
Plan of action for equal opportunities at USI

2017-2020

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Executive Summary

Università della Svizzera italiana sees equal opportunities as an integral component of its strategic priorities in its outlook for the four-year period 2017-2020. With this Plan of action, the University aims not only to carry out initiatives on behalf of equal opportunities for men and women, but also to spread an inclusive culture based on valorising diversity. The measures laid out favour an approach characterised by networks and partnerships, be it within the University, by involving the Faculties and the Services in carrying out given activities, or outside, by planning synergetic interventions with other equality organisations across the Canton as well as nationally.

The Plan of action begins by analysing the University's situation from a gender perspective, making use of statistical data for its studentship, its administrative and its academic staff. The findings thus obtained have enabled us to define, in the second part of the document, the strategies to adopt to resolve the existing imbalances and to formulate the general targets to be reached, in terms of equal opportunities, for the four-year period 2017-2020:

1. To monitor gender equality and steer the equal opportunities policies effectively;
2. To guarantee a study and work environment that is fair and perfectly in step with the pace of life, where everybody, men and women, regardless of their status and role, may benefit, without any discrimination, from the same opportunities, and advance in their educational and professional development;
3. To avoid horizontal segregation and tackle professional stereotypes;
4. To spread a culture of inclusion, founded on overcoming stereotypes and enhancing diversity, through the promotion of cultural initiatives;
5. To promote equal access to study curricula by lowering gender- and diversity-related barriers;

At the heart of the Plan of action there is a systematic presentation of the 29 specific actions that USI intends to pursue regarding the five priority areas of intervention identified: Gathering and processing of data on gender issues; Equal opportunities for career promotion; Equal opportunities in selecting a study curriculum and deconstructing professional stereotypes; Information and awareness over issues of gender, equal opportunities and diversity; and Equal opportunities in learning and studying.

The innovative measures are listed (in the form of a synoptic table) and analysed in detail by the different actors involved, by stages of implementation, expected results, and the instruments designed to check their effectiveness.

Introduction

The *Plan of action for equal opportunities at USI: 2017-2020* responds to the call published by swissuniversities on 16 June 2016, in view of implementing Module A of the P-7 Programme "Equal opportunities & Development of Graduate Schools 2017-2020". It also complies with the Directives for equal opportunities at USI, in particular Art. 7, according to which: *"The Equal Opportunities Service develops a Plan of action, addressed to the University Council. It puts forward measures to achieve equality between men and women"*.

Complying with the legal framework underpinning equal opportunities at USI, the Plan of Action, approved by the Rector's Office, on 23 September 2016, endorses the same objectives defined in the University's planning for 2017-2020, which includes equal opportunities among its strategic priorities. It is an effective instrument not only for organising major initiatives oriented to gender equality and diversity, but also because it gives them internal coherence and appropriately brings out their value.

The measures proposed favour an approach based on networking and cooperation, both within the University, by involving Faculties and Services in carrying out certain activities, and outside, by setting up interventions in synergy with other equality bodies at the Cantonal level as well as nationwide.

In particular, the longstanding productive partnership between USI and SUPSI, which extends to gender policy matters, has led the two academic institutions to sign a specific collaborative agreement on equal opportunities and diversity in view of increasing and rationalizing further strategies and actions in this field.

The present document begins by analysing the University's situation in matters of gender equality with specific reference to statistical data for the student, administrative and academic bodies. The evidence gathered helps us define, in the second part of the document, the main areas of intervention for the four-year period. Likewise, it helps us with a systematic presentation (through a synoptic table) of the specific targets and operational measures developed for reaching them. The document is completed by a set of enclosures.

PART 1/**USI's current position regarding equal opportunities****1.1 Review of main activities: 2000-2016**

Over the years, various activities have been promoted at Università della Svizzera italiana, designed to tackle gender imbalances and promote equal opportunities. The underlying aim was to advance along the road to equal status between men and women, and from there to enable USI to nurture a real "culture of gender equality". It may be worth reviewing, at this point, the main stages characterising the history of the Service's activities to date, in order to recover a sense of the global nature of the experience: the satisfaction for the progress made would be complemented by the awareness - supported by the empirical data presented below - that much remains to be done.

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 2000/2001 | Creation of the position of Representative, of the Working Group and of the Equal Opportunities Service. |
| 2001/2002 | Setting up of the <i>Mentoring Programme</i> , to promote academic careers for women at USI, a programme, repeated annually. Launch of the <i>Day Nursery Support Programme</i> , offered on an annual basis. |
| 2002/2003 | Appointment of the first woman associate professor at USI. Launch of workshop for the junior academic body, repeated at six-monthly intervals. |
| 2003/2004 | First event in the <i>USI-SUPSI Family Day</i> series, repeated annually. |
| 2005/2006 | Publication of the <i>Directives for equal opportunities at USI</i> . |
| 2006/2007 | Work on the booklet: <i>"Equal Opportunities in academic careers"</i> . First issue of <i>Equality Newsletter</i> , published on a six-monthly basis. Women full and associate professors account for 2.4% of tenured professorial staff. |
| 2007/2008 | Observers for equal opportunities attend, with no voting rights, meetings of the selection committees for the appointment of ordinary professors and the allocation of research grants. First edition of the booklet <i>"The Family is getting bigger"</i> . |
| 2008/2009 | First <i>Shadowing programme</i> , repeated annually. Organisation, jointly with the Faculties, of public lessons designed to train and inform on gender issues, repeated on an annual basis. |
| 2009/2010 | Launch of the <i>Support Programme of after-school Services</i> , repeated annually. Collaboration with the research project, <i>"Learners' Voices @ USI & SUPSI"</i> carried out by eLab, aiming to describe the use of ICT by USI and SUPSI students. |
| 2010/2011 | Celebration of <i>"10 years of equal opportunities at USI"</i> – with a series of events and publications. Women full and associate professors account for 10.1% of tenured professorial staff. |
| 2011/2012 | First run of training course for USI-SUPSI administrative staff, repeated on an annual basis. |
| 2012/2013 | Survey conducted on gender differences in terms of pay gaps and opportunities of access to the job market for men and women graduates of USI. First issue of <i>"Researching at USI. A practical guide for researchers and their families"</i> . |
| 2013/2014 | Distribution of <i>"Mentoring Handbook. Suggestions for promoting women's academic careers"</i> . |
| 2014/2015 | Survey conducted on <i>"Gender and language. Words and images in USI's communication 2010/2014"</i> , dissemination of Guidelines for language equality in institutional communication. Extension of parental leave and changes in the Regulations for administrative and academic staff, designed to facilitate a work-family balance. |
| 2015/2016 | Women full and associate professors account for 17.1% of tenured professorial staff. |

1.2 Analysis of the current situation

Before undertaking an effective multi-annual planning operation, we must necessarily analyse the existing situation. In fact, that is the only efficient way to proceed if we want to plan and implement the most appropriate interventions guaranteeing the best conditions of equal opportunity between men and women. Therefore, we first carried out an *analysis of the internal context*, identifying – also through a scrutiny of statistical data – strengths and weaknesses of USI in terms of equal opportunities. Secondly, we *analysed the external context*, to identify the main opportunities worth seizing and any barriers hindering progress in this respect.

