

Estado da Questão

.....

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34619/yysb-dznb>

* ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4986-0493>

NOVA University Lisbon (UNL), School of Social Sciences and Humanities (NOVA FCSH),
Interdisciplinary Centre of Social Sciences (CICS.NOVA). Faces de Eva. Estudos sobre a Mulher.
1070-312 – Lisbon, Portugal

anaribeiro@campus.fcsh.unl.pt

** Advisor to the Rector, NOVA University Lisbon, 1099-032 Lisbon, Portugal

fcavazzini@unl.pt

*** ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-3957-7109>

NOVA University Lisbon, Campus de Campolide, 1099-032 Lisbon, Portugal
s.figueiredo@unl.pt

**** NOVA University Lisbon, NOVA School of Science and Technology, UNIDEMI, Department
of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering (DEMI), Faculty of Sciences and Technology, NOVA
University Lisbon, Portugal, 2829-516 Caparica, Portugal

ilnunes@unl.pt

SPEAR Project: Supporting and Implementing the Gender Equality Plan in NOVA University Lisbon⁽¹⁾



ANA RIBEIRO* | FREDERICO CAVAZZINI**
SILVANA FIGUEIREDO*** | ISABEL L. NUNES****

SPEAR project, funded by the “Science with and for Science” work programme 2018-2020 (SwafS), from the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme, was organized around the central task of implementing Gender Equality Plans in Research Institutions and Universities across Europe. From January 2019 to April 2023, NOVA University Lisbon, a member of the consortium, joined efforts with other ten organizations from several European countries to achieve this overall goal. Moreover, the project partners developed valuable resources and learning materials that may guide and inspire other organizations which aim to achieve long-lasting structural changes, strengthen inclusivity, and ensure gender equality. In this descriptive article we briefly explain SPEAR’s unique working methodology; take a round tour of SPEAR’s Policy Reflections, which cover four critical topics to promote

1. This work has received funding from the European Union’s H2020 – SwafS research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 824544.

gender equality and inclusion (GE⁺) in academia on a daily basis; finally, we offer an overview of NOVA's "Gender Equality Plan 2021-2025" (GEP), approved in October 2021, and underline NOVA's strategy for sustained implementation of the GEP, now that the SPEAR project has ended.

I – BRINGING TOGETHER ELEVEN EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS WITH A COMMON GOAL

The new European funding programme for research and innovation, Horizon Europe, launched in 2021, established a new eligibility criterion introduced to underline gender equality as a priority. Starting in 2022, higher education institutions, applying for funds and in order to sign the funding contracts, are required to have a gender equality plan (GEP) in place, complying with several process and content requirements. Building on the already existing European Commission Gender Equality regulatory framework, SPEAR anticipated this policy and established four overall objectives, including the implementation of GEPs. Using a methodology supported by seven interrelated work packages, the project developed a collaborative process involving eleven institutions from nine countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, Hungary, Portugal, and Sweden).

SPEAR's work was entirely based on the support, learning, practice, and collaboration among the different partners. Nevertheless, their experience of implementing GEPs was diverse. Germany and Sweden were countries with a reputation for performing strongly in this area; Denmark reported considerable progress in recent years; Lithuania, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Portugal were the countries with least experience at the start of the project. Hence, for more effective work, the partners established two communities: a Community of Learning (CoL) and a Community of Practice (CoP), somewhat interconnected but with different purposes. CoL was an environment for learning and training that encompassed several sessions to gather information about possible measures to implement and obstacles to overcome. CoP was meant to provide reflection and feedback on the actions, experiences and challenges resulting from the CoL sessions. The CoL/CoP tool created by the SPEAR project was based on the idea that partners, despite their geographic, cultural, and institutional specific contexts, are part of

the same movement toward Gender Equality (GE), in the larger strategic development framework set by the European Union and, more globally, the United Nations' SDGs.

II – SPEAR'S CICLE OF POLICY REFLECTIONS FOR GE PRACTITIONERS AND POLICYMAKERS²

The project partners, as a result of their hands-on experience and collective knowledge, developed resources to support not only GE practitioners in their daily actions, but also European and national policymakers to introduce or reinforce ongoing policies towards sustainable and inclusive gender equality in Academia. The work was structured around the answers to three sequential questions: What are we aiming for? Why is it important? How can it be achieved? These questions, covers the four GE interrelated topics, supporting the recommendations thereafter set in the Policy Reflections (SPEAR, 2023, a,b,c,d).

