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RESHAPING GENDER IN DECISION MAKING

LEVERAGING THE GEP TO ENCOURAGE A GENDER POLICY AT CORPORATE LEVEL

CIHEAM Bari, Italy

The Gender-SMART project is a community composed of seven European Research Performing & Funding Organisations, operating in the broadly framed field of research in food, agricultural and life sciences, committed to advancing gender equality.

This fact sheet illustrates one of the twelve experience-based good practices collected by the project to encourage and steer change in Gender-SMART Partner Institutions.

Results are meaningful and scalable to reach out to a larger number of beneficiaries.

AREA



Re-shaping Gender
 in Decision Making

CATEGORY



Management and
 Governance

PARTNER



CIHEAM Bari, Italy



FOCAL PERSONS



Maroun
 El Moujabber

elmoujabber@iamb.it
 Gender-SMART Project Leader

Key stakeholders
 Elvira Lapedota

lapedota@iamb.it
 Marina Marini

marini@iamb.it
 Gender-SMART Core Team
 at CIHEAM Bari

Main Description

CIHEAM Bari is one of the four Mediterranean Agronomic Institutes of the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM), an intergovernmental organisation. Despite CIHEAM's engagement in research topics and cooperation activities dealing with women's empowerment, an internal overarching gender policy for CIHEAM is not available yet.

This practice on leveraging CIHEAM Bari's GEP has enabled to raise awareness around the Gender-SMART (GS) project within CIHEAM and emphasise the expertise developed by CIHEAM Bari on gender equality issues. By sharing the experience gained, the GS Core Team has reached out to staff members of other CIHEAM institutes to inspire a pathway towards change for a joint engagement in a flagship initiative.

As a result, a decision was made by CIHEAM's Governing Board to encourage all institutes to design tailored GEPs and further network towards a gender policy at corporate level. The adoption of a GEP has several benefits for the organisation since it creates an equality culture, promotes equality values and behaviours in everyday life and integrates an equality dimension in the workplace. To top it all, it allows eligibility for funding by Horizon Europe.

Background

Founded in 1962, the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) is an intergovernmental organisation bringing together 13 Mediterranean member countries.

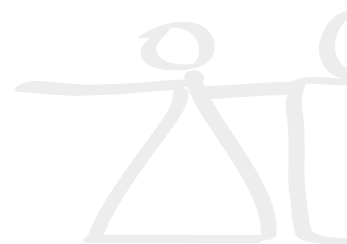
CIHEAM comprises four Mediterranean Agronomic Institutes located in Bari (Italy), Chania (Greece), Montpellier (France) and Zaragoza (Spain) and a General Secretariat headquartered in Paris. The main representative bodies at central level are the Governing Board and the Steering Committee, the Advisory Board, and the Board of Auditors.

The Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (CIHEAM Bari), staffed with 82 employees and 150 non-permanent consultants, is involved in post-graduate education, networked scientific research and design of in-loco partnership actions within the framework of international cooperation programmes.

It pursues its three missions to provide tangible solutions to current issues across the Mediterranean region. The main thematic areas for research, education and training are 'Land and Water Resources Management' (L&W), 'Integrated Pest Management of Mediterranean Fruit Crops' (IPM), 'Mediterranean Organic Agriculture' (MOA), 'Sustainable Agro-ecosystems and Resilience' (SARe) and Open Innovation & Youth Entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean Agri-food Sector.

With Gender-SMART, CIHEAM Bari has committed to a four-year gender equality plan (GEP) to advance gender equality and develop a genuinely inclusive community in its organisation in which all people can be appreciated for their merits and contributions.

"Championing change for more gender inclusiveness" is not only one of CIHEAM Bari's core values but also a way to establish a new culture that values excellence, encourages talents and promotes inspirational behaviours.



CIHEAM Bari Gender Equality Plan

VISIT PAGE



Specifics of the measure

A participatory process was launched by the Gender-SMART Core Team involving staff members from CIHEAM headquarters and institutes. Activities were held remotely starting from November 2020 throughout January 2022.

At the first meeting with focal points from the Headquarters and the four institutes (Admin, HR, Communication, Research and Cooperation areas), the Gender-SMART Core Team shared a presentation on gender equality, research and innovation, European and national perspectives, GEP design, results of audit activities, and how to communicate GEP-related topics.

The second step was a blended capacity building session held by a Gender-SMART expert on "Advancing Gender Equality at CIHEAM".

These activities encouraged the Governing Board of CIHEAM to endorse a recommendation for all Institutes to create their own GEP.

A corporate working group on Gender Equality & Women Empowerment was created and a virtual meeting was organised to analyse and compare the actions included in the draft GEPs - developed meanwhile by the Institutes and Headquarters - and the actions proposed in a "State-of-Play Report on Gender at CIHEAM", mandated by the Headquarters to an external expert. The GS Core Team was also requested to provide feedback on the draft GEPs and suggest relevant improvements. Moreover, CIHEAM staff were invited to join several training and capacity building activities delivered as part of the Gender-SMART project also including a seminar held by a Gender-SMART partner's expert on "Gender and Research Design Cycle. Exploring key options for Gender+ integration in research in the agri-food sciences".

The practice implementers were the GS Core Team, CIHEAM Bari's GEP key stakeholders (Research and Cooperation, Education, Admin, HR, Communication) and the members of CIHEAM's working group on gender with the overall goal of promoting ownership of Gender Equality culture and needs.

Results to date are quite satisfactory as regards GEPs' elaboration and strengthening of capacity which proves the scalability of this practice. CIHEAM Bari's bottom-up (from middle management to executives) and participatory approach has triggered change. The four institutes and the Headquarters have now their custom GEPs elaborated and published in their websites and an enabling environment has been created around greater gender equality in the workplace. We are on the way towards fully achieving the expected outcome of a corporate gender policy that takes a longer time.

To start with, some common actions have been identified that will be conducted jointly and will push the corporate process ahead.

1 Elaborate a document to disseminate CIHEAM's gender-sensitive culture and commitment to gender equality.	2 Publish guidelines on the use of inclusive language (for English, French, Italian, Spanish).	3 Draw up an annual corporate gender report based on sex-disaggregated data collected across the organisation.
4 Run corporate communication campaigns on gender.	5 Hold a series of seminars on gender mainstreaming at corporate level.	6 Share relevant indicators for monitoring and evaluation of GEP's actions in common areas of interest.

A similar approach can undoubtedly be replicated by other organisations which have multiple sites to integrate a gender perspective at corporate level.

Lessons learned

The GS Core Team has played a catalyst role at CIHEAM level managing to actively involve all the colleagues. The experience acquired through the GS project and GEP elaboration and implementation has greatly facilitated this result. Capacity in communicating gender issues through discursive resources, sharing of results, awareness raising, building trust and empowering stakeholders as potential agents of change are the main assets.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic slowed down the activity for a short time, the process is now in full swing.

