

REPORT

INSPIRING ERA EXCHANGE – Equality Monitoring Frameworks at National and EU Levels Online Webinar – 29 October 2025

Introduction:

The INSPIRING ERA consortium, in close cooperation with the European Commission (DG RTD – Gender Sector), the Danish Presidency representative, and national stakeholders, organised an online exchange on equality monitoring frameworks across the European Research Area (ERA). Held on 29 October 2025 as part of the ERA Structural Policy “Strengthening gender equality and inclusiveness in the ERA”, the event aimed to provide a structured space for practical knowledge-sharing, policy reflection, and coordination among Member States.

Building on the momentum of the ERA Policy Agenda 2025–2027, the exchange focused on the implementation and monitoring of inclusive Gender Equality Plans (GEPs), gender mainstreaming obligations, the integration of the gender dimension in research content, and emerging intersectional and anti-gender-based violence priorities. The session brought together national experts, equality officers, ERA Forum members, researchers, policymakers, and representatives from equality bodies and EU institutions to strengthen mutual learning and support the development of coherent, comparable and effective monitoring systems across Europe.

Context:

The ERA Policy Agenda 2025–2027 introduces a reinforced structural policy on gender equality and inclusiveness, placing a strong emphasis on implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. As highlighted in the Commission’s presentation, the new cycle prioritises the development of guidance, principles, and approaches for monitoring inclusive GEPs, tracking gender budgeting and expenditures, integrating intersectionality in R&I policies, addressing gender-based violence, and strengthening synergies with other ERA actions.

Robust equality monitoring frameworks are essential to understanding progress, identifying structural and cultural barriers, and supporting evidence-based policymaking. They also ensure accountability for national strategies, institutional mechanisms, gender mainstreaming obligations, and data-driven evaluation systems. Presentations by Member States (Czechia, Belgium, Denmark, Norway) and EIGE highlighted the wide diversity of governance structures, institutional capacities, legal constraints, and methodological traditions across the EU.

The event further addressed shared challenges identified in recent data collection cycles: varying interpretations of GDPR, lack of intersectional and disaggregated data, resource limitations, inconsistent definitions, and fragmentation between national and organisational monitoring structures. The exchange provided an opportunity to assess how these challenges can be aligned with the ERA agenda and how national frameworks can converge in ways that allow comparability while respecting specific legal and political contexts.

Objectives of the event:

The webinar had four main objectives:

1. Facilitate mutual learning and policy coordination on equality monitoring frameworks at national and EU levels, drawing on diverse institutional and governance models presented by the speakers.
2. Provide a comparative overview of existing monitoring tools and methodologies, including national strategies, legal obligations, statistical infrastructures, and evaluation approaches applied to GEPs and gender mainstreaming.

3. Identify and discuss key challenges related to data availability, GDPR compliance, disaggregation limits, intersectional approaches, and monitoring emerging fields such as gender-based violence and gender dimension in R&I.
4. Explore opportunities for strengthening monitoring structures to support the implementation of the ERA Policy Agenda 2025–2027, including alignment with ERA Forum work, national adaptation needs, and potential EU-level guidance or common indicators.

Attendees:

The event gathered participants from EU institutions, national ministries, universities, research funding organisations, and equality bodies. Participants represented national authorities, higher education organisations, research-performing organisations, EU institutions, and other stakeholders from across Europe. The event gathered over 80 participants, with more than 130 people registered.

Methodology:

The event consisted of a plenary presentation block, followed by breakout discussions. Speakers provided country case studies and methodological insights on monitoring frameworks. Afterward, participants joined four breakout groups to exchange experiences and identify shared challenges and opportunities. The session was moderated by Iwona Klich-Królikowska, supported by additional facilitators such as Business Science Poland (BSP) and DLR. During the plenary part, speakers presented national case studies and methodological insights on equality monitoring frameworks. Afterwards, participants were divided into four breakout groups to exchange experiences, discuss challenges and identify opportunities for strengthening monitoring practices across the ERA.

Content:

Hana Tenglerová (DG RTD – Gender Sector) presented the ongoing implementation of the ERA Policy Agenda 2025–2027, highlighting the stronger emphasis on monitoring and evaluation. She discussed priorities including inclusive GEPs, combating gender-based violence, integrating intersectional approaches, and strengthening gender budgeting.

Helena Morais Maceira introduced EIGE's monitoring framework assessing institutional mechanisms for gender equality. She highlighted gaps in accountability, comparability, and data quality.

Monika Šamová presented Czechia's Gender Equality Strategy 2021–2030, emphasising regular progress reviews, consultations, and challenges in maintaining institutional engagement.

Elena Phalet explained Belgium's decentralised governance model and challenges in harmonising monitoring across regions.

Liv Baisner Petersen presented Denmark's legal and statistical approach to gender mainstreaming.

Ella Ghosh and Brit Lynnebakke discussed Norway's Equality and Diversity Plans and challenges concerning intersectional data and evaluation routines.

Summary of Breakout Groups:

Breakout discussions focused on data collection practices, key challenges, and good practices across institutions. Four groups discussed GDPR misinterpretations, legal barriers to sensitive data collection, small sample sizes, cultural resistance, lack of intersectional data, and insufficient institutional capacity. Solutions included anonymised surveys, improved survey design, proxy indicators, targeted inclusion calls, stronger EC guidance, and systematic data infrastructures.