From an examination of the current situation, we build the following picture.

1.2.1 The internal context

Legal framework

The Equal Opportunities Service, one of the central Services of the University, plays a proactive and dynamic role in concretely promoting and implementing the principles of equal rights and opportunities of women and men as asserted in the Laws and the Statutes of USI:

- The University Act (the Law on Università della Svizzera italiana, the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland and on Research Institutes) - art. 1 'Nature and objectives', cv. 4^{bis},
- Statutes of Università della Svizzera italiana - art. 12 'Equal opportunities'.

In 2006, moreover, the University adopted its 'Directives for equal opportunities at USI' (Annex 1) which, besides specifying the general objectives of equal opportunities pursued by the University, indicates the bodies designated to implement them and the instruments to be used to steer the activities towards the set targets. More particularly, the Directives specify that the Equal Opportunity Service:

- "It has sufficient financial and human resources to discharge its tasks" - art. 4;
- "It develops a Plan of action for the attention of the University Council. It puts forward measures to achieve equality between men and women" - art. 7.

An academic assistant supports the person in charge of the coordination and implementation of the projects and activities promoted by the Service. The positions of Representative and academic assistant are officially recognised hence integrated in the structure. Currently, these positions are filled by part-time staff for a total of 1.1 FTEs.

Wishing to enhance, rationalise and further develop the activities in the field of equal opportunities and diversity, USI and SUPSI – which have been working together productively for years on this issue, too – have signed a specific collaborative agreement (see Annex 2) which defines how USI's Equal Opportunities Service and SUPSI's Gender and Diversity Service coordinate their work. According to the terms of the agreement, each academic institution shall draft a four-year plan of action, identify initiatives to be undertaken jointly, and submit a joint report to their respective Management at four-year intervals.

Therefore, the present Plan of action fits in with the initiatives promoted by USI's Equal Opportunities Service, and designed to reach the University's equality goals, as prescribed by USI's *Directives for equal opportunities*.

Gender matters, a matter of numbers

The review of the internal context continues with an analysis of the statistical data on the student body, the administrative staff and the academic staff at USI, and provides an overview of its distribution by gender.

The student component

In the academic year 2015/2016, the breakdown by gender of registered students was fairly balanced: 48% women vs. 52% men. One observes nonetheless that the composition is rather uneven in different sectors: the male component appears to dominate in some study programmes, particularly in Informatics (84%) and Economics (62%), whereas the female component seems to prefer the Faculty of Communication (67%). Architecture, on the other hand, is where the distribution by gender of registered students is the most balanced (51% women, 49% men).

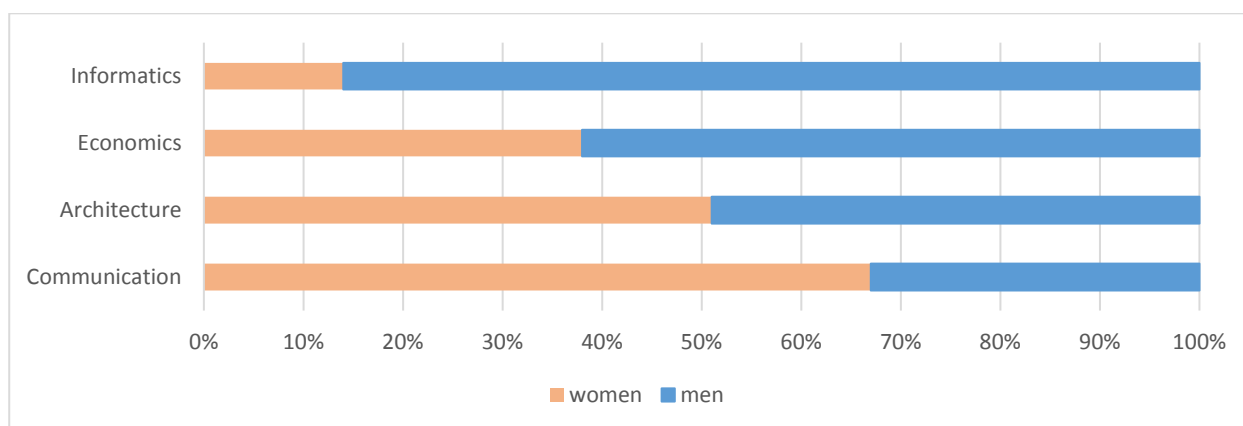


Fig. 1. Distribution of students by Faculty and gender - 2015/2016

Administrative staff

The overall situation of the University, in terms of administrative staff, reveals a slight over-representation of women (56%): out of 147 employees recorded last December, in fact, 82 are women. With regard to their professional grading and the role played, it needs to be underlined that women staff are equally distributed at all career levels, except for the top positions: in fact, the Head of administration and the Rector are men. Half of the Services active at USI are currently headed by a woman.

The Table below shows the figures for full- and part-time administrative staff. Notice, here, that of the current 82 female staff 28 are employed part-time, while only 6 men do not work full time.

| | 2013 | | 2014 | | 2015 | |
|--------------------------------|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|
| | Women | Men | Women | Men | Women | Men |
| Full-time administrative staff | 49 | 56 | 50 | 60 | 54 | 59 |
| Part-time administrative staff | 30 | 5 | 26 | 5 | 28 | 6 |

Tab. 1. Full time and part-time administrative staff by gender – 2013/2015

In the 2013-2015 period, 4 women and 0 men requested a change in their employment contract and/or a leave of absence for family reasons (birth of a child or to care for a relative). Bear in mind, finally, that 26% of the administrative staff have underage children.

Academic staff

The academic staff consists of junior academics (PhD candidates, post-doc and assistants) and the professorial body (fixed-term contract lecturers, assistant professors, associate and full professors). The Figure reported below shows the difficulty women run into in their pursuit of more secure and higher levels of the academic career.

