

Resisting, Accepting and Supporting Gender Equality in Portuguese Higher Education Institutions: Leadership Profiles

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Abstract: In the European context, Portugal is the country with the lowest number of women (1.9% in 2016) at the top of the academic career and just 30% of women in the leadership of HEIs (*She Figures 2018*; Elsevier, 2021; Cabrera, 2019; Carvalho and Diogo, 2018). Paradoxically, it is also one of the European countries where female academics have the highest publishing productivity (Elsevier, 2021) and make up most of the doctorates (55% in 2016). Only very recently, however, these inequalities began to receive attention. In 2019, for example, women's participation in academic decision-making and leadership became required by law (National Law 26/2019) in all Portuguese public higher education institutions. And levelling effects of this law are soon expected since human resources management in the public HE institutions in Portugal is a centralised system (OECD, 2021). In this context it also becomes interesting to understand what academic leaders think about the promotion of gender equality in HEIs. This paper seeks to address this question. As part of a larger research project exploring gender equality issues in HEIs in Portugal we deatched qualitative interviews conducted with HEIs leaders throughout the country. The project also involved secondary analyses of national and international data on gender equality and four case studies in HEIs with an action research approach. The outcome of the analysis was an exploratory typology identifying three specific profiles among interviewees – *Resisting, Accepting, and Supporting* – conveying different ways of understanding and dealing with gender equality issues in HEIs. Overall, this qualitative analysis found a greater awareness about Gender Equality than what has been reported in previous research (e.g. Carvalho, White and Machado-Taylor 2013; Carvalho, Özkanli and Machado-Taylor, 2012; Carvalho and Machado-Taylor, 2010). The paper describes and illustrates each of these profiles and discusses implications of these findings for promoting gender equality in HEIs in Portugal and beyond.

Keywords: gender equality in higher education institutions, HEIs leaders' perceptions about gender equality, willingness for change in HEIs

1. Gender equality in Portuguese Higher Institutions

The Higher Education system in Portugal combines past and present elements due to its history of institutionalization and expansion (Teixeira and Sarrico, 2019; Dias, Sá and Machado-Taylor, 2013) and for accompanying the global growth of university systems (Connell, 2019). Factors such as the late transition to democracy, only possible after the end of the dictatorship in 1974 and, since then, a strong public investment in education and science and the European integration partly explains the transformations that have been taking place. Nevertheless, concerning the gender equality agenda, the country lags behind several years when compared to other European countries, with the incipient inclusion of measures to promote gender equality in Higher Education Institutions constituting one among many other examples of this late development, as well as the persistent attitudes of resistance and indifference facing the subject (Amâncio, 2003, Cabrera, 2019, Carvalho, White and Machado-Taylor, 2013).

Regarding the adoption of a gender equality perspective, Portugal is a peculiar and even paradoxical case. Historically the country has had a very high participation of women in teaching and scientific research, and yet, simultaneously, a very reduced proportion of women in leadership positions in HEIs. Furthermore, a recent report from Elsevier "Gender in the Portugal Research Arena. A Case Study in European Leadership" (Elsevier, 2021), features the country as a leader, namely because of the successful female performance on publication metrics as women represent nearly 50% of the active authors in Portugal and tend to continue publishing over time, unlike their European peers. At the same time, however, precarity in research, being also a reality for young men, is even more expressive for women. Thus, one of the reasons that may explain this exceptional leadership of Portuguese women researchers, may exactly be the fact that they publish intensively to try to

increase the likelihood of achieving a permanent position in an university system, mostly public, that struggles to absorb all its candidates.

These inequalities have only very recently begun to receive attention. It can even be said that Portugal is in the first phase of promoting equality policies in higher education. The first HEI equality plan was launched in 2011, in University of Beira Interior, and most of the initiatives that have developed afterwards have been carried out through European funding and partnerships in international projects. For example, it is only in 2019 that the participation of women in decision-making and academic leadership in all Portuguese public higher education institutions becomes mandatory by law (National Law 26/2019). It is expected that this law will cause levelling effects soon, as human resource management in the public higher education sector in Portugal is a centralised system (OECD, 2021). It then becomes relevant and necessary to understand what academic leaders think about the promotion of gender equality in HEIs.

