

English summary

Federal Ministry of Education and Research

Framework Call as part of the Federal Government's strategy for the internationalisation of education, science and research

Guideline for the funding of projects in research and innovation cooperation with the countries of the Eastern Partnership and Central Asia

Funding Announcement

Support Initiative Gender Equality Plan (UI-Gleich)

to strengthen scientific cooperation between Germany and the Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine)

1 February 2024

Gender equality is a universal human right, protected by the German Constitution. Despite legal support, achieving equality in daily life poses challenges nationally, within the European Union and neighbouring countries. The German Federal Government is dedicated to promoting equal opportunities for women and men in personal, professional, and family spheres, including research, development, and innovation.

Gender equality is crucial for optimizing R&D systems, aligning with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 and the EU's gender equality strategy 2020-2025. Recognized as a quality factor in the science system, gender equality positively impacts innovation and research quality, fostering an inclusive environment that retains talent and mitigates brain drain.

Despite acknowledged benefits, consistent implementation lags in many EU states. To address these gaps, EU's Horizon Europe framework programme for research and innovation requires universities to submit a *Gender Equality Plan* for participation with the goal of fostering structural change, ensuring equal treatment, and contributing to broader societal transformation. This also applies to countries associated with Horizon Europe.

As neighbouring countries to the EU and with most countries being associated with the framework programme, collaboration with the Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine) holds crucial strategic significance, especially given the changes in context of the geopolitical "turnaround." Notably, despite substantial progress, the involvement of researchers from Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine in Horizon Europe has fallen short of their potential in recent years. This is particularly evident in the underrepresentation of women in collaborative research activities.

Elaborating and implementing *Gender Equality Plans* at regional research institutions enhances female scientists' involvement in joint research with Eastern Partnership countries. Those plans formalize participation in Horizon Europe calls, fostering collaboration with German institutions, exploring new partnerships, and intensifying existing ones. This boosts regional research competitiveness, provides opportunities for female scientists, and aligns with the EU's gender equality strategy and SDG 5 of the UN.

With this call for proposals, the BMBF is assisting Horizon Europe applicants in developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating *Gender Equality Plans*. Funding prioritizes international exploratory and networking measures (Module 2) supporting projects like exploratory trips, workshops, and events related to *Gender Equality Plans*. This includes funding for gender equality-themed events and networking activities for female scientists.

The project outline must be submitted by a German institution in cooperation with at least one or more research institutions from at least one of the five Eastern Partnership countries. While participation from partners from the countries specified in this call is required, involvement from further third-country partners is also generally allowed.

The grants are awarded by way of project funding as a non-repayable subsidy, generally up to a maximum of €40,000 per project for a period of generally 12 to 24 months.

The procedure has two stages. In the first stage of the procedure, project outlines in written and/or electronic form must be submitted to the project management organisation by 24 April 2024 via the electronic outline tool "easy-Online" at <https://foerderportal.bund.de/easyonline/reflink.jsf?m=IB-GUS/RUS&b=UI-GLEICH&t=SKI>. The submission deadline is not a cut-off period. However, project outlines received after the deadline may no longer be considered.

The German-language project outline should contain the following information and generally not exceed ten to twelve pages (including annexes):

- Information on the project coordinator and the German and foreign project partners,
- presentation of the project objective,
- information on the state of the art in science and technology at the interested party,
- assessment of the utilisation/application possibilities,
- estimated expenditure/costs (including participation of third parties and expected funding requirements and, if applicable, project lump sum),
- informative summary.

Please address any questions to:

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