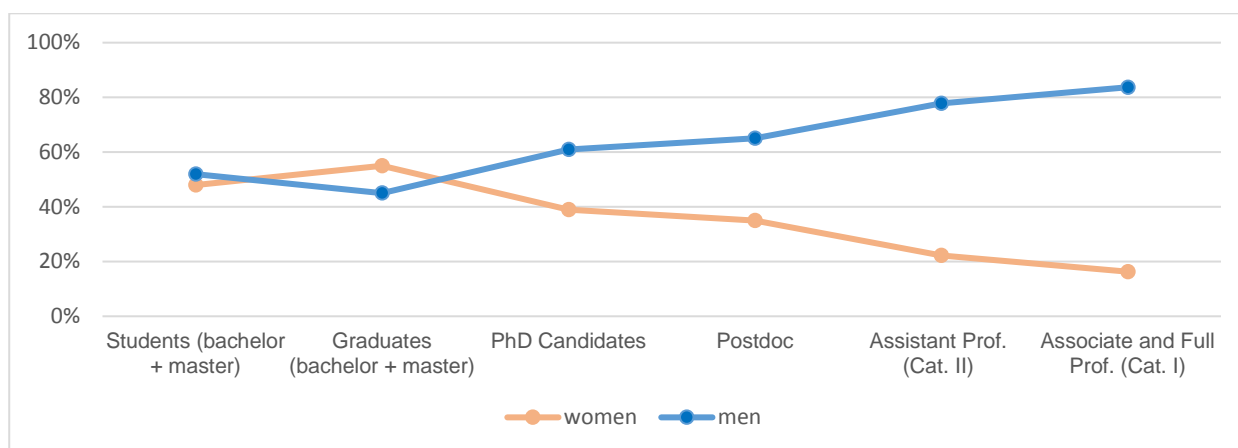


Fig. 3. Distribution of women and men in typical functions of the academic career - 2015

Compared to data collected for 2012, there nonetheless emerges that women make up a higher proportion of the tenure-track professorial body (cat. I and II); from 15.8% they have risen to 17.1% (July 2016). Even though this proportion is below the national average, this figure bears witness to the good work done in narrowing the gender gap in the upper echelons of the academic career at USI, with an increase of more than 14% in the number of women professors in ten years.

The following Figure illustrates the extent to which women in the junior academic rank and of professorial rank are distributed across different study sectors currently offered by USI. These data highlight that women researchers are a minority in the sectors of Informatics at USI.

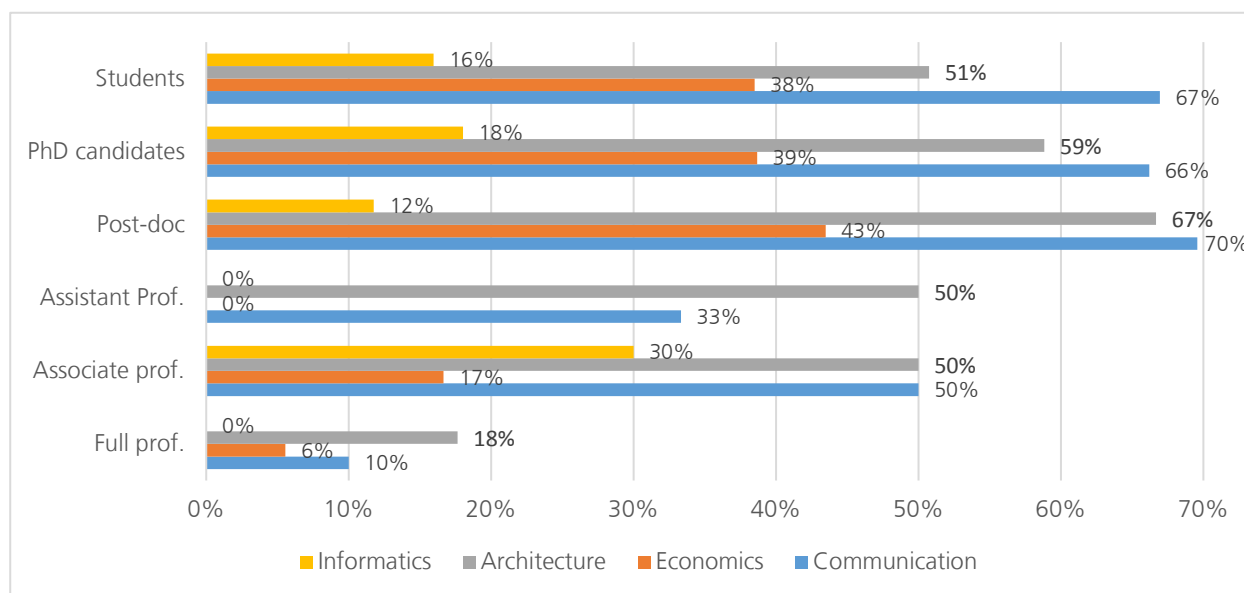


Fig. 4 Distribution of women and men by function and area of study – 2015/2016

Bear in mind, finally, that 24% of the junior academic staff and 41% of the professorial body are parents of underage children.

The section of the University's website (www.usi.ch) "USI in figures" gives an overview of the University through statistical data and graphs since its foundation.

1.2.2 External context

There are also exogenous factors influencing the equal opportunities context at USI; and it would be appropriate to take them into account before formulating suggestions for a course of action in this area.

The Equal Opportunities Service at USI maintains an open dialogue and cooperation, not only with its counterpart at SUPSI, but also with the Canton's Advisory Committee for equal opportunities, with women's associations which, in one way or another, address the question of equal opportunities in the region, and with organisations and enterprises sponsoring projects in favour of equality between men and women. Therefore, the spread of a gender culture in Ticino grows, facilitating the reciprocal transfer of good practice, all of which benefits equal opportunities.

Moving on to the national context, the Equal Opportunities Service has been cooperating for years with similar offices in other universities. With these counterparts, over the years collaborative projects have been conceived and developed mostly with a view to promoting the new generation of women academics (*Mentoring Deutschschweiz*, *Réseau romand de mentoring pour femmes*) or to optimise gender skills (*Regard*). The language and geographical peculiarities that characterise USI, however, often translate into specific critical aspects of our University. Our productions, our texts are not immediately exportable into other contexts, and they invariably need to be translated. And the same is true of the activities and events organised on our premises, where besides the language component, there are aspects related to people's mobility.

Module B of the federal Programme will undoubtedly represent a strong incentive for clearing these sorts of hurdles and will facilitate the transfer of knowledge between institutions of higher education.

