



**SCIENCE
EUROPE**
Shaping the future of research

**JUNE
2025**



EVENT REPORT

WOMEN -IN- SCIENCE

**CELEBRATING INCLUSION AND
SHAPING THE FUTURE OF RESEARCH**

28 FEBRUARY 2025



SCIENCE EUROPE SUPPORTS EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION (EDI) AS A CORE VALUE OF RESEARCH SYSTEMS

WOMEN -IN- SCIENCE





Colophon

June 2025

'Women in Science: Celebrating Inclusion and Shaping the Future of Research'

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Introduction

Science Europe has a long-standing commitment to promoting and supporting Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in research environments. Following a first milestone with the launch of the [Practical Guide to Improving Gender Equality in Research Organisations](#) (2017), we have been participating in numerous initiatives and campaigns in support of women in science, such as those in [2023](#) and [2024](#). Our approach aims to be holistic and is guided by our [Vision and Framework for Research Cultures](#).

More recently, in February 2024 Science Europe published a [Practical Guide to Supporting Diversity in Research Environments](#). The Guide showcases good practices, and provides practical recommendations across topics such as positive action measures and the collection and use of diversity data, to support institutions in defining processes to reinforce positive environments and address misconduct. In the [Science Europe Briefing Paper on the ERA Policy Agenda 2022–2024](#) (Section 5), outlines a concise overview of Science Europe's advocacy priorities in this area.

Science Europe currently contributes to various forums to advance equality in the research ecosystem, in Europe and globally, in particular the [EDI Working Group of the Global Research Council](#) – co-chaired together with the São Paulo Research Foundation in Brazil – and the [European Commission Expert Group on Inclusive Gender Equality in the ERA](#). We support EDI in connection with other major policy initiatives that are driving national and international research cultures in positive directions such as the new European Framework for Research Careers and the recent framework for research assessment promoted by [DORA](#) and [CoARA](#).

In particular, Science Europe aims to work towards the implementation of [the zero-tolerance code of conduct on gender-based violence and sexual harassment](#), as well as promote the integration of EDI consideration in

research content and priorities. EDI does not only have a human resources dimension, but can also influence scientific methodological approaches in research projects.

On 28 February, Science Europe organised a webinar, '[Women in Science: Celebrating Inclusion and Shaping the Future of Research](#)', to mark the 10th anniversary of the International Day for Girls and Women in Science on 11 February and International Women's Day on 8 March. This webinar discussed how research funding and performing organisations can better contribute to improving the framework conditions – through their own instruments and policies – to foster European and national research ecosystems that are more diverse, equitable, and free from bias and discrimination. While the webinar explicitly referred to women in science, it discussed this topic through an intersectional lens, and addressed the rights and challenges of all minority and under-represented groups.

Through speaker interventions and a panel discussion, the webinar focused on several key areas:

- Integrating EDI in research content: How the EDI dimension can be integrated into research projects and the role of research funding and performing organisations in its promotion.
- Integrating EDI in Priority Setting and Funding Priorities: Examining the criteria and processes used to determine funding priorities and how research funding and performing organisations can set EDI-sensitive priorities for their (funding) instruments.
- Promoting holistic policy changes to support EDI: Examining how policy developments – such as the reform of research assessment and the promotion of more diverse research careers – can support EDI.

The outcomes of this discussion are summarised in this report, and highlight possible avenues for research funding and research performing organisations to improve research working environments by addressing equality, diversity and inclusion matters. They will be used by

Science Europe to support its members in this mission, and to advocate for improved EDI policies at European and international levels. The [recording of the event](#) is available on Science Europe's YouTube page.

Panel Discussion

Marcela Linkova, from the [National Contact Centre for Gender & Science](#) at the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences and Co-Chair of the ERA Expert Group on Inclusive Gender Equality, made the first presentation by recalling the history of the integration of the gender dimension in research content. Gender mainstreaming first became a priority in the European Research Area (ERA) in 2012, and became a [requirement in 2021 in Horizon Europe](#), the current EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. This, she clarified, means considering the differences between people based on sex and gender and their interplay, and how this affects research questions, methods, and outcomes.

