



## 2. Project-specific Building Blocks

### Building Block 2b: Including the categories sex/gender in the project content

#### Introduction

Including the categories *sex* and/or *gender* in the project content means that **from the beginning to the end of the project** these are given consideration, covered, analyzed and interpreted. Thus, that they are included in every phase of the project.

Including sex/gender throughout a project does not mean that the result must always show a difference between the sexes. However, it is a matter of scientific precision and thus a **scientific quality standard** to investigate both sexes for all medical questions. If there are no differences or no differences which are medically relevant, all the better for treatment, medication dosage, therapy etc. If there are differences, the consequences to be drawn therefrom are to be carried over throughout the rest of the medical project.

Sex- and gender-specific assessments have not yet been performed for every medical specialty. This means that literature is not necessarily already available for every question we may explore. On the other hand, this does not mean that differences between women and men are ruled out. The only thing that can be said is that the question has not yet been studied. You are a pioneer.

With few exceptions, the categories **sex** and/or **gender** are always **relevant** in clinical research and basic medical research. Cell cultures, mice/rats also have a sex and at the end of basic medical research is the female or male patient. For questions in which sex/gender has little relevance (for ex. urology, gynecology, specific subjects or a focus on exclusively one sex because of a procedural background, ...) the lack of relevance should be explicitly stated and explained.

The following will describe **specific questions for each and every project phase**. The aspects presented there for discussion should be given consideration and explicitly explained in the grant application, namely always for the specific project. A more detailed description of the underlying **‘gender-sensitive research cycle’** can be

found in the guideline *Equal Opportunity as Quality Characteristic for Excellent Research. Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming in Grant Applications and Research Projects*:

<https://www.i-med.ac.at/koostelle/gender-mainstreaming/leitfaeden-fuer-forschung-und-lehre.html.en>

### **Starting Phase/Literature**

- ✓ Does the research question in the scientific project directly concern human beings or are human beings involved in the study? Was the sex- and gender-specific relevance of the topic analyzed?
- ✓ If the research question does not directly relate to human beings (for example, in basic research), it should be remembered that sex-specific differences naturally also play a role in animal experiments, cell cultures and biochemical studies and are thus to be given consideration. Are these sex-specific differences included in the research question?
- ✓ Did you examine literature and other sources for gender-specific differences with regard to the research topic?
- ✓ Do you want to examine sex or gender differences?
- ✓ Does the literature refer to sex or gender differences? Critically question imprecisely used terms!
- ✓ Have other possible variables been overlooked here?
- ✓ Is the work you are planning eligible for sex/gender-specific funding?
- ✓ Does your research group have the necessary expertise to address a sex/gender-specific issue, or do you draw on relevant external expertise?

### **Research Design**

- ✓ Does the chosen methodology ensure that (possible) sex differences can be demonstrated, that the data differentiated according to sex/gender during the entire research process are recorded and analyzed and will be part of the final written thesis?
- ✓ In your research concept do you explicitly state how the gender-specific questions will be treated (for example, continuously or as a separate part of the study)?
- ✓ Was a possibly different research outcome and its consequences for women and men already considered in the research design?
- ✓ Do you have a sufficiently large sample size to make a statement about actual sex/gender-specific results?
- ✓ How is sex/gender determined? (self-reported, genetic testing, hormone status, etc.)

### **Implementation Phase**

- ✓ Are the questionnaires, surveys, interview guidelines, focus groups etc. designed in such a way that the data obtained demonstrate possible gender-specific differences?
- ✓ Are the groups that your project deals with balanced with regard to gender (for example, random samples, study groups)?

- ✓ Were data analyzed for the gender variable? Were other relevant variables analyzed with regard to gender-specific differences?
- ✓ Are modifiers and confounders taken into account?
- ✓ Does the gender of your employees have a potential impact on the results?

#### **Final Phase: Publication/Dissemination**

- ✓ Do your statistics, illustrations, overviews and descriptions include a gender-specific analysis of the data collected for your study?
- ✓ Was the sex/gender-specific evaluation planned from the outset (a priori), or is it a post-hoc analysis?
- ✓ Are institutions, organizations, scientific journals that concentrate on sex- and gender-specific topics included among the target groups for publication and dissemination of your findings?
- ✓ Have you considered additional publication of the sex- and gender-specific findings of your project?
- ✓ What are the possible implications of my findings – could they also disadvantage a particular group? How can this be avoided?

#### **Further important information and departments for project development:**

##### **Horizon Europe – Gender Equality Plan (GEP)**

Mitteilungsblatt der Medizinischen Universität, 33. Stück, 2. April 2025

<https://www.i-med.ac.at/mitteilungsblatt/2024/33-.pdf>

##### **Kompetenzzentrum für klinische Studien (KKS)**

<https://www.i-med.ac.at/kks/>

##### **Forschungsportal der Abteilung Forschungsservice**

<https://www.i-med.ac.at/forschung/>

##### **Ethikkommission der Medizinischen Universität Innsbruck**

<https://www.i-med.ac.at/ethikkommission/>

##### **Good Scientific Practice an der Medizinischen Universität Innsbruck**

<https://www.i-med.ac.at/goodscientificpractice/>

**Tierschutzgremium der Medizinischen Universität Innsbruck**

<https://www.i-med.ac.at/tsg/index.html>