's Day, amongst others, specific communication campaigns are organised on Vinnovas social media channels to spread knowledge and awareness.

Supporting Knowledge Sharing through the Vinnova Website

Vinnova's external website (www.vinnova.se), has a microsite devoted to communicating the importance of an inclusive and gender-equal research and innovation ecosystem, both in terms of funding and project alignment. On the microsite, stakeholders and applicants can read published reports on this subject, learn about the new mandatory requirements from Horizon Europe calls, and receive guidance in terms of methods and toolkits.

Stockholm December 17, 2025

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Isaksson', with a stylized, flowing script.

Darja Isaksson
General Director