Sex/Gender Relevant Text from IRC Call Documentation 2014

For Applicants

Question in Application Form

9. Sex/gender dimension

Please read carefully the section on 'Biological Sex/gender dimension' in the Guide for Applicants for help in answering this question.

Does your proposed research programme involve any of the following?

1. *Humans as the research focus*
2. *Animals as the research focus*
3. *Human samples and/or data*
4. *Humans involved as consumers, users, patients, or in trials*
5. *Research on animals, animal samples and/or data*
6. *Research outputs with implications for end users or consumers*

Yes ☐

No ☐

If you have answered NO, please explain why there is no potential biological sex and/or gender dimension to be considered in your proposed research.

If you have answered YES, indicate how potential biological sex and/or gender issues will be handled. In particular, you are asked to reference the points mentioned in the 'Checklist for sex/gender in research content' in the Irish Research Council's GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS 2014.

[max 300 words]

Guidance Provided in 'Guide for Applicants'

Sex/Gender Dimension Statement

The Council funds excellent research and excellent research fully considers whether a potential biological sex and/or gender dimension is relevant to the research content and fully integrates sex/gender analysis where relevant, thereby ensuring maximise impact, societal benefit and optimising innovation. It is well established that, where relevant, not integrating sex/gender analysis into the design, implementation,

evaluation and dissemination of the research can lead to poor results and missed opportunities.

Whereas researchers in some fields, particularly in humanities and social sciences, are well practised at considering whether there may be a potential sex/gender dimension to their research, this is less true of some other fields. This is despite the fact that there are many examples that also show the importance of integrating sex/gender analysis across a range of fields including health and medical research, engineering, environmental research, and in the development of new technologies8. A conscious decision to focus solely on one sex, or not to take into account gender issues, is a valid research approach as long as this is clearly stated in the project and the results are evaluated and disseminated as such. A problem only arises when the researcher has consciously ignored sex and/or gender as a valid variable or has not realised that a sex and/or gender dimension is relevant to their research. In this instance, extrapolation of the results to the population as a whole, when they actually only apply to half the population, is misleading and could have serious implications.

All applicants to Council schemes are required to complete the Sex/Gender Dimension statement in the application and this will also be a requirement for Horizon 2020 proposals.

Please refer to Appendix II 'Guidance on the Sex/Gender Dimension Statement', which summarises the Toolkit Gender in EU-funded research[1], for help on how to do this.

For Assessors

Assessing the Sex/Gender Dimension Statement

Question for Assessor: Do you understand the concept of biological sex and social gender as they impact research content?

- Please refer to the link below which summarises the Toolkit Gender in EU-funded research for guidance: http://www.yellowwindow.be/genderinresearch/downloads/YW2009_GenderToolKit_Module1.pdf

- Please refer to the links below for examples of case studies in Science, Health & Medicine, Engineering and Environment. http://genderedinnovations.stanford.edu/methods/concepts.html; http://genderedinnovations.stanford.edu/.

[1] http://www.yellowwindow.be/genderinresearch/downloads/YW2009_GenderToolKit_Module1.pdf

It is suggested that Assessors consider whether the proposed research programme involves any of the following:

- Humans as the research focus
- Animals as the research focus
- Human samples (e.g. tissues/cells) and/or data
- Humans involved as consumers, users, patients, participants, or in trials/interviews
- Research on animals, animal samples and/or data
- Research outputs with implications for both men and women
- Research outputs with implications for end users or consumers

It is suggested that Assessors consider the following when appraising the research proposal:

- Has the applicant clearly outlined the consideration that has been given to the relevance of sex and gender in their proposed research?
- If there is a potential sex/gender dimension, has the applicant clearly indicated how the potential sex/gender issues will be handled with reference to the points mentioned in the 'Checklist for sex/gender in research content' in Appendix II in the Guide for Applicants.

