Toolkit for organizing reflexive working groups for selection committee members

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ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

Why?
Gender inequality in science is still a pressing problem today. Although the percentage of women and men PhD students are more or less equal, the higher up the scientific ladder, the more positions are occupied by men. Recruitment and selection processes are key to maintaining or changing the status quo. Criteria that are used in recruitment and selection procedures can play out differently for men and women candidates, to the disadvantage of the latter. Reflection on these criteria and on the process of academic recruitment and selection can help to counter gender inequalities.

For whom is this Toolkit intended?
The Toolkit is intended for scientific staff members and/or diversity professionals who a) see the urgency of action plans and interventions geared to gender equality in science; and b) want to organize/facilitate reflexive working groups for recruitment and selection committees in order to raise awareness for and change the practices that can foster the reproduction of gender inequalities, gender biases, and disparities in recruitment and selection, specifically of early career researchers.

What is the purpose of this toolkit?
The purpose of this Toolkit is to help aforementioned staff members in effectively organizing and facilitating reflexive working groups for all support and research staff who are involved in recruitment and selection committees and/or procedures or otherwise responsible for the evaluation of early career researchers. Target groups are for example chairs and members of selection committees (academics who have been or will be part of selection committees for early career researchers), and other key players (e.g. managers of the departments, HR staff).

What are reflexive working groups?
A reflexive working group is a type of interactive training that invites the participants to reflect on their own actions and behaviour in organizational processes. It is a space to share and exchange experiences. The aims of reflexive working groups are threefold. First, to raise awareness among key players on how gender practices influence the selection process and the selection criteria, including conceptions of excellence. Second, to raise awareness that evaluation criteria are not objectified truths, and that evaluators’ conceptions of criteria differ in highly political selection processes. And third, to raise awareness of the gender practices in evaluation procedures that disadvantage women.

A part of the reflexive working group consists of providing information on gender practices in recruitment and selection processes. However, the key element is reflexivity of those involved in recruitment and selection. Participants are encouraged to actively reflect on how recruitment and selection criteria are constructed, on what is happening in recruitment and selection processes (e.g. on the politics involved), and on the gender practices in the evaluation of early career researchers.

What are early career researchers?
Although the gendered and political processes that occur in recruitment and selections processes apply to all academic positions, this Toolkit is foremost aimed at the recruitment and selection of early career researchers. Early career researchers are researchers who recently obtained their PhD’s and find themselves at the start of their scientific career. Positions of early career researchers vary from temporary positions, without the prospect of a permanent contract (for instance postdocs), temporary positions expected to become permanent positions in the long run (for instance tenure tracks), or a first permanent academic position (for instance assistant professor). These positions differ across countries, universities and/or institutes, so when using this Toolkit, focus on the positions that are most appropriate in the context at hand.

What are gender practices?
Gender practices refer to the everyday social practices of distinguishing between men and women, between masculinity and femininity (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012). Gender practices are produced and negotiated in interactions, for example when committee members make use of gender stereotypes to describe differences between men and women candidates.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Toolkit reflexive working groups provides a road map for designing and executing effective reflexive working groups. The Toolkit is intended for scientific staff members and/or diversity professionals who a) see the urgency of action plans and interventions geared to gender equality in science; and b) want to organize and facilitate reflexive working groups for recruitment and selection committees in order to raise awareness for and change the practices that can foster the reproduction of gender inequalities, gender biases, and disparities in the recruitment and selection of early career researchers.

The Toolkit is part of work package 7 of the GARCIA project. The GARCIA Project – Gendering the Academy and Research: combating Career Instability and Asymmetries – is concerned with
the implementation of actions in European universities and research centres to promote gender equality and to prevent gender stereotypes and discriminations. Work package 7 focuses on the revealing of gender practices in the construction of scientific excellence in recruitment and selection procedures. The construction of scientific excellence is especially salient for the early stages of a scientific career, as the label of excellence can make the difference between the inclusion or exclusion of researchers in academia. Building on the D7.2 report on Gender practices in the construction of excellence (Herschberg, Benschop & Van den Brink, 2016), this toolkit is designed to organize and facilitate reflexive working groups for committee members and other key players involved in the recruitment and selection of early career researchers.

The Toolkit is based on the reports on reflexive working groups for selection committee members that were organized in the six GARCIA beneficiaries: Belgium, Iceland, Italy, the Netherlands, Slovenia, and Switzerland. The reflexive working groups were organized in two disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH)) to assure that the Toolkit is an encompassing tool that can be extended to all levels of an institute by incorporating the best systemic organizational approaches.