SPEAR's Policy Reflections virtuous cycle call for stronger action towards fair, constant, complex and enduring rights in Academia, and are briefly explained below.

Careers in Academia. Recruitment, promotion and career development

Improving gender equality and inclusiveness in Academia demands for “ a revision of the concept of academic excellence” (SPEAR, 2023a, p.1). This in turn calls for clear criteria for recruitment, promotion and career development in Academia, as these activities “drawn on concepts of academic excellence” (SPEAR, 2023a, p.1). Without systematic decision-making processes, based on transparency and fairness, candidates’ “assessment and selection risk being biased and reproduction existing inequalities” (SPEAR, 2023a, p.1). It is important to highlight that bias is one the major obstacles

2. In this section, due to the limitation of the length of the article, we don't fully explain SPEAR's recommendations on how to act on the issues addressed, therefore, further consultation of SPEAR online resources is advised: <https://gender-spear.eu>.

to excellence because it “reduces the possibility for bringing in vital new perspectives and developing surprising new talent, creativity and innovation” (SPEAR, 2023a, p.1).

Gender inequality in Academia “has various negative and self-reinforcing impacts that perpetuate inequality and non-inclusive cultures” (SPEAR, 2023a, p.1). For instance, the lack of female role-models to inspire other women and young girls to pursue academic careers; “the prevailing uneven gender balance and lack of diversity in decision-making and power positions; a skewed allocation of research funding and resources, widespread use of precarious contracts and persistent gender pay gaps” (SPEAR, 2023a, p.1).

Work and Study Environments and Sexism in Academia

There is a growing body of evidence that shows a “correlation between poor work and study environments in Academia and threats to creative output of high quality on the one hand, and the prevalence of sexist, even misogynistic, behaviour and harassment on the other (SPEAR, 2023b, p.1). It is recognized that “Academia is inherently competitive and characterised by high demands, unclear expectations, harsh selection processes, few and powerful gatekeepers in long career trajectories, complex power relations and interdependencies, precarious affiliations, individualisation and blurring of personal and professional domains” (SPEAR, 2023b, p. 1). Moreover, Universities are undergoing a process of internationalisation regarding their student, teaching, research and staff populations. This means that “the greater the diversity – cultural, religious, socio-economic, gender, disciplinary, etc. – the larger the need for intersectional understanding and action” (SPEAR, 2023b, p.1) to mitigate exclusion and inequalities.

On the other hand, Academia holds “the scientific and intellectual strength to bring mechanisms that underlie inequality and sexism to light and to develop effective research-based countermeasures and support systems” (SPEAR, 2023 b, p.1). It has also the responsibility to apply these solutions to “its own academic environment, and contribute with awareness raising, enlightenment and debate beyond Academia” (SPEAR, 2023 b, p1) walls.

Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Equality Plans

Working towards gender equality and inclusiveness (GE+) in Academia needs firm anchors to face the current and future challenges of higher education organisations. These anchors are “GE processes, GE mainstreaming and GEPs (...) as models for actions and measures, mainstreaming, monitoring and quality assurance of GE+ efforts” (SPEAR, 2023c, p.1), built upon clear and operational requirements and objectives. The European Union is a reference in defining these objectives, for instance, through the “2020–2025 Gender Equality (GE) strategy, the Gender Equality Priority in the European Research Area (ERA), the definition of gender equality as a core democratic value and the Horizon Europe Gender Equality Plan (GEP) requirement” (SPEAR, 2023c, p.1).

For GE processes, GE mainstreaming and GEPs to be effective, the policies, frameworks, measures and initiatives “must be holistic, sustainable, context-specific, research-based and multifaceted” (SPEAR, 2023c, p.1). That is, for these anchors to be effective, “long-lasting initiatives must target institutional structures and cultural practices simultaneously” (SPEAR, 2023c, p.1). For the success of this work, it is essential to collect high-quality data and to monitor progress, furthermore, “revising processes and outcomes in administrative procedures and practices (i.e., gender mainstreaming), such as management, Human Resources (HR), finances and legal” (SPEAR, 2023c, p. 1).

