

Evolution of Gender Equality Plan (GEP) Development in Agriculture & Life Sciences Higher Education Institutions

What is AGRIGEP?

AGRIGEP is a Horizon Europe project (2023–2025) that supports universities in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) to strengthen gender equality in Agriculture and Life Sciences (ALS) higher education. It brings together universities in Hungary, Czechia and Slovenia with expert mentoring partners to help them design and implement more effective Gender Equality Plans (GEPs).

Why Gender Equality Matters in Agriculture & Life Sciences Higher Education?

Gender equality strengthens innovation, improves safety, reduces discrimination, and increases the competitiveness of rural and knowledge-based sectors. When women and men have equal opportunities to study, work, lead and innovate:

- Research becomes more creative and relevant
- Fieldwork and laboratory environments become safer
- Rural communities gain skilled professionals
- The economy becomes more resilient
- Young people —especially girls— see more role models and career paths

What is a Gender Equality Plan (GEP)?

A GEP is a strategic institutional document that sets objectives, actions and responsibilities to make universities more equal, safer and inclusive. In Horizon Europe, having a GEP is a mandatory requirement to receive research funding. The GEP 1.0 was often created within a short time by HR experts, mainly to meet the Horizon Europe eligibility rule. As a consequence, many institutions —especially in the widening countries— produced minimal, compliance-oriented documents with limited data, unclear responsibilities, and very general measures. As universities move into their second cycle of gender equality planning, the goal changes from compliance to cultural change within institutions. This is why GEP 2.0 requires more depth, clarity and specificity.

Why GEP 2.0? Why is it a new chapter for ALS (Agriculture and Life Sciences)?

The AGRIGEP project helps implementing partners move toward GEP 2.0: a more advanced, evidence-based, sector-specific approach that addresses real challenges in ALS higher education, research, and field environments.

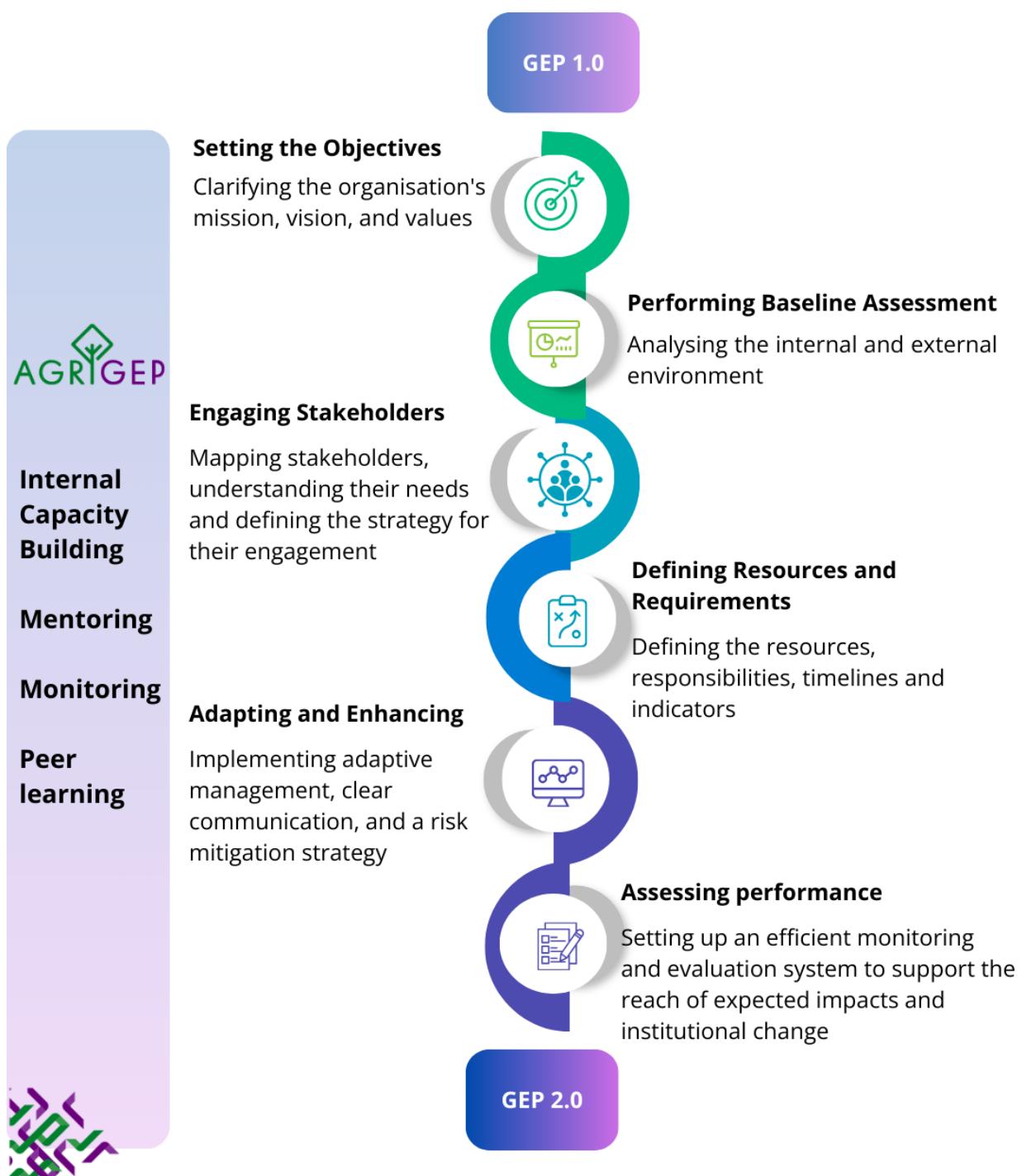
AGRIGEP Project as a Driving Force for GEP 2.0 in the CEE



