



# EUROPEAN POLICYBRIEF



**HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-ERA-01-81**

**TOPIC: SUPPORT TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF  
INCLUSIVE GENDER EQUALITY PLANS**

**PROJECT: BUDGET-IT**

**DATE: APRIL 2024**

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the advancement of gender equality plans (GEPs) in higher education has spread to widening countries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Türkiye both through their own national laws but also through European Union funded projects which support the development of inclusive gender equality plans. However, too often gender equality plans remain trapped in a gender binary system and at the same time they do not embrace an intersectional approach which recognizes the ways that gender is produced and reproduced in interdependent ways with other identities such as race, religion, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, nationality among others. Additionally, GEPs are often implemented without the necessary commitment of resources to actualize the actions they contain. These issues need to be addressed if GEPs are going to be truly inclusive.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Türkiye all have a legal framework to support gender equality although Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia have made more legal advances on this issue. All three countries have constitutional provisions that provide for gender equality. Bosnia and Herzegovina's provision takes the form of a prohibition on discrimination based on sex as well as other social identity categories while Serbia and Türkiye both have constitutional clauses which guarantee equality. Additionally, both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia have specific gender equality laws. These laws seek to guarantee gender equality in all areas of social, economic, and political life. This added layer of legal protection providing for gender equality is lacking in Türkiye.

## EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

In Bosnia and Herzegovina all nine public universities in the country have adopted GEPs and most major private universities have also developed and adopted GEPs as well. The same cannot be said for Serbia and Türkiye. In Serbia, less than half of public universities (four out of nine) and just two of ten private universities

have adopted GEPs. In part due to its size, the University of Belgrade comprised of 31 separate faculties, has taken the interesting approach of adopting GEPs at the faculty level. To date, a little more than a half of all the faculties which are a part of the University of Belgrade (17 out of 30) have adopted their own GEPs. The substantive scope and thoroughness of these GEPs vary substantially. While some GEPs are fairly comprehensive and could be said to broadly follow the “Taking a Reflexive Approach to Gender Equality for Institutional Transformation” (TARGET) guidelines and methodology, some are rather rudimentary and require further development. For the case of Türkiye one of the main differences from Bosnia and Serbia is that of size. As of 2023, there are 204 universities in Turkey; 129 are public and 75 are private. Only 17.6% (36) universities currently have GEPs. Of the thirty-six institutions with GEPs, there are a nearly even number of public (51.4%) and private (48.6%) institutions. One major issue for both Serbia and Türkiye is that of the low number of higher education institutions that have adopted GEPs.

Across all three countries, the quality of the adopted GEPs varies dramatically. However, the issue of the gender binary, the lack of intersectionality and the absence of any type of gender budgeting plagues the vast majority of institutional GEPs. Nearly all the GEPs adopted do not adopt a gender+ perspective rather use a simple gender binary to frame their actions. This, of course, negates the myriad of gender identities that individuals identify with. Moreover, the use of binary gender categories reduces gender to sex which is usually sex assigned at birth and this invalidates individuals right to identify themselves.

The lack of intersectional data available remains a problem for all three widening countries discusses here. Despite the recognition of the importance of intersectionality, few if any GEPs employ an intersectional perspective. One reason is the sheer lack of intersectional data on the national and institutional level. Data protection and confidentiality issues also make the collection of intersectional data particularly difficult. Collecting intersectional data is also methodologically complex. It requires large sample sizes to ensure that all intersecting identities are adequately represented, and this proves problematic for small institutions where the collection of such data may also compromise someone’s privacy.