1.3 Summary of evidence from findings

The collection and assessment of quantitative data, together with a few investigations and surveys carried out over the four-year period, has brought to light the following pieces of evidence:

- 1.1 In order to formulate a strategy and conduct an evaluation from a gender perspective, it is indispensable to make use of monitoring systems designed and built to provide data disaggregated by gender and information relevant for equal opportunities.
- 2.1 The number of women professors (full and associate) at USI has risen over the years, from 2.6% in 2005 to 16.3% in 2015. Between 2012 and 2015 USI appointed 24 new full and associate professors: 5 of these women (i.e. 20.8%); although advances have been made, the situation remain unbalanced.
- 2.2 The higher you go in the hierarchy, the lower the number of women: 55% women graduates, 39% doctoral students, 35% post-doc, 22% assistant professors, 16% full professors. These figures (for 2015/2016) highlight, therefore, the continued existence and the persistence of a “glass ceiling”. Further interventions are needed in order to contrast the phenomenon of vertical segregation.
- 2.3 Many members of the administrative and the academic staff are having to reconcile their professional and/or study activity with the personal sphere. The provision of innovative and competitive organisational solutions with regard to flexible working and to the culture of work-home balance helps to reach a balance between the different demands of living and generates wellbeing. The more the wellbeing, the more productive the individual.
- 3.1 The rate of women attending USI’s Faculties and subsequently graduate is comparable to that of men, though not without differences, some quite considerable, in terms of study stream. In particular, there is a clear gender imbalance in the Faculty of Informatics at both the undergraduate and PhD levels.
- 4.1 The Equal Opportunities Service plays a major role combining information with education on equality issues both inside and outside the University. By creating a good fabric of dynamic relations with actors in the region, who, somehow or other, address questions of equal opportunities and gender diversity, it would be appropriate to plan and implement training initiatives, awareness events, monitoring and assessments to encourage good practice towards enhancing a culture of gender in Italian-speaking Switzerland.
- 4.2 *“Gender and language. Words and images in USI’s communication 2010/2014”*, a study conducted in 2015 by the Institute of Argumentation, Linguistics and Semiotics of the Faculty of Communication Sciences has highlighted an ‘unmarked’ presence of the feminine dimension, both in terms of number of women worth talking about and in terms of the time devoted to gender equality. The study was carried out jointly with USI’s Equal Opportunities Service and Media and Communication Service. In addition to issuing guidelines for a form and style of communication respectful of diversity, it would seem crucial to be able to draw suitable attention, within the University, to women’s contribution to scientific research. It is equally crucial to promote female role models – especially for the young generation of academics – capable of building a career strategy that is coherent and in line with their values.
- 5.1 USI has grown over the years, steadily adding to the education and curricula provided, and becoming more and more international. Student and academic staff comprise people from over 50 countries. It is important to take into account further dimensions of equal opportunities (handicaps, origin, age, etc.) and promote actual equality of access to study curricula if equal opportunities and non-discrimination are to be guaranteed.

PART 2/ Goals and scope for action in the 2017-2020 period

2.1 Strategy

USI intends to employ all the necessary strategies to overcome the existing imbalances and formulates the following general objectives, in terms of equal opportunities, for the four-year period 2017-2020:

1. To monitor gender equality and steer equal opportunities policies effectively;
2. To guarantee a study and work environment that is fair and perfectly in step with the pace of life, where everybody, men and women, regardless of their status and role, may benefit, without any discrimination, of the same opportunities, and advance in their educational and professional development;
3. To avoid horizontal segregation and tackle professional stereotypes;
4. To spread a culture of inclusion, founded on overcoming stereotypes and on enhancing diversity, through the promotion of cultural initiatives;
5. To promote equal access to study curricula by lowering gender- and diversity-related barriers.

2.2 Areas of intervention

To reach these general targets, which fit well into the context of the federal Programme *"Equal opportunities and development of University schools"*, the Plan points out five main areas of intervention:

1. Gathering and processing of data on the gender issue;
2. Equal opportunities for career promotion;
3. Equal opportunities in selecting a study curriculum and deconstructing professional stereotypes;
4. Information and awareness over issues of gender, equal opportunities and diversity;
5. Equal opportunities in learning and studying.

It is expected that, for each area of intervention, specific objectives will be pursued and specific actions implemented, as indicated hereunder.

As highlighted at the outset, the Plan of action for equal opportunities at USI favours an approach based on network and collaboration, both within the University, by involving the Faculties and the Services in carrying out certain measures, and outside it, by organising initiatives in synergy with other equality organisations operating in the Canton or elsewhere in Switzerland.

2.2.1 Gathering and processing of data on the gender issue

TARGET 1/ To monitor gender equality and steer equal opportunity policies effectively

Current situation

To conduct any activity designed to promote equal opportunities one must have a sound knowledge of the gender distribution across the University. At the moment, the gender dimension at USI is monitored by periodically updating a series of statistical figures for all the University components (students, graduates and doctoral students by Faculty, Executive Master's participants, academics and administrative staff). These data are shown from a longitudinal perspective on the University's website.

The information base on which the Equal Opportunities Service relies is reinforced by the reports of search committees on the appointment of tenured professors. These documents record systematically the number of applications received and the number of candidates short-listed, subdivided by gender, completed by an explicit and clear explanation of the reasons why the Committee pointed toward a certain candidate.

Surveys on the professional integration of male and female graduates of USI and on their career progression; research into institutional communication from the standpoint of gender, together with surveys into the needs for work-family balance on the part of members of the academic community – all of these have proved invaluable in spotting critical aspects to do with gender, and in defining, after due consultation with the academic bodies concerned, appropriate measures for improvement.

Steps for the four-year period: 2017-2020

Over the next four years, USI intends to broaden further its information base in support of equal opportunities, by a dynamic collaboration with the Quality Audit Service and other institutional figures involved in the process of data collection and acquisition. The activities thus planned have been listed in the synoptic table at the end of the chapter.

Degree of innovation and potential for transfer

Analyses are to be carried out and surveys promoted on strategic issues and/or internal problematic aspects from an equal opportunities perspective never explored to date; they will involve different institutional figures. The findings may possibly be publicised and /or shared with other partners.

2.2.2 The role of equal opportunities for career promotion

TARGET 2 / To guarantee a study and working environment that is fair and perfectly in step with the pace of life, where everybody, men and women, regardless of their status and role, may benefit, without any discrimination, of the same opportunities, and advance in their educational and professional development

Current situation

Despite the improvements made in recent years, we can hardly claim that gender equality has yet been reached in the academic world. Although the picture across universities is diverse, we are still witnessing a relatively low presence of women on the top rungs of the academic and decision-making ladder. The reasons for this enduring “glass ceiling” have been highlighted by several studies, which point to the following main factors: organisation cultures, the evaluation criteria of academic production, professional socialisation and the difficulties of reconciling work and family.

