

# REVIEW OF GENDER EQUALITY CERTIFICATIONS



Systemic  
Action *for*  
Gender  
Equality



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## **D2.5 – Review of Gender Equality Certifications**

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## Introduction

As a Coordination and Support Action (CSA), one of the tasks of the SAGE project is to learn from and extend the findings, tools, and results from previous FP7 and other EU projects, as well as to adapt or update what is available to meet the needs of SAGE partners and other forthcoming Horizon 2020 projects. This report is a synthesis and updating exercise detailing what certifications/awards relating to gender equality are available for higher education institutions (HEIs) at national and international level.

Gender equality award schemes and certifications have been demonstrated to be a useful tool and framework to counter gender imbalances at a structural, institutional level, as well as to promote good practice and equal opportunities regardless of gender. Certifications and awards help advance these aims in diverse ways:

- By serving as a subtle benchmarking tool to verify the efforts on the topic by faculties, departments or branches of the higher education institution, and indeed between institutions;
- By remunerating (reward or recognition) higher education institutions for efforts expended and goals reached;
- By signaling to the external world that women academics and researchers are specifically welcome and that an institution has made particular efforts to attract and accommodate them, thus helping to draw and retain world class academics and become more competitive

The effectiveness of such award schemes was clearly demonstrated in the example provided by a 2013 review of the Athena SWAN Charter and Award Scheme, conducted by Loughborough University, which showed evidence of a significant positive impact on equality issues and institutional culture as a result of successful participation in the scheme.<sup>1</sup>

Hence, the present report provides concise, up to date and relevant information for higher education institutions that SAGE Partners, and other readers of the report, can make use of in their institutions or sectors. It is structured with the intention that it will be usable and accessible even by readers who are less familiar with institutional actions promoting gender equality.

## Methodology

The report draws upon the experience and efforts undertaken through the GENDER-NET Analysis report, a review of award schemes, produced by the UK Equality Challenge Unit, with the help of national and international observers and GENDER-NET advisory group members. In presenting these findings, three levels of awards are outlined: international, national, and institutional schemes. Discussion is provided of how good practice might be followed and replicated by other institutions in other countries.

Two years have elapsed since the GENDER-NET Analysis report was released. This report provides an update and includes awards for gender equality in higher education institutions that exist in

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/advancing-women%E2%80%99s-careers-in-STEMM-evaluating-the-effectiveness-and-impact-of-the-Athena-SWAN-Charter-FINAL.pdf>

additional countries in the SAGE consortium, i.e. Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Italy, Portugal, and Turkey, as well as Ireland and the UK. All SAGE partners were issued with a custom template for the data collection on certifications and awards. The GENDER-NET Analysis report assessed eight different awards and two additional awards were found within the SAGE consortium.

Further information was obtained via the SAGE advisory board and other sources. Prof. Tomas Brage, Lund University, member of the SAGE Advisory Group and of LERU Gender Thematic Group and Expert Group for H2020, was invited to the most recent SAGE meeting in 2017 to discuss the gender equality certification implemented at the Lund University. These findings are included in this report, thereby underlining the importance of networking and sharing good practices.

## International Awards

The evidence of the GENDER-NET Analysis report recommends the development of an international gender equality award scheme to assist mobility by incentivizing women academics from elsewhere to work at that institution. Obtaining an international gender equality award is important, since it signals to the external world that an institution welcomes women academics and researchers, thus attracting the best world class academics and becoming more competitive. Three schemes collected in the GENDER-NET Analysis report fall within the category of international certifications: HR Excellence in Research, Project Juno, and Athena SWAN.

### HR Excellence in Research

*HR Excellence in Research* is a Europe-wide scheme implemented by the European Commission. It is linked to the implementation of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, which set out principles for good working conditions for researchers. It is a tool to help research institutions and research funding organizations to put the principles of both the European Charter for Researchers, and Code of Conduct for their Recruitment, into practice.

However, it is implemented on a voluntary basis and is not directly linked to funding within EU research framework programmes. Consequently, participation in the scheme is relatively low, considering the large number of eligible countries and institutions. To date, no concrete impact towards advancing gender equality has been demonstrated. However, the scheme measures excellence and **not** gender equality primarily, though gender equality is included amongst its 40 criteria.

