



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), 2nd: 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)

Benefits of group cooperation

1. Direct transfer of knowledge and experience between CoP members from different institutions, e.g.
ZRC SAZU GEP → ZRS Koper GEP; FF UL GEP → UL GEP.
2. 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 Equal 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?