Gender mainstreaming must take into account specific context and framework conditions to address efficiently the prevailing values, strategies and daily practices of individual institutions. This entails “GE+ expert resources to drive, analyse and adjust measures to bring about impact, which in turn requires qualified support and resources for GE+ agents.” (SPEAR, 2023c, p. 1).

Integration of the Gender + Dimension in Research, Innovation, and Teaching

Integrating gender and sex analysis into research, innovation and education content is a powerful way to include a diverse range of perspectives and pursue high quality innovative outcomes with impact on society, as well as

to “overcoming stereotypes and systemic inequalities” (SPEAR, 2023d, p.1). It can be achieved through “designing teaching content –topics, examples, materials, methods – and carrying out bias-aware practices in interactions, assignments and assessment” (SPEAR, 2023d, p.1).

It is worth underlining that the results of research and innovation “influence day-to-day practicalities and thus have widespread daily impact on peoples’ lives, not least in areas such as medicine, safety equipment, traffic, economic capacity and access to education” (SPEAR, 2023d, p.1) or legal procedures, meaning that the need for this analysis should be obvious, but more often than not it is forgotten, undervalued or seen as not “compatible with academic freedom and excellence” (SPEAR, 2023d, p.2). Therefore, not using a gender and sex analysis in research, innovation and teaching “is increasingly recognized (...) to be a contributing factor to perpetuate existing inequalities” (SPEAR, 2023d, p.1).

III – NOVA AS A FORERUNNER FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

NOVA University Lisbon was founded in August 1973, still under the dictatorship regime, with the aim to innovate higher education in Portugal, a country at that time undergoing fast transformations that would eventually culminate with the transition to democracy on April 25, 1974. NOVA’s motto “*Omnis Civitas Contra Se Divisa non Stabit*” (every city divided against itself, will not stand) is a call for unity beyond all the diversity of the nine organic units that constitute the University (Schools and Institutes), metaphorically represented by “civitas”, the city of knowledge that produces and disseminates such knowledge for the benefit of the community at large (Barata, n.d.). Following this spirit, 50 years later, NOVA is recognized by the quality of its teaching and research that follows an international agenda and by the commitment to social, cultural, and economic development, thereby confirming its identity as a Global and Civic Institution.

NOVA has been contributing towards a more equal and inclusive society, with a specific emphasis on gender equality, through research, innovation and education, leading the way with several initiatives. In 1998, it was created the still active research group *Faces de Eva. Estudos sobre a*

*Mulher*³, in the School of Social Sciences and Humanities (NOVA FCSH). Initially, its role was to promote the advancement on women's and feminist studies in Portugal, and later on it was extended to the broader area of gender studies. In the academic year 1999-2000, the NOVA School of Law added "Women's Rights and Social Equality" to the curriculum, making it an autonomous discipline in law (Beleza, 2010). Both these schools host two national observatories that contribute to the promotion of GE+. The National Observatory of Violence and Gender (founded in 2008 at NOVA FCSH) and the Observatory of Racism and Xenophobia (founded in 2023 at NOVA School of Law). All NOVA Schools and Institutes have developed measures and initiatives (conferences, courses, communication, services) to promote awareness and the engagement of students/teachers/researchers/staff on gender equality and inclusion issues, although at different paces.

NOVA's Gender Equality Plan 2021-2025

Despite NOVA being an accelerator for the development of gender equality and inclusion policies, when, in January 2019, it became a partner of SPEAR, there was no Gender Equality Plan in the university. The first step was to map the institutional landscape using data over a five-year period, covering established indicators from which the data was disaggregated by sex and by organic unit. This evidence-based approach aimed to understand patterns and to identify knowledge gaps regarding all members of NOVA Community (students, researchers, academic and administrative staff), as well as scientific outputs. To do so, there was a need to collect and analyse data from several departments (Human Resources, Strategic Planning and Communication) from every NOVA organic unit; hence, the *NOVA Working Group for Gender Equality* was created, including two representatives from each School or Institute, to support the SPEAR project until its conclusion in April 2023.