To counter this phenomenon, for the past 15 years USI has been working on these aspects. Thus, gender balance was incorporated within the University’s strategic policies and measures in favour of equal opportunities were put in place, which managed to mitigate the existing gender imbalances.

The proportion of women professors with tenure track at USI (full and associate professors) rose from 2.6% in 2005 to 17.1% in 2016. In any competition notice, USI explicitly encourages women’s applications and an observer for equal opportunities attends, without rights to vote, the meetings of the Selecting/appointment Committees (Statutes, Art. 30b). A full/associate professor (male or female) for equal opportunities designated by the Rector takes part in the meetings of the Committee for the allocation of study grants (Statutes, Art. 23d).

In addition, the University promotes women’s academic careers through a dedicated one-to-one mentoring programme. It is under the same aegis that study grants are allocated to mentees (through the shadowing programme) and likewise information booklets with useful tips for anyone who is about to launch into an academic career are distributed, also in association with the other Swiss universities. Still with a view to promoting career paths, the University proposes training events designed to develop the skills necessary to take up top-management roles, to optimise one’s know-how in management and communication, and to break down all gender-related stereotypes.

With regard to work-life balance, USI has put in place several activities to help its academic staff and administrative personnel to harmonise study, career and family. In particular, the University has focused on the following levers, which complement each other: work and study organisation; supply of services to support parents working for the University (including financial assistance in case of limited income); information and awareness of the issue.

Main results achieved in recent years include: longer parental leave (10 days’ leave for fathers and 16 weeks in case of adoption) and the amendments to the Staff Regulations in view of facilitating work-life balance (such as converting the 13th month salary into holiday allowance, art.16 Rpam).

As far as services and facilities for families are concerned, let us mention the fact that when the new USI-SUPSI campus is built, as expected, in 2020, it will have its own crèche and new, better equipped infrastructure for families. Until then, the University intends to renew the agreement signed with the day nurseries of the City of Lugano and Mendrisio Council, whereby it is entitled to reserve space for the members of the academic community and to grant a subsidy for the payment of fees in case of limited income.

Likewise, as far as its family-friendly culture is concerned, the University has fostered major initiatives. Study half-days, special events, information brochures for people with family responsibilities and for Dual Career Couples: all of these have helped by providing adequate information and increasing awareness of the (new) members of Ticino’s academic community to the issue of balancing and the importance of a study and working environment characterised by gender equality, inclusiveness and harmony.

Steps for the four-year period 2017-2020

Over the next four-year period, USI is determined to:

- Have regard for equal opportunities and diversity in establishing the criteria for recruiting /managing academic staff;
- provide incentives and support to women researchers at USI, in such a way as to avoid wasting female talent and curb vertical segregation;
- provide support to parents and people that are domestic care-givers, in order to promote a fair balance between family and professional responsibilities and foster their wellbeing.

The set target for the four-year period is to reach at least 20% women full/associate professors.

The actions to be implemented are listed in the synoptic table placed at the end of the chapter.

Degree of innovation and potential for transfer

This is the area of intervention on which, even since it was first set up, the Equal Opportunities Service has strongly focused its activity. Measures of proven effectiveness have been institutionalised (for instance, the Mentoring Programme and the Days Nursery Programme). To follow up from what has been done so far, it is now a matter of extending the existing areas of intervention and/or to work on new aspects. More precisely, the following innovative features are worth pointing out:

- For the recruiting process, undertake an active search for excellent and diverse candidates;
- Set up educational/training occasions by involving more specifically people taking part in the Mentoring or the Shadowing Programme and on subject not treated before, integrating especially the topic of diversity;
- Put together a new publication on mentoring with useful tips on how to take up an academic career, and including some testimonials by mentees who have taken part in the USI programme "*Carriere accademiche al femminile*" over the years. Before writing it, there will be a careful review of the actual career paths of the participants, since the Programme was first established (2001-2002);
- Investigate in depth the issue of balance between professional and personal /family life by putting in place new measures to further this balance, above all for people who happen to be facing the consequences of unpredictable events (health problems, birth of new baby, separations, death, etc.).

The potential for transfer is very high; the activities will be shared with collegiate bodies set up at the local and national levels. We expect that some measures regarding work-life balance will be developed jointly with SUPSI.

2.2.3 Equal opportunities in selecting a study curriculum and deconstructing professional stereotypes

TARGET 3/ To avoid horizontal segregation and tackle professional stereotypes

Current situation

90% of work positions today require technological skills; according to the European Commission, in 2020 in Europe, the shortfall in the world of IT will be of 825,000 positions. Yet, the number of young women who decide to study disciplines in the MINT area at University is clearly lower than that of young men; USI is no exception. Take the number of registered students in the Faculty of Informatics: there, female students account for little more than 16% of the total.

Hence, the clear need to propose measures in this area, aimed at raising awareness among female students, that their 'equal' contribution is vital for social and cultural development. And this is also true of areas traditionally and wrongly considered relatively unattractive for women.

It is often the very parents and teachers that are to blame; they unwittingly pass on and perpetuate prejudices, for example, that girls have little or no disposition for scientific subjects. The best way of overcoming them and directing young women toward a digital career seems to be by giving visibility to positive models to follow, namely to dynamic and fulfilled women professionals.

Steps for the four-year period: 2017-2020

Over the next four years, USI wants, therefore, to further a diversification of women's professional career choices, by providing them with positive female models. The plan is to manage to drive up the percentage of women studying Informatics at USI over the 20% mark, through a series of actions described in the synoptic table at the end of the Chapter.

Degree of innovation and potential for transfer

The activities thought up in this area of intervention are all new. Their effectiveness is going to be put to the test by internal processes of self-evaluation and with the aid of statistical indicators.

2.2.4 Information and awareness of issues such as gender, equal opportunities and diversity

TARGET4/ To spread a culture of inclusion, founded on overcoming stereotypes and on enhancing diversity, through the promotion of cultural initiatives.

Current situation

True equality between men and women, or awareness of gender differences, will never be achieved without a proper promotion of a gender culture.

USI is squarely engaged in this sense, having organised, over the years, many initiatives to inform and increase awareness. Encouraging part-time work for men, stamping out gender-related stereotypes in the media, the introduction of an institutional language respectful of gender are some of the subjects that have recently been addressed through exhibitions, communication campaigns or public lectures.

On the strength of its dynamic collaboration with other institutional and entrepreneurial figures in Ticino, USI has made an active contribution to disseminating a culture of equal opportunities in Italian-speaking Switzerland.

Steps for the four-year period: 2017-2020

USI wants to proceed in this area of intervention along two main directives -- both crucial in the battle against gender segregation, either vertically or horizontally – namely:

- To support the increase of know-how in order to further professional growth and organizational development in a gender and diversity perspective;
- To carry out awareness and promotion initiatives intended to spread a culture of gender and diversity.