Breakout Group 1 Summary

Participants highlighted that robust and consistent data collection remains a fundamental requirement for any effective equality monitoring system. Institutions, particularly research institutes, often lack overarching equality strategies, clear reporting structures, or the resources needed to sustain systematic monitoring. A recurring issue is the divergence between formal compliance and meaningful practice: some organisations approach gender equality as an administrative requirement rather than a strategic priority, resulting in “copy-paste” GEPs and fragmented data.

The group underlined that different perceptions of discrimination—shaped by social, political and cultural factors—must be better understood to address underlying inequalities. Establishing clear monitoring methodologies and embedding accountability within organisational structures were viewed as essential steps to avoid producing data that has no impact on practice.

There was also a call for broadening institutional equality frameworks beyond gender alone, ensuring that dimensions such as race, age, and disability are systematically integrated.

Breakout Group 2 Summary

Discussions focused on the importance of dedicated institutional responsibility for monitoring and reporting. Participants noted that assigning clear roles and embedding equality work within existing organisational structures increases sustainability, reduces fragmentation, and strengthens oversight.

The group emphasised the need for monitoring systems that move beyond procedural fulfilment and towards measuring tangible impact. Without measurable outcomes and clear indicators, equality initiatives risk becoming purely administrative exercises.

Participants recommended establishing internal support structures (e.g., equality units) to provide technical guidance and ensure continuity, though resource constraints remain a major obstacle. At a broader level, they noted that human rights and equality discussions tend to concentrate narrowly on gender rather than adopting an integrated, multidimensional perspective.

Breakout Group 3 Summary

Participants discussed the need for coordinated monitoring frameworks at the European level. The idea of developing a centralised EU mechanism or unit that could standardise indicators,

methodologies and reporting practices across Member States was raised as a potential solution to fragmentation and inconsistent definitions.

It was emphasised that any EU-level tool should prioritise support rather than enforcement, enabling institutions to progress at their own pace and encouraging learning rather than compliance driven by fear. A staged approach was proposed: institutions could begin voluntary monitoring and move gradually toward mandatory requirements once practices become standardised -mirroring the evolution of GEP adoption.

Discussions also highlighted the need to combine practical and structural solutions: sustained support mechanisms, strong data infrastructures and shared accountability frameworks are all required to deliver long-term impact.

Breakout Group 4 Summary

This group reflected on the broader systemic challenges facing equality monitoring across the ERA. Participants emphasised the necessity of defining baseline assessments to effectively track progress, noting that there is still ambiguity around what ERA monitoring is expected to measure: implementation progress, overall outcomes, or shifts in organisational practice.

Member States vary significantly in their monitoring capacities, legal frameworks, and political incentives, creating barriers to implementing ERA priorities locally. The group observed that while the existence of GEPs can be measured relatively easily, assessing the uptake of the gender perspective in R&I requires qualitative evaluation—a process that is more complex, less standardised, and often misunderstood.

Participants noted that tools such as the Yellow Window readiness assessments and resources from the INSPIRE project can support national adaptation. However, common European definitions and shared methodological standards remain essential for comparability across Member States.

Key Takeaways:

- Baseline assessments are crucial for coherent monitoring.
- GEP monitoring practices can support ERA-level monitoring.
- Unclear definitions hinder comparability.
- Intersectional data remain limited.
- National legal contexts must guide data collection approaches.
- Qualitative assessments are essential for understanding gender perspectives in R&I.

Annex:

Programme of the Event on 29 October 2025:

09:30 Welcome by Iwona Klich-Krolikowska

09:45 Presentations: Tenglerová, Morais Maceira, Šamová, Phalet, Petersen, Ghosh & Lynnebakke

11:00 Break

11:15 Breakout Sessions Introduction

11:20 Breakout Group Discussions

12:00 Closing Remarks

Closing remarks:

The event underscored a strong collective commitment to strengthening equality monitoring across the European Research Area. Speakers highlighted the need for coherent and comparable monitoring systems capable of capturing the diversity of national governance structures, institutional arrangements, and policy traditions. The presentations repeatedly drew attention to the strategic importance of inclusive GEP implementation, the integration of the gender dimension in research content, and the emergence of new priority areas such as intersectionality, gender budgeting, and gender-based violence prevention.

Across all contributions, participants recognised that effective monitoring requires not only robust indicators and methodologies, but also a clear understanding of legal, organisational and cultural constraints. The cases presented by EIGE, Czechia, Belgium, Denmark and Norway illustrated both the progress made and the persistent gaps: fragmented responsibilities, variations in institutional maturity, limited data availability or comparability, and the uneven integration of intersectional perspectives. At the same time, several promising practices emerged, including iterative data quality processes, coordinated national networks, transparent accountability mechanisms, and structured evaluation approaches.

Overall, the discussions highlighted that monitoring is not merely a technical exercise, but a foundational component of evidence-based policymaking in research and innovation. Ensuring meaningful progress will require continued collaboration among Member States, EU institutions and research organisations, supported by clear guidance, shared standards and sustained investment in data infrastructures. As emphasised throughout the event, strengthening equality monitoring across the ERA will depend on combining methodological rigour with policy coherence and fostering a culture that views monitoring as a driver of improvement rather than compliance.