Previous studies point to a persistent discourse that normalises gender inequalities, especially uttered by academic leaderships (Carvalho, White and Machado-Taylor 2013; Carvalho, Özkanli and Machado-Taylor, 2012; Carvalho and Machado-Taylor, 2010). It has also been concluded that the higher proportion of women academics in Portugal (compared to other OECD countries) does not necessarily translate into equality (Carvalho and Diogo, 2018; Carvalho & Machado-Taylor, 2010), even in a changing context. Moreover, the transition from the “collegial” model to the “managerial” model in the Portuguese university system has not led to a greater concern for equality between women and men, remaining hostage to the internal micro-political dynamics of each HEI (Carvalho, Özkanli and Machado-Taylor, 2012; Carvalho and Machado-Taylor, 2010). It is, therefore, very important to know, not only what university leaders think about gender inequalities, but also how willing they are to implement a strategy and/or initiatives to promote gender equality in their HEIs.

2. Methods and analytic framework

The present findings are based on qualitative data collected by the *GE-HEI project: Gender Equality in Higher Education Institutions*, which has national coverage and involves a comparative approach to the European context. The project is funded by the EEA Grants Conciliation and Gender Equality Program, whose operating entity is CIG (Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality, National Body), and is promoted by DGES (Directorate General for Higher Education), being developed by CIEG (the Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies) in partnership with A3ES (the Portuguese Agency for Assessment and Accreditation of Higher Education) and RIKK (the Institute for Gender, Equality and Difference at the University of Iceland).

The GE-HEI project aims to understand gender (in)equality in HEIs in Portugal in comparison with the European context, both in terms of horizontal and vertical segregation. To this end, it relies on i) the analysis of secondary data, to identify trends and changes in the Higher Education system, at national and European levels ; ii) interviews with key informants in management and leadership positions in HEIs and successful academic women, to gather their perceptions, positions on, and willingness towards promoting Gender Equality; iii) on four case studies in specific and contrasting HEIs to understand Gender Equality organizational norms, perceptions and practices with an action research approach; and iv) the development of general guidelines and recommendations for the integration of gender equality issues in curricula of specific 1st cycle degrees (in connection with the case studies undertaken).

The paper focuses on preliminary results of the qualitative interviews conducted with 12 university leaders of public HEIs, enriched with at least 20 more ongoing interviews collected with successful academic women and in the context of two case studies. The interviews with HEI leaders followed a structured script and were intentionally conducted to lead to a reflection on gender inequalities and their implications for the university context. The interviews were led online, via zoom, between May 6th and July 13th 2020. They were recorded with the verbal consent of all interviewees, who responded freely and who were given the opportunity to add comments and topics they considered relevant. They had an average duration of 88 minutes, were transcribed and analysed through the Maxqda 2020®.

Building on the empirical evidence collected, and supported by the literature review conducted on the subject, we looked for patterns in the interviewees’ narratives that could help us understand how university leaders perceive gender inequalities and their willingness to promote and implement equality measures and plans. The outcome of this analysis was an “exploratory typology” (Swedberg, 2018) of leadership profiles (elaborated

below), which may contribute to discussions about the possibilities of developing effective strategies to promote gender equality in HEIs in Portugal and beyond.

3. HEI leadership profiles concerning gender equality

Contrary to what is documented in previous qualitative investigations on Portuguese universities (Carvalho, White and Machado-Taylor 2013; Carvalho, Özkanli and Machado-Taylor, 2012; Carvalho and Machado-Taylor, 2010; Vieira, 2007) the leaders interviewed in this study showed a greater awareness of gender inequalities. This difference can be explained by at least two reasons. First, the recruitment process itself, since it is possible that many of the leaders who agreed to carry out the interview were already the most favourable to GE in Higher Education. In addition, the fact that the interviewees previously received an information sheet with facts and evidence on gender inequality may also have provided them a greater insight about gender inequalities in the academic context. Second, the last decade has been particularly marked by a great visibility and growing awareness of gender inequalities, both in general and in the national and European higher education system (Pereira, 2018; Messerschmidt et. al., 2018), as well as its prioritization by European political and scientific agendas (European Commission, 2020).