The aims of a reflexive working group are threefold. First, to raise awareness among key players on how gender practices influence the selection process and the selection criteria, including conceptions of excellence. Second, to raise awareness that evaluation criteria are not objectified truths, and that evaluators’ conceptions of criteria differ in highly political selection processes. And third, to raise awareness of the gender practices in evaluation procedures that disadvantage women.

Reflexive working groups are thus designed to discuss the recruitment and selection procedures of early career researchers and how gender practices are key to the inclusion or exclusion of candidates. Participants are invited to discuss the discrepancy between ‘formal’ criteria often displayed in job postings, and the actual criteria applied during recruitment and selection procedures. Moreover, reflexive working groups aim to increase committee members’ understanding about the role of gender in the recruitment and selection processes in which they take part. Criteria and selection processes are reconsidered to raise awareness on gender asymmetries in career development and how criteria that are used to define “excellence” may work out differently for men and women candidates in recruitment processes. Finally, participants are invited to come up with recommendations and action points to counter gendered selection processes.

The Toolkit is divided into three main parts: preparation, execution and evaluation. The preparation part focuses on all aspects involved in organizing and setting up a reflexive working group. This section explains what organizers/facilitators should take into account in anticipation of the execution of reflexive working groups. The execution part focuses on all aspects involved in the actual execution of the reflexive working group. In this section, we describe how facilitators can run a reflexive working group effectively. The evaluation part focuses on all aspects involved in evaluating the reflexive working group. This section provides guidelines how to collect feedback and evaluations at the end of the reflexive working group in order to improve future reflexive working groups.
1. PREPARATION
1. PREPARATION

The preparation for the reflexive working group can be divided into two main parts:
1) Research in preparation of the reflexive working group
2) Preparing the reflexive working group

The first part involves research activities within the institute(s), organization(s), or department(s) in which the reflexive working groups are to be organized (hereafter just referred to as institute(s)). After the first part is completed, reflexive working group organizers can continue with the second part, that is, the preparation of the actual reflexive working group. These two main parts will be further elaborated upon in the following sections.

1.1 Research in preparation of the workshop

The aims of the reflexive working group are 1) to discuss the discrepancy between ‘formal’ criteria often displayed in job postings and the applied criteria during the selection procedure; and 2) to bring an understanding as to how gender can play a role in the recruitment and selection processes. Thus, a prerequisite for an effective reflexive working group is to have knowledge about these formal criteria and actual practices in selection committees within the institute in which the reflexive working group is to be organized. Furthermore, it is necessary for working group facilitators to have knowledge about gender practices to be able to explain the role of gender in recruitment and selection procedures and the possible gendered implications for appointments.

To acquire this knowledge, research needs to be conducted prior to the reflexive working group. This research can be done in two different ways. The first, and most recommended, way is a study within the institute in which the reflexive working group is to be organized. Although this research is time-consuming – estimated time is six to eight months (cf. GARCIA working paper n. 9) – the insights gained from this type of research also provide the most contextualized knowledge about the formal and informal recruitment and selection criteria, and the gendered practices within the targeted institute.

A second, less time-consuming but also less contextualized way, to collect the appropriate knowledge on gendered recruitment and selection practices is to conduct an extensive literature study on the construction of excellence in recruitment and selection, and the gender practices therein (see §1.1.1 Step 1: Literature review). Publicly available documents on the Internet on European and US projects like GARCIA or ADVANCE can function as a source for additional information to gain a general understanding of gender biases in the construction of excellence (in recruitment and selection committees).

We recommend the first, contextualized approach, because data from the institute where the reflexive working group is aimed for would present concrete examples and better insights into the specific difficulties within the institute, and, therefore, better aimed actions for change. Based on the contextualized research approach, we outline three steps that can serve as guide to carry out the research. These steps are based on GARCIA working paper n.9 (Bozzon, Murgia, & Poggio, 2016). The results of this research will form the basis of the content of the reflexive working group.

1.1.1 Research guidelines

Step 1: Literature review
To gain an understanding of gender biases in the construction of excellence, conduct a literature review on the construction of excellence and gender practices in science. (see Appendix A for recommend readings)

Step 2: Data collection
Documents Collect available documents related to the recruitment and selection of postdoc and assistant professor positions: job postings of the last five years; policy documents on hiring and promotion practices; and HR-documents (e.g. appointment reports and assessment sheets for evaluation of early career researchers).
Additionally, collect data on gender statistics in research and science from the subject institute.
and/or from other sources (such as the SHE Figures).

Interviews Conduct interviews with recruitment and selection committee members and other members of the recruitment procedure to identify how excellence criteria are applied during selection procedures (see Appