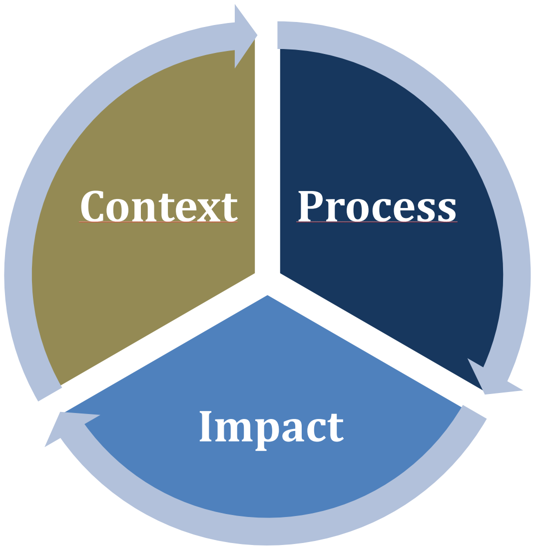
3 The self-assessment process II: Implementation

The preparatory work described in the previous chapter paves the ground for the actual implementation of the self-assessment.

This guide suggests the self-assessment to integrate three perspectives on the Transformational Gender Action Plan to be evaluated, namely to examine (1) the context, i.e. the framework conditions for creating and implementing the gender action plan; (2) the implementation process of the action plan and (3) the impact created by the action plan and its measures on site (see graph 3).[8]



Graph 3. Three perspectives of the evaluation

Following this approach, two phases of data collection and analysis can be distinguished: The first phase covers an assessment of the framework, implementation process, input and output of the gender action plan (i.e. the first and second perspective), and the second phase comprises an analysis of its outcome and impact (i.e. the third perspective).

Within each phase, relevant data is to be both collected or produced and analysed. The decision on which data is to be collected and which data needs to be produced is rooted in the mapping of available data and the identification of data gaps carried out in the preparatory phase.

Overview of relevant data collection/production methods

Relevant qualitative data collection methods include document analyses, interviews, group discussions, surveys and guided site visits.

An analysis of key documents at European, national, institutional and/or local level ['Context analysis'] is crucial for adequately taking the contextual conditions of the design and implementation process into account.

Interviews with actors in charge of the implementation of the gender action plan and possibly further gender equality actors are particularly instructive for an analysis of implementation processes and outcomes of gender equality measures. Furthermore, expert interviews can guide the document analysis and/or complement the insights gained through that method in order to assess the framework conditions ['Context analysis']. Interviews

[8] Cf. Lipinsky A., Schäfer M. (2014), GESIS Evaluation Concept for Transformational Gender Action Plans, INTEGER Deliverable 7.13, available at: http://www.gesis.org/cews/fileadmin/cews/www/download/D7_13-Detailed-Evaluation-Concept.pdf.

with the target groups of measures – e.g. staff or decision-makers –, in turn, can shed light on impacts of these measures ['Assessment of impacts']. For that purpose, group interviews [link: ...] are particularly recommended.

Group discussions and surveys can be another way to assess target group reach-out and impacts on target groups. Whereas group interviews and discussions may allow for deeper insights into the impacts of certain measures on a small group of people, a survey provides the opportunity to measure reach-out and impacts of measures on a larger group of staff, and can possibly even be deemed representative.

Site visits in which the evaluators are guided by staff are a useful method of obtaining insights into specific day-to-day framework conditions like, amongst others, the work environment and the work climate.

Quantitative data can contribute to an overall picture of existing gender inequalities and imbalances in the institution and can provide information on impacts of gender equality measures. Depending on the goals of the gender action plan and the self-assessment, the evaluators are recommended to compile sex-disaggregated HR data on e.g. the employment status and pay as well as further sex-disaggregated staff data on e.g. participation in committees. In order to detect developments over time that may eventually be causally attributed to the gender action plan, these data are to be collected repeatedly. Furthermore, relevant quantitative data may be produced through a survey. Climate surveys facilitate an assessment of the starting point as regards the work climate, and possibly a comparison between the situations at different points in time. Surveys may also be used to measure different kinds of impacts in quantitative terms.

References

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United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) (2013): Handbook for Conducting Evaluations of Normative Work in the UN System, available at: http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/1484, pp. 48ff.

Krueger, Richard A. (2002): Designing and Conducting Focus Group Interviews, available at: http://www.eiu.edu/~ihec/Krueger-FocusGroupInterviews.pdf.

3.1 Phase I: Assessment of the Context, Implementation process, Input and Output

For the first phase, i.e. the assessment of the context, implementation process, input and output of the Transformational Gender Action Plan, it is recommended to focus mainly on qualitative data. Relevant data can be collected or produced through document analysis, interviews and self-reports. Yet, quantitative data can provide very relevant information regarding the national, institutional and local context as well.

Context analysis

Purpose of the context analysis is to understand the contextual conditions and possible constraints at organisational and subordinate levels in relation to (elements of) the Transformational Gender Action Plan. Organisational structures significantly determine the implementation process of gender equality activities.

Background information on higher education legislation and research governance policy, employment policy in public research, gender equality policy applicable to higher education and research institutions, etc. as well as relevant characteristics of the specific institution and entity – i.e. the status quo regarding the participation of women in decision-making, career paths of female and male scientists, financial resources dedicated to gender equality measures, the dominant gender equality discourse, persistence of gender stereotypes, etc. – serve as background for weighting more specific assessments of processes, outcomes and impacts, e.g. the potential of the institution to demonstrate change within a specific area of the gender action plan.

It is recommended to sum up the contextual conditions in a 'Context report' at the beginning of the self-assessment, and to revisit it at a later stage when assessing the outcomes and impacts. Depending on the role of the evaluator(s) in the institution and in the implementation process – and thus on their knowledge – the evaluator(s) may decide to write the report themselves or to delegate (parts of) this task to another actor in the institution. Such a 'Context report' may contain the following sections: (1) summary of the national, institutional and local baseline situation; (2) structure and organization of gender equality in the institution; and (3) objectives and overall concept of the Transformational Gender Action Plan. The INTEGER Self-Assessment Toolkit contains a detailed template for such a 'Context report'.

Data collection/production

Document analysis

Relevant information on the legal and policy context at national, institutional and local levels can be obtained by means of document analysis. It is recommended to include the following (types of) documents in this analysis: Relevant national (gender equality, research) policies and legal provisions, etc. (if existent); institutional gender equality policy, action plans, etc. (if existent); further institutional policies and other relevant institutional documents at different levels within the institution; and documents related to the Transformational Gender Action Plan to be evaluated.

Interviews

Further insights can be gained from interviews with representatives of the management, gender equality actors and research staff. For further information on conducting and analysing individual and group interviews and group discussions please see the section on 'Process analysis'.

Statistical data

In addition, quantitative data can provide a broader understanding of gender (im)balances in decision-making positions in management and research and of career paths of female scientists and other staff, including, for example, career breaks and drop-outs. Such data may be available from national statistical offices or the administration of the higher education and research institution, for example, or could be collected. For further guidance on the collection and analysis of quantitative data please consult the section on 'Assessment of impacts'.

Survey

A survey among staff is a useful method to get an idea of the work climate in the institution (or a selected part of it). It may, for example, include questions that shed light on perceptions of the work environment, career ambitions and the awareness of gender inequalities among staff. The section on the INTEGER Tools for Action website dedicated to the planning stage of setting up a Transformational Gender Action Plan (cf. http://www.integer-tools-for-action.eu/en/resource/get-to-know-your-institution-0) provides questionnaires for such surveys developed at the three implementing INTEGER partner institutions.

Site visit(s)

Site visits within the institution provide insights through observations and are likely to facilitate informal discussions with staff. They are a fruitful method to investigate on the work environment (e.g. the work place facilities), the work climate (e.g. the overall atmosphere, collegial cohesion and social activities), the visibility of gender equality-related initiatives, and the existence and quality of child-care facilities, amongst others. It is recommended to ask a staff member working in the selected environment to show the evaluators around and to introduce them to her/his colleagues.