The integration of the [gender dimension in research](#) has been shown to enhance scientific rigour through the production of more accurate, comprehensive, and applicable research outcomes. In this way, it increases both the quality and the societal relevance of the knowledge, technology, and innovation produced. Since the [Ljubljana Declaration on Gender Equality in Research and Innovation](#), there has been an important shift towards Inclusive Gender Analysis, which goes beyond sex and gender to consider other aspects that are relevant to knowledge production, such as age, race, disability, or socio-economic background.

Building on the work of the ERA Expert Group on Inclusive Gender Equality, she highlighted important challenges in Europe in mainstreaming Inclusive Gender Analysis. Approaches to that effect, when they exist, vary from country to country and funder to funder. In addition, there remain misunderstandings within the research community regarding the

integration of gender dimensions and the analytical concept of intersectionality. As a result, awareness raising, capacity building, and monitoring continue to be priorities.

She concluded by emphasising that simplification efforts cannot be pursued to the detriment of equality policies and the systematisation of Inclusive Gender Analysis, which, in turn, benefits scientific excellence.

The approach of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) to the integration of the gender dimension in research content was presented by Carmen Mayoral Gastón, Tenured Scientist at the Instituto de Carboquímica (ICB) and Executive Vice-President of CSIC's [Women and Science Committee](#). She explained that CSIC launched the committee to implement a [range of initiatives](#) to promote and strengthen the participation of women in the organisation. It integrates [gender considerations](#) in recruitment processes, career progression, and all decision-making within CSIC. The Committee also plays a crucial role in monitoring the participation of women in the institution and gathering relevant data.

In particular, she highlighted, a dedicated training course for researchers, the provision of relevant tools and information, as well as e-learning modules for researchers and evaluators. However, she added that the lack of clear incentives – as well as resistance from researchers – limits the correct implementation of gender equality measures. Simply providing information does not seem to be sufficient for researchers and evaluators to feel empowered to effectively integrate the gender dimension in research content, or assess whether grant proposals do so accurately. While appropriate information and tools are indeed available, the

issues are often complicated and difficult to understand by non-experts.

A key challenge faced by smaller project teams and consortia – which are more numerous at the national than European level – is the difficulty of including partners or staff who have the necessary expertise. In many scientific fields, that expertise might not even be readily available.

Jo O’Leary, the [Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at UK Research and Innovation \(UKRI\)](#), and a member of the Science Europe Working Group on Research Culture, highlighted the three-pronged approach in which UKRI considers EDI: as a funder, an employer, and a partner.

To pursue scientific excellence, she explained, diversity and inclusion need to be [at the core](#) of funders’ thinking to bring all perspectives together. This is not about adapting people to fit into the current system, but adapting the system to be inclusive, diverse, and collaborative, which in turn enhances the scientific and societal relevance of research outcomes. UKRI is working

towards fostering a system that is flexible, dynamic, and inclusive. One area of particular interest is the exploration of [diverse career paths](#), shifting away from the traditional view of a research career path as a linear progression. This idea is implemented through changing how potential grantees apply for funding and thinking about the different role types that are eligible. UKRI is introducing the [narrative CV format](#), which enables applicants to describe their different contributions to the research system and also encourages diversity in the outputs and outcomes being presented.

She shared a series of examples of how UKRI is implementing EDI – for example, when making research proposals to the Medical Research Council (MRC), applicants are required to [include both sexes in their experimental designs](#). UKRI also runs a specific competition called ‘[Women in Innovation](#)’ to support women entering innovation and which celebrates diversity and and creativity within that system.