However, while gender awareness was generally high, there were also different perceptions and attitudes towards gender equality among the interviewees. More specifically, three profiles were identified: *Resisting*, *Accepting*, and *Supporting*. Following this exploratory typology, and drawing from the 12 HEI leaders interviews, complemented where possible with other qualitative data collected in the project, we develop below these different profiles, describing how they differ in terms of knowledge, interest and availability to implement measures

3.1 Supporting

Most of the Leaders of the *supporting* profile occupy top decision-making positions: 1 female rector, 1 female vice-rector, 1 male in a position similar to that of rector, 1 male vice-rector and 1 male director of HEI. These leaders identify obstacles to Gender Equality in their HEIs and point to concrete causes. They also are available to take action, implement initiatives and have an attitude of self-accountability for the strategies, advocating a top-down and inside-out approach.

In regards to gender equality in general, they consider that the Portuguese society has undergone a noteworthy evolution towards gender equality, which they attribute to the legal, institutional and everyday life achievements of promoting equality in Portugal (a country that has taken “solid steps”). They also note that younger generations are more aware and better prepared. However, they portrait this evolution as a slow transformation process and spot the persistence of significant inequalities that require continuous investment in more measures:

“I think there is room for improvement. Again, my vision is very positive from the perspective of the progress that has been made. I think the country has improved a lot and I would say we are on the right track. Nevertheless, and to continue to be on the right track, we must insert elements of pressure here: quotas, the issue of remuneration, the issue of staying at home with the children, etc.”

(Director, Social Sciences, male, 56 years old)

Perceiving a context of change that is moving on “the right” direction, this leader recognizes the need for further measures to guarantee continuous improvement towards greater gender equality. Drawing from scientific evidence and relying on concrete facts about persisting gender inequalities, supporting leaders see the reproduction of power logics as transversal in Portuguese society and the effect of those on the Higher Education system. They identify the asymmetrical distribution of women across education fields and their reduced access to decision-making positions as the main inequalities in Higher Education.

Regarding gender equality in their own HEIs, *supporting* leaders signal the tradition of institutional closure of management bodies to women (“it’s still a gentlemen’s club”), as well as the stereotypical attribution of some areas of responsibility to women (“they gave the campus to the lady, to take care of the house”). Although they consider that this historical trend persists today, they also think that it has evolved towards a greater parity, highlighting the relevance of the “collegiate model” (i.e. where there is a sense of belonging and an involving community) and the sharing of responsibilities in decision-making bodies. The appointment of women to rectorial

teams is also seen as an important power-entry mechanism. This access is seen by some as breaking the stigma of female leadership, even though female leaders still have to deal with prejudices:

"The first time I ran I was not elected. Still today I have the feeling that one of the issues was: No way, a woman [Rector] no way. That was in 2010!"

(Rector, Agrarian Sciences, female, 66 years old)

The rejection of women to the positions of rector is presented by this leader as a timeless issue, pointing out that the difficulties of access are deep rooted in HEIs culture. Also, when describing their HEIs teaching staff, these leaders acknowledge their vertical segregation, identifying a greater proportion of male full professors/principal coordinators (analogous position in polytechnic HE) and a parity/greater proportion of women in the intermediate (associate professor/coordinator) and lower categories (assistant professor/adjunct). At this regard, they predict a positive evolution and greater parity at all levels in the future, referring to the higher proportion of female candidates in the career's competitions. The increased autonomy of Research Centres and scientific production competitiveness are pointed out as mitigating factors of existing imbalances.

When it comes to strategies to promote gender equality, *supporting* leaders identify concrete obstacles, pointing both to internal and external causes, while emphasizing the need for a transformation strategy based on institutional factors and showing willingness to implement it.

Moreover, regarding the actual practices for gender equality, these leaders largely highlight the important role that higher education institutions can play in fighting inequalities, especially due to their training dimension, prioritising either the inclusion of Gender Equality in curricula or as a transversal competence in the university training provided in their HEIs: "The university is the mother house of knowledge and people's education" (Director, Social Sciences, male, 56 years old). On top of that, these interviewees support affirmative action measures such as quotas or Gender Equality ranking systems (like Athena SWAN Charter), but point to their cautionary use. In this sense, they state the need for a top-down and inside-out approach in their HEIs, revealing themselves as favourable to an institutional change and willing to take the responsibility for implementing it. In fact, all of them mentioned (directly or indirectly) the inclusion of gender equality measures in their electoral programs. Most think they potentially got more votes because of this, but also noted a tendency in HEIs to regard the topic as "political correctness".

In conclusion, this group of leaders, especially when compared with the other two profiles, suggest that gender equality strategies and initiatives in HEIs result as much from awareness and knowledge about gender inequalities as from willingness to implement measures and policies.