Example from the INTEGER project

At the beginning of the evaluation activities, the evaluators extensively analysed political and legal documents at national level as well as key policy documents at organisational level in order to gain an understanding of the context in which the Transformational Gender Action Plans (TGAPs) were drafted and implemented. Yet, in particular as regards the evaluation of Šiauliai University's Transformational Gender Action Plan, the corpus of documents that could be analysed was restricted due to language barriers.

The evaluators asked the local project coordinators and TGAP managers to provide a self-report on the contextual conditions and the implementation of the TGAPs. For this purpose the evaluators provided a self-report template that served as the basis for designing the 'Context report' and 'Process report' templates provided in the INTEGER Self-Assessment Toolkit. As the evaluators were external to the national and institutional contexts as well as to the implementation processes, the insights gained from the self-report – although the framing of certain information can be expected to have been influenced to some extent by the authors' own interests – were of high value and fed into the preparation of the interviews and the site visits.

Furthermore, the evaluators carried out site visits at the pilot faculties/institutes during which they were guided by local staff. The site visits offered informative insights into the work environment, the work climate and further aspects of interest.

References

The National Science Foundation/ Joy Frechtling (2002): The 2002 User Friendly Handbook for Project Evaluation, available at: http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2002/nsf02057/nsf02057.pdf, pp. 49ff.

Process analysis

In order to assess the operationalization of the Transformational Gender Action Plan, it is suggested to apply a process analysis. By looking at key actors involved in the implementation of the action plan as well as the institutional behaviour (actors not directly involved but potentially affected), strengths and weaknesses of the institution managing the change process can be revealed.

Relevant elements of the implementation process to be analysed include: resources (e.g. financial resources and time dedicated to the implementation of the gender action plan and the access to relevant expertise/competence); implementation structures (e.g. types of actors involved, their responsibilities and their level of ownership of the gender action plan, and the role and position of the coordinator of the plan); further collaboration within and beyond the institution; internal communication on gender equality measures; public relations related to the action plan; the work flow regarding the selection of activities and their implementation; drivers as well as resistances and conflicts; and prospects for the sustainability of the processes.

Data collection/production

Promising data collection/production methods for an assessment of implementation processes include interviews, 'Process reports' and site visits.

Process report

In order to establish a comprehensive data base for the process analysis it has proven useful to issue a 'Process report'. Such a report serves to compile relevant data in a structured manner and can constitute a starting point for deeper investigation e.g. during interviews. The report should be written by persons actively involved in the implementation of the Transformational Gender Action Plan – i.e. the evaluator(s) themselves and/or by other actors –, and the work may also be divided between different actors according to their experience. In any way the evaluators should provide a clear template for the report that could include the following topics: (1) level of implementation of the gender action plan; (2) strengths and weaknesses of implementation structures; (3) strengths and weaknesses of communication processes; (4) internal quality control; (5) cooperation on gender equality within and beyond the institution; and (6) sustainability mechanisms. A template for such a 'Process report' is provided in the INTEGER Self-Assessment Toolkit.

Interviews

Depending on the specific focus of the interview session with each respondent, it may be more fruitful to conduct either an individual interview (probably the most common form) or a group interview. Whereas individual interviews allow for questions specifically tailored to the individual respondent and tend to facilitate openness due to the more confidential situation, group interviews can offer valuable insights into roles of actors as well as communication and work processes, and may even evoke a more relaxed and open atmosphere. Group interviews may be particularly useful if they bring together actors – e.g. those who are involved in the implementation of gender equality measures – who find themselves at a similar hierarchical level, as they can complement each other's narrations and do not feel troubled by the presence of superiors that may increase self-censorship.

The first step in the run-up to an interview is to decide who is going to conduct the interviews. Assigning this task to the evaluators themselves brings the benefit of their deep understanding of the self-assessment purpose, the subject of the self-assessment and the questions to be asked. In some cases, in particular if the person(s) in charge of the self-assessment is/are deeply involved in the organisational structures and hierarchy, it may make sense to have another person – e.g. a professional evaluator – carry out the interviews. In this case, comprehensive briefings by the person(s) in charge of the self-assessment are crucial. Usually, these considerations are made already when deciding whom to task with the whole self-assessment.

