



INSPIRE

D3.5 Factors facilitating or hindering intersectional equality policy making: An explorative European multiple-case study

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31st of March 2025



**Funded by
the European Union**



Project no.	101058537
Project acronym:	INSPIRE
Project title:	INSPIRE: Centre of Excellence on Inclusive Gender Equality in Research & Innovation: Creating Knowledge & Engaging in Collaborative Action
Call:	HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ERA-01
Start date of project:	01.10.2022
Duration:	48 months
Deliverable title:	D3.5 Report on hampering & facilitating factors of the emergence of intersectional equality policies
Due date of deliverable:	31.03.2025
Actual date of submission:	31.03.2025
Deliverable Lead Partner:	Hasselt University
Dissemination level:	Public

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Quality assurance editor



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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101058537.

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Document History			
Version	Date	Summary of changes	Revised by
01	17.03.2025	Original version	Koen Van Laer, Patrizia Zanoni and Joanna Beeckmans
02	31.03.2025	• Provided complementary information on the adopted approach • Added text in all steps to better show the underlying rationale of the study • Included more detail in the methodological section • Clarified the intersectional dimension of all identified factors • Verified the examples included in the text with whole research team • Added a conclusion section summarizing key insights from the study • Added a next steps section • Textually fine-tuned the whole text for typographical mistakes and readability • Added executive summary • Checked the references	Koen Van Laer, Patrizia Zanoni and Joanna Beeckmans



Executive Summary

The European Commission recently adopted an intersectional approach to its (gender) equality policies with the aim to address multiple, interlocking forms of inequality and discrimination that remain invisible in current gender-focused policies (Garcia and Zajicek, 2022; European Commission, 2020a). Therefore, one of the most important mandates of INSPIRE is to generate knowledge to support Higher Education and Research (HE&R) organizations in moving from gender-focused equality policies and/or Diversity, Equality & Inclusion (DEI) policies towards more integrated and inclusive – intersectional – policy making. This explorative study fits into this ambition and aims to:

1. Explore the design, governance and implementation of intersectional equality policies
2. Identify organizational and extra-organizational factors that facilitate or hinder intersectional policy making in HE&R organizations in Europe.

Relying on intersectionality as a critical methodology, this study adopts an inductive approach that looks for intersectionality in existing equality policies of HE&R organizations. Specifically, we systematically focus on policies that simultaneously meet two criteria, which we consider as the core of intersectionality: 1) they are designed, implemented and/or governed in ways that overcome siloed or single-identity policy approaches, and 2) they address power inequalities.

A multiple-case study was conducted of nine HE&R organizations – universities and research institutes – located across Europe. To maximize the likelihood of finding intersectional policies, we sampled ‘extreme cases,’ which have relatively developed equality policies addressing multiple grounds of discrimination and inequality. In each organization, empirical data was collected through interviews with multiple key stakeholders (policy designers, implementers, and potential beneficiaries), document, and, where possible, observations.

On the one hand, the analysis revealed the limited presence of equality policies that are intersectional in terms of their design, governance and implementation. On the other hand, in these organizations, we could observe a wide array of manifestations of emergent intersectional policy making, offering an initial repertoire of possible strategies and actions that can be enacted to advance equality and social justice. Regarding policy design, we found a variety of policies designed intersectionally, although not consistently across the nine different cases and not always formally labelled as intersectional. Independent of their label, existing intersectional policies often address inequalities resulting from the intersection of a limited set of axes of inequality, overlooking other potentially relevant ones. Regarding policy governance, we found multiple governance structures and mechanisms that, by enhancing the coherence and coordination among single-axis policies and enabling wide consultation with multiple stakeholders, render these policies more intersectional. Regarding policy implementation, we found that intersectionally designed policies were often not (consistently) translated into practice, but also, conversely, that single-axis policies were sometimes implemented in a more intersectional way.

Comparing all nine cases, a number of factors facilitating and hindering intersectional policy making – in terms of policy design, governance and implementation – in HE&R organizations were identified. We distinguished between organizational and extra-organizational factors. Although both co-shape organizations’ intersectional policy making, organizational factors are factors that fall under the authority of the organization, whereas extra-organizational factors originate outside of it, and can in principle not be easily changed by the organization. Accordingly, we classified all identified factors in



four categories: facilitating organizational factors, facilitating extra-organizational factors, hindering organizational factors, and hindering extra-organizational factors.

Our analysis has revealed how multiple external factors play an essential role in stimulating HE&R organizations across Europe to move towards intersectional equality policy making. These factors are key to envisioning EU policy fostering the adoption of intersectional equality policies in HE&R. They include equality-related eligibility criteria for EU funding, national equality legislation, equality certifications, and dedicated networks for sharing knowledge and expertise on equality policy. They are key because these regulations, incentives and support structures open up possibilities for organizations to build the organizational factors, or the organizational capacity, that is needed to move towards intersectional equality policies and policy making.



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List of Acronyms

CEE	Central Eastern and Eastern Europe
CWE	Central Western Europe
DEI	Diversity-Equality-Inclusion policy
DM	Discussion Moment
GEP	Gender Equality Plan
HE&R	Higher Education & Research organizations
NE	Northern/Western Europe
SE	Southern Europe
SDGs	Sustainability Development Goals
D	Deliverable



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Background and aims

One of the most important mandates of INSPIRE is to generate knowledge to inform and guide Higher Education and Research (HE&R) organizations' policies in moving from gender-focused equality policies and/or Diversity, Equality & Inclusion (DEI) policies towards more integrated and inclusive – intersectional – Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) that effectively foster intersectional equality. Gender equality has been one of the European Union's founding principles since its establishment in 1957. The European Commission recently adopted an intersectional approach to its (gender) equality policies with the aim to address multiple, interlocking forms of inequality and discrimination that remain invisible in current gender-focused policies (Garcia and Zajicek, 2022; European Commission, 2020a). This commitment is the result of a successful plea from various actors in civic society with the EU, but also national institutions (e.g. in the UK and Ireland) and global ones like the United Nations, to move beyond compartmentalized and 'siloes,' single-axis policies. Such policies tend to focus on gender or some other axes of inequality, producing a hierarchisation of inequality axes and leaving some inequalities unseen and unaddressed. The adoption of intersectionality as a principle of EU equality policy has however challenged HE&R organizations to envision policies and practices that effectively tackle intersecting equalities (Christoffersen, 2021; Müller & Humbert, 2025).

This study aims to 1) explore the design, governance and implementation of intersectional equality policies and 2) identify organizational and extra-organizational factors that contribute to or hinder intersectional policy making in HE&R organizations in Europe. The existing literature conceptualizes intersectionality as a paradigm and theory (e.g. Collins, 2019; Dhamoon, 2011; Hancock, 2007), research methodology (Choo & Marx-Ferree, 2010; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012; Yuval-Davis, 2006), and analytic and political critical tool (e.g., Atewologun, 2018; Cho et al., 2013; Collins & Bilge, 2020) that focuses on the interlocking systems of oppression and privilege, power relations and social inequalities that occur along multiple axes including, but not limited to, gender, ethnicity and race, social and economic status, sexual orientation, disability and age (Breslin, Pandey & Riccucci, 2017; Collins, 1990; Athena SWAN, 2021; Council, 2021; Crenshaw, 1989). Drawing on this literature, we understand intersectional policies as equality policies that aim to address inequalities and discrimination that occur jointly along multiple, intersecting discrimination axes including gender, race, ethnicity, disability, age and sexual orientation, on the individual, organisational and structural levels.

As a theory, intersectionality expands beyond traditional paradigms that assume group uniformity based on identity categories and invisibilize inequalities within these groups. It unveils and critiques this in-group essentialism by for example highlighting how historical feminist movements primarily focused on the claims of white women and anti-racist movements on the claims of black men, leaving the unique experiences of black women rendered invisible. Similar critiques have been made for other axes of inequality, such as disability and sexual orientation. Moreover, intersectionality operates as a lens to reveal the interlocking forms of privilege and oppression connected to systems such as cis-heteronormativity, racism or ableism in structures such as science and academia (Deem, Case, and Nokkala 2022). As a research methodology, intersectionality helps to capture how



multiple, interrelated grounds of power inequality operate as they manifest in specific empirical situations (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). Cho, Crenshaw and McCall describe intersectionality as “more a nodal point than as a closed system — a gathering place for open-ended investigations of the overlapping and conflicting dynamics of race, gender, class, sexuality, nation, and other inequalities” (2013: 788).

Importantly, intersectionality also refers to a political praxis that has historical roots in Black and Latinx feminist activism for social justice (Cho et al., 2013; Collins & Bilge, 2020). It is this dimension that is most relevant to our aim, as it offers a critical tool for policies driving transformative change within institutions (Christoffersen & Emejulu, 2022; Collins & Bilge, 2020; Rodriguez et al., 2016). Despite the abundance of academic work on intersectionality, knowledge on how to design, implement and govern intersectional equality policies remains scarce. The existing scientific literature on HE&R organizations has to date mostly emphasized the absence of truly intersectional policies. Current studies highlight how existing policies fail to comprehensively translate intersectionality into policy in ways that remain faithful to the activist historical roots of this notion (for a review of the literature, see Beeckmans, Zanoni & Van Laer, 2024).

Multiple reasons for this absence have been advanced. Often, studies mention the lack of knowledge, expertise and capacity of various organizational actors to transform existing equality policies into intersectional ones (Fay et al., 2021; Jackson et al., 2022; Porter et al., 2020; Seelman, 2014). A second reason refers to the more or less overt political barriers by opponents to intersectionality and/or intersectional equality (Coleman et al., 2020; Duran et al., 2020; Ovink & Murrell, 2022). Finally, it is argued that, as institutions are products of the past, they reflect and even solidify historical power inequalities and are thus inherently unable to promote equality (Colpitts, 2022; Mkhize, 2022; Stewart & Nicolazzo, 2018). This last argument foregrounds an inherent contradiction between intersectionality as an activist political concept and the ambition to affect change within institutions, understood as structurally reflecting existing power inequalities (Dennissen et al., 2020; Rodriguez et al., 2016). While awareness about the limitations of extant policies is important, it does not automatically advance our understanding of how intersectional equality policies required to address structural inequalities that are inherently intersectional can be developed and effectively implemented.

The text is structured as follows. We first present our approach to the study of intersectional equality policy and then extensively explain the methodology that was used to carry out the empirical multiple-case study. The third section presents key findings on intersectional policy design, governance and implementation and the fourth the identified organizational and extra-organizational factors facilitating or hindering the emergence of intersectional policy making in HE&R organizations. The text concludes with the main lessons drawn from the study on existing intersectional equality policy making and by indicating how this report will inform the next activities in the INSPIRE’s Knowledge & Support Hub 3 on Intersectionality.



Approach to the study of intersectional equality policy

In line with the notion of intersectionality as a critical methodology mentioned above, this study adopts an inductive approach to intersectionality. We systematically identified existing equality policies of HE&R organizations – e.g., GEPs and/or DEI policies and practices – that simultaneously meet two criteria, which we consider as the core of intersectionality: 1) they are designed, implemented and/or governed in ways that overcome siloed or single-identity policy approaches (Agustín, 2013; Krizsan et al., 2012; Verloo et al., 2012) and 2) they address power inequalities (Collins, 2019; Nash, 2018; Ní Laoire et al., 2021). The former criterion pertains to their form, pointing to the need that they not only deal with multiple axes of inequality, as so-called ‘additive’ DEI policies do, but that they bring such axes in relation in some way. The latter criterion pertains to their (potential) effectiveness in fostering intersectional equality and organisational change. We then comparatively explore the interplay between factors facilitating or hindering the emergence of these policies inside organisations in the local, national and international contexts in which they are embedded.

This approach moves away from prevailing normative understandings of intersectional policy making as the comprehensive, faithful translation of intersectionality into policy in ways that remain true to the activist historical roots of this notion, which are prevalent in the literature. Rather, we conceive of intersectionality as a critical tool and deploy its key tenets as a means to assess existing equality policies and policy making. We are aware that this approach, which focuses on what is present, offers no guarantee that the identified policies address all forms of intersectional inequality in a specific context. It is possible that some axes of inequality and their intersections are not addressed by current policies. However, by reframing intersectional policy making as a matter of degree, rather than a pass or fail against an ‘ideal’ intersectional policy, it is suitable to capture the potential of extant policies to provide a first step towards a more comprehensive intersectional equality policy and policy making. It overcomes the current policy making impasse by allowing to uncover opportunities for advancing a novel repertoire of strategies and actions for attaining equality and social justice intersectionally, even if that repertoire is only emergent.



Methodology

To conduct the study, a multiple-case research design was adopted, involving a systematic, theory-informed analysis of 9 cases of research performing organizations (a tenth case is currently being conducted). A case study inquiry is one that “[i]nvestigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2003: 13). The case study method lends itself to research that aims to offer an in-depth exploration of a complex phenomenon on which there is not yet a consolidated body of knowledge. It enables the researcher to take into account different perspectives and contextual factors that are highly pertinent to the phenomenon of study. A multiple case study design further allows the identification of “patterns of relationships among constructs within and across cases and their underlying logical arguments” (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007: 25) in order to build novel theory. It is therefore very useful to empirically explore the phenomenon of existing intersectional equality policies and policy making in a relatively inductive way, without knowing beforehand which organizational and contextual factors play a role, in order to theorize from it.

The research process

The case study work was carried out from October 2023 until March 2025. Activities included the setting up of the ethical and methodological framework, the drafting of shared protocols, the data collection and analysis, the writing of the single-case reports, and the writing of the comparative analysis. The case studies were conducted by five INSPIRE research teams, namely from Radboud University (RU), The Open University of Catalonia (UOC), Hasselt University (UH), The Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC SAZU) and Fraunhofer ISI, including a total of 11 researchers: Yvonne Benschop from RU, Aran Romero Moreno from UOC, Joanna Beeckmans, Patrizia Zanoni, and Koen Van Laer from UH, Jasna Fakin Bajec, Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc and Martin Pogacar from ZRC SAZU, and Carolina Wienand-Sangaré, Mei Araki, and Maria Karaulova from Fraunhofer ISI.

UHasselt drafted a methodological framework (D3.4, submitted to INSPIRE in September 2024), which provided a detailed protocol to ensure alignment of the research activities carried out by the different research teams. The framework was collectively discussed and adopted. Guidelines for sampling research performing organizations were jointly adopted to ensure that the sample was sufficiently heterogeneous in geographical location, type of institution and size. In collaboration with all research teams, UH designed three interview guidelines to be used for interviews with three types of key stakeholders that play a significant role in the policy making process: policy designers, implementers, and potential beneficiaries. Additionally, UH developed shared guidelines for collecting data through observations and document analysis as well as a template for the single-case reports. This ensured sufficient consistency across the cases. However, at the same time, throughout this process, the methodology included the possibility to adapt the data collection to adhere to context-specific factors. Every researcher made context-sensitive decisions based on the overall research objectives, access to interviewees and the availability or absence of specific data sources, such as different policy documents and possibility to conduct observations.



Five Discussion Moments (DM) with the full research team were organized between December 2023 and June 2024. At least one researcher from each INSPIRE research team involved in the study participated in each DM. In these DMs, we discussed the progress of (and potential challenges or questions related to) the data collection; made decisions on how to balance adaptation to specific cases and contexts and consistency of the data collection to enhance the comparability of the results from the different cases necessary for cross-case analysis; and discussed the open and axial coding process, as well as exchanged preliminary findings from the inductive analysis of each individual case. These meetings facilitated ongoing dialogue among the research teams, addressing challenges in gaining access to the institutions, privacy considerations, coding issues, and the operationalization of intersectional equality policies and policy making in the analysis. To advance coherence in the final coding, a shared coding template was collaboratively developed. This template formed the foundation for the further axial and selective coding, and was used for the writing of the final single-case reports and to carry out the comparative cross-case analysis reported below.

A single-case report was written for each case, based on a shared template focusing on design, governance and implementation of intersectional equality policies (Appendix 1). Each single-case report starts with a general description of the case and its socio-political and institutional context. This section is followed by a description of the methodology, clarifying which documents were analysed, the interviews that were conducted, and the observations that were undertaken, the data collection and data analysis. The next section describes the findings on the overall diversity and inclusion in the organisation, the nature and characteristics of the policies and plans, the governance and design of the policies and plans, the implementation of the policies and plans, and the emerging effects of the policies and plans. Each report ends with a conclusion and reflection on the case, providing overarching answers to the research questions. The UHasselt team reviewed all single-case reports, provided feedback for further development, and asked for further clarifications to enhance the mutual understanding of the case and alignment across cases.

Following the completion of the individual case reports, a comparative analysis was conducted by the UH team to identify common patterns, variations, and provide concrete examples of the overarching insights across the nine cases. This comparative analysis focused on the organizational and extra-organizational factors facilitating or hindering the designing, governing and implementing of intersectional equality policies, as defined above. A first draft of this analysis was produced by UH and discussed with the five research teams. This draft was sent to Jörg Müller, who provided feedback in his role as external quality control editor. After this feedback, the report was refined with the help of additional input from the partners.

The case sample

The cases were theoretically sampled based on their suitability to illuminate relationships among key constructs (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). They were identified based on three main criteria. First, the sample of cases intended to capture the heterogeneity of European institutional, historical and cultural contexts, as this potentially leads to differences in organizational and extra-organizational factors. The sample therefore includes cases in 10 different countries spread across four European country clusters: Central Western Europe (4 cases, of which 3 have been completed at the time of writing), Southern Europe (2 cases),



Central Eastern and Eastern Europe (2 cases) and Northern/Western Europe (2 cases). The following table (Table 1) gives an overview of the countries in the different country clusters.

Country cluster	Included countries
Central Western Europe (CWE)	Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxemburg Netherlands
Central Eastern and Eastern Europe (CEE)	Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Romania
Northern/Western Europe (NE)	Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Sweden
Southern Europe (SE)	Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain

Table 1: Country clusters

During discussions between the researchers and the institutions, it was agreed that the geographical location of the institution would be replaced by the country clusters. This measure was implemented to address privacy concerns raised by certain institutions due to the sensitivity of the topic in the current political climate. Additionally, the individual case reports remain confidential and were used solely for conducting the comparative case analysis and identifying the organizational and extra-organizational factors influencing the design, implementation, and governance of intersectional equality policies.

Second, we selected ‘extreme cases,’ in which the likelihood of finding intersectional policies is high. The cases needed to have policies addressing multiple grounds of discrimination and inequality, for instance through (a combination of) GEPs, DEI policies and practices, and/or other policies. This criterion was assessed based on publicly available information. Third and last, the sample intended to include different types of research performing organizations. It consists of 6 higher education institutions (universities), including one private university, and 3 research institutes.

Access to the cases

Organizations meeting the above-mentioned selection criteria were contacted by email to inquire whether they were willing to participate in the study. We informed the organizations about INSPIRE and the goals of the study, explained the research design so that they could estimate the type of commitment required on their part to participate, discussed the deontological norms concerning anonymity and privacy, and promised to share with them any insight derived from the study that could help them improve their equality policy. The first contact person was identified through the organization’s website or the publicly available documents (see below).



The data collection

The fieldwork in the nine organizations was conducted between October 2023 and December 2024. A tenth case study, a university located in the CWE cluster, is currently being prepared and will be carried out in April-May 2025. Multiple types of data were collected in each case to allow for triangulation, enhancing the reliability of the data and the analysis (Yin, 1994). The case studies included desk research focusing on relevant documents, semi-structured interviews with key informants, and, where possible, observations.

Documents

In each case, data was first collected through documents. Relevant documents include publicly available documents, such as DEI plans, GEPs and all other material that communicates about policies and practices that aim to (intersectionally) promote gender equality, diversity, inclusion, and tackle discrimination. Immediately available documents, such as GEPs and public websites, were used to select the cases and further analysed for those included. This analysis also allowed a first identification of relevant stakeholders (e.g., those involved in the design, governance and implementation of equality policies) to be interviewed. Moreover, the information derived from the documents informed the interviews and the observations. The goal of the document analysis was:

- To understand the nature and characteristics of the organisations' equality policies and plans, whether or not these policies and plans make explicit mention of intersectionality; to understand the intended focus on and goals for specific groups and/or topics; and to identify the organisational and extra-organisational factors mentioned in the documents to justify policy choices.
- To gather initial information on the organisation's design, governance and implementation process of its equality policies and plans, as well as the organisational and extra-organisational factors mentioned as shaping these choices.
- To get an initial overview of the main intersectional practices adopted by the organisation, as defined above, as well as the organisational and extra-organisational factors mentioned as shaping them.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews with key informants form a crucial source of data, as they provide insight into the perspective and experiences of different stakeholders. In each case, between 14 and 25 interviews were conducted with three types of stakeholders: designers of policies, implementers of policies and potential beneficiaries of policies.

Designers of policies are stakeholders involved in making decisions on the organization's overall equality philosophy, approach, policies and plans, their specific nature, priorities, focus, and goals. It also includes those designing the specificities of particular practices. Stakeholders in this category might also play a role in the governance of the equality policies, including the oversight, measurement and monitoring, evaluation and follow-up of their effects. Potential examples of such stakeholders are: the Human Resources (HR) director, DEI manager, Vice-president responsible for equality, DEI board members, members of the GEP task force, HR professionals responsible for designing particular DEI practices, etc.



The goal of these interviews was to gain an understanding of:

- the (reasons for the) specific nature and characteristics of the organisation's equality policies and plans, its focus on specific groups or topics, the degree to which these (do not) adopt an intersectional approach to tackling inequalities, as well as the different organisational and extra-organisational factors shaping these choices;
- the different steps in the design process and the role of different organisational and extra-organisational factors in them;
- how they experience (their role in) the design process of equality policies and practices;
- the governance of the implementation and effects on (intersecting) inequalities of equality practices, as well as the way these are shaped by organisational and extra-organisational factors;
- what the organisation can do in the future to foster intersectional equality and include an intersectional approach in its equality policies.

Moreover, the interviewees were asked whether they could share additional documents relevant to the study.

Implementers of policies are stakeholders who are involved in the actual day-to-day translation of equality policies into practice. Whether and how they implement the equality strategy and policies in practice has an important impact on how these are perceived by other stakeholders and on their effectiveness. Potential examples of such stakeholders are: heads of department, managers of specific divisions, deans, HR staff, DEI staff members, etc.

The goal of these interviews is to gain an understanding of:

- how they perceive the nature and characteristics of the organisation's equality policies and plans, their focus on specific groups, topics, and the overall policy approach to tackling (intersectional) inequalities;
- how they experience (their role in) the implementation process of actual equality practices, as well as the different organisational and extra-organisational factors affecting the implementation process;
- how the implementation is monitored, evaluated and whether accountability measures are in place;
- how they experience the effects of the equality practices they are involved in implementing on (intersectional) inequalities, as well as on the different organisational and extra-organisational factors affecting these effects;
- what they believe the organisation could do in the future to foster intersectional equality and include an intersectional approach in (the implementation of) its equality policies and plans.

(Potential) beneficiaries of policies are stakeholders who are (potentially) affected or (potentially) benefit from the equality strategy and policies. Examples of such stakeholders are: intersectionally minoritized staff, PhD students and junior researchers, students and student representatives (if applicable), etc.

The goal of these interviews is to gain an understanding of:



- how they experience the organisation and their work context, their experiences of (in)equality in the organisation grounded in their intersecting identities, and the organisational and extra-organisational factors that contribute to their sense of in/exclusion;
- how they perceive the nature and characteristics of the organisation's equality policies and plans, their focus on specific groups and topics, and their approach to tackling (intersectional) inequalities;
- how they experience (the effectiveness of) the implementation, design, and governance of equality policies and plans in the organisation and their effects on (intersecting) inequalities;
- what they believe the organisation could do in the future to foster intersectional equality and include an intersectional approach in its equality policies and plans.

The interviews took place in the organization or online. They were almost always recorded and then fully transcribed verbatim for analysis. In the few cases in which the respondent did not allow for recording, notes were taken by the researcher.

Selection of respondents

A limited number of potential interviewees were first contacted with the support of the contact person in the organization. Then, using a snowballing approach, they were asked to refer to other potential interviewees belonging to the different stakeholder types. This ensured that the researchers had some degree of autonomy in selecting the respondents, which also helped protect interviewees' anonymity and data confidentiality. The sampling of potential beneficiaries also aimed to ensure this group was diverse in terms of (intersecting) identities in order to gather insights in different intersectional inequalities they might face. In some cases, interviewees sampled to represent one type of stakeholders also belonged to another one.

Interview guidelines

For each stakeholder type, an interview guideline was prepared reflecting the specific role (Appendices 2-4). The aim of these interview guidelines was to outline the core topics to be discussed during the interviews with each type of stakeholder and to ensure that the data collected through each interview was in line with the goals outlined above. These guidelines include a list of relevant questions, and for each of them, a number of more detailed probing questions that could be asked to dig deeper and elicit more specific information. These detailed questions did not need to be explicitly asked if the information emerged spontaneously during the interview. The guidelines were organized in a way that the most important questions for that type of stakeholder came first. The core sections of the guidelines for each type of stakeholders, which required the most attention in the interviews, were also indicated in the guidelines. When respondents occupied multiple roles (e.g., as implementers and beneficiaries), the interview was however integrated with questions from the additional relevant interview guidelines.

Observations

Observations were a third data source in most of the cases. Observation involved for example participating in equality-related events, workshops or training. The ability to collect this type of



data was dependent on the access provided by the organisation. In some cases, the researcher was present and observed the practice being implemented, without any involvement in it (e.g., observing (the participants of) an event organised by the DEI team). In other cases, they took part in the activities, and could experience it more directly together with other participants (e.g., participating in a DEI training). The choice for the type of observation depended on the opportunities provided by the circumstances and the studied organisation. During the observations, notes were taken, using the observation template (Appendix 5).

The goal of these observations was to gain an understanding of:

- the communication about and/or the implementation of equality practices, as well as the nature and characteristics of the observed implemented practices, their focus on specific groups, topics, and their way of tackling (intersectional) inequalities.
- how (the implementation of) equality practices are experienced by those implementing them and by those targeted by them.

Table 2 and Table 3 hereunder provide overviews of, respectively, all collected data along the data collection method and the number of interviews conducted per stakeholder type in each organization.

Acronym	Country Cluster	Documents	Interviews	Observations
U1CWE	Central Western Europe	20	19	0
RI3CWE	Central Western Europe	9	13	1
RI4CWE	Central Western Europe	12	25	2
U5SE	Southern Europe	12	16	1
U6SE	Southern Europe	12	20	3
U7CEE	Central Eastern Europe	10	15	1
RI8CEE	Central Eastern Europe	6	14	2
U9NE	Northern Europe	13	21	0
U10NE	Northern Europe	16	19	0

Table 2: Overview of all collected document, interview and observation data



Acronym	Total interviews	Interviews with designers of policies	Interviews with implementers of policies	Interviews with potential beneficiaries of policies
U1CWE	19	4	7	8
RI3CWE	14	1	4	9
RI4CWE	25	7	2	16
U5SE	16	6	5	5
U6SE	20	6	8	6
U7CEE	15	4	3	8
RI8CEE	14	5	3	6
U9NE	21	6	12	3
U10NE	19	7	9	3

Table 3: Overview of all collected interview data by stakeholder type

The data analysis

Data analysis refers to “the process of making sense out of the data,” which involves “consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016: 202). The data was first analyzed within each case and then across the nine cases.

In line with common qualitative research practice, within-case data analysis was initiated during the fieldwork so that emergent knowledge could be taken into account. It was carried out by the researchers with the support of a research software. The initial phase of coding was guided by a core topic list based on the research objectives and the central themes of the interview guidelines (Appendix 6). However, this is not a codebook that a priori identifies and defines a fixed list of codes. Rather, we allowed for specific codes and categories regarding these themes to emerge inductively through the process of analysis (cf. Tracy, 2013). This process helped to ensure that the analysis of each case focused on the same topics, as well as allowed context-sensitive insights to be inductively identified for each of these topics. This first coding phase was discussed among the researchers in order to ensure consistency and comparability. This led, for example, to the creation of new shared codes and categories, capturing similarities and differences between cases. The shared codes were then used in subsequent steps of coding and recurrently discussed with the partners in order to ensure consistency and comparability.



The second phase of the data analysis, the single-case reports of the nine cases were comparatively analysed to identify relevant factors facilitating and hindering intersectional policy making. The outcomes of this analysis were discussed among the researchers to ensure that the empirical results presented in the single-case reports were correctly interpreted and that the cross-case analysis remained true to them. These discussions led to a refinement of the initial analyses.

The results of this analysis are presented in the next two sections. The first presents the main overarching findings on intersectional policies, while the second turns to factors facilitating and hindering intersectional policy making. It should be noted that an exploratory, multiple-case study mainly relying on qualitative data is highly suitable to capture the phenomenon under investigation in its complexity and to build theory by leveraging data analyses within each case and across cases. However, it is not suitable to capture the phenomenon in its entirety. Our sampling strategy aimed at maximising the chances of finding intersectional equality policies in order to explore their design, governance and implementation and to identify a broad range of factors facilitating and hindering intersectional policy making in research performing organizations across Europe. However, the qualitative methodology of this research does not allow us to conclude that this list captures all factors that might play a role across all European research performing organizations, nor can it indicate how prevalent these factors are.

Intersectional policy design, governance and implementation

In this section, we report key overall insights concerning the design, governance and implementation of intersectional policy based on the comparative multiple-case analysis of the nine European cases.

Policy design

Two main insights could be drawn regarding intersectionality in policy design. First, we found a variety of policies designed intersectionally, although not consistently across the nine different cases. In some instances, these policies were explicitly labelled as intersectional. However, also policies named through other concepts, such as DEI, work-life balance, anti-bullying, social safety, human rights, social justice, or Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), appeared to be intersectional, as they mentioned the ambition to work transversally – as opposed to in siloed ways – and to address the disadvantages at the intersections of multiple axes of inequality. While this finding could be interpreted negatively, as a sign of confusion of policy makers between various concepts to designate equality policy, more positively, it entails in practice that policies that at first sight are not intersectional, do in fact fulfil core intersectionality principles.

Second, independent of their label, intersectional policies often address inequalities connected to the intersection of a limited number of axes of inequality, thereby overlooking intersections with other potentially relevant ones. Policies often start from gender, and combine it with a limited number of other identities, such as migration background, nationality, dis/ability, sexual



orientation, parenthood, gender identity and gender expression. Moreover, grounds of inequality are expressed in a variety of ways. For instance, in some cases, race was expressed as ethnicity (U6SE) or solely related to foreign nationality (U9NE), and class was expressed through the education level of the parents (U9NE), language in terms of adopting English as organizational language instead of the local language which is more spoken by class-related underprivileged groups and/or regional origins which are more deprived (U6SE, U10NE, U9NE). While these grounds reflect the specific context in which organizations are embedded, they also reflect current power relations, selectively (re)formulating axes of inequality in more acceptable terms and obscuring certain dimensions of inequality in that specific context.

Policy governance

Across the cases, we were able to observe multiple governance structures and mechanisms aimed at enhancing the coherence and coordination among single-axis policies, rendering them more intersectional. This for instance occurred through a single leadership for multiple single-axis policies to overcome siloes, through consultation processes to capture a wide variety of different voices and foster dialogue, through bodies organized along transversal themes, and through diverse representation within organs in charge of a specific policy. These governance structures and mechanisms do not only enhance the effectiveness of equality policies, but often do so in ways that explicitly address intersectional disadvantages. This finding indicates that intersectional policy making can be achieved through multiple single-axis policies that, while not themselves intersectionally designed, together become intersectional through governance mechanisms that structurally mutually coordinate them and ensure wide consultation.

Policy implementation

Three main conclusions could be drawn regarding intersectionality in policy implementation. First, intersectionality is overall clearly less present in policy implementation, highlighting that even approaches that were intersectionally designed and/or governed were not (yet) consistently translated into actually implemented policies. Second, even when intersectional policies were implemented, this implementation did not necessarily occur in the entire organization, but could be uneven, limited to certain parts of the organization and/or beneficiaries (e.g., only focusing on (certain) students or staff groups). Third, and more positively, in some cases, we could on the contrary observe that intersectionality was introduced informally in the implementation of policies that were not designed or governed as such. Overall, this indicates that there is not a linear relationship between policy design, governance and implementation, and that both the assessment of existing policies and the envisioning of novel intersectional policies requires careful consideration of all three aspects of intersectional policy making.



Factors facilitating and hindering intersectional policy making

Comparing all nine cases, a number of factors facilitating and hindering intersectional policy making, in terms of design, governance and implementation, were identified. The table hereunder (Table 4) organizes them by distinguishing between facilitating and hindering factors on the one side and organizational and extra-organizational factors on the other side. The first distinction is important because it indicates the nature of the relationship between the factor and the intersectional policy. The second distinction is extremely important because it points to the degree of control the single organization itself exerts on the factor. While both types affect the organization's policy making, organizational factors fall in principle under the authority of the organization, whereas extra-organizational factors originate elsewhere, and can in principle not be easily changed by the organization.

Of course, the four types of factors are not completely independent from each other. Rather, there are connections between different factors, for example as facilitating extra-organizational factors might contribute to the presence of facilitating organizational factors, or as hindering extra-organizational factors might contribute to hindering organizational factors. For example, national policies and legislation can stimulate top management to support intersectional policy making and/or lead to an increase in the expertise on intersectionality. Or an unsupportive and hostile political context can contribute to legitimate the absence of resources for implementing policies. At the same time, organizational actors can also at times mobilize external factors in strategic ways, despite not being able to control them. For example, top management might leverage national policies or demographic shifts in the organization's context to build a business case that legitimises intersectional policy making. In other words, while there is a relationship between organizational and extra-organizational factors, it is not linear or automatic, as extra-organizational factors rarely directly simply determine organizational ones. The openness of this relationship is particularly visible when a factor might either facilitate or hinder intersectional equality policy making, depending on the organization's capacity to mobilize it for this purpose. For example, extra-organizational factors stimulating the adoption of gender equality policies can both result in gender equality policy and expertise providing a springboard for the organization to develop intersectional equality policies or, on the contrary, gender equality policy and expertise that reaffirms gender as the main focus of equality policy. The specific constellations of organizational and extra-organizational factors shaping policy making in an organization, together with their mutual non-deterministic relations, entails that the possibilities for advancing intersectional policy making are multiple and open-ended. They require organizational capacity to identify these opportunities and to translate them into suitable strategies and actions in the specific context.

In what follows, we discuss each factor and illustrate it through empirical material from our cases. We first elaborate on the organizational factors and then move to the extra-organizational ones.



	Organizational	Extra-organizational
Facilitating factors	1. Expertise and familiarity with the concept of intersectionality 2. Support of the top for intersectional policy making 3. Organizational structures supporting intersectional policy making ○ Horizontal ○ Vertical 4. Gender policies as a springboard for intersectional policy making 5. Increased internal diversity	1. Equality-related eligibility criteria for research project funding 2. (Supra-)national legislation mandating attention to different axes of inequality 3. National policies fostering equality policy making 4. Demographic shifts in the organization's context 5. Pressures from societal stakeholders to adopt equality policy 6. Equality certifications 7. External networks supporting equality policy making
Hindering factors	1. Lack of resources for intersectional policy making 2. Lack of ownership of and accountability for the implementation of intersectional policy making 3. Persisting dominance of gender in (intersectional) equality policy making 4. Lack of intersectional data 5. Vertical or horizontal segregation of (intersectionally) minoritized groups	1. Limited or constraining national law 2. Unsupportive or hostile socio-political context 3. Sector-wide academic culture and structure

Table 4: Classification of factors



Organizational factors facilitating intersectional policy making

1. Expertise and familiarity with the concept of intersectionality

A facilitating organizational factor that often emerged across the cases is expertise related to intersectionality or an overall familiarity with the concept throughout the organization. In some cases, this expertise has been built through participation in EU projects. For instance, in case U1CWE, the current work on intersectional policies builds on participation in European projects on GEPs and the staff members who participated in these consortia working on intersectionality are in the driver's seat of policy design. In case U5SE, intersectional policies build on the institution's extensive knowledge on disability. By contrast, in many cases, even those in which intersectionality was explicitly mentioned in policy documents, large parts of the organization were not familiar with this term and its meaning. This lack of familiarity complicates attempts to put intersectionality front and centre of equality policies.

2. Support of the top for intersectional policy making

The cross-case analysis also revealed the importance of support of the top of the organization for intersectional policy making. The leadership can provide legitimacy and resources to this process, and play a key role in overcoming resistance. Moreover, top leaders' direct involvement in designing, governing and implementing intersectional policies appears to be crucial to signal that these policies are considered important for the organization. For example, the head of the DEI office in case U6SE is a senior management member with expertise on intersectionality who has the administrative know-how, formal authority and the legitimacy to co-shape the overarching equality strategies of the university.

3. Organizational structures supporting intersectional policy making

A third facilitating organizational factor is the presence of formal structures that, on the one hand, ensure the coherence and coordination across equality policies and policy making and, on the other hand, foster communication and allow input from diverse stakeholders throughout the organization. This ensures the consultation of stakeholders with different backgrounds, allowing them to share their knowledge on existing inequalities and on required policies, to contribute to policy making and provide feedback on existing policies. This can involve two types of structures:

- Horizontal structures, which ensure the exchange of knowledge between groups or committees focusing on different axes of inequality.
- Vertical structures, which ensure bottom-up input, which ensures that more issues are heard and taken into account.

For example, the equality policies of case U6SE foresee the consultation of a broad variety of stakeholders reflecting the multiplicity of intersectional diversity both vertically (management to students) and horizontally (between different subgroups and its intersections). This ensures that the design of the policies is informed by potential beneficiaries' intersectional needs and increases commitment to the policy. A similar example was found in U10NE, in which the EDI



committee's intersectional policy making was supported by wide consultation with representatives from each stakeholder group to ensure knowledge exchange, such as with (PhD) student representatives, EDI working groups, Heads of Department, student administration, and HR.

4. Gender policies as a springboard for intersectional policy making

A fourth facilitating organizational factor that might contribute to intersectional policy making is the presence of gender policies. While the sole focus on gender is often presented as a barrier to intersectional policy making, gender policies can also catalyse attention to inequalities and provide a basis for further policy making that addresses intersecting inequalities. For example, in case U10NE, a tradition of formal GEPs led to an increasing number of people working on equality and to increased expertise on intersectionality. This longstanding experience with gender equality facilitated the translation towards policies that overcome siloed, single-axis approaches.

5. Increased internal diversity

An additional facilitating organizational factor mentioned across our cases is increased diversity in the organization, both among staff and students. The increased presence of intersectionally minoritized groups can provide an opportunity to build a business case for intersectional equality policies. More generally, it can put increased pressure onto the organization to adopt and implement equality policies focusing on multiple grounds of inequality, which can in turn lead to intersectional policy making. For example, in case RI4CWE, the growth of international staff not only resulted in more policies targeting this group (e.g., adoption of English as a second working language), but also had some spillover effects. Employees with disabilities reported that the openness of the institution makes them feel comfortable to communicate specific needs and work accommodations. Part-time employees also felt increasingly comfortable communicating preferred work schedules. Moreover, in this same case, the representation of (intersectionally) minoritized employees affected the degree to which different departments implemented the equality policies. On the other hand, the increased presence of certain groups in the organization, for example the share of women in leadership positions, can also be used to delegitimize further, intersectional equality policy, as the organization might consider this presence as a sign that the problem of gender inequality has been 'resolved.'

Organizational factors hindering intersectional policy making

1. Lack of resources for intersectional policy making

A first hindering organizational factor emerging from the cross-case comparison is the lack of resources for the design, governance and implementation of intersectional equality policies. While the lack of resources is a widespread problem for all equality policies in HE&R organizations, it is particularly relevant for intersectional policy making, as this often entails the expansion of the scope of existing equality policy making to include invisibilized intersectional inequalities, which might require additional resources. This involves the lack of funding, the



absence of dedicated staff to support intersectional policy-making, stakeholder fatigue due to having to do additional work without sufficient resources or change happening, and/or time constraints preventing employees from being involved in the design and implementation of intersectional policies. For example, in case U6SE different interviewees referred to how they themselves or others wore multiple hats, simultaneously taking on roles in designing, implementing, and governing the policies, and raising wider awareness on intersectionality to the organizational members. The lack of financial and human resources dedicated to the intersectional equality policies entailed that only a small number of people in the organization worked on these policies, leading to stakeholder fatigue and a broader lack of awareness of the policies in the organization.

2. Lack of ownership of and accountability for the implementation of intersectional policies

A second hindering organizational factor is the lack of ownership of and accountability for the implementation of intersectional equality policies. Across the cases, the implementation of intersectional equality policies was hindered by the absence of an actor or department clearly holding the responsibility for doing so. This can prevent designed intersectional equality policies from becoming implemented. Moreover, if those responsible for implementing policies are not held accountable if they do not do so, this can result in implementation to depend on the goodwill and commitment of deans, department heads, etc., who might lack the motivation or knowledge to implement intersectional equality policies. In case U9NE, the decentralized structure of the organization provides each department the autonomy on how they implement equality policies, which makes it highly dependent on the willingness of individuals. In U1CWE, department-level middle management is a powerful gatekeeper, as the management culture is decentralized. Middle managers who do not like DEI are often able to stop the implementation of (intersectional) equality policies. In case U9NE, the DEI manager is the primary designer of the equality policies and also holds the end responsibility for ensuring their implementation. Nonetheless, they rely on multiple other stakeholders for the implementation and have no means to hold these stakeholders accountable when they fail to contribute, as the policy does not establish clear accountability measures in place.

3. Persisting dominance of gender in (intersectional) equality policy making

A third hindering organizational factor emerging from the cases is equality policy making that continues to privilege gender as the most important ground of inequality. The dominant focus of equality policy on gender and specific groups of women (e.g., white, heterosexual) risks leaving the intersectional inequalities experienced by other (sub-)groups (of women) unaddressed. In turn, this can contribute to disappointment and backlash from other (intersectionally) minoritized groups. They might want to maintain a distance from gender or even intersectional equality policy, because they feel their concerns will never matter as much as (specific) gender issues. For example, in case R13CWE, gender policies are seen to only target cis-women, and to overlook the needs of for example non-binary or trans employees. In case U1CWE, whereas gender equality initiatives are institutionalized, anti-racism is mainly organized bottom-up. Some stakeholders fear bringing racism under the wider DEI umbrella. This might entail losing visibility, as DEI is perceived to be dominated by gender issues.



4. Lack of intersectional data

Another organizational factor hindering intersectional policy making is the lack of intersectional data, which hampers the ability of the organization to measure intersectional inequalities as well as to monitor the effectiveness of policies. Additionally, in some organizations, it is not so clear which data may legally be collected. For example, in cases U6SE and U9NE, gender data collection is mandated, yet without taking non-binary gender identity into account. The gender data cannot be further disaggregated as no data on other social identities is collected. In other cases, such as U10NE, where equality policy is more data-driven, there is a clear ambition for the collection of intersectional data, including data on race and ethnicity data and non-binary gender data. Yet the operationalization remains difficult in multiple ways. Problems included (intersectionally) minoritized individuals' survey fatigue and suspicion about data collection; the incompatibility of the data collection methods used by the HR department and the student administration making the centralization of data highly complex, hampering analysis; setting up organizational actors' access to the data in compliance with GDPR regulations; and questions about how to meaningfully analyse the data to inform intersectional equality policy.

5. Vertical or horizontal segregation of (intersectionally) minoritized groups

A last hindering organizational factor is the concentration of intersectionally minoritized individuals in specific segments of the organization (for instance, in junior researcher positions on temporary contracts or in part-time contracts), or in specific departments, which makes it difficult to argue for the necessity of an intersectional equality policy for the whole organization or to even include their voice in intersectional policy making. For example, in case R14CWE, the lack of participation of minoritized groups in DEI-related activities is partially caused by the fact that this involvement comes on top of employees' workload and employees of minoritized groups have a higher likelihood of being on a part-time contract.

Extra-organizational factors facilitating intersectional policy making

1. Equality-related eligibility criteria for research project funding

A first extra-organizational factor facilitating intersectional policy making identified through the cross-case analysis are equality-related eligibility criteria for obtaining research funding. These eligibility criteria do not only draw attention to inequality, but can also force organizations to engage with equality as a formal condition to compete for external funding. This in turn stimulates organizations to develop equality policies, including (potentially) intersectional ones, or can represent a starting point for developing broader intersectional policies. In absence of these criteria, HE&R organizations' attention for equality issues might weaken, reducing the possibility that intersectional policy making might emerge. The inclusion of GEP's as an eligibility criterion for EU funding and equality-related criteria imposed by national funding bodies were often mentioned in our cases as a starting point for equality policies, and in some cases resulting in intersectional policy making. For example, all universities in the country where U1CWE is located have set up GEPs to meet the Horizon Europe eligibility criterion to compete for European research funding. In case U9NE, the GEP was itself developed under



a Horizon Europe project to meet the eligibility criteria. The development of the GEP has led the organization to hire an DEI manager that started to develop strategies on equality and set up a governance structure to work more broadly on issues of diversity and inclusion from an intersectional perspective. In case U6SE, the GEP was designed to conform to the gender equality eligibility criteria. However, as the members of the DEI committee developing this GEP have the expertise regarding intersectionality, they were able to leverage this mandate to include an inclusive approach to gender equality by widening their strategies with an explicit focus on intersectionality.

2. (Supra-)national legislation mandating attention to different axes of inequality

A second extra-organizational factor that emerged from the cases as contributing to intersectional policy making are national and supra-national laws, such as anti-discrimination law, that mandate policy attention to different grounds of inequality. Legislation can push organizations to adopt policies addressing multiple axes of inequality, which can provide a first step towards intersectional policy making. For example, the work on intersectionality in case RI4CWE is impacted by national anti-discrimination laws focusing on sexual orientation, sex and/or gender, religious or philosophical beliefs, disability, characteristics regarding cultural and ethnic backgrounds and age. Anti-discrimination laws, for example, stimulate inclusive job advertisements that at once use gender-sensitive language and are translated in the local language and English. RI4CWE's mandatory diversity training also references anti-discrimination laws as a motivator for new managers to facilitate approaches to their teams that are inclusive for (intersectionally) minoritized individuals. Additionally, case RI3CWE has an anti-discrimination working group that participates in the design of DEI measures by providing input on multi-dimensional discrimination present in the organization.

3. National policies fostering equality policy making

National policies and programs mandating equality efforts to focus on multiple or intersecting axes of inequality are another extra-organizational factor that can facilitate intersectional policy making. This can include policies offering specific support or other incentives to adopt intersectional policies. For example, in case U9NE, national policies incite HEIs to advance the equality and excellence of the organizations by developing strategies on gender mainstreaming and internationalization. In this national context, gender mainstreaming is historically related to an intersectional perspective starting from gender. Universities that work on gender equality are required to acknowledge the different experiences of women and men and the ways gender equality intersects with other axes of inequality. Similarly, while policies on internationalization do not explicitly refer to intersectionality, they have contributed to a consideration of the way stakeholders can overcome siloed, single axis approaches in their equality efforts, and, for example, pay specific attention to the needs of international female students and staff. Another example is in U10NE, located in a country that has mandated all public organizations to work on Human Rights. While intersectionality is not explicitly mentioned, this case showed how this mandate contributed to the widening of the organizational equality policies from siloed to transversal approaches. It also stimulated the explicit rethinking of the policy approach away from single-axis equality policies toward more intersectional ones.



4. Demographic shifts in the organization's context

Demographic shifts in the context where the organization is embedded were described as potentially facilitating more intersectional policy making. These evolutions can spur attention to additional axes of inequality, for example as the presence of racialized communities increases within the local community and the labour market. This is for example visible in U6SE, where the evolution of the country's demographics in terms of race, ethnicity and religion contributed to the institution's move beyond attention to gender. Similarly, in case RI3CWE, the increasing number of racialized people and highly educated migrants in the city where the organization is located contributed to increased attention to sources of inequalities beyond gender and to axes of inequality intersecting with it.

5. Pressures from stakeholders to adopt equality policy

Societal stakeholders and social movements can facilitate attention to additional axes of inequality acknowledged in policy making, which can result in intersectional policies. These outside stakeholders can demand attention to specific topics and identities beyond gender, and pressure institutions to take them seriously in their policy making. For example, in case U1CWE, bottom-up Black Lives Matter protest actions by students and staff resulted in a (temporary) project on anti-racism, equity and decolonization.

6. Equality certifications

The existence of recognised certifications on equality, such as Athena Swan and Diversity Charter, might provide a trigger to adopt equality policies. To the extent that certifications promote intersectional policies as a 'higher' form of equality policies, this might stimulate intersectional policy making. For example, in U7CEE and RI8CEE, the design of the GEP was strongly driven by an Athena Swan Project. In RI8CEE, yearly reporting includes specific intersectionally minoritized subgroups. Moreover, future revisions of the current gender-focused GEP foresee addressing intersectionality, with particular attention to migrant workers, disability and gender identities. In the country where 10NE is located, the Athena Swan accreditation structure mandates all universities to have both a GEP and Race Equality Plan. The nation-wide Athena Swan accreditation structure has promoted intersectionality by advocating for the systematic collection of race and ethnicity data since 2020, including a gender non-binary category, and requiring intersectional policies and practices by the end of 2021.

7. External networks supporting equality policy making

A last facilitating extra-organizational factor that emerged from the analysis is the existence of national or international equality networks. Such networks allow expertise on and experiences of intersectional policy making to be exchanged, which can operate as a facilitating factor for the diffusion of intersectional policies. For example, in case U7CEE, equality DEI policies are shaped by their participation in projects with local NGOs. Relevant source materials developed by NGOs are often used in their DEI policies or in the implementation of activities. In case U9NE, the private nature of the university encourages collaborations with private companies to fund and co-organize widening participation programs for underprivileged groups. These programs focus on intersectionally minoritized groups, such as high school students who are



first-generation to attend university, with a migration background, and/or a financially less secure background. These collaborations provide a space for centring the needs and overcoming intersecting barriers of underprivileged groups.

Extra-organizational factors hindering intersectional policy making

1. Limited or constraining national law

While certain national laws can facilitate intersectional policy making, specific national legislation can also represent a hindering factor. Specifically, in many cases, it was pointed out that the ability to implement particular policies was constrained by national legislation. This especially involved the prohibition of the collection of data on specific grounds of inequality, or the limiting way in which attention to inequality is framed in existing legislation. The former can prevent organizations from getting a clear picture of intersecting inequalities, which can be crucial to developing effective policies. For example, in case RI3CWE, the collection of data was restricted to information on gender, nationality and severe disability. Moreover, institutions might limit themselves to adopt policies addressing only the inequalities on which the law mandates them to take action, and not engage with additional grounds of inequality for which there are no legal requirements.

2. Unsupportive or hostile socio-political context

A second hindering extra-organizational factor is a societal and political context that is unsupportive or even hostile to intersectionality policy making. These can make policy attention to specific identities or to the very notion of intersectionality controversial, and thereby hinder the ability of the organization to adequately address intersectional inequalities. For example, the work on intersectionality in case U1CWE is hampered by ongoing debates on the internationalization of universities and by the intimidation experienced by equality professionals, especially when working on topics such as gender-neutral bathrooms, anti-racism and decolonization. In U7CEE, the dominant religion in the country has posed an important barrier to the mainstreaming of LGBT rights.

3. Sector-wide academic culture and structure

A last important extra-organizational factor that appears to hinder moving towards intersectional policy making are the overarching characteristics of academia, such as the culture and structure of this field, which profoundly affects research performing organizations. In some cases, the academic culture heavily focusing on individual merit and competition makes it particularly difficult to chart (intersectional) equality policies. This culture is often combined with a structurally high share of temporary, precarious employment contracts, especially for early career researchers. As intersectionally minoritized staff are overrepresented in these lower-rank temporary academic positions (e.g., in RI8CEE and RI3CWE), they are structurally less well positioned in HE&R organizations to have a voice in defining the intersectional equality policies that would benefit them most. For example, the implementation of intersectional equality policies in U1CWE was hindered by the dominant academic culture, which heavily focuses on high performance (research) excellence.



Conclusion

Adopting an understanding of intersectionality as a critical tool for policies driving transformative change within institutions (Christoffersen & Emejulu, 2022; Collins & Bilge, 2020; Rodriguez et al., 2016), this study aimed at exploring the design, governance and implementation of intersectional equality policies and identifying organizational and extra-organizational factors that contribute to or hinder intersectional inequality policy making in HE&R organizations in Europe. We sampled nine ‘best cases’ in which the likelihood of finding intersectional policies – that is, policies that are designed, implemented and/or governed in ways that overcome siloed or single-identity policy approaches and address power inequalities – was the highest. This approach intended to unveil existing potentialities for intersectional policy making to advance equality, rather than testing existing policies against an ideal intersectional policy derived from intersectionality theory.

Unsurprisingly, our analysis of the HE&R organizations we investigated did not find widespread equality policies which are consistently intersectional in terms of design, governance and implementation. This finding is in line with the existing literature on intersectional policies, (D’Agostino, 2024, Harpur et al., 2022, Christoffersen, 2021), and more specifically with the observation that intersectionality, even when present in equality policy, is often not implemented (Christoffersen, 2021), or adopted only in partial ways, focusing on selected grounds of inequality (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). However, at the same time, in these organizations, we could observe a wide array of manifestations of emergent intersectional policy making, offering an initial repertoire of possible strategies and actions that can be enacted to advance equality and social justice.

First, respondents in various organizational roles across the different countries reported doing intersectionality through policies not formally labelled as such (cf. Agustin, 2012), including inside single-axis policies (by implementing them intersectionally in practice, acknowledging diversity within the target group), gender and gender+ policies, DEI policies, decolonization policies, and human rights policies. While these strategies cannot institutionalize intersectionality as a formal policy principle, they suggest that intersectionality can, under certain conditions, come to ‘organically’ inform existing policies and practices. In some cases, these latter might subsequently formally become intersectional policies and practices, reversing the assumption that institutionalization needs to precede practice. This insight broadens the entry points into intersectional equality policies and suggests that it is important to gain a better understanding of the conditions that need to be met for intersectionality to emerge organically and to then foster its institutionalization.

Second, across the nine cases, we observed a wide array of grounds of inequality addressed by HE&R organizations’ policies, ranging from gender and sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, language, nationality, LGBTQ+, disability, migrant background, socio-economic background, rural background, parent status, age, etc. and their intersections. Assessed against the intersectionality literature, the use of some of these terms might be considered as reflecting the invisibilization of key axes of inequality (for example, using ethnicity or migrant background or nationality to invisibilize race). However, these terminologies might also better reflect the (power-laden) historical background and specific conditions of the organization and the context in which it is embedded (cf. Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012), and therefore be more suitable for policy purposes than key social identities which are prominent in the scientific literature. In other



words, the use of a certain terminology should be assessed in terms of its performativity in terms of enhancing intersectional equality, rather than for its alignment with intersectional theory per se.

Third, our analysis also revealed that intersectional policy making does not solely occur through equality policies which are intersectionally designed and/or implemented. Rather, a key modality of intersectional policy making are the structures and processes for governing it as a whole. Intersectionality-fostering governance includes for instance single leadership to overcome siloed policies, consultation processes to capture a wide variety of different voices and foster dialogue, committees along transversal equality-related themes, and diverse representation within organs in charge of equality policy making. These various governance mechanisms foster the coordination of multiple single-axis policies in ways that decrease the likelihood that intersectionally minoritized groups are invisibilized and their disadvantage reproduced. They do so by enhancing participation, coordination and coherence across single policies. Although governance mechanisms require organizations to make choices and to privilege some articulations over other ones, they do offer an alternative to multiplying policies to address the complexity that intersectional inequalities potentially introduce into policy making.

Taken together, these three aspects reveal the multiplicity of possibilities open to HE&R organizations across Europe to move towards intersectional equality policy making. Importantly, our analysis has also revealed how, in all these organizations, multiple external factors have played an essential role in stimulating them to do so. These factors are key to envisioning EU policy fostering the adoption of intersectional equality policies in HE&R. They include equality-related eligibility criteria for EU funding, national equality legislation, equality certifications, and dedicated networks for sharing knowledge and expertise on equality policy. They are however key because they provided the regulations, incentives and support for building the organizational capacity for starting to transform the existing equality policy and policy making more intersectional.



Next steps

This report will serve as the basis for a virtual co-creation workshop to be held on April 2nd, 2025 (D4.4). During the workshop, the research findings will be discussed in view of developing Open Training Units (D6.1) to support intersectional policy making within HE&R organizations. These practical tools will be made available through a set of guiding principles on the INSPIRE website. Additionally, the single case studies and the comparative analysis will provide the content of an edited book to appear before the end of the project.

The report's insights will further contribute to the ongoing work of INSPIRE's Knowledge & Support Hub 3 on Intersectionality, which integrates case study findings with input from four experts (Ashlee Christoffersen, Barbara De Micheli, Bruna Cristina Pereira, and Irina Lungu) and the work of three Communities of Practice (WISE CoP, Intersectionality for change CoP, and OpenEU CoP). This continuous collaboration will result in five publicly available working papers (D4.3), reflecting knowledge exchange events.

To enhance co-creative practices, the findings from D3.5 will be discussed alongside other conducted case studies, including those analyzing the impact of Gender Equality Plans (D3.7/8) and gender-sensitive innovations (D3.10). These discussions will be collected in a report (D3.11) that identifies cross-cutting analytical synergies, connecting the different empirical research strands, and used to formulate policy recommendations for the Centre of Excellence's future approaches.



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Appendices

Appendix 1

Template for single-case report

1. General information

- Description of the university's or research institute's characteristics. This includes:
 - Type of organisation (and main field of expertise if applicable)
 - Size in terms of personnel (and students if applicable)
 - Overview of the general organogram, including different faculties/divisions,...
 - Brief history of the organisation, indicating important evolutions
- Description of the national context of the case (use GEAR tool and D2.1 report of national experts). This includes important societal elements that might influence GEPs and DEI and DEI-policies in organisations

2. Methodology

- Overview of the data sources
- Overview of the interviews, this includes:
 - Number of interviews and their average duration
 - Process of recording, informed consent, transcription
 - Description of selection procedure and of process of contacting respondents
 - Table providing pseudonymized names, role and socio-demographic information of interviewees
- Overview of the documents analysed, this includes:
 - Table with description of the analysed documents (e.g. Publicly available GEPs and/or equality policies). If publicly available, add the link.
- Overview of the (non-)participant observations, this includes:
 - Table with the observations, providing a description of the observed equality policy (name of the activity, date, organisers, participants, duration, goal)
 - Description of the role of the researcher (non-participant or participant)

3. Diversity and inclusion in the organisation

- Description of the diversity and in/exclusive nature of the organisation. This includes:
 - The diversity of the organisation
 - The (lack of) sense of belonging experienced by individuals with different intersecting identities
 - The (lack of) valuation of the expertise and contributions of individuals with different intersecting identities
 - Barriers and discrimination experienced by individuals with different intersecting identities
 - The reasons for/organisational and extra-organisational (e.g. institutional, historical, cultural, economic) factors affecting this.



4. Nature and characteristics of the (intersectional) GEPs and DEI policies and plans

- RQ1: What are the nature and characteristics of intersectional equality policies and plans? -

- Description of the organisation's overall DEI philosophy including the GEP. This includes:
 - Why the organisation believes DEI(-policy) is important (what is the main problem to be addressed, what do they aim to achieve)
 - The general guiding principles characterising the DEI-philosophy
 - The main groups focused on or the main potential beneficiaries identified
 - Whether and how an intersectional approach is adopted / attention is given to intersectionality
- Description of the GEP and the main DEI policies and practices. Including for each policy:
 - The main goal and the main problem addressed
 - The main groups they focus on & whether and how an intersectional approach is adopted / attention is given to intersectionality
 - The main practices that are part of these policies. This includes
 - What their aims are and which problem they aim to address
 - How they work
 - The main groups they focus on & whether and how an intersectional approach is adopted / attention is given to intersectionality
 - The evolution in DEI policies and practices including the GEP over the years
- Add all the DEI policies and practices that adopt an intersectional approach
 - The main goal and the main problem addressed
 - How they work
 - Explanation on how are they intersectional

5. Governance and design of the (intersectional) GEPs and DEI policies and plans

- RQ2a: How are intersectional equality policies and plans governed and designed and what are the organisational and extra-organisational (e.g. institutional, historical, cultural, economic) factors affecting this? –

- Description of the governance of the DEI philosophies, policies, practices and plans. This includes:
 - The individuals and/or groups responsible for different aspects of DEI (philosophies, policies, practices and plans)
 - Their respective roles and responsibilities
 - The reasons for/organisational and extra-organisational (e.g. institutional, historical, cultural, economic) factors affecting this governance framework
 - The way progress (in terms of policy, practice development, implementation and effects on different groups) is monitored, reported on, and the way individuals are held accountable for (a lack of) progress.
 - The way changes are being made and/or practices and policies are being improved
 - Attention to intersectionality in governance
- Stakeholders' evaluation of DEI-governance (advantages and disadvantages).
- Description of the design process of the DEI philosophies, policies, practices and plans. This includes:
 - The different steps in the design process of GEP and DEI philosophies, policies, practices and plans



- The different actors involved in designing GEP and DEI philosophy, policies and practices
- The design choices, such as:
 - The choices made in designing the DEI philosophy, policies and practices (what is the main problem to be addressed, what do they aim to achieve)
 - The focus on particular groups
 - (Not) adopting an intersectional approach or for (not) focusing on multiple groups
- The reasons for/organisational and extra-organisational (e.g. institutional, historical, cultural, economic) factors affecting these choices
- The main challenges in designing policies & the way they are overcome
- The support received by the organisation
- Organisational member's evaluation of the GEP and/or DEI-design process (advantages and disadvantages).

6. Implementation of the (intersectional) GEPs and DEI policies and plans

- RQ2b: How are intersectional equality policies and plans implemented, and what are the organisational and extra-organisational (e.g. institutional, historical, cultural, economic) factors affecting this? -
- Description of the implementation process of GEP and DEI philosophies, policies, practices and plans. This includes:
 - The people responsible for implementation
 - The organisational and extra-organisational (e.g. institutional, historical, cultural, economic) factors affecting the implementation process
 - The role of intersectionality
 - The challenges in the implementation of GEP and/or DEI practices & the way they are overcome
 - The organisational support in the process of implementation
- Organisational member's evaluation of the GEP and/or DEI-implementation process (advantages and disadvantages).

7. Emerging effects of the (intersectional) GEPs and DEI policies and plans

- RQ3: What are the emerging effects of intersectional equality policies and plans, and what are the organisational and extra-organisational (e.g. institutional, historical, cultural, economic) factors that influence these possible effects? -
- Description of the emerging effects of the DEI philosophies, policies practices, and plans this includes:
 - The effectiveness of policies and practices in actually addressing the problems they aimed to address and reach the intended goals
 - The changes that are already visible (objective data or individuals' experiences) as a result of the GEP and/or DEI policies and practices
 - The difference in effects for people with different intersecting identities
 - The organisational and extra-organisational (e.g. institutional, historical, cultural, economic) factors that influence these emerging effects



- The improvements needed for the future, this includes:
 - The needs and problems that need to be more addressed
 - The groups that deserve more attention
 - Potential future policies and practices

8. Conclusion and reflections

- Overarching answers to the main questions:
 - What are the nature and characteristics of intersectional equality policies and plans?
 - How are intersectional equality policies and plans governed, designed and implemented, and what are the organisational and extra-organisational (e.g. institutional, historical, cultural, economic) factors affecting this?
 - What are the emerging effects of intersectional equality policies and plans, and what are the organisational and extra-organisational (e.g. institutional, historical, cultural, economic) factors that influence these possible effects?



Appendix 2

Interview guideline for designers

Name interviewer		
Date and place of interview		
Duration interview		
Name interviewee		
Organization		
Job interviewee		

- Briefly explain general objective and informed consent.

	Questions	Goal
Role in the organization	• Could you describe what you do in the organisation? ○ What is your position in the organisation? ○ What are your main tasks? ○ What does your typical work day look like? • Can you describe the team or department you are part of? ○ Who do you mostly work with? • What did you do before starting in this position? ○ Did you have other positions in this organisation? ○ What other work experiences do you have? ○ What did you study?	Brief introduction of the interviewee, what they do in the organisation, and with whom they work together. This is important basic information to understand the answers to the questions that follow. However, too lengthy explanations about careers and details about their actual work (except for their role in DEI) should be avoided.
Nature and characteristics +	• Can you describe your role in designing DEI policies? ○ Who else is involved in the design of the DEI policy? ○ What are the different steps in designing DEI policies? ○ Why are you involved in the design? ○ Are other people consulted?	CORE OF THIS INTERVIEW



Governance and design	• How would you describe the organisation's philosophy on diversity and inclusion? ◦ Why was this chosen? ◦ What are some of the factors that influenced the choice for this? • What are the key issues the DEI policies of the organisation focus on? ◦ Why was this focus chosen? ◦ Which policies were chosen to focus on this issue? Why? ◦ Why was this policy designed in this way? • Do DEI policies mainly focus on one specific minority group or on multiple groups? ◦ If so, which ones? ◦ What was the reasoning behind this choice? ◦ Why was this policy designed in this way? • Can you give some examples of DEI practices in the organisation that focus on multiple groups? ◦ What was the reasoning behind this choice? ◦ Why was this policy designed in this way? • An example of a practice that is also being implemented in the organisation is [practice with a potentially intersectional focus or focus on multiple groups identified from the documents] -[asked if interviewee does not introduce these themselves]. ◦ Can you describe this policy? ◦ Why was this policy designed in this way? • Do you feel that the management supports the design process and its choices? • What were some of the challenges in the design of DEI practices? ◦ How have they shaped design choices? ◦ What are some of the reasons for these challenges? ◦ Are you able to overcome these challenges? ◦ Do you experience any pushback? From who? Why? • Is it clear who is responsible for which parts of DEI policies and practices? • Are there ways in which progress is being reported? ◦ To whom? ◦ How?	Understanding how they perceive (their role in) the different steps of the design process of DEI policies and the role of different organisational and extra-organizational factors in them. Understanding how the design process is motivated, followed-up and whether there are accountability measures. Understanding the specific nature and characteristics of the organisation's philosophy on DEI, its focus on specific groups or topics, and the degree to which these (not) adopt an intersectional approach to tackling inequalities, as well as the different organisational and extra-organisational factors shaping this.
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	• Are there any follow-ups after the policies are designed? ○ Is the progress that is being made monitored and measured? ○ If yes, how? ○ Do you believe it is important to monitor sensitive data such as race, sexual orientation, disability to include those needs in the implementation of the policies? Why, why not? ○ Who is in charge of following up DEI policies once they have been designed? Why? ○ Are there accountability measures in case certain goals aren't met? ○ Are there resources made available for following up DEI policies? INTERSECTIONALITY • To which extent would you say that the policies take into account the needs of everyone? • Do you feel DEI policies ignore specific topics or groups? • Who or what should be more addressed in the future DEI policies? How? • To which extent would you say that the policies acknowledge the experiences of [name intersections between identities mentioned throughout the interview]? • A topic that is drawing increasing attention is intersectionality. Have you ever heard this being used in the organisation? ○ In which context? • An intersectional approach [define]. Do you believe this is being applied in the organisation?	
Implementation	• What do you think about the way particular policies are being implemented? ○ Do they ensure that everyone feels included? • What do you think are some of the challenges in the implementation of DEI policies?	Understanding how they experience implementation of DEI policies and practices.



	○ How could this be overcome?	
Emerging effects	● How would you describe the diversity of the workforce in the organisation? ○ Do you see differences between different departments or teams? ▪ If so, what do you think are the causes of these differences? ○ Are there groups that are underrepresented in the organisation? ▪ If so, what do you think are the causes of this underrepresentation? ● Do you think everyone, regardless of their identities, feels at home and respected in the organisation? ○ Why is that? ○ Which factors contribute to this? ○ Do you think individuals with specific identities are less likely to feel at home? ▪ if specific identities are named: ask about intersections between them ○ Can you give examples of this happening? ○ Do you believe that the policies and practices contribute to this [if no problems are identified] - are effective in addressing this [if potential problems are identified]? ● Do you feel that the organisation sufficiently recognizes and rewards everyone's expertise and achievements, regardless of their identities,? ○ Why, why not? ○ What contributes to this? ○ Do you think people with certain identities are less likely to be recognized for their achievements and expertise? ▪ if specific identities are named: ask about intersections between them ○ Can you give examples of this happening? ○ Do you believe that the policies and practices contribute to this [if no problems are identified] - are effective in addressing this [if potential problems are identified]?	Understanding how they experience the operation and effects on (intersecting) inequalities of DEI policies and practices and how they are being monitored and potential changes are made.



	- Do you think certain people sometimes face barriers or discrimination in the organisation? - Could you describe such situations? - Do you think people with certain identities are more likely to face barriers or discrimination? - if specific identities are named: ask about intersections between them - Do you believe that the policies and practices contribute to this [if no problems are identified] - are effective in addressing this [if potential problems are identified]? - Which effects do you already see emerging from the policies that were designed? - For who? Do you think everyone experiences these effects? - To what would you attribute it? - What were important factors that play a role in affecting the effects?	
Closing	- What are other steps you believe the organisation should take in the future to tackle the inequalities that individuals face who identify with more than one minority group? - How do you think the organisation or yourself can improve their GEP or DEI policy for those individuals and groups in the future? - Further information on the interviewee's - Gender identity - Age bracket - Race/ethnicity/nationality (E.g. white Belgian national with a French background) - Other relevant identities (E.g. disability, sexual orientation,...) - Is there anything you would like to add, which I did not ask but you think is important for me to know?	Understanding what they believe the organisation could do in the future to foster intersectional equality and include an intersectional approach in its Gender Equality Plan or Diversity, Equality and Inclusion policies.



Appendix 3

Interview guideline for implementers

Name interviewer	
Date and place of interview	
Duration interview	
Name interviewee	
Organization	
Job interviewee	

- Briefly explain general objective and informed consent.

	Questions	Goal
Role in the organisation	• Could you describe what you do in the organisation? ○ What is your position in the organisation? ○ What are your main tasks? ○ What does your typical work day look like? • Can you describe the team or department you are part of? ○ Who do you mostly work with? • What did you do before starting in this position? ○ Did you have other positions in this organisation? ○ What other work experiences do you have?	Brief introduction of the interviewee, what they do in the organisation, and with whom they work together. This is important basic information to understand the answers to the questions that follow. However, too lengthy explanations about careers and details about their actual work (except for their role in DEI) should be avoided.
Nature and characteristics + Implementation	• Can you describe your role in implementing the DEI policies and practices? • Which practices related to diversity, equality and inclusion issues are you involved in implementing [ask the following questions for all practices identified by the interviewee] ○ Can you describe this policy? ○ Can you describe your role? ○ Do you believe this practice is useful? ○ Do you believe the supposed beneficiaries think this policy is useful? ○ Is it useful for everyone? Why, why not?	CORE OF THIS INTERVIEW Understanding how they experience (their role in) the process implementation of actual DEI practices, as well as the different organisational and extra-organisational factors affecting the implementation process. Understanding of how the implementation is monitored, evaluated and whether there are accountability measures.



	• An example of a practice that is also being implemented in the organisation is [practice with a potentially intersectional focus or focus on multiple groups identified from the documents] -[asked if interviewee does not introduce these themselves]. Do you have a role in implementing this? If yes: ○ Can you describe this policy? ○ Can you describe your role? ○ Do you believe this policy is useful? ○ Do you believe the staff thinks this policy is useful? ○ Do you think this works for the intended group? Why, why not? ○ Is it useful for everyone? Why, why not? • Do you know why you are involved in implementing these policies? ○ Do you think it is a good thing that you are involved in the implementation of these policies? Why/why not? • What are some of the challenges in the implementation of DEI practices? ○ What are some of the reasons for these challenges? ○ Are you able to overcome these challenges? ○ Do you experience any pushback? From who? Why? • Does the organisation adequately support you in the process of implementation? What could be improved? ○ Are you informed about the goals of the policy? ○ Did you receive training or guidance on how to implement DEI policies? ○ Do you get feedback on the process of implementation? From who? • Do you need to report on the progress that is being made? ○ To whom? ○ How? ○ Do you have a deadline for implementing practices? ○ What happens if you don't fulfil your role?	
Emerging effects	• How would you describe the diversity of the workforce in the organisation? ○ Do you see differences between different departments or teams? ▪ If so, what do you think are the causes of these differences? ○ Are there groups that are underrepresented in the organisation? ▪ If so, what do you think are the causes of this underrepresentation?	Understanding how they experience the effects on (intersectional) inequalities of the DEI practices they are involved in implementing, as well as on the different organisational and extra-organisational factors affecting this.



	● Do you think everyone, regardless of their identities, feels at home and respected in the organisation? ○ Why is that? ○ Which factors contribute to this? ○ Do you think individuals with specific identities are less likely to feel at home? ▪ if specific identities are named: ask about intersections between them ○ Can you give examples of this happening? ○ Do you believe that the policies and practices contribute to this [if no problems are identified] - are effective in addressing this [if potential problems are identified]? ● Do you feel that the organisation sufficiently recognizes and rewards everyone's expertise and achievements, regardless of their identities? ○ Why, why not? ○ What contributes to this? ○ Do you think people with certain identities are less likely to be recognized for their achievements and expertise? ▪ if specific identities are named: ask about intersections between them ○ Can you give examples of this happening? ○ Do you believe that the policies and practices contribute to this [if no problems are identified] - are effective in addressing this [if potential problems are identified]? ● Do you think certain people sometimes face barriers or discrimination in the organisation? ○ Could you describe such situations? ○ Do you think people with certain identities are more likely to face barriers or discrimination? ▪ if specific identities are named: ask about intersections between them ○ Do you believe that the policies and practices contribute to this [if no problems are identified] - are effective in addressing this [if potential problems are identified]?	
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	- Which effects do you already see emerging from the policies you implemented? - For who? Do you think everyone experiences these effects? - To what would you attribute it? - What were important factors that play a role in affecting the effects? INTERSECTIONALITY - To which extent would you say that the policies take into account the needs of everyone? - Do you feel DEI policies ignore specific topics or groups? - Who or what should be more addressed in the future DEI policies? How? - To which extent would you say that the policies acknowledge the experiences of [name intersections between identities mentioned throughout the interview]? - A topic that is drawing increasing attention is intersectionality. Have you ever heard this being used in the organisation? - In which context? - An intersectional approach [define]. Do you believe this is being applied in the organisation?	
Governance and design	- Ideally, who do you think should be involved in the design of a DEI policy? - Who is involved? - Have you ever been consulted? Or know of others who have been consulted? - Do you feel that the organisation sufficiently includes the experiences of different minority groups into the design process of their DEI policies? Why/not? - Do you feel that your needs are included in the design of the DEI policies? - Do you feel someone is measuring whether these policies are effective? - Do you think something is being done if they don't work?	Understanding how they experience the design, and governance of actual DEI practices in the organisation
Closing	What are other steps you believe the organisation should take in the future to tackle the inequalities that individuals face who identify with more than one minority group?	Understanding what they believe the organisation could do in the future to foster intersectional equality and include an intersectional approach in its Gender



	• How do you think the organisation or yourself can improve their GEP or DEI policy for those individuals and groups in the future? • Further information on the interviewee's ○ Gender identity ○ Age bracket ○ Race/ethnicity/nationality (E.g. white Belgian national with a French background) ○ Other relevant identities (E.g. disability, sexual orientation,...) • Is there anything you would like to add, which I did not ask but you think is important for me to know?	Equality Plan or Diversity, Equality and Inclusion policies.
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Appendix 4

Interview guideline for potential beneficiaries

Name interviewer	
Date and place of interview	
Duration interview	
Name interviewee	
Organisation	
Job/student status interviewee	

- Briefly explain general objective and informed consent.

	Questions	Goal
Role in the organisation	• Could you describe what you do in the organisation? ◦ What is your position in the organisation? ◦ What are your main tasks? ◦ What does your typical work day look like? • Can you describe the team or department you are part of? ◦ Who do you mostly work with? • What did you do before starting in this position? ◦ Did you have other positions in this organisation? ◦ What other work experiences do you have?	Brief introduction of the interviewee, what they do in the organisation, and with whom they work together. This is important basic information to understand the answers to the questions that follow. However, too lengthy explanations about careers and details about their actual work should be avoided. <u>Alternative questions for students:</u> • Could you describe what you do in the organisation? ◦ What does your typical day as a student look like? • Can you describe the department study at? ◦ Who do you mostly come in contact with? • What did you do before becoming a student here?
Experiences	• How would you describe the organisation in terms of ◦ Its diversity? ◦ Its inclusive nature?	CORE PART OF THE INTERVIEW WITH THIS GROUP: Understanding how they experience the organisation in terms of sense of belonging and recognition, their



as an employee	SENSE OF BELONGING - Do you think everyone, regardless of their identities, feels at home and respected in the organisation? - Why is that? - Which factors contribute to this? - Do you think people with certain identities are less likely to feel at home? - if specific identities are named: ask about intersections between them - Can you give examples of what happened? - Do you feel at home in the organisation? - Why, why not? - What contributes to this? - How would you describe the relationships with the main people you come in contact with? - Have you ever not felt at home? Can you give examples of this? - Have you ever felt that you needed to change something about yourself in order to fit in the organisation? Why, why not? RECOGNITION OF EXPERTISE - Do you feel that everyone's expertise and achievements are sufficiently recognized and rewarded, regardless of their identities? - Why, why not? - What contributes to this? - Do you think the expertise of people with certain identities is less likely to be recognized? - if specific identities are named: ask about intersections between them - Can you give examples of what happened? - Do you feel that your expertise and achievements are sufficiently recognized and rewarded? - Why, why not? - What contributes to this?	experiences with discrimination and barriers in the organisation, and how this is connected to intersectional identities. Moreover, whether they believe these experiences are shared by others (e.g. with other intersecting identities). These questions give us potential insight in: - emerging effects - relevant organisational and extra-organisational factors
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	○ Have you ever felt a lack of respect for your expertise or achievements? ▪ Can you give examples of what happened? ▪ What did you do? DISCRIMINATION AND BARRIERS ● Do you think people sometimes face barriers or discrimination in the organisation? ○ What kind of barriers or discrimination? ○ Could you describe such situations? ○ Do you think people with certain identities are more likely to face barriers or discrimination? ▪ if specific identities are named: ask about intersections between them ● Have you ever faced barriers or been discriminated against in the organisation? ○ On the basis of what? ○ Could you describe a situation in which you were excluded or discriminated against? ○ How did you deal with this? ○ Was this in some way addressed? ○ Are there spaces or people you can go to when you feel excluded or discriminated against? ● Do you believe that existing policies sufficiently protect employees against discrimination? Why, why not? ● Have you noticed any changes in the past years within the organisation regarding diversity, equality and inclusion issues? ○ If yes, can you give an example of positive/negative changes? ○ If not, to what do you attribute this?	
Nature and characteristics	● Are you familiar with policies or practices related to diversity, equality and inclusion issues? [ask the following questions for all practices identified by the interviewee] - If yes, ○ How did you learn about them?	ANOTHER CORE SECTION FOR THIS GROUP: Understanding how they perceive the nature and characteristics of the organisation's approach to DEI, its focus on specific groups, topics, and its way of tackling (intersectional) inequalities.



	○ Did you or anyone you know ever made use of it? How did you/they experience it? ○ What did you think of the way it was organised? ▪ Who was involved? ▪ Did you see any downsides with the way it was organised? ○ Do you think it is useful? Why, why not? ○ Do you think it's useful for everyone? Why, why not? Is it effective for individuals who identify with more than one minority group? ○ Do you believe this is effective to tackle inequality and promote inclusion? If not ○ Are there certain policies or practices you think would be important in the organisation? ○ Why would this be useful? ○ For everyone? Why, why not? ○ Would you or anyone you know make use of it? Why? INTERSECTIONALITY ● An example of a practice that is also being implemented in the organisation is [practice with a potentially intersectional focus or focus on multiple groups identified from the documents] -[asked if interviewee does not introduce these themselves]. Have you ever heard about this? ○ If yes, how did you learn about them? ○ Did you or anyone you know ever made use of it? How did you/they experience it? ○ What did you think of the way it was organised? ▪ Who was involved? ▪ Did you see any downsides with the way it was organised? ○ Do you think it is useful? Why, why not? ○ For everyone? Why, why not? Is it effective for individuals who identify with more than one minority group? ○ Do you believe this is effective to tackle inequality and promote inclusion? ● To which extent would you say that the policies take into account the needs of everyone?	Understanding how they experience the implementation, usefulness, effects on (intersecting) inequalities of practices. Understanding how they experience the implementation of actual DEI practices in the organisation.
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	• Do you feel DEI policies ignore specific topics or groups? • To which extent would you say that the policies acknowledge the experiences of [name intersections between identities mentioned throughout the interview]? • A topic that is drawing increasing attention is intersectionality. Have you ever heard this being used in the organisation? ◦ In which context? • An intersectional approach is [define]. Do you believe this is being applied in the organisation?	
Implementation + Governance & design	• What do you think about the way practices are being implemented in the organisation? ◦ Do you feel that the diversity and inclusion policies and practices are well communicated about? ◦ Do you think there are specific challenges in implementing policies? ◦ Do you think there is opposition to certain policies? Why/why not? From whom? ◦ What do you feel could be done to overcome these challenges in your organisation? • Why do you think DEI policies and practices are designed as they are? ◦ Do you think they focus on the right issues and problems? Why (not)? ◦ Are there particular issues and problems overlooked? • Ideally, who do you think should be involved in the design of DEI policies? ◦ Have you ever been consulted? Or know of others who have been consulted? ◦ Do you feel that the organisation sufficiently includes the experiences of different minority groups into the design process of their DEI policies? Why/not? ◦ Do you feel that your needs are included in the design of the DEI policies? • Do you feel progress is being monitored and measured? ◦ How does this happen? ◦ Do you think something is being done if they don't work? ◦ Do you think people are held accountable for a lack of progress?	Understanding how they experience the design, and governance of actual DEI practices in the organisation



Closing	• What are other steps you believe the organisation should take in the future to tackle the inequalities that individuals face who identify with more than one minority group? • How do you think the organisation can improve their GEP or DEI policy for those individuals and groups in the future? • Further information on the interviewee's ○ Gender identity ○ Age bracket ○ Race/ethnicity/nationality (E.g. white Belgian national with a French background) ○ Other relevant identities (E.g. disability, sexual orientation,...) • Is there anything you would like to add, which I did not ask but you think is important for me to know?	Understanding what they believe the organisation could do in the future to foster intersectional equality and include an intersectional approach in its Gender Equality Plan or Diversity, Equality and Inclusion policies.
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Appendix 5

Observation guideline

Name of observer	
Type of observation	Participatory/non-participatory
Organised by	
Other (key) actors involved (ex. speaker, facilitator, consultant...)	
Targeted audience and how many people present	
Place and time	
Duration	

Nature and characteristics	• Short description of the observed activity/practice (ex. training session, information session, informal net-working event...) • Described goal of the observed activity/practice • Indication whether the observed activity/practice is part of a larger series of activities/practices • Relevant social identities mentioned (gender (identity), race, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, other) • Intersectionality explicitly mentioned ○ If yes, describe how ○ If no, describe if intersectional approach is used (quotes supporting why it is considered intersectional) • Researcher's evaluation of the general atmosphere during the event
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Governance and design policy	• Motivation for the focus on specific goals, specific target groups (if available) • Who is in charge of the activity/practice • To whom is the activity/practice reported
Implementation policy	• Description of the actor(s) involved in the implementation • Motivation for the way the practice is implemented
Emerging effects	• Measurement of effects mentioned ◦ If yes, how • Reactions of the audience • Reactions of the organisers



Appendix 6

Core topic list for analysis

Diversity and inclusion in the organisation

- Described diversity of the organisation
- Sense of belonging
 - Also focus on differences between people with different intersecting identities
- Valuation of the expertise and contributions
 - Also focus on differences between people with different intersecting identities
- Barriers and discrimination in organisation
 - Focus on different barriers and discrimination and differences between people with different intersecting identities
- Organisational factors affecting diversity and inclusion
- Extra-organisational factors affecting diversity and inclusion

Nature and characteristics of the (intersectional) DEI policies and plans

- Characteristics of the organisation's DEI philosophy
 - Focus on: main goals, problems addressed, principles
 - Focus on: whether intersectionality is used and how it is used
- Characteristics of specific DEI policies and practices
 - Make a primary distinction between DEI policies and practices that are intersectional in nature and those that are not
 - Also focus on: main goals, problems addressed

Design of the (intersectional) DEI policies and plans

- Characteristics of the design process
 - Focus on: actors responsible for the design process, different steps involved, organisational support
- Design choices
 - Focus on: main goals, problems addressed, principles
 - Focus on: why intersectionality is (not) used or why specific groups are (not) targeted
- Reasons for design choices
 - Focus on: organisational factors affecting design
 - Focus on: extra-organisational factors affecting design
- Problems & challenges
- Evaluation of design process



Governance of the (intersectional) DEI policies and plans

- Roles and responsibilities in the governance of DEI
 - Focus on: The individuals and/or groups responsible for different aspects of DEI, their respective roles and responsibilities
- Aspects of DEI governance
 - Focus on: Monitoring of progress/follow-up, accountability measures, organisational support
 - Also focus on: whether attention is paid to people with different intersecting identities
- The reasons for governance framework
 - Focus on: organisational factors affecting design
 - Focus on: extra-organisational factors affecting design
- Problems & challenges
- Evaluation of governance

Implementation of the (intersectional) GEPs and DEI policies and plans

- Roles and responsibilities in the implementation of DEI
 - Focus on: actors responsible for implementation, organisational support
- The reasons for implementation process
 - Focus on: organisational factors affecting choices for process of implementation
 - Focus on: extra-organisational factors affecting choices for process of implementation
- Problems & challenges
 - Focus on: organisational factors posing challenges
 - Focus on: extra-organisational factors posing challenges
 - Also focus on: potential role of intersectionality
- Evaluation of implementation

Emerging effects of the (intersectional) GEPs and DEI policies and plans

- The emerging effects:
 - Focus on: The effectiveness of policies and practices in actually addressing the problems they aimed to address
 - Focus on: The changes that are already visible
 - Also focus on: different effects for people with different intersecting identities
- Reasons for emerging effects:
 - Focus on: The organisational factors
 - Focus on: Extra-organisational factors
- The improvements needed for the future:
 - Focus on: The needs and problems that need to be more addressed, the groups that deserve more attention, the potential future policies and practices



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Funded by
the European Union

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101058537.



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