3.2 Accepting

Accepting the promotion of gender equality in HEIs was a profile found in many of the Director's narratives, accounting for two female and two male directors of HEIs. These leaders did not identify or found it difficult to identify obstacles to Gender Equality in their HEIs, but tended to adopt a learning attitude towards the subject as the interview unfold. They varied, however, in their evaluation of the need for Gender Equality measures and/or the inclusion of these in electoral programs.

Regarding gender equality in society in general, *accepting* leaders acknowledge substantial advances in Portuguese society, pointing it as a recent social "concern", and predict future improvements, adopting an optimistic viewpoint while viewing cultural traditions as obstacles to gender equality, giving particular attention to family inequalities:

"So, I think there have been extraordinary advances in recent years. I have no doubts about it. But there is still a lot of work to do in the deeper dimension of cultural practices, habits, ways of being; we still have a lot to work on..."

(Vice-Rector, Humanities, female, 62 years old)

As this interviewee, leaders in this group tend to look at gender inequalities as primarily an educational problem, arising from childhood socialization and the family environment, which in turn indicates that the focus should be, precisely, at the cultural level. They see the academic environment as a more privileged place, that

nevertheless “imports” society problems: “I think the big problem is educational.” (Vice-Director, Social Sciences, female, 43 years old).

Regarding gender equality in their HEIs, *accepting* leaders express some discomfort towards the topic and/or rely on external factors to explain women's (lack of) access to their HEIs management bodies. Some mention that the absence of female leadership is not due to institutional obstacles but by the lack of availability of women:

“The times that people have to research, to write, to travel abroad can be different because of the upstream circumstances, which are familiar from the outset.”

(Vice-Director, Social Sciences, female, 43 years old)

This leader suggests that women have less time to dedicate themselves to the profession due to their family responsibilities. However, on portraying their HEIs faculty, these leaders describe women as competent, hardworking and collaborative. The increasing number of women among the teaching staff was the most highlighted theme by *accepting* leaders, who emphasized meritocracy in career access as well as the quality of “female” academic performance. Their narratives suggest the idea of a “feminine” future university. These leaders predict that, in the short term, there will be a balance in the distribution of full professors and that more female members will be included in senior positions.

Concerning gender equality strategies, although they demonstrate a high degree of gender awareness and, overall, they point to the social and cultural factors that underlie gender exclusions and discriminations, *accepting* leaders were largely unable to identify obstacles to Gender Equality in their HEIs. Mostly, they refer to external factors as the main causes of persisting inequalities, namely prevailing prejudices, leadership stereotypes and the greater predisposition of men to be career-focused, their higher levels of productivity and networking. Moreover, these asymmetries are perceived almost as if they are “inescapable”.

This difficulty of identifying concrete challenges in their HEIs and/or understanding them as the outcome of external pressures conditions also explains the ambiguous way in which these leaders approach their responsibility to solving existing inequalities.

In fact, when it comes to adopting actual gender equality practices, these leaders favour the inclusion of Gender Equality in the curriculum, mainly supporting the promotion of training through transversal skills or awareness raising activities. They are divided, however, in what concerns the use of scoring systems and assessment criteria as well as on women quotas, even though they all claim HEIs compliance with Law No. 26/2019 in their HEIs. Other than that, they did not include, or only did so indirectly/generally, issues about equal treatment in their electoral programs and consider that including them would not have increased the number of votes received. Instead, attention should be given to meritocratic principles and the practical demonstration of equality, such as the appointment of parity teams on management boards.

All in all, they are willing to learn, and accept the idea of promoting gender equality in their HEIs, being eager to implement some of the equality measures suggested in the interview and/or referring the need to have “someone”, a focal point or an office, to monitor and implement specific practices at their institutions. Without an *a priori* strategy, *accepting* leaders seem to lack knowledge on gender issues to be able to act properly. While they show a learning attitude, they also reveal a strong inability to understand the extent to which existing barriers actually affect the opportunities of women and men at their HEIs'. This reduced knowledge about gender differences and inequalities result in less effective skills to act upon persisting inequalities, consequently expressing a poorer capacity to integrate those concerns at institutional level.