Subsequently, the evaluators need to identify which interviewees may be the most suitable ones for which kind of information to be collected. Key actors involved in the design and implementation of the Transformational Gender Action Plan as well as (other) key decision-makers in the institution should be interviewed in any case. In addition, it may be helpful to interview e.g. administration staff as well.

As regards the identification of interview partners it is to be taken into account that the same interview participant may provide information about various factors relevant to the implementation of the gender action plan, e.g. the context conditions, the process and the outputs.

In order to increase the participation rate it is important to address the potential participants adequately, explaining the purpose of the self-assessment and pointing out the compliance with data protection standards. Furthermore, it is important to provide for favourable external conditions, e.g. an adequate room with a calm, pleasant atmosphere. Depending on culturally specific practices, available facilities, possibly their position in the institution's hierarchy and personal preferences, interviewees may prefer to be interviewed in their own office. This may provide the interviewer with interesting insights into the interviewee's workplace and may offer stimuli for further questions.

Furthermore, it is to be verified in advance if an interpreter (spoken or sign language) is needed for the interview. If so, it is favourable to involve an interpreter with an understanding of gender inequalities and to brief the interpreter about key features of the Transformational Gender Action Plan and the context.

It is recommended to record the interviews in order to allow for a thorough analysis. This requires the informed consent of each participant; and high standards of data protection must be guaranteed. A smooth run of the technical equipment is to be guaranteed. If a participant does not agree to the recording of the interview it is recommended to task an additional person (if possible a member of the self-assessment team) with taking notes. Notes-taking can also be helpful to provide guidance in the analysis of interviews, and to directly retain insights to be used in subsequent interviews.

For conducting the interview a semi-structured form is recommended, as it reduces the risk of a little fruitful interview and still leaves room for adapting to the flow of the conversation. During the preparation of such a semi-structured interview, the information to be gathered is to be defined, and subsequently suitable questions are to be developed. Whereas some information can be easily extracted, other issues may require more indirect questions. A draft structure can guide the interviewer through the interview. It has proven useful to develop questions and potential follow-up questions, including references to practical examples or academic literature, for example.

In addition to a thorough preparation as regards content, it is recommended to acquire basic interview techniques in the run-up to the interviews. Trainings allow the interviewer to already practice certain skills, but if trainings are not an option it can be useful to consult literature on interview techniques (see the section 'References' below).

Example from the INTEGER project

As mentioned above (link: Framework analysis > Example from the INTEGER project), the evaluators asked the local project coordinators and TGAP managers to provide a self-report that featured several sections on the implementation process.

In addition, the evaluators conducted a total of 41 individual and group interviews and group discussions with representatives of each institution's senior management, members of governing bodies, representatives of the central and de-central administration, members of the TGAP implementation teams, and research staff and senior academics.

All three evaluators attended all interviews and discussions. In the preparation phase they had assigned specific tasks to each of them for all the interviews and discussions and had these tasks rotate among each other. Thus, the lead interviewer was always supported by a second interviewer, intervening only at certain points, and by a person taking notes and keeping the time. This set-up has proven instrumental in all interviews. Whenever necessary, the evaluators were accompanied by interpreters (English-French-English and English-Lithuanian-English) to guarantee the 'freedom of expression' of each interviewee and to reduce misunderstandings and subsequent misinterpretation of the empirical data collected.

References

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Cohen D., Crabtree B. (2006): "Semi-Structured Interviews", Qualitative Research Guidelines Project, available at: http://www.qualres.org/HomeSemi-3629.html.

Analysis of inputs

These self-assessment guidelines do not focus on input-output-efficiency. Yet, it is informative to analyse the inputs into the design and implementation of the Transformational Gender Action Plan, amongst others because this can provide an understanding of the possibilities and constraints of gender equality measures as well as of the political will to implement the gender action plan.

Inputs in the sense of resources may encompass, for example, financial means, (paid and unpaid) time dedicated to the implementation of the gender action plan, and expertise in terms of gender concepts, gender equality work and self-assessment.