NOVA's Gender Equality Plan, approved in October 2021 by the Board of Deans, has an implementation period until 2025, during which the plan will be monitored annually to assess progress and challenges faced, and to

3. Faces of Eve. Studies on Woman.

make adjustments accordingly. The plan considers 44 goals framed by five strategic dimensions:

- Structural integration of policies;
- Equal access to employment;
- Equality in the working conditions;
- University as a place for work;
- Gender dimension on research and education.

The goals are also organised in terms of “measures/activities”, “target group”, “people involved” and “SDGs of the 2030 Agenda”, giving a holistic element to the plan, as envisaged in the SPEAR methodology summarised in the Policy Reflections.

NOVA’s Office for Gender Equality and Inclusion

The sustainability of the GEP beyond the frame of SPEAR will be assured not only by the involvement of NOVA Community, maintaining the top-down and bottom-up approaches, but also through the networking with external stakeholders and the implementation of the NOVA’s *Office for Gender Equality and Inclusion* (during 2023).

NOVA keeps a stable contact with external stakeholders united by the same aspirations towards GE+. In Portugal, holds a close dialogue with several sister-projects facing the same challenges towards implementing a GEP; internationally, besides keeping up the dialogue with SPEAR partners, NOVA established an alliance with 9 other European Universities, forming the EUTOPIA European University, which is committed to building an inclusive learning, research and working environment in Academia (EUTOPIA, 2021).

The Office, organizationally speaking, will replicate the functioning of SPEAR, being based in the Rectorate, coordinated by a member of the Rectoral Team, Vice-Rector Isabel L. Nunes, also former coordinator of SPEAR, leading a team of professionals with training/experience in gender equality and inclusion. The overall goal is to make NOVA University an example of institution with social responsibility and committed to ensuring equal opportunities, inclusion and diversity among its Community and, naturally, for society at large.

REFERENCES

- Barata, J.P.M. (n.d.). *Logo and motto of Universidade Nova de Lisboa. History: A pioneer history*. <https://www.unl.pt/en/nova/history>
- Beleza, T.P. (2010). *Direito das mulheres e da igualdade social: A construção jurídica das relações de género* [Women's rights and social equality. The legal construction of gender relation]. Almedina.
- EUTOPIA. (2021). *EUTOPIA inclusion manifesto*. <https://eutopia-university.eu/english-version/about-us/mission-and-vision/inclusion/eutopia-more-inclusion-manifesto>
- SPEAR. (2023a). Careers in Academia: Recruitment, promotion, career Development. *SPEAR's cycle of policy reflections*. https://gender-spear.eu/assets/content/policy-reflections/SPEAR_Policy_Careers_in_Academia.pdf
- SPEAR. (2023b). Work and study environments and sexism in Academia. *SPEAR's Cycle of Policy Reflections, 2*. https://gender-spear.eu/assets/content/policy-reflections/SPEAR_Policy_environments_sexism.pdf
- SPEAR. (2023c). Gender mainstreaming and gender equality plans. *SPEAR's Cycle of Policy Reflections, 3*. https://gender-spear.eu/assets/content/policy-reflections/SPEAR_Policy_gender_mainstreaming.pdf
- SPEAR. (2023d). Integration of the gender+ dimension in research, innovation and teaching. *SPEAR's Cycle of Policy Reflections, 4*. https://gender-spear.eu/assets/content/policy-reflections/SPEAR_Policy%20_Gender+.pdf

Contribuição de autoria:

Ana Ribeiro colaborou para o trabalho através da conceção do artigo, escrita, revisão e edição do texto.

Frederico Cavazzini colaborou para o trabalho através da escrita, revisão e edição do texto.

Silvana Figueiredo colaborou para o trabalho através da escrita, revisão e edição do texto.

Isabel L. Nunes colaborou para o trabalho através da conceção do artigo, escrita, revisão e edição do texto.

Aceite para publicação/ Accepted for publication: 21/06/2023

Esta revista tem uma licença Creative Commons – Attribution – Non-Commercial (CC-BY-NC 4.0) / This journal is licensed under a Creative Commons – Attribution – Non-Commercial (CC-BY-NC 4.0) license