3.3 Resisting

Resistance regarding gender equality in HEI was unveiled by one female vice-rector and two male directors interviewed. They consider gender equality specific actions unnecessary and are against measures such as women quotas in governing bodies or ranking systems based on Gender Equality implementation. These leaders devalue the subject of gender inequality, arguing that their HEIs do not have a role in promoting change because there has been already a positive development, and because gender (in)equality is mainly an external problem and/or a minor issue.

Regarding gender equality in general, *resisting* leaders see a positive development in the Portuguese society that goes beyond achieving balance, pointing recent themes such as caring masculinities or the need to also include inequalities affecting men:

"Sometimes we also don't give men the same opportunity to take on certain positions in the family or in their personal life. Cultural issues are deeply rooted and in Portugal this could have a great influence."

(Vice-Rector, Engineering and Technology, female, 45 years old)

While gender inequality is presented by this leader as a cultural issue, the main problem has to do with the opportunities that men have (or lack to have) to do gender differently. Moreover, *Resisting* leaders perceive the academic world almost as if gravitating in society as a "non-hegemonic" space, believing that, unlike what happened in the past, the absence of formal restrictions leads to a balanced Higher Education system:

"It has to do with traditions, with doors that have been opened. A woman could go to Pharmacy, but could not go to Medicine. I still remember hearing these conversations. Therefore, it was natural that in Pharmacy... There was a very large invasion. There was an imbalance. It was the door that society accepted. There are still these imbalances remnants in Higher Education, in Mechanical Engineering... But less and less."

(President, Humanities, male, 58 years old)

This leader refers to the end of the horizontal segregation in HE, considering that this "very large invasion" that happened when the doors opened will result in a balanced distribution. Paradoxically, yet, despite this idea of evolution, *Resisting leaders* also recognize the gendered segregation in fields of knowledge but they tend to highlight a "gender predisposition" here, thus naturalizing differences and devaluing them as a problem:

"There are areas where you can see gender differentiation. It doesn't mean that this is necessarily bad or that there is a problem. It may just be a predisposition to certain areas."

(Vice-Rector, Engineering and Technology, female, 45 years old)

By drawing on the idea of 'no problem', this leader and the others in this group, devalue both horizontal segregation and vertical segregation patterns, normalizing them as individual rather than an institutional question. Therefore, when it comes to discuss gender equality in their HEIs, *resisting* leaders naturalize the predominance of men in HEIs management bodies, not seeing this distribution as a problem. There was even a leader who used his decision-making autonomy to validate and promote this type of imbalance:

"I ensured the masculinisation of the management team when I arrived at the Board. The gender division was balanced, but in the meantime, (...) when I joined as Director, it ended up staying [more masculine]."

(Director, Exact Sciences, male, 59 years old)

In the narratives of these leaders, not only do gender inequalities emerge as natural, but in the case of this leader, there is an active effort to maintain and explicitly perpetuate them. So, regarding gender equality strategies, *resisting* leaders recognize that there are obstacles to Gender Equality in their HEIs, identifying particularly the small proportion of female who are full professors and in senior positions. However, as before, they normalize this fact and fundamentally adopt a devaluation attitude and/or do not attribute concrete causes to it.

The way these interviewees face the challenges necessarily conditions the eventual formulation and planning of a Gender Equality strategy that could be implemented in HEIs. In this case, in addition to the absence of a strategy, *Resisting leaders* present arguments to refute the need for transformation and show a strong unwillingness to combat inequalities or promote institutional changes at the most diverse levels.

Regarding gender equality actual practices, they consider the inclusion of the Gender Equality subject as a hypothesis, but only as a complement to other transversal competences of citizenship, refuting the need to address the topic as "compulsory" or "independently":

"I am convinced that a good part of the training is based on the way we deal [with students] and not so much on the fact that there is a discipline that easily takes on the character of: «Oh I have

to learn those things. » (...). I think it's much more relevant how (...) people in the institution behave and act in relation to all these types of behaviour.”

(Director, Exact Sciences, male, 59 years old)

Although this leader recognizes the importance of informal institutional action, in effect, both him and the rest of this group disagree with the above-mentioned law No. 26/2019, claiming that HE systems evolution has been largely beneficial to women, that they defend “meritocracy” and that their HEIs follow fair measures:

“As a woman I am not in favour of quotas. I think it shouldn't be necessary to have quotas. I understand that they have to exist for us to be able to change something in society. I would see the issue of informal rules and the issue of forcing the rotation of positions more favourably than the institution of rules.”