Data collection/production

It is recommended to collect data on inputs in the 'Process report' (see above). By means of a table template the person(s) tasked with the 'Process report' can provide information on (amongst others) inputs and outputs for each gender equality measure.

Example from the INTEGER project

The evaluators within the INTEGER project collected information on inputs by means of a table to be filled in by the project coordinators at the partner institutions. This table lists all measures featured in the institution's Transformational Gender Action Plan and is to be completed with data on the budget and time attributed to each measure, amongst others. In addition, the evaluators included a question on sources of expertise the TGAP managers resorted to in the self-report to be delivered by the local project coordinators.

Analysis of outputs

Outputs can be defined as the direct effects of the evaluated subject. In the context of Transformational Gender Action Plans, the implemented gender equality measures themselves (for example a completed briefing, a communications campaign or the establishment of a mentoring programme) can be considered to constitute the outputs of the gender action plan. Following the logics of the logic chart model [link], measures are successful if these outputs generate the desired outcomes and impacts.

Data collection/production

As briefly described above, a structured way to collect data on outputs is a 'Process report'. Please consult the INTEGER Self-Assessment Toolkit for a respective table template.

Example from the INTEGER project

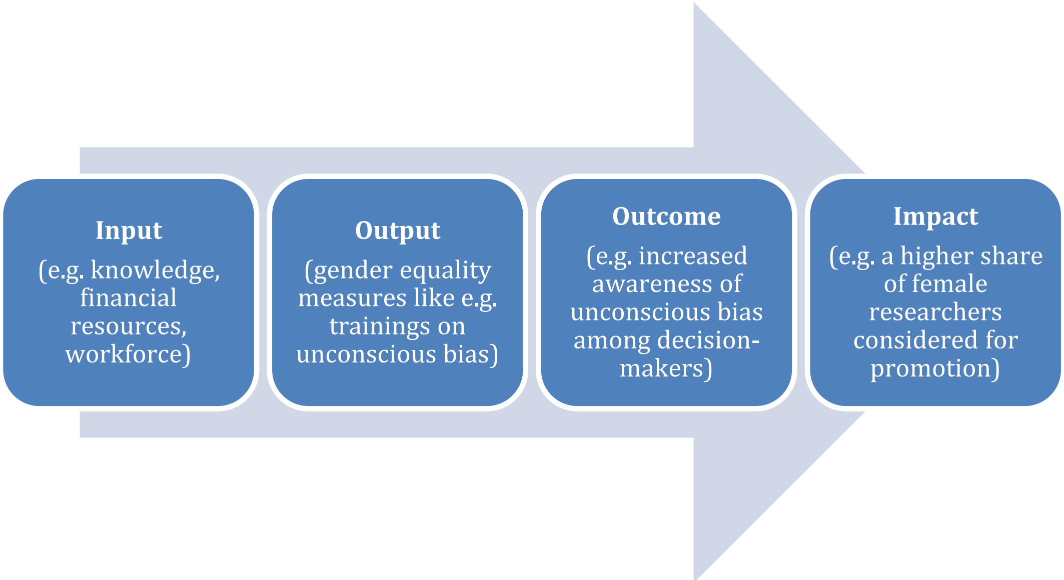
As suggested above, the evaluators identified the implemented TGAP measures as the outputs of the gender action plan. In order to obtain comprehensive information on the status quo of the implementation of each measure, they asked the TGAP managers at the partner institutions to complete a table template in which the partners could tick a box if a measure had already been (partly) implemented, and provide additional information.

3.2 Phase II: Assessment of Outcomes and Impacts

The Transformational Gender Action Plan and its measures can be considered successful if they reach their objectives. Thus, first of all, the overall objective(s) of the action plan as well as of (bundles of) measures are to be defined. If the action plan does not explicitly state its objective(s), they may be concluded from complementary documents and/or interviews with owners of the action plan.

The recommended methodological approach to be followed in the analysis of the outcomes and impacts of the Transformational Gender Action Plan is the logic chart model (cf. e.g. Balthasar 2011; Knowlton Wyatt/ Phillips 2009). It aims at shedding light on causal relationships between outputs, outcomes and impacts of measures. Using the logic chart template as provided in the INTEGER Impact Report Template is highly recommended as it provides clear and comprehensive guidance in this analysis.