The specific targets for the next four years, and the actions to be implemented to reach them, are indicated in detail in the synoptic table below.

Degree of innovation and potential for transfer

The innovative nature of this area undoubtedly lies in the introduction of the diversity perspective, in the introduction of innovative technologies, and in the synergies with the partners involved, who extend the potential for transfer outside the University.

2.2.5 Equal opportunities in learning and studying

TARGET 5/ To promote equal access to study curricula by lowering gender- and diversity-related barriers

Current situation

USI has grown over the years, to become an increasingly international and interdisciplinary university. Today, the students and academics make up a community of people coming from over 50 nations.

To guarantee the right to study, equality and integration within the university community, it is important to make those organisational changes whereby inequality in education can be reduced.

Steps for the four-year period 2017-2020

Over the next four years, USI wants to assess the possibility of facilitating access to study, also to those who are engaged, for example, in a professional activity concurrently with a training programme (flexible working).

Likewise, it wants to facilitate the learning process and overcome any cognitive and/or physical barriers (differentiation), by introducing innovative teaching models. The synoptic table you find at the end of this chapter provides details of the planned activities.

Degree of innovation and potential for transfer

The innovative nature of this area of intervention lies not only in the subject tackled but also in the synergy created with the partners involved (SUPSI-DFA) and in the high potential for transfer.

2.3 From strategic to operational targets

The following table illustrates the actions envisaged over the next four-year period, 2017/2020. For each area of intervention, they indicate the subjects concerned, timelines, recipients/beneficiaries of the interventions, expected outcomes and monitoring indicators. The content is a response to the evidence drawn from the previous analyses (see Chapter 1).

Out of 29 planned activities, 19 are wholly innovative. The rest, in keeping with all that has been achieved so far, stand out for the innovative nature of the subjects chosen (in particular, the integration of the diversity dimension), for the technologies and/or the methodologies used, for the synergies created with the partners involved and for the potential for transfer of knowledge and good practice, themselves providing a boost.

| TOOLS/MEASURES | ACTIVITIES/CONCRETE PRODUCTS | FIGURES/BODIES INVOLVED | YEAR | TARGET | OBJECTIVES/RESULTS | INDICATORS | DEGREE OF INNOVATION |
|---|---|--|------------------------------|---------------------------|--|---|--|
| AREA OF INTERVENTION 1 | | | | | | | |
| GATHERING AND PROCESSING OF DATA ON THE GENDER ISSUE | | | | | | | |
| 1.1 Extension of the information base supporting equal opportunities | Organisation of a statistical survey aimed to achieve gender balance To undertake a 'journey' where the University is encouraged to take stock in matters of gender, by integrating further aspects of university life (staff distribution and functions, part-time, continuing education, career progression, etc.) into its systematic collection of statistical data. | Management SQ SPO | 2017 2018 2019 2020 | Academic community | To monitor gender equality and steer equal opportunity policies effectively | Statistics and reports submitted | New indicators are integrated. |
| | Promotion of research and surveys on issues of particular interest to the University, from a perspective of equality and diversity Jointly with the academic bodies involved, to identify themes for specific research carried out by female and male researchers of the University and, later, to formulate proposals for improvement from a gender and diversity perspective. | Management SPO Services Faculties | 1 research project a year | Academic community | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic issues and/or internal critical aspects never explored to date; - Different institutional figures involved. |
| AREA OF INTERVENTION 2 | | | | | | | |
| EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CAREER PROMOTION | | | | | | | |
| 2.1 Regard for equal opportunities and diversity in setting criteria for recruiting/managing academic staff | Active search for excellent applicants during the recruiting process for tenured professors To draw the attention of excellent candidates from the under-represented gender to job advertisements and invite them for interview. | Rectorate Faculties | 2017 2018 2019 2020 | Professorial candidates | To reduce any asymmetry within the tenured professor body. The expectation is that by the end of the four-year period at least 20% of full professors will be women. | Statistics on the number of women members of the professorial body. | NEW. |
| | Raising awareness to gender imbalances among members of selecting/appointment committees and study grant allocation committees To draw the Selection Committee's attention to the possible influence of unconscious judgements in the appraisal of candidates, so as to guarantee a fair and thorough scrutiny of candidates. | Rectorate SPO | 2017 2018 2019 2020 | Members of USI Committees | | | New ways of raising awareness/ education. |

| TOOLS/MEASURES | ACTIVITIES/CONCRETE PRODUCTS | FIGURES/BODIES INVOLVED | YEAR | TARGET | OBJECTIVES/RESULTS | INDICATORS | DEGREE OF INNOVATION |
|---|---|--------------------------------|------------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| 2.2 Support for USI women researchers in view of contributing to curb the waste of women's talents and vertical segregation | Shadowing for mentees To offer women researchers taking part in USI's Mentoring Programme the possibility to benefit from a month's leave from their work commitment at the University to devote themselves entirely to bolstering their academic portfolio by joining a research group in an overseas university. | SPO GL | 1 call a year | Mentees of the junior women academic body | To tackle the phenomenon of vertical segregation | Number of files submitted | Synergies with new universities. |
| | Training and specialised seminar for junior academics To organise, also jointly with the Gender and Diversity Service, SUPSI, training initiatives designed to optimise the gender and diversity skills of the young generation of academics. | Faculties SPO GeD SUPSI | 1 workshop a year | Junior academics | | Number of participants | - Integration of the "diversity" issue; - Synergy with SUPSI. |
| | Carrying out research on the career paths of USI mentees Look into the career paths of <i>mentees</i> who over the years have taken part in USI's Mentoring Programme. | SPO GL | 2017 | Junior academics | | Extent of implementation of project | NEW. |
| | Publication on Mentoring with the testimonial of some mentees whose career in academia has taken off To provide strategies and useful information to (future) researchers of the University, by circulating a dedicated publication. | SPO GL | 2018 | Junior academics | | Number of copies circulated and mentees feedback | NEW. |
| | Organising an event to launch the publication on Mentoring In collaboration with the professorial staff of the different Faculties, to report back on the survey conducted; to promote the new publication and valorise women's career paths. | SPO GL Faculties | 1 event in 2018 | Junior academics | | Number of participants | NEW. |
| 2.3 Support aimed at parents and people engaged in care-giving activities to promote balance between family and professional duties and stimulate wellbeing [1] | Promoting surveys on the need to balance work and family commitments To probe at regular intervals the demands of the members of the academic community, in order to adjust the strategy and the available resources in this area. | SPO | 2018 - 2020 | Admin staff Academic body | To further a good balance between professional and family life | Extent of implementation of surveys | Strumento di verifica dell'efficacia delle nuove azioni promosse. |
| | Launching new services to support parents during the school holiday with children aged 4 to 12 In addition to providing information on the main activities organised in the region, and to negotiating agreements with external actors, USI and SUPSI want to organise a <i>Junior camp</i> during the summer for children of the members of both Institutions. | Management SPO GeD SUPSI | 2017 2018 2019 2020 | Families | | Number of applications to join the new <i>Junior camp</i> USI-SUPSI | NEW. |