(Vice-Rector, Engineering and Technology, female, 45 years old)

For this leader, quotas make explicit an institutional rule that she, being “a woman”, does not agree with. Pointing to changes in society as a whole, she rather suggests that there should be an implicit rather than explicit rule system, understanding it as something that will “force” what is “not necessary”. The preference for a certain informality when dealing with these issues leads these interviewees to also downplay and/or strongly disagree with Gender Equality ranking systems or evaluation criteria implementation in their HEIs, even stressing that it may be self-defeating and promote discrimination towards the rest of the academic community. Therefore, they understand that measures aimed at promoting gender equality are (by default) particularistic and exclusionary. Unsurprisingly, they did not include Gender Equality in their electoral programs and said they do not know if they would get more votes if they had done that.

In conclusion, *resisting* leaders are characterized by a greater devaluation, ignorance or reduced reference to Gender Equality practices implemented at the HEI, in line with their perceptions and strategies for HEIs. This profile strongly suggests that identification of gender inequalities has to be combined with an understanding of the ways in which it affects the entire institution, which requires greater gender knowledge and skills to ensure a shift towards equality in HEIs.

4. What opportunities for change are available at the level of university decision-makers?

This paper aimed to understand how leaders of HEIs perceive gender inequality and institutional barriers to achieve it, and their willingness to implement gender equality measures and promote transformations in the context of their institutions. As we could see in the brief portrait of the Portuguese HEIs, gender inequalities in academia only recently have begun to receive attention in this country. Moreover, Portugal is a peculiar and even paradoxical case that requires a deep analysis: indeed, despite an increasing presence of women in the teaching and research arenas, female vertical and horizontal segregation in HEIs continue, and is not translating into a greater concern for equality between women and men. It then becomes relevant to understand what university leaders think about gender inequalities and how willing they are to implement a strategy and/or initiatives to promote gender equality in their HEIs.

Overall, interviewees tended to present an evolutionary and optimistic perspective. Based on concrete evidence, on historical facts and/or on a devaluation of the subject, they pointed to the blurring of inequalities over time, portraying the last decades as the opening of new possibilities, especially for women. Where identified, gender differences in family roles and caring responsibilities were considered the main sources of inequality.

Therefore, similar to what had been found in other studies (e.g. Carvalho and Diogo, 2018; Carvalho, Özkanli and Machado-Taylor, 2012), perceptions were more centred around external and cultural/traditional aspects than on institutional features, which would be more amenable to change.

Beyond these global trends, HEI leaders also diverged in a relevant set of dimensions, namely in the importance they give to gender inequalities and the challenges they recognize to achieve GE in their institutions. This greater or lesser gender awareness, higher or lower degree of gender knowledge will, in turn, affect their skills and willingness to promote change in HEIs. In other words, precisely because the development of Gender Equality at institutional level depends on competent people, who can effectively incorporate gender concerns in policies and plans, these data suggest that decision-making processes have to be accompanied by a focus, not only on

increasing awareness among leaderships about existing inequalities in HEIs, but also on the body of knowledge in gender studies to help unpack the factors and processes that create and sustain such inequalities.

This paper was concerned precisely with the willingness of institutions and of leadership to change Gender Equality issues in HEIs, and not only to adopt compulsory measures like Gender Equality Plans in a blind and mechanical way. It highlighted the relevance of leaders having gender equality skills, theoretical and practical knowledge, to be able to implement effective change in HEIs. We therefore recommend the creation and implementation of equality plans in HEIs that not only consider the composition of different HEI bodies and levels (teaching staff, non-teaching staff, students) but also contribute to restructure and advance institutional practices by acting upon existing inequalities and creating learning environments of improvement. This requires a rigorous gender equality assessment to measure and analyse persisting gaps and produce updated evidence. Undoubtedly, today there is a greater awareness of gender equality among the leadership of Portuguese HEIs than ever before; yet, as we have shown, gender equality knowledge and the willingness to act upon existing inequalities remains variable. Moreover, knowledge about gender inequalities appears to be associated with greater willingness to act upon them. Given the important role of Higher Education Institutions for citizenship and the social impact of its scientific outputs, knowledge about gender (in) equalities is, thus, critical to build more gender-egalitarian Higher Education Institutions and, to a great extent, more egalitarian societies too.

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