As described above, gender equality measures implemented, such as products delivered, constitute the output. Outcome, in turn, refers to specific changes directly resulting from the output, for example, increased awareness of gender inequalities among participants in a certain training. Impact is defined as the wider effects on the target group(s) of the measures that can be causally attributed to the implementation of the Transformational Gender Action Plan, for example the removal of barriers to the career progression of female scientists. To the extent that this is possible, the analysis should differentiate between outcome and impact at different levels within the institution, especially if the gender action plan targets different levels specifically.



Graph 4: The Logic Chart Model (source: own graph based on Balthasar (2011)).

However, impacts often cannot be clearly attributed to a specific initiative. This is, amongst others, due to the influence of a variety of previous, parallel and subsequent initiatives and developments that make it difficult or impossible to single out the influence of a singular measure, as well as to difficulties in collecting relevant data. The fact that a causal link to a specific measure cannot be proven should not prevent the actors in charge of the self-assessment from documenting and analysing developments that are of relevance to the objective(s) of the Transformational Gender Action Plan.

References

Balthasar A., (2011), "Critical Friend Approach: Policy Evaluation between Methodological Soundness, Practical Relevance, and Transparency of the Evaluation Process", German Policy Studies 7, 3, pp. 187–231.

Knowlton Wyatt L., Phillips C. C., (2009), The Logic Model Guidebook. Better Strategies for Great Results, Los Angeles, California: Sage Publications.

Mayne, John: Addressing Attribution Through Contribution Analysis: Using Performance Measures Sensibly, Discussion Paper, 1999, available at: http://www.dww.cz/docs/attribution_through_contribution.pdf.

Assessment of outcomes

In order to assess the outcomes of gender equality measures it is helpful to depart from each output and to analyse which changes can be directly attributed to specific outputs. If not explicitly stated in the Transformational Gender Action Plan itself, the first step of this analysis needs to be to identify the specific target group(s) of each measure. This is particularly relevant for the analysis of impacts on target group(s) at the following stage but also provides guidance in the analysis of outputs.

Data collection/production

Interviews

The most promising method to collect data on outcomes is to conduct interviews with staff who directly benefitted from certain measures, for example the participants in a mentoring programme. Both individual and group interviews can be fruitful in this regard (see the section on 'Process analysis' for (dis)advantaged of each of the two methods). To give an example, if the expected outcome is an increased awareness of the existence of gender inequalities or of gender equality initiatives, it is recommended to conduct group interviews or group discussions with randomly selected staff members, or a group of staff members that is considered representative of the institution. Group discussions can be considered particularly useful if the focus is put on attitudes including awareness, stereotypes, etc. For further information on the benefits and challenges related to this method please consult the section on 'Group discussions'.

It can also be informative to ask actors who are closely involved in the implementation of the Transformational Gender Action Plan to provide their assessment of the outcomes. This information may be obtained in interviews or in a 'Process report' (see 'Process report').

Site visit(s)

Site visits do not only provide information on the setting in which the Transformational Gender Action Plan is being implemented but can also offer practical insights into the implementation of certain measures, for example of measures aiming at improving intra-department communication or childcare. For further information on site visits please see the section on 'Site visits' in the chapter on context analysis.

Example from the INTEGER project

In the evaluation carried out in the INTEGER project, the analysis of outcomes was guided by the logic chart model [link] departing from the (partly) implemented measures as outputs.

Data was mostly collected through individual interviews with the project partners, group interviews with the TGAP implementation teams and group discussions with staff. This information was complemented by insights obtained from the 'self-report' provided by the project partners and, to some extent, from insights gained during site visits, e.g. as regards the establishment of child care facilities. Although relying heavily on actors involved in the implementation of measures to be evaluated carries the risk of a significant bias, the data collected from the actors involved in the INTEGER project can be considered quite comprehensive, also because of the fact that these actors are not a homogenous group as regards their perspectives and motivations.

Assessment of impacts

The assessment of impacts indicates to what extent a measure and the Transformational Gender Action Plan as a whole have reached their objective(s), and thus sheds light on the success of the action plan.