APPENDIX II (taken from the Guide for Applicants)

Guidance on the Sex/Gender Dimension Statement

While there are research projects in which biological sex and/or gender may not be relevant in terms of the research content, it is well established that, where relevant, not integrating sex and gender analysis into the design, implementation, evaluation and dissemination of the research can lead to poor results and missed opportunities. The following is provided to help applicants complete the sex/gender dimension statement in the application. This is taken from the Toolkit Gender in EU-funded research[2], which aims to give the research community practical tools to integrate gender aspects into their research, including gender equality (equal outcomes for women and men) and integration of sex/gender analysis in research content. Please also refer to http://genderedinnovations.stanford.edu/ for examples of case studies in Science, Health and Medicine, Engineering and Environment.

A Summary from the 'Toolkit Gender in EU-funded research'

The best possible research validity: Research should take into account the differences between men and women in the research population, the results will be more representative. General categories such as 'people', 'patients' or 'users' do not distinguish between men and women. Research based on such categories may well draw partial conclusions based on partial data. For example, research on a new breast cancer treatment should include male patients, so as to draw a complete picture. Most basic research with animal models focuses on males to the exclusion of females (Zucker et al., 2010; Marts et al., 2004). Research on economic migrants cannot limit itself to male points of view if it wants to understand the whole migrant population.

Research ideas and hypotheses: The relevance of biological sex and/or gender for and within the subject matter needs to be analysed and an assessment made as to whether these are relevant variables. The formulation of hypotheses can draw upon previous research and existing literature. Indeed, the body of knowledge on sex/gender issues has been steadily growing over recent decades, and can serve as interesting reference material to build new hypotheses for future research.

Project design and research methodology: While research methodologies may vary, they all strive to represent (aspects of) reality. Whenever this reality concerns humans, any sound methodology should differentiate between the sexes and take into account the men's and women's situations equally. Groups such as 'citizens', 'patients', 'consumers', 'victims' or 'children' are therefore too general as categories.

Research implementation

Data collection tools (such as questionnaires and interview checklists) need to be gender-sensitive, use gender neutral language, and should make it possible to detect the different realities of men and women. This will help to avoid gender bias.

[2] http://www.yellowwindow.be/genderinresearch/downloads/YW2009_GenderToolKit_Module1.pdf

For example, answers to be provided by the ‘head of household’ are not necessarily valid for all household members.
Data analysis: In most research concerning human subjects, data is routinely disaggregated by sex, which would logically lead to analyses according to sex. However to date this is still not common practice. Systematically taking sex as a central variable and analysing other variables with respect to it (e.g. sex and age, sex and income, sex and mobility, sex and labour) will provide significant and useful insights. Involving gender-balanced end-user groups in the course of the research is also a good way of guaranteeing the highest impact.

Dissemination phase – reporting of data: Collecting and analysing sex and/or gender specific data is not enough if they are omitted from the published results. Sex and/or gender should be included in ‘mainstream’ publications as it is as much part of daily reality as any other variable studied. Specific dissemination actions (publications or events) for sex and/or gender findings can be considered. Institutions and departments that focus on gender should be included in the target groups for dissemination. Publications should use gender-neutral language.

CHECKLIST FOR SEX AND/OR GENDER IN RESEARCH CONTENT

Research ideas phase:
o If the research involves humans as research objects, has the relevance of biological sex and/or gender to the research topic been analysed?

o If the research does not directly involve humans, are the possibly differentiated relations of men and women to the research subject sufficiently clear?

o Have you reviewed literature and other sources relating to differences in the research field?

Proposal phase:
o Does the methodology ensure that (possible) sex/gender differences will be investigated: that sex/gender differentiated data will be collected and analysed throughout the research cycle and will be part of the final publication?

o Does the proposal explicitly and comprehensively explain how sex/gender issues will be handled (e.g. in a specific work package)?

o Have possibly differentiated outcomes and impacts of the research on women and men been considered?

Research phase:
o Are questionnaires, surveys, focus groups, etc. designed to unravel potentially relevant sex and/or gender differences in your data?

o Are the groups involved in the project (e.g. samples, testing groups) gender-balanced? Is data analysed according to the sex variable? Are other relevant variables analysed with respect to sex?

Dissemination phase:
o Do analyses present statistics, tables, figures and descriptions that focus on the relevant sex/gender differences that came up in the course of the project?

o Are institutions, departments and journals that focus on gender included among the target groups for dissemination, along with mainstream research magazines?
o Have you considered a specific publication or event on sex/gender-related findings?