Key Messages from the Discussion with the Participants

The interventions from the panellists were followed by an open discussion with the audience. The exchanges touched on a large variety of topics and issues, and the conclusions are summarised below.

- The requirement or incentivisation of mobility in research careers should consider the differentiated effects on different population groups. For instance, there could be an option to divide mobility periods into smaller posting periods rather than consisting of a single continuous period, to support women who bear the majority of parental and caregiving responsibilities.
- Policies to combat discrimination and promote inclusion cannot be developed for each under-represented and minority group or area of inequality – such as gender, race or disability for example. – independently from each other. Institutions must also consider these approaches through an intersectional lens.

- Collecting data continues to be a challenge, partly due to legal limitations on gathering information related to certain characteristics, as well as concerns from affected groups that sharing personal information could increase their risk of discrimination. Collaborating with concerned groups is an effective way to gather data and identify potential challenges and pitfalls. It is also crucial to ensure these surveys are comprehensive and address often-overlooked issues such as non-visible disabilities.
- Changing research culture and building research systems to be less exploitative and provide safe and healthy working environments is essential to improving equality. Actions to improve inclusiveness would benefit from reducing the intense competitiveness of research ecosystems and allow researchers to share care responsibilities without risking damage to their careers.

- Considering and taking relevant steps to ensure the safety of researchers should be a priority for research organisations. In particular, mobility and networking activities carry risks, especially for women and LGBTQ people, who are more likely to be exposed to harassment and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence in these situations.
- When discussing academic freedom, it is important to consider that researchers from minority and under-represented groups have the right to pursue an academic career, free from bias and discrimination. Academic freedom – an essential value of research – cannot be misused to limit EDI efforts.
- Extending Gender Equality Plans to include all areas of inequality and discrimination through an intersectional lens should be pursued. Similarly, addressing sexual and gender-based violence should be included in the eligibility criteria for EU funding.
- Equality policies should extend beyond grant applicants to encompass all researchers, as well as research staff, technicians, and administrative personnel. Including the private sector in these efforts to improve EDI is also essential.
- Leadership is key to ensuring institutional change and support for minority and under-represented groups. Leaders who establish transparent and accountable systems, and who are willing to take the necessary actions to advance equality and inclusion, and actively address sexual and gender-based violence, especially in challenging political climates, are essential.

Next Steps for Science Europe

The presentations and discussions during the webinar provided valuable insights and recommendations for action to promote EDI in research and innovation. Building on previous activities – in particular the Practical Guides and the Vision and Framework for Research Cultures – Science Europe will continue to work to support progress in equality, diversity, and inclusion and will use the conclusions of the webinar to inform the development of future activities. Science Europe will carry out the following actions in particular:

- Continue to support the development of the ERA Action on Inclusive Gender Equality, and advocate for strong policy actions in the European Research Area to support EDI.
- Continue to promote EDI as a cornerstone of EU Framework Programmes, and support the inclusion of ambitious Gender Actions Plans across all programme cycles.
- Mainstream EDI in its activities and events, notably through identifying and exploring elements relevant to equality, diversity, and inclusion throughout its Multiannual Action Plan.
- Continue to raise awareness among its members and support them in their efforts to develop policies and actions on EDI. It will also promote the priorities and recommendations highlighted in this webinar to Science Europe Member Organisations.
- Develop and implement appropriate activities to promote progress in EDI – for example to support action against sexual and gender-based violence or the integration of Inclusive Gender Analysis.
- Continue to work with partners – such as the Global Research Council's EDI Working Group – to promote a more fair and equitable global research ecosystem.

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Science Europe is the association representing major public organisations that fund or perform excellent, ground-breaking research in Europe.

We bring together the expertise of some of the largest and best-known research organisations in the world to jointly push the frontiers of how scientific research is produced and delivers benefits to society.

We advocate science and the scientific community to help build the European Research Area and shape the global scientific agenda.

More information on our mission and activities is provided at www.scienceeurope.org