A task of the self-assessment in this regard is to assess effects on the target group(s) (e.g. female researchers) that can be attributed to measures introduced through the gender action plan. For this analysis of causal relations these effects are to be assessed in the lights of outputs and outcomes. Yet, whereas outcomes can usually be observed in the short term, impacts may only manifest themselves in the medium or long term. Thus, the fact that a certain desired impact cannot yet be observed does not always imply that it is not to come.

As stated above, it is common that not all progress towards the achievement of the goals of the gender action plan can be clearly attributed to the measures rooted in the action plan. Thus, the assessment of impacts benefits from the combination of two approaches to the analysis: An approach that starts from the overall objectives of the gender action plan and analyses developments in this area since the implementation of the action plan, and the analysis of correlations between the measures rooted in the action plan and observed impacts.

Data collection/production

Collection of quantitative data (data monitoring)

As staff data is often collected and stored by various entities at central and de-central levels, a time-consuming, yet important task is to compile the available sex-disaggregated data and harmonise it – if possible. The HR department is probably most likely to be able to provide useful staff data, especially on forms of employment and pay. However, it may be necessary to contact each faculty, institute, department, laboratory and/or governing body to fill remaining gaps. Compiling data from different sources also poses the challenge of definitions of staff categories that may vary between institutes, etc.

The objective should be to establish a consistent database with sex-disaggregated data on e.g. research and management positions as well as participation in decision-making bodies (depending on the objectives of the Transformational Gender Action Plan) that allows tracking developments over time. For this purpose it is crucial to collect these data at regular intervals; this would benefit future self-assessments as well.

The first step is to assign the responsibilities for data collection, taking its (most probably) time-consuming character into account. It can be useful to delegate the data collection at de-central levels to staff who is familiar with the local setting; yet, the coordination should be placed in the hands of one person or entity who stays on top of all activities and is responsible of the harmonisation.

Subsequently, categories of staff etc. are to be defined, guided by the objective(s) of the self-assessment. This may require the harmonisation of different co-existing definitions. It is recommended to set up a data monitoring template in which to insert the data. The INTEGER Self-Assessment Toolkit contains a data monitoring template as used in the INTEGER project. As mentioned before, the actual data collection is then to be carried out at regular intervals, e.g. once a year, and should preferably be continued after the end of the self-assessment.

Survey(s)

Surveys can be considered a very informative method to collect data on impacts of the Transformational Gender Action Plan among a large group of people. Depending on the target group(s) of the gender action plan they may address e.g. research, technical and/or administrative staff in the institution or in a certain section, students and/or members of certain decision-making bodies. The most feasible and accessible type of survey for this purpose is a web survey.

On the down side, surveys tend to be quite time-consuming if thoroughly prepared, and require (access to) respective methodological and technical competence. Furthermore, any data protection issues need to be clarified in advance. Most importantly, surveys need to be based on valid indicators. The development of these indicators is to be rooted in existing knowledge acquired in previous research (e.g. desk research, interviews).

Interviews

Insights into impacts may as well be obtained through interviews with members of the target group(s) of the measures, for example female researchers or decision-makers in the management. As most probably only a small number of people can be interviewed, this method cannot be expected to produce representative results. Interviews usually serve a rather explorative purpose, and may even feed into the design of a survey at a later stage.

Please consult the section on 'Process analysis' [link] above for further information on individual and group interviews.

Group discussions

In addition, it may prove useful to conduct group discussions among members of the target group(s) of the Transformational Gender Action Plan. Group discussions aim to provide insights into opinions and experiences of the selected group, and are thus a particularly suitable method to investigate on understandings of gender, gender stereotypes, the awareness of gender inequalities, and attitudes towards gender equality measures. Yet, conducting a group discussion is a challenging task requiring particularly thorough preparation. That is because moderating techniques need to be carefully selected in order to facilitate an open discussion without inflicting too much bias on the participants. Indirect questions are key to this. It is recommended to pay particular attention to the design of the opening question that is supposed to stimulate a first exchange of thoughts. It may resort to e.g. recent events, quotations or pictures.