### Project Juno

*Project Juno* was founded in 2007 in the UK, by the Institute of Physics, to address the under-representation and low retention of women in physics in the UK. Juno certification provides recognition to Physics departments (or to institutes offering physics-based courses) that can demonstrate they have taken action to address this under-representation. Other faculties or institutions are not eligible for the scheme, which is restricted to physics departments, and no funding is awarded.

In order to be considered for Juno certification, applicants must respect five core principles:

- 1) A robust organisational framework to deliver equality of opportunity and reward;
- 2) Appointment and selection processes and procedures that encourage men and women to apply for academic posts at all levels;

- 3) Departmental structures and systems which support and encourage the career progression and promotion of all staff and enable men and women to progress and continue in their careers;
- 4) Departmental organisation, structure, management arrangements and culture that are open, inclusive and transparent and encourage the participation of all staff;
- 5) Flexible approaches and provisions that enable individuals, at all career and life stages, to optimise their contribution to their department, institution and to science.

Project Juno is one of only a small number of schemes (together with Athena SWAN and the Pleiades Award) that recognises a progression in the path towards gender equality. There are three levels of Juno award (Supporter, Practitioner and Champion), each with different requirements in terms of embedding the five principles and producing the requisite evidence. Assessment processes are different for each level: to become a Supporter, only a letter of intent is required, while the Practitioner and Champion awards are assessed by the Juno Assessment Panel, which meets twice per year.

It is important to stress the emphasis that Project Juno puts on progression. A department's Juno Supporter status is valid for three years, with the expectation that the department will submit for Practitioner before this renewal expires. Otherwise a renewal for three years is allowed. Should a department not submit for Practitioner within six years of becoming a Supporter, it will be removed from the list of Juno Supporters. The same temporal principle applies to the Practitioner status and renewal. However, from November 2017 the Juno Champion renewal process will change from a three-year to four-year award.

### Athena SWAN

Athena SWAN is the most prominent gender equality award, established in 2005 by the UK Equality Challenge Unit to encourage and recognise commitment to combating the under-representation of women and advancing the careers of women in research and academia. It has seen a consistent rise in the number of applications for its awards, with more than 120 institutions and 400 award holders currently. This rise may be attributed to the fact that Athena SWAN certification is now a funding requirement in some research fields in the UK.

Athena SWAN awards require completion of a two-step process. Firstly, institutions need to sign up to the Athena SWAN charter before they can apply for an award. The Charter's principles require commitment and action to fight gender inequalities, the implementation of diversity management, retention and progression of women in science, active organization in making the academic career sustainable, etc.

For institutions within the UK, membership requires payment of an annual fee. However, in Ireland, funding is through the State higher education funding body and institutions do not pay individually.

New Charter entrants are expected to apply for an award within three years of joining. Once an institution has been awarded Bronze (or higher), individual departments/schools can also apply for awards, thereby demonstrating a cascade effect. Applications are assessed by peer- review panels drawn from the higher education sector. All panelists are required to undergo pre-assessment training provided by the Equality Challenge Unit, UK.

Athena SWAN comprises three progressive levels: bronze, silver and gold. Applicants must hold an institutional award before any of their Schools or Departments can successfully apply for awards. To date, no institution has been awarded a gold level award, but the number of silver awards held is rising. Bronze award applications require a self-assessment of progress towards gender equality to date, as well as a plan for future actions covering a four-year period, while silver and gold levels require evidence of impact on academic women and their career progression.

In 2015, the Irish Higher Education Authority (HEA) launched Athena SWAN in Ireland resulting from negotiations across the Irish HEI sector, initiated in Trinity College by the Centre for Women in Science & Engineering Research (WiSER). The HEA will require Irish Universities to have achieved Bronze Institutional awards by end 2019 and Silver awards by end 2023. Irish research funding will also be tied to achievement of Athena SWAN awards.

In Australia, the Australian Academy of Science (AAS) and the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE) launched a pilot Athena SWAN in September 2015. The implementation of Athena SWAN principles is still in progress at the time of writing, but about 40 member institutes requested to become members of the Charter and c. 30 applications for the first award round are due by April 2018.

The aims of the Athena SWAN Charter are complementary to those of Project Juno. Athena SWAN awards recognize both departments and institutions, but the institutional engagement is a prerequisite for the departments, while this is not the case for Juno. So, a physics department can engage with Project Juno without an institutional commitment. However, Project Juno provides a “fast track” for an Athena SWAN holder. If a physics department already has Juno Supporter status and receives Athena SWAN Silver recognition, the Juno Champion process can be granted without the intermediate level of Practitioner. It also works in reverse, i.e. once departments have achieved Juno Champion certification they will automatically receive Athena SWAN Silver status. A trial fast track is now operating between Juno Practitioner and Athena SWAN Bronze, as detailed in the Code of Practice for Project Juno.

## Australian National Awards

Along with the pilot Athena SWAN award, Australia has two other gender equality schemes: the *Employer of Choice for Gender Equality Citation* and the *Pleiades Awards*. These two certifications preceded Athena SWAN and are not limited to higher education and research, though there has been rising participation among research institutions.

The *Employer of Choice for Gender Equality citation*<sup>1</sup> is operated by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), a statutory agency of the Australian government. The citation was introduced in 2014 and is a programme for the recognition of good practice, that aims to encourage, acknowledge and promote active commitment to achieving gender equality in Australian workplaces. Criteria for the citation cover leadership, learning and development, gender remuneration gaps, flexible working and other initiatives to support family responsibilities, employee consultation, preventing sex-based harassment and discrimination and targets for improving gender equality outcomes. Criteria are strengthened each year to reflect best practice.

The scheme is open to eligible organisations across a broad range of sectors, including, but not limited to, higher education institutions. Application for the citation involves completion of an application form (which includes questions under seven criteria) with substantiating material documenting action taken, a 15-20 minute telephone interview with the CEO of the applicant organization, and random interviews to assess ongoing leadership commitment. Successful application entitles awardees to use the certification logo for one year, after which point they must reapply if they wish to retain it. An annual application fee of \$750 AUD applies.

The Pleiades Awards<sup>2</sup> scheme was launched by the Astronomical Society of Australia's (ASA) Women in Astronomy in 2014 to incentivize efforts to increase the numbers of women in the field of astronomy and to combat unconscious bias and unequal pay. The award is discipline- specific, even though it is not restricted to the higher education sector. All organisations employing astronomers are eligible to apply.

The Pleiades Awards employs the same three-level system as Athena SWAN: bronze, silver and gold. However, the Pleiades Awards do not necessitate any action planning and the application can be made on the basis of past policies. Hence the impact on progression may be limited. Each award lasts two years and no renewal is possible. Participants must reapply for accreditation.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.wgea.gov.au/employer-choice-gender-equality/what-wgea-eocge-citation>

<sup>2</sup> <https://asawomeninastronomy.org/the-pleiades-awards/>

## National Awards in Europe

A total of four schemes were identified at a national level. The Gender Equality Award (Norway) and Gender Equality Award (Iceland) are referred to in the GENDER-NET Analysis report, and there are two additional awards in France and Turkey, both countries represented within the SAGE consortium.

### Norway

The Norwegian *Gender Equality Award* is aimed at structural change for gender equality, underpinned by robust national legislation to promote gender equality. The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research rewards action plans and gender equality measures that have already been implemented in higher education institutions. Hence it is based on the evaluation of past actions and does not incentivize future activities.

The Gender Equality Award rewards institutions with prize money, allowing them the opportunity to implement new equality measures or expand existing ones, with a demonstrated positive impact on the representation and retention of women. Surprisingly, the participation rate is not very high - the number of applicants has dropped annually since 2007. This may be due to the fact that only one or two prizes are awarded each year and that there is no progression, only the possibility of re-applying in subsequent years.

### France

The French *Label égalité professionnelle entre les femmes et les hommes*<sup>3</sup> is one of the two certifications found within the SAGE consortium. It is awarded by the Association Française de Normalisation (AFNOR) and supported by the Ministry for Higher Education and Research, as stated in 2017 Road Map towards real gender equality in France. However, the first explicit references to gender issues in national policy documents date back to 2000, when a State Secretary for Women's Rights and Equality in the Workplace was re-established, to be followed by new gender equality policies. France now relies on many legislative and policy instruments to implement its gender equality policies across various domains. The most important and recent development in gender equality policy is the adoption of the "Law on Real Gender Equality" in 2014, which sought to embrace all spheres of social life, fill the gap in policy implementation and strengthen sanctions.

