

# Impact of the #ACTonGender project

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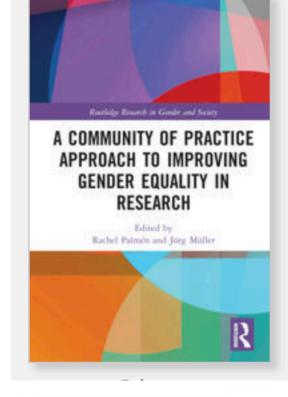
#### Basic information about #ACTonGender

- A Community of Practice Approach to Improving Gender Equality in Research (1 May 2018 – 31 October 2021), coordinator: Universitat Oberta de Catalunya
- Community of practice (CoP) concept by Jean Lave & Etienne Wenger (1991):
   a group of people who share a common concern/problem/interest and who
   come together to fulfil both individual and group goals by learning from each
   other, sharing best practices and creating a new knowledge together.
   Facilitator + group members.
- https://act-on-gender.eu/; @ACTonGender



## Main project results

- Palmén, Rachel, and Jörg Müller, eds. A Community of Practice Approach to Improving Gender Equality in Research. Oxon: Routledge, 2023.
- 8 CoPs:



















## Community of Practice Alt+G



- Alternative Infrastructure for Gender Equality in Academic Institutions
- Practitioners from different academic institutions in Slovenia, interested in implementing gender equality measures at their institutions (37 individuals from 16 institutions, summer 2019 →)
- Starting point:
  - No institution in Slovenia had a GE office(er)
  - ZRC SAZU first to have GEP (R&I PEERS project, Feb 2019), 2<sup>nd</sup>: Faculty of Arts University of Ljubljana (Gearing Roles project, May 2020)
  - Previous experience: GENDERA (2009-2012), Genis Lab (2011–2014); GARCIA (2014–2017);
     PLOTINA (2016–2020), CHANGE (2018-2022)
- Building on long history: Commission on Women in Science (since 1999).
- Alternative institutional infrastructure for sharing knowledge, experiences and strategies
  for implementing GE measures at both institutional and national level.
- https://altg.act-on-gender.eu/

#### Activities of CoP Alt+G

- Year 2020:
  - intertwining of national regulation and everyday practices in academic institutions (e.g. use of gender inclusive language)
  - Intervening into the national regulation: Rules on Academic Research Titles (advancement through the ladder of academic titles)
  - Extension of evaluation period for habilitation due to leave of absence (UL)
- Incentive: GEP as a requirement for applying for Horizon Europe (2021-2017)
- Year 2021: GEP focused activities:
  - workshops, consultancy, mutual exchange via mailing list
- Sustainability:
  - Projects: Ethics, integrity and gender equality in the research area of Slovenia: between policies and their implementation; (Sept 2021 Aug 2023)
  - INSPIRE Centre of Excellence on Inclusive Gender Equality in Research & Innovation: Creating Knowledge & Engaging in Collaborative Action (Oct 2022 Oct 2026)

## Benfits of group cooperation

- Direct transfer of knowledge and experience between CoP members from different institutions,
   ZRC SAZU GEP → ZRS Koper GEP; FF UL GEP → UL GEP.
- Unstructured sharing of experience on problems and challenges (spontaneous, personal),
   e.g.
  during online discussions or via email threads giving each other 'moral support' when facing resistances within their institutions.
- 3. Prototyping solutions to particular problems, e.g. GEAM survey translation.

## Benefits of inter-institutional cooperation

- Engaging true believers (change agents) rather than box ticking.
- Involvement of structural stakeholders:
  - Ministry of Education/Science
  - Commission for Eqaul Opportunities in Science (advisory body to Ministry)
  - Coordination of independent research institutes of Slovenia (KOsRIS)
  - Rectoral Conference (October 2021)
  - Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS) & National Accreditation Body (NAKVIS)
- Spillover effects:
  - Expert group for drafting Guidelines on addressing the problem of sexual harassment in academic setting (October 2021 – September 2022)
  - Group for Guidelines on gender sensitive language (ongoing)

## Problems and challenges:

- Groups need facilitators. Facilitation is labour.
- CoP approach operates on the fuel of personal motivation and depends on individual rather than institutional commitment → concrete institutional change is contingent on favourable structural context.
- Relying on additional/unpaid labour of researchers/academic staff.
- Sometimes disjoint GE expertise and decision-making.
- Futile expectation of adopting "good practices" from outside instead of engaging/educating inhouse staff (institutional memory).
- How to make GEP/GE measure part of institutional structure/memory?
- GEP requirement as double-edged sword danger of box ticking.
- Sustainability through never-ending project streamline?