Site visit(s)

As pointed out above, site visits to e.g. institutes and laboratories – possibly those specifically targeted by the Transformational Gender Action Plan if the plan does not address all sections of the institution alike – facilitate insights into the work environment, the work-climate and the visibility of e.g. childcare-facilities, amongst others. Thus, it may also be indicative for an ad-hoc impression of the impact of certain measures targeting exactly these features. These impressions can complement respective information shared by e.g. interviewees.

<u>Example from the INTEGER project</u>

The evaluators in the INTEGER project assessed the impacts of the Transformational Gender Action Plans at two points in time. The first impact analysis was conducted during the central evaluation round when it was guided by the logic chart model, departing from specific measures. Interviews and group discussions with members of the target group of measures provided insights into the (limited) impacts that had manifested themselves at this stage. This impact analysis was of rather exploratory nature, as no impact indicators could be defined at this point.

The second impact analysis was carried out about one year later in the framework of the final evaluation. This analysis examined to what extent the overall objective of the Transformational Gender Action Plans and the project as a whole have been reached. For this purpose, the analysis departed from the concept of 'transformational change' as formulated in the INTEGER project, and the evaluators defined three indicators and seven sub-indicators of 'transformational change' in this context. These indicators fed into a web survey that was conducted among the staff of the pilot entities and the control groups at the INTEGER partner institutions.

In addition, quantitative personnel data was collected during both evaluation rounds. Whereas the qualitative analysis provided at least some interesting results regarding the impacts, no impacts could be measures in quantitative terms yet. The short timeframe of the EU project INTEGER in view of the slow pace at which transformation change tends to manifest itself are considered to play a significant role in this regard.

Providing for the accessibility of interviews and/or surveys

In order to reduce bias, efforts should be made to make the interviews, group discussions and/or surveys as accessible as possible, and to guarantee – to the extent possible – 'freedom of expression' during these activities. For this purpose, it is to be made sure that all potential participants receive the invitation (which may not be the case if certain restricted mailing lists are used), that the time to take part in the interview or survey does not exceed what is considered bearable (which differs from institution to institution and across disciplines), and that interviews can be scheduled flexibly regarding both time and place. Anonymity needs to be guaranteed, and this is to be communicated to potential participants. It is also recommended to use language that is generally understandable, and to resort to practical examples where possible. Furthermore, it should be considered to involve interpreters in interviews or group discussions with individuals who are not native speakers in the language in which the self-assessment activities are carried out and/or who communicate in sign language.

<u>Example from the INTEGER project</u>

In the INTEGER project, a particular challenge regarding the accessibility of the interviews and group discussions were the language barriers the evaluators – all of whom are German native speakers – faced in all partner institutions to a different degree.

During their visits to CNRS and Šiauliai University the evaluators were accompanied by interpreters (English-French-English and English-Lithuanian-English, respectively). The position and role of the interpreters as regards the organisational setting differed: Whereas in one case the professional interpreters were hired externally, in the second case the interpreter was a member of the institution. Both cases carry specific risks: Whereas external interpreters tend to be less familiar with the organizational structure and current developments in the institution, which may hinder them from understanding some discussions, interpreters who belong to the same institution as the interviewees may be tempted to influence the discussions. In both scenarios, a thorough briefing of the interpreter(s) is of high importance.

For the web survey, the evaluators had the questionnaires translated into French, for the data collection at the CNRS, and into Lithuanian, for the data collection at Šiauliai University. The limited resources available for translations led to the evaluators' decision against open-ended questions as the answers would have needed to be translated professionally, at least in the case of the questionnaire in Lithuanian.

The project coordinators in the partner institutions supported the evaluators in adequately taking national, institutional and/or local specificities into account when scheduling and conducting interviews. Thus, the evaluators learned that in one institution the order of the interviews had to be guided strictly by the professional hierarchy (with the highest-ranking interviewee to be met before all others), and in which settings it was common to conduct interviews in the interviewees' offices and not in meeting rooms.

References

Squires, Allison (2009): Methodological challenges in cross-language qualitative research: A research review, International Journal of Nursing Studies, 46:2, pp. 277-287.