AFNOR is a private institution created in 2004 to improve professional equality in companies, administrative organisations and associations in both the public and private sectors. Consequently, the award is not specific to higher education organisations. The award provides a label of recognition, and no funding is granted. The impact of such a label is rather on the image of the organization as being socially-engaged, for example by developing a culture

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.boutique-certification.afnor.org/certification/label-egalite-professionnelle>

based on equality, improving economic performance through staff motivation, better recognition, less legal risks linked to discrimination, etc. The award has been in force since 2004 and the submission process is quite straightforward: the candidate puts forward an application – via the AFNOR application form – by completing a questionnaire focusing on the criteria for specifications. After verification of the specifications by AFNOR, a report is submitted to the “labellisation”/award commission, which is composed of five state representatives, five trade union representatives, and five representatives of employer organisations, who deliver their decision by a majority vote. The winning applicant can retain the label for three years, but there is an assessment by the commission after 18 months.

## Turkey

The Turkish *Gender Equality in Work Life Award*<sup>4</sup> is the second certification collected within the SAGE consortium. As with the AFNOR award, it is not higher education specific, and all organisations and businesses are eligible to apply. The social and political context, however, is very different from France. Since the foundation of the Republic in 1923, Turkey sought to ensure equality between men and women and the entry of the latter into the public sphere, so that they do not confront any legal obstacles in exercising fundamental human rights, including labour force access. However, it is not possible to say that gender equality has been reflected completely in accordance with the legal framework. Although the equality between women and men is ensured legally, women’s labour force participation rate is only one third (TurkStat Labor Statistics 2015) and the country is ranked 130<sup>th</sup> of 144<sup>th</sup> in the 2016 Gender Gap Index (2015) of World Economic Forum, despite being one of the 20<sup>th</sup> largest economies in the world. Furthermore, women’s living conditions have deteriorated compared to the previous year, when Turkey was ranked 125<sup>th</sup>.

Among the efforts of the Ministry of Labor and Social Security to improve gender equality in work life, the Gender Equality in Work Life Award (established in 2014) targets all segments of society (especially employers) and encourages them to assign importance to gender equality in their workplaces. However, no funding is awarded, only recognition of merit.

In the application form, employers are required to answer questions relating to the working environment and policies on gender equality, training, existing anti-discrimination and complaints mechanisms, recruitment, career planning and promotion processes, work-life balance, the gender pay gap, etc.

Applications are evaluated by a jury composed of representatives from the social partners and non-governmental organizations (including academic institutions). The criteria considered for the granting of the award are various, including the ratio of female employees to male (including sub-employer workers, if appropriate), the distribution of employees at work by

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<sup>4</sup> Operated by the Turkish Ministry of Labour and Social Security - <https://www.csgb.gov.tr/En>

their positions and gender, the percentage of women engaged in work-related training, annual average weekly working time in working units disaggregated by gender, etc.

The Award thus far has been given to institutions operating in a wide range of fields. Among previous awardees are: Mercedes Benz, and Çimsa, a construction company, TED College Ankara and Nevşehir Municipality.

### Germany

The German *Total E-quality*<sup>5</sup> is one of the oldest certifications available, dating back to the 1990s. It was developed by the Positive Action Network of the European Commission in 1994. The Total E-quality scheme is included in the Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation and the Higher Education Pact 2020, thereby confirming its importance in pursuing gender equality. The award is granted by Total E-quality Deutschland e.V. with financial support from the Federal Minister of Education and Research. Total E-quality is viewed as an incentive for universities to achieve a positive work environment in terms of gender equality.

The award has one call each year. Initially, it sought to improve equal opportunities in the private sector but was later adapted for use in the research sector, through a dedicated strand. It is not higher education specific and is not led by academics. No funding is given, but the scheme is used in German University rankings. The award expires after three years.

Total E-quality is one of the few schemes which requires a fee (€50) for submission of applications. For successful applicants, a membership fee of up to €2,000 is sought, depending on the number of the staff employed.

An independent jury assesses the submitted applications based on several criteria, such as recruitment and staffing, procedures in place for gender equal advertising, career and staff development, consideration of gender in planning new courses, work-life balance, organisational culture, etc. In the case of awards, the jury reserves the right to conduct site visits to institutions.

