Resources and gender competence are needed for science equality measures to be effective

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Half of female Spanish researchers believe that being a woman makes your career more difficult. Furthermore, 70% of female scientists think that there are not enough female researchers in leadership roles in Spain.

This is according to a report on gender equality in research published by the Society of Spanish Researchers in the United Kingdom in collaboration with the Cotec Foundation. In an attempt to mitigate this inequality, companies and institutions across Europe are implementing gender equality measures in R&D, the outcome of which is not normally evaluated from a scientific perspective.

In light of the situation, the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC) and Arhaus University in Denmark have participated in a study led by the German research organization Fraunhofer, which analysed 19 interventions of this nature in six European countries (including Spain). The research has shown that more resources are needed and that all employees need greater gender competence for these R&D equality measures to be effective.

"One of institutions' main areas for improvement is the level of gender competence throughout the institution, from employees without management responsibilities, through to middle management and senior decision-makers," said Rachel Palmén. Palmén is a member of the Gender and ICT research group at the UOC's Internet Interdisciplinary Institute (IN3), and the study's principal investigator.

The study, which has been published in the journal *Evaluation and Program Planning*, analyses different gender equality initiatives in sectors such as higher education, business and government administration. It focuses on the countries of Austria, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Spain and Sweden, analysing their interventions on a regional, national and institutional level.

The study's results highlight the need to invest more resources into devising equality measures

In each of the 19 case studies, the scientists carried out document analysis and conducted between four and twelve interviews with those in charge of gender policy, those affected by the measures and other employees, both male and female.

The study, which is part of the EFFORTI project, then used the data to analyse how gender quality measures are implemented in relation to eight parameters: if they were coherent with the outlined objectives, if they had changed over time, who assumed responsibility, their relationship with decision-making organisms, what fixed procedures were in place, which factors inhibited their implementation, which factors favoured their implementation and if the obstacles that did exist could be overcome.

Palmén and her team were able to deduce that, in Spain, far fewer resources are dedicated to gender equality measures in R&D than in other countries such as Austria, Germany or other Nordic countries. She said that "in the Spanish case studies we see a constant lack of resources for this type of intervention, although expectations of real change remain high, leading to unrealistic expectations of what can actually be achieved".

Despite this lack of resources, it seems Spain has one of the most advanced legislative frameworks for gender equality in R&D. "This country has a wealth of experience in devising gender equality plans and is home to some of the most well-known experts in this area in Europe," Palmén said.

More than just figures: reducing gender bias

The research highlights a widespread notion that gender equality simply means having the same number of women and men in a company or institution. "It's much more than that: it also involves thinking about how

institutional processes and procedures can promote or reduce gender bias," said Palmén.

In the specific case of the R&D sector, the measures must go beyond just achieving institutional change and consider that the gender dimension should be integrated into research and innovation. "Gender equality interventions in R&D are complex and any evaluation of these measures must take this complexity into account," Palmén said.

More information: Rachel Palmén et al, Analysing facilitating and hindering factors for implementing gender equality interventions in R&I: Structures and processes, *Evaluation and Program Planning* (2019). DOI: 10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2019.101726

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