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Roadmap towards GEP 2.0



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From Compliance to Transformation: GEP 2.0 in Agriculture & Life Sciences

Evolution of Gender Equality Planning in Agriculture & Life Sciences	
GEP 1.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Created to meet Horizon Europe requirements Limited data and monitoring Weak internal awareness and expertise Relied on generic actions not linked to local realities Gender equality seen as “administrative task” Few ALS (Agriculture and Life Sciences specific) actions Little engagement from leadership
GEP 2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence-based, grounded in internal assessments Includes agriculture- and life-science-specific measures Stronger leadership involvement and accountability Clear monitoring and reporting procedures Greater attention to safety in fieldwork and labs Integration of GE into research and teaching content Involvement of students, academic staff and partners Stronger communication and visibility across the institution
Key Achievements of AGRIEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Built internal GE teams (“change agents”) and strengthened GE expertise Launched capacity-building trainings for staff, researchers and leaders Introduced gender-disaggregated data collection mechanisms Developed ALS (Agriculture and Life Sciences specific) -focused safety measures (fieldwork, labs, placements) Improved stakeholder engagement inside and outside the university Linked GE to HR reforms, workplace well-being and internationalisation Increased institutional transparency through monitoring systems
ALS-Specific Gender Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agriculture and Life Sciences have distinctive challenges: Fieldwork safety risks, including harassment and isolation Gender stereotypes in rural communities and educational pathways Unequal access to laboratory equipment and research opportunities Vulnerability during external placements (farms, agri-businesses) Work-life balance barriers affecting both students and staff Underrepresentation of women in leadership and research careers



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Why AGRIGEP Benefits Society?

Civil society directly benefits when universities become more equal, safe and transparent:

- Students—especially young women—gain safer study environments
- Rural youth see more diverse career options in agriculture and science
- Better research quality leads to better food, climate and sustainability solutions
- Families benefit from fairer work–life balance conditions
- Local communities gain inclusive innovation and skilled professionals
- Gender equality supports stronger European competitiveness and resilience

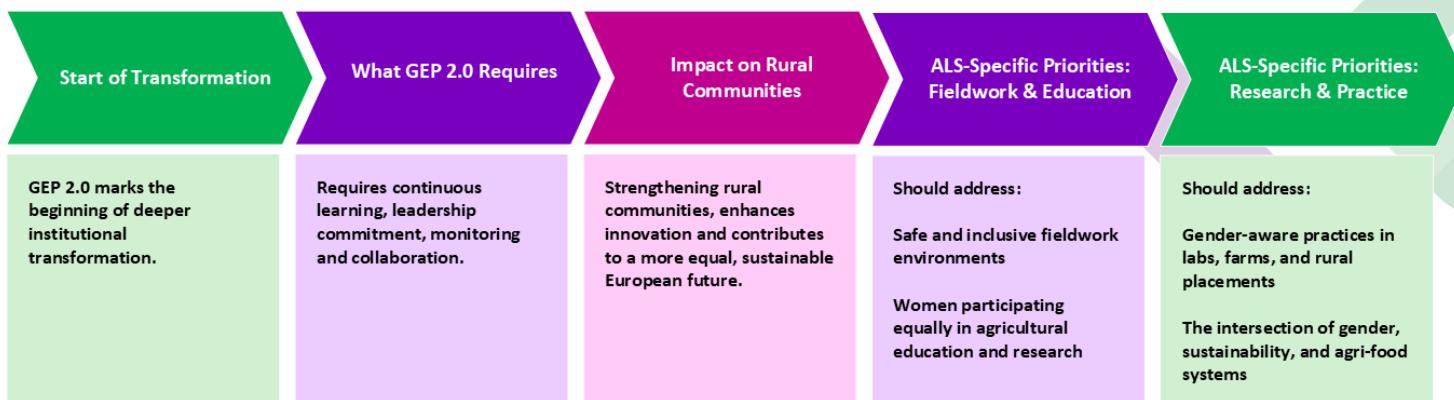
Its impact extends far more widely across society, and the current GEP focuses on examining the gender-related aspects specific to the agricultural sector.

What Needs to Happen Next

For universities:

- Make GE governance permanent, not project-based
- Introduce regular training for staff and leadership
- Strengthen monitoring and data reporting
- Ensure safe fieldwork, lab conditions and external placements
- Integrate GE into teaching, curricula and research design
- Improve transparency in recruitment and promotion

The Road Ahead



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