### Institutional Awards

Only one certification was identified as institution-specific, implemented by the Swedish University of Lund. The scheme arose from the Lund AKKA leadership programme through which leaders at various levels of academia were interviewed to discuss their perceptions about gender equality in the university. The results showed a willingness to commit to gender equality but some difficulties in the implementation process.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.total-e-quality.de/en/>

As a result, in late 2007, the Vice-Chancellor appointed a committee to carry out an exploratory investigation into the feasibility of using some type of certification to accelerate, and increase the visibility of, the work towards a broad inclusion of relevant gender perspectives at the University of Lund. The group consisted of representatives from all faculties, along with representatives from the union, students and administrative personnel. Once the committee had published its report, stressing the importance of certifications as quality assurance, the Vice-Chancellor invited the departments of the university to participate in the certification pilot project.

Since then, the Department of Physics has undertaken actions to implement this pilot certification project. First, it was noted that there was an insufficient understanding on how gender theories could be combined with physics. Some training activities were therefore organized, including workshops about discrimination, symposia with experts on gender and science/technology, and information meetings with staff. Following this, the next step was to attempt to translate what was learned into practice by distributing flyers with information on gender and physics to students, arranging a dedicated bookshelf on gender and science literature in the Physics library, and analyzing the Department's budget from a gender perspective. The third phase was to summarise and evaluate the actions taken. The certification pilot project concluded with the production of recommendations for action. It demonstrated that certification as a reward was not seen as so relevant for the participants, who were more interested in changing the institute than acquiring a label.

Consequently, the project of an institutional certification has been put on stand-by and the new project *Gender-integrated coaching in Science* is starting in 2017. This deals with mentoring, but is not women specific. Instead of arranging mentoring programs focusing on changing women, they aim at changing the culture of the institution, which needs the efforts of both men and women and an inclusion policy.

## Conclusion

In this review of certification and awards for gender equality, existing schemes can be evaluated in terms of:

- Nature of the incentive (reward versus recognition);
- Potential for transfer to other countries;
- Degree of progression;
- Mutual recognition;
- Sector or institutional specificity;
- Evidence of expansion into HEI sector; and
- Leverage for effecting gender equality at discipline, institution, sector (e.g. reputation/funding)

Whilst potentially more appealing for recipients, the evidence for impact of rewards (versus recognition) is limited, if not discouraging. This may be due to the small number of reward recipients relative to the amount of work involved in the application process. Also once awarded a prize there is little ongoing motivation to re-apply.

Recognition can be more important in a country/sector and even internationally. Universities are now competing internally and externally to attract the best students and staff. Hence the appeal of an internationally recognized award that enhances the university's status/reputation.

International transferability is important as Project JUNO and Athena SWAN demonstrate. This effectively excludes institutional awards (such as Lund University's gender certification) and country/continent specific awards such as the Total E-quality and Pleiades awards.

Unlike the award of an annual prize to one or a small number of institutions, schemes that build upon low entry requirements and lead to higher awards (JUNO and Athena SWAN) provide a motivation/incentive to declare their objectives and receive higher level awards for meeting their targets which match the concept of gender equality plans (GEPs).

One of the strengths of JUNO and Athena SWAN is in their mutual recognition. Departments of Physics need only pursue one or the other to have been deemed in receipt of the award. However, unlike Athena SWAN, JUNO (like Pleiades) is restricted to one discipline.

Experience with the Athena SWAN awards demonstrates that there is potential demand that goes beyond a specific discipline or range of disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine) to now embrace the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.

A final criterion that reinforces the expansion of a scheme across the HEI sector is the existence (UK) or introduction (Ireland) of a funding incentive, attached to Athena SWAN

award holders. Ireland's Higher Education Authority, drew upon UK experience in seeking to drive gender equality at an institutional level by making a Bronze institutional Athena SWAN award a requirement to be met and this will be extended to national funding agencies.

Overall, for SAGE purposes, there are major limitations associated with institutional and discipline-specific awards which fail to provide a pathway for other disciplines/universities to follow. The Athena SWAN award has already demonstrated its transferability and adaptability beyond STEM, via STEMM to all disciplines. Furthermore, it has expanded beyond England/Wales to Scotland/Northern Ireland to Ireland and Australia.

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