

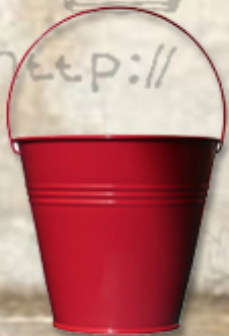


EQUALIST

Gender Equality in Information Sciences and Technology

Gender Equality Progress Report

GEP in the University of Minho
(Portugal)



Keywords: EQUAL-IST, UMINHO, STEM, women in ICT, Gender Equality Plan, progress report.

The EQUAL-IST Project

Women remain a minority among academic leaders, especially in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields. The project “Gender Equality Plans for Information Sciences and Technology Research Institutions” (EQUAL-IST) is improving this situation for seven partner Universities that are active in the fields of Information Sciences and Technology (IST) fields. EQUAL-IST joins the forces of those IST Research Institutions which are committed to introducing the internal structural changes necessary for boosting gender equality and removing barriers to the career progression of women in Research and Innovation (R&I).

The EQUAL-IST project does not only boost gender equality at the involved RPOs but also seeks to influence a bigger number of IST research organizations in order to address gender bias and contribute to the achievement of ERA objectives by increasing the number of female researchers in the IST fields.

Case of UMINHO



Gender equality in academia and science has been a central theme of several scientific studies in Portugal. Over the last few years, there has been an extensive literature production on the explicit and implicit processes that drive gender inequalities and make them persist over time. Part of these studies shows the importance of social variables for the perpetuation of conditions of gender inequality. It is, therefore, important to focus on gender inequalities based on other inequalities, namely inequalities related to social class, age and, in

the academic and scientific context, the scientific field and specific institution. The social and human sciences have contributed substantially to show that education and science are intensely driven by factors of the symbolic order that also feed on diverse prejudices and stereotypes. Similar results have been published in the fields of engineering and technology. In contexts of increasing mobility, globalisation and cultural change, it is urgent that science and education policies, defined in the context of Universities and their human resources (including teachers and non-teaching staff as well as students) recognise gender inequalities and promote effective measures for its eradication, in a collective and participatory approach. Despite the production of literature attesting to the existence of gender inequalities in academia, documenting processes of segregation and discrimination that affect the various participants of the organization and the methodologies proposed to overcome them, have not





fed, as might be expected, the reality of practices in teaching and research institutions. More recent studies continue to show that gender inequalities are considered "natural" and "unavoidable" and that there are biological differences that determine the difference in treatment.

This is also the reality that the EQUAL-IST project confirms for the case of the University of Minho where the performed diagnosis confirms the same trends elicited in scientific studies. The EQUAL-IST project is being carried out by teams in several European countries, and it is aimed primarily at studying and intervening in the advancement of gender equality in the information systems and technology fields. In the case of the University of Minho, since gender inequality is a transversal problem and holds implications for the University as a whole, and individually for the people that compose it, the study evolved to a more comprehensive diagnosis, having been collected a wide range of information on various relevant indicators to understand the depth and extent of the problem.

The project integrates researchers from various scientific disciplines, from Engineering, Sociology, and Management of Science and Technology. The methodology followed in the project is based on the principle of co-produced knowledge, assuming that the phenomena of power, usually associated with gender inequalities and the support of principles still predominantly androcentric, can be studied in their density and depth with the active participation of all those involved, especially those who experience situations of powerlessness, subordination or invisibility. To support this methodology, a crowdsourcing platform was developed; this platform allows individuals to share their concerns and suggestions, in a reflexive way. As a result of the ideas and discussions shared online, the various project teams select the set of actions that they deem implementable and measurable over the life of the project. These are then integrated into a tailored Gender Equality Plan (GEP).

EQUAL-IST is a project that has as its corollary the design and implementation of a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) especially devoted to raising awareness of all the problems associated with gender inequalities, ranging from recruitment and performance evaluation, to work relationships, including phenomena of harassment and discrimination. For this reason, the project integrates a strong dimension of action research, encouraging the participation of all the Schools and Institutes of the University of Minho. The committee for the GEP's definition and implementation integrated researchers and institutional representatives, equally identified and committed to the purposes stipulated therein.

The University of Minho is guided, in its Statutes, by the will to offer a scientific, technical and human education oriented to the advancement of knowledge as a universal good. In recent years, the University of Minho has affirmed itself to the national and international community as a university "without walls" and as a "complete" university. Under this assertion, it is included the construction of a university that affirms the advancement of diversity and equality.

Thus, the recognition of the epistemic richness of the contributions of all the people that make up the daily life of the university, accompanied by the awareness of the existence of a variety of gender inequality phenomena, are decisive steps in the consolidation of the present and future identity of the University of Minho and its sustainability. Because the national and international affirmation of the University is made by its ability to mobilize the multiple knowledges produced within it, towards the continuous improvement of practices, values and procedures, the University of Minho affirms its commitment to promote the diagnosis of inequalities and the definition, implementation and evaluation of concrete actions aimed at



eliminating all the conditions and factors that are at the genesis, and contribute to the maintenance, of phenomena of gender inequality.

Challenges and Key Performance Indicators

The identified challenges along with the goals are presented in the table below.

Intervention Areas	Challenge Title	Goal
HR and Management Practices	Gender Equality Reflexivity and Awareness at the University	To achieve the periodic integration of considerations of diversity and gender equality in decision-making processes at all levels of University management, and in particular in the field of HR management (Goal 1)
	Institutionalization of Gender Equality as a guiding principle of the University's mission and strategy	
	Lack of physical structures and services to support Gender Equality practices and the Conciliation of Life Demands	
Teaching and Students Services	Gender inequality in Study Programs	To achieve a greater gender balance in the various University's study programs and in particular the STEM ones (Goal 5).
	Gender inequalities in the labor market	To engage faculty and students in the discussion of gender equality practices (Goal 6).
Research Design & Delivery	Recognize, encourage and fairly evaluate Projects / Publications on Gender Equality in the various teaching and research organic subunits	To increase the recognition of Gender Equality Projects / Publications in organic sub-units (Goal 2).
	Encouragement of Gender Diversity in Groups and Research Projects	To achieve higher levels of Gender Parity in Research Groups and Projects (Goal 3). To promote the involvement with the EURAXEES initiative and network on gender equality and diversity (Goal 4).



Institutional Communication	Lack of an effective communication policy covering the various dimensions of academic life (teaching, research and management)	To implement an effective communication policy that covers the various dimensions – teaching, research and management (Goal 7).
	2.4.2 Lack of concern for language issues in the description of study programs and their dissemination in the media	To promote genderless description of study programs and dissemination materials (Goal 8).

First year's main results

At the UMINHO 36 Activities were initiated: 16 of them were completed and 20 are in progress. The Activities, which were initiated and which are intended to be continued or repeated in the future, are as follows:

- (i) Internal events for high school students were organised and conducted by the School of Engineering within annual information days at the UMINHO.
- (ii) The Observatory of Gender Equality in Higher Education in Portugal ('Observatory' hereafter) was established and is currently further developed. The information incorporated in the Observatory is continuously analysed. It is planned to involve students to maintain the Observatory and to promote discussions on the topics related to gender equality. The Observatory is currently being extended with further infographics related to gender equality at the UMINHO and in Higher Education in Portugal.
- (iii) Women working in the STEM fields in Portugal are encouraged to participate as speakers in the events organised by the UMINHO.
- (iv) Several events discussing gender equality challenges and opportunities were organised and conducted and it is planned to replicate them in the future. These events involved various stakeholders, including government representatives and representatives of all organisational units for education and research at the UMINHO.
- (v) In order to ensure the sustainability of Activities initiated within the EQUAL-IST project, the opportunities to obtain national funding for promoting further gender equality at the UMINHO are currently being investigated.
- (vi) The 8th International Conference on Equality & Technology (EQUALiTECH'18: [1http://sites.ieee.org/portugal-wie/index.php/equalitech18-save-the-date-june](http://sites.ieee.org/portugal-wie/index.php/equalitech18-save-the-date-june)) has been organised by the EQUAL-IST project team at the UMINHO and will be repeated. Various aspects of gender equality in such areas as communication, education, research, politics, and work will be discussed within the conference.
- (vii) The UMINHO Code of Conduct which includes the aspects related to the promotion of gender equality.



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