| TOOLS/MEASURES | ACTIVITIES/CONCRETE PRODUCTS | FIGURES/BODIES INVOLVED | YEAR | TARGET | OBJECTIVES/RESULTS | INDICATORS | DEGREE OF INNOVATION |
|---|--|--------------------------|-------------------|--|---|---|---|
| 2.3 Support aimed at parents and people engaged in care-giving activities to promote balance between family and professional duties and stimulate wellbeing [2] | <p>Launching services in support of emergency management in relation to the need for work-family balance</p> <p>To assess, after a close examination of the Regulations, what measures to activate /reinforce to help the academic and administrative staff to cope with the consequences of unpredictable personal and family events (health problems, birth of new babies, separations, death, etc.).</p> | Management SPO | 2017/2018 | Admin staff Academic body | To further a good balance between professional and family life | Extent of implementation of project | NEW. |
| | <p>Feasibility study for the Senior Care project</p> <p>Assessing the feasibility of information meeting and/or running specific interventions for members of staff engaged in caregiving activities with elderly relatives, also by seeking possible partners in the Canton or nationwide.</p> | SPO HRM | 2018 | Staff with domestic care-giving activities | | Extent of implementation of project | NEW. |
| | <p>Design and implementation of a publication on the working flexibility solutions</p> <p>Illustrating, also through direct testimonials by members of the two universities, solutions of flexibility of time and space (personalised timetables, teleworking, job sharing, etc.) and promoting the initiatives arranged by the two institutions in this area.</p> | SPO GeD SUPSI | 2018/2019 | Admin staff Academic body | Provide information on suggestions for work-family balance from USI and the region. | Number of copies circulated | NEW. |
| | <p>Organisation of "Family Day USI-SUPSI"</p> <p>To strengthen a spirit and sentiment of community by enjoying good moments together with our loved ones during a leisurely afternoon devoted to the families of the two academic institutions.</p> | SPO GeD SUPSI | 1 activity a year | Families | Strengthening the academic community by deepening the sense of belonging | Degree of implementation of the initiative and number of participants | Involving new member of the two academic communities. |
| | <p>Organisation of USI Welcome Kids Day</p> <p>Organising an <i>Open Day</i> devoted to the children of the administrative and academic personnel. During the event, the children will get to know the workplace of their Mum and Dad, and take part in play-learning workshops conceived for them.</p> <p>That Day will be an occasion in which to distribute the main publications of the Service, where these targets are covered.</p> | Management SPO SCM | 1 activity a year | Admin staff Academic body | | Degree of implementation of the initiative and number of participants | NEW. |

| TOOLS/MEASURES | ACTIVITIES/CONCRETE PRODUCTS | FIGURES/BODIES INVOLVED | YEAR | TARGET | OBJECTIVES/RESULTS | INDICATORS | DEGREE OF INNOVATION |
|---|---|--|------------------------------|---|--|---|----------------------|
| AREA OF INTERVENTION 3 | | | | | | | |
| EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CHOICE OF A STUDY CURRICULUM AND IN DECONSTRUCTING PROFESSIONAL STEREOTYPES | | | | | | | |
| 3.1 Raising awareness to further diversification of women's professional career choices | <p>Promoting studies in Informatics through a non-stereotypical image of the profession</p> <p>In collaboration with science teachers in Ticino's upper secondary schools as well as with organisations and enterprises based in the region, to instigate actions (information seminars, video-contest, ...) helping to deconstruct gender stereotypes. In particular, these events should, on the one hand, highlight that the stock of technical-scientific knowledge is not the prerogative of males (girls/women have proved to be not less competent in maths, for example) and, on the other, bring out a series of capacities and attitudes that tend not to be associated with scientific professions.</p> | FAC INFO SOeP SPO SMS - DECS Organisations and enterprises | 2017 2018 2019 2020 | Male and female pupils of upper secondary schools in Ticino | To contribute to deconstruct and overcome all gender stereotypes during a course of study | Number of actions implemented and their assessment by the target public | NEW. |
| | <p>Preparation of material to encourage young women to engage in technical-scientific careers</p> <p>To prepare promotional resources (paper and digital), to be supplied during the University's promotional and career events, with the testimonials of women researchers and professionals that have successfully launched an academic or entrepreneurial career after degree studies in Informatics. These instruments will show, to students of both genders faced with a choice of Faculty, the creative nature of Informatics, the importance of scientific skills for their professional future and the role of gender stereotypes in selecting a course of study. The model of successful women is an encouragement and an "authorisation" for young women to direct their choice toward areas of interest generally seen as a 'male preserve'. It can guarantee them positive reinforcement, associated both to their skills and to a sense of that 'choice' being more 'agreeable' to others.</p> | FAC INFO SOeP SPO SMS - DECS | 2017 2018 2019 2020 | Male and female students faced with the problem of choosing a Faculty | To increase – by 2020 – to above 20% the number of women students registered in the Faculty of Informatics, USI. | Degree of implementation of the instruments | NEW. |
| | <p>Allocation of a study grant</p> <p>To award a 'gender' study grant to an especially deserving female student (based on school grades achieved) and/or with family responsibilities.</p> | FAC INFO SPO | 1 grant a year | Female students of the Faculty of Informatics, USI.I | | Number of requests received | NEW. |

| TOOLS/MEASURES | ACTIVITIES/CONCRETE PRODUCTS | FIGURES/BODIES INVOLVED | YEAR | TARGET | OBJECTIVES/RESULTS | INDICATORS | DEGREE OF INNOVATION |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|--|---|--|--|---|
| AREA OF INTERVENTION 4 | | | | | | | |
| INFORMATION AND AWARENESS ON QUESTIONS OF GENDER, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY | | | | | | | |
| 4.1 Support for the development of gender and diversity skills | In-depth gender study in Bachelor's and Master's courses To collaborate with the professorial staff of the different Faculties to identify subjects to discuss in training and increasing the awareness of the student body. The aim is to show the connection between the subject taught and the gender dimension. | SPO FAC –professorale | 1 activity a year | Bachelor's and Master's students | To promote professional growth and organisational development from a gender perspective | Number of 'paths' put in place | - Integrazione del tema "diversity". - New collaborations with professors of the different Faculties |
| | Formazione ed approfondimenti di tipo seminariale per il personale amministrativo su temi di genere e diversità To organise training initiatives on gender and diversity issues on behalf of the administrative staff of USI and SUPSI. | SPO GeD SUPSI | 1 workshop in 2018 1 workshop in 2020 | USI-SUPSI Admin Staff | | Extent of implementation of the initiatives and number of participants | Incorporating the "diversity" issue. |
| | Designing and implementing a MOOC on equal opportunities in teaching To develop a training and awareness course on-line (MOOC) to illustrate the importance of integrating the gender dimension in teaching in terms of content as well as methods. | FAC COM & INFO SPO | 2017/2018 | Top Junior academics with teaching responsibilities | | Developing the course and numbers of 'users' | NEW. |
| 4.2 Spreading a culture of gender and diversity | Events to raise awareness and publicise the issue of equal opportunities and diversity To put forward interventions, also in synergy with other operators in the region, designed to foster debate and the dissemination of knowledge related to the culture of gender and diversity. | SPO GeD SUPSI Outside Partners | 1 activity a year | USI-SUPSI Academic communities General public | To spread a culture of inclusion, based on overcoming stereotypes and on the valorisation of diversity | Extent of implementation of the initiatives planned | - Incorporating the "diversity" issue. - New collaborations with local organisations. |
| | Awareness campaign on women role models in academia and in society To highlight the success achieved by women researchers and professors at USI and, more generally, by women in the sciences, entrepreneurship, and in decision-making positions. | SPO GL | 2017/2018 | USI community | | Extent of implementation of the initiative | NEW. |
| | Award of a prize for best Master's thesis on equal opportunities To motivate students to research the issue of equal opportunities in society or other subjects somehow connected with the gender perspective. | SPO GL FAC | 1 award a year | Master's students | | Number of theses submitted | NEW. |
| | Participating in drafting the code of ethics To contribute to drafting and publicising, with regard to equal opportunities, a code of ethics as a reference point for all the members of USI, in terms of the desirable conduct in the workplace and the study environment. | CE SPO | 2017 | Academic community | | Extent of implementation of the initiative | NEW. |

| TOOLS/MEASURES | ACTIVITIES/CONCRETE PRODUCTS | FIGURES/BODIES INVOLVED | YEAR | TARGET | OBJECTIVES/RESULTS | INDICATORS | DEGREE OF INNOVATION |
|--|---|-------------------------|-----------|--------------------------------|---|---|----------------------|
| AREA OF INTERVENTION 5 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN LEARNING AND STUDYING | | | | | | | |
| 5.1 Introducing organisational changes to reduce inequalities in training and education, guaranteeing the right to study, equality and integration within the academic community | Introduction of innovative teaching methods that encourage flexible and differentiated methods of study Assessing, in collaboration with the Faculties having established appropriate monitoring instruments (survey of students, review of Study Regulations, ...) the launch and/or the development of differentiated teaching model capable of overcoming physical, cognitive, and organisational obstacles and study flexibility. | SPO FAC | 2017 | USI Academic community | To facilitate access to study curricula (<i>flexibilisation</i>) and develop a teaching method enabling to overcome any cognitive and/or physical barriers (<i>differentiation</i>), also by applying appropriate devices in the classroom and/or online. | Extent of implementation of the initiative | NEW. |
| | Increasing awareness of the use of differentiated teaching instruments Creating an information document made up of good practice to apply in dealing with the whole student body, in particular, with people with disabilities or specific learning disorders. | SPO GeD SUPSI | 2018 | USI-SUPSI Academic communities | | Implementation and distribution of the instrument | NEW. |
| | Awareness event on differentiated teaching designed to closely examine specific learning disorders In collaboration with USI's Faculties and SUPSI's officers responsible for training, to identify and share good practice to assure an effective support in case of physical and/or cognitive barriers. | SPO GeD SUPSI | 2018/2019 | USI-SUPSI Academic communities | | Extent of implementation of the initiative | NEW. |

With its current four-year Plan, USI has succeeded in organising a series of interventions grounded in the analysis of its past record and background. The analysis has revealed a number of critical areas and underlying problems, which will be the focal point of equal opportunity actions.

The University will ensure that all the activities envisaged in the current Plan are implemented, with the assistance and support of interested parties. The University is fully aware that the removal of the hurdles hindering the progress of equal opportunities in the study- and work-place is a prime strategic concern of USI.

During the period covered by the Plan, regular checks will be carried out; views, advice, comments, and suggestions will be collected, as well as potential solutions to problems encountered by interested parties, with a view to monitoring and, possibly, adjusting the methods of implementation in relation to any changes in the context. The positive outcome of the planned activities is bound to depend, in fact, on the capacity to react to the challenges that are, inevitably, bound to emerge and, at the same time, on being able to recognize and make the most of any positive chances that come our way, in order to further and consolidate equality at USI.

The Plan is published on the website of USI's Equal Opportunities Service and is clearly visible and easily accessible to everyone in the academic community. The *Equal Opportunities Newsletter*, distributed at six-monthly intervals, will provide all interested parties prompt updates on the execution of all the planned measures and activities.

Abbreviations

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|------------|--|
| CE | Comitato Etico: Ethics Committee |
| FAC | Facoltà USI: USI Faculties |
| FAC COM | Facoltà di Comunicazione: Faculty of Communication Sciences |
| FAC INFO | Facoltà di Informatica: Faculty of Informatics |
| GeD SUPSI | Servizio Gender e Diversity SUPSI: Gender and Diversity Service, SUPSI |
| GL | Gruppo di lavoro per le pari opportunità: Working Group for equal opportunities |
| HRM | Servizio Amministrazione del personale: Human Resources Management Service |
| SCM | Servizio Comunicazione e Media: Service for Media and Communication |
| SMS – DECS | Scuole Medie Superiori – Dipartimento Educazione Cultura e Sport del Canton Ticino: Upper Secondary School – Department for Education, Culture and Sports of Canton Ticino |
| SOeP | Servizio Orientamento e Promozione: Study Advisory Service |
| SPO | Servizio per le Pari Opportunità: Equal Opportunities Service |
| SQ | Servizio Qualità: Quality Assurance Service |
| SUPSI | Scuola Universitaria Professionale della Svizzera Italiana: University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland |
| SUPSI-DFA | Dipartimento Formazione e Apprendimento della SUPSI: Department of Education and Learning, SUPSI |
| USI | Università della Svizzera italiana |