Gender budgeting ensures that government spending and resource allocation are equitable and address the specific needs and priorities of different genders. It is an important tool for achieving gender equality but Bosnia and Herzegovina and Türkiye lag far behind Serbia in this respect. Neither country maintains a law on gender budgeting and no institutions of higher education that we are aware of have implemented gender budgeting.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Institutions of higher education in Turkey should be required to develop and implement intersectional gender equality plans which meet the basic requirements as outlined for those applying for EU funding.
- Training and mentoring needs to be provided for institutions developing intersectional GEPs for the first time.
- Training and needs to be provided for how to collect intersectional data and ensure its privacy.
- Guidelines are needed on what types of intersectional data should be collected in order to establish baseline data and for comparison between countries and regions.
- Institutions should retain individuals or assign individuals or committees to ensure that the GEP is being implemented and periodically evaluated.
- Committees that are charged with creating a GEP or gender equality should be composed of a variety of community individuals and a majority should possess a background in gender equality. Training should be provided for those who have no background in gender equality.
- National funders can assist with the provision of training.
- National funders can join the EU in requiring institutions to have an inclusive GEP to apply for funding.
- Gender budgeting needs to be encouraged if not required.

## SUSTAINABILITY AND LEGACY

The BUDGET-IT project will produce a set of training videos on creating inclusive gender equality plans and gender budgeting which will be available in 2025.

## RESEARCH PARAMETERS

Building Gender+ Equality Through Gender+ Budgeting For Institutional Transformation (Budget-It) is a three-year project designed to use gender+ budgeting to transform institutions to advance inclusive gender+ equality and enhance the reputation, inclusiveness, and research excellence of the widening countries of Bosnia, Serbia and Turkey assisted by internationally leading university counterparts in Italy and Spain. BUDGET-IT proposes the use of gender+ budgeting as a tool to move past the current stagnation surrounding gender+ equality. The integration of gender+ budgeting into GEPs will ensure that institutions are distributing their resources in an equitable and intersectional way. By the end of the project, partner institutions will have produced an integrated, inclusive gender+ equality plan and gender+ budget (GEP-GB).

The Budget-It model is divided into three iterative parts where all partners will concentrate on one major aspect of the project for each year. This will allow for a focused in-depth and concentrated effort for each major component of Budget-It. Each succeeding component of the project builds on the previous step and the acquired knowledge and experience culminating in an integrated document GEP-GB for each partner institution. This repeating process will also allow for capacity building and reputation enhancement in the widening country partner institutions as they move through each step of the model.

Underlying this three-step approach, Budget-It will employ design thinking as a means of approaching GEPs and gender+ budgeting in an innovative way. Design thinking comprises a human centred approach to problem solving that is creative, collaborative, iterative and grounded in real people's experiences.<sup>1</sup> Although originating in the world of design in more recent years has been applied to the area of gender+ equality.<sup>2</sup> The use of design thinking is deeply rooted in context and therefore will ensure a GEP and gender+ budget that are tailored to each institution and their cultural context. For each step of the project, partners will move through the steps of design thinking resulting in an integrated inclusive gender+ equality plan and gender+ budget (GEP-GB) for each partner institution.

## PROJECT IDENTITY

<b>PROJECT NAME</b>	Building Gender+ Equality Through Gender+ Budgeting For Institutional Transformation (BUDGET-IT)
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	Prof. Dr. Mary Lou O'Neil, Kadir Has University, Istanbul, Türkiye, mloneil@khas.edu.tr
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<sup>1</sup> <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/value-of-diversity-and-inclusion/design-thinking-business-gender-bias-workplace.html>

<sup>2</sup> Christensen JF, Mahler R, Teilmann-Lock S. GenderLAB: Norm-critical design thinking for gender equality and diversity. Organization. 2021;28(6):1036-1048. doi:10.1177/1350508420961528

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Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
7. University of Alicante  
Alicante, Spain
8. University of Belgrade—Law Faculty  
Belgrade, Serbia
9. University of Brescia  
Brescia, Italy

#### FUNDING SCHEME

HORIZON-WIDERA-2022-ERA-01-81 Support to the implementation of inclusive gender equality plans

#### DURATION

January 2023 -- December 2025 (36 months).

#### BUDGET

EU contribution : €999,235.00

#### WEBSITE

<https://budget-it.eu/>

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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#### FURTHER READING

O’Neil, Mary Lou. Gender Equality Plan at Universities in Turkey. *About Gender: International Journal of Gender Studies*. Vol. 12/24 (2023):1-29.  
<https://doi.org/10.15167/2279-5057/AG2023.12.24.2272>



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