EGERA CHARTER FOR GENDER SENSITIVE GOVERNANCE
IN RESEARCH & HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

PREAMBLE

Significant progress has been made by research organizations and universities to achieve gender equality. Simultaneously, they have been increasingly encouraged to review their management structures and processes and the way they are governed and evaluated. This trend is to be noticed throughout the European Research Area, and contributes to redefining the context of knowledge production in Europe, towards new standards in terms of financial autonomy, self-governance, accountability, social responsibility and academic excellence. For the European Commission, ensuring gender equality in both the research process and the research content, constitutes one of the six basic principles supporting Responsible Research and Innovation.

Evidences abound, however, that research and higher education institutions remain characterized by strongly embedded gender inequalities, such as lower access of women to senior and decision-making positions, gender-biased practices in assessing academic performance as well as gender biases and stereotypes in framing the standards of research and academic excellence.

This Charter therefore aims at raising the awareness of these issues and to provide an encouragement to take action, by outlining guiding principles to enhance gender equality in the governance of research and higher education institutions. Along with research, educational activities and knowledge circulation to society – the “societal impact” of research –, are at stake.

By “governance”, we hereafter refer to legal frameworks, institutions, structures, processes, actors and practices through which research organizations and universities are governed and managed. This includes scientific, educational, financial and human resources management, as well as decision-making mechanisms. As research is being increasingly governed through evaluation, the latter is understood as an inherent part of governance mechanisms, referring to all kind of instruments aimed at assessing the performance of staff and/or institutions in achieving their objectives and delivering excellence.

The principles and recommendations laid out in this Charter, are meant to cover all members of academic and research communities as far as those are concerned by governance mechanisms: researchers, teaching and administrative staff, students.

BY SIGNING THIS CHARTER IN THE NAME OF OUR INSTITUTIONS, WE:

- Acknowledge that we share certain values and principles, such as equality, inclusion, fairness, transparency and accountability.
- Acknowledge that research and higher education institutions should favour equal access and a balanced participation of men and women to/in senior and decision-making positions.
Recognise our commitment to acting as role model institutions in promoting gender equality.

- Recognise that the rules, procedures, structures and actors through which our institutions are
governed can be affected by implicit or unconscious legal, cultural and/or cognitive gender biases that
are detrimental both to the position of women and to an effective governance itself. These gender
biases often operate at the intersection with other axes of inequality.

- Acknowledge that the importance granted to the evaluation of individuals and organisations should
entail a greater attention to potential gender biases, as those can impact career management and
access to resources or funding.

We therefore declare to commit to promote measures such as:

- Integrating and mainstreaming the objective of gender equality in our strategic documents and
when establishing and communicating our long-term priorities.
- Addressing the situations and needs of both men and women when designing internal policies,
with a view to support gender equality, work-life balance and well-being at work.
- Addressing the under-representation of women in senior and decision-making positions by
monitoring appointment processes and provisions regulating access to decision-making.
Depending on legal contexts, this may include but not be limited to adopting mid- and long-term
quantitative objectives and/or implementing pro-active measures for those positions or bodies
where women remain under-represented.
- Preventing gender bias in internal procedures so as to define gender-sensitive standards for
recruitment, qualification, appraisal, evaluation and career management. Standards regarding
individual career paths, geographical and upward mobility or academic performance should not
favour either sex, but allow a diversity of experiences and promote an inclusive notion of academic
excellence.
- Aiming at setting up performance indicators for the evaluation of research units, departments,
teams or projects that do not favour either sex, but acknowledge a diversity of profiles and
backgrounds.
- Periodically reviewing whether the results of teaching evaluation by students are not affected by
significant gender biases and assessing the role granted to this evaluation in light of this review.
- Enhancing gender knowledge in all research areas and pursuing the transformation of our
academic cultures and practices for more gender sensitivity and transparency.
- Enhancing gender knowledge circulation by addressing gender in the content of academic
curricula.
- Aiming at embedding adopted measures into the internal regulatory frameworks of our
institutions.

The present Charter will be published together with the measures adopted by the undersigned
institution in the realms of gender equality and social responsibility.

Prof. dr. L. Kaydens, Dean
Date, place, name and signature

Name of the institution and stamp

For an overview of these challenges, see: Musselin, C. and Texeira, P. (eds.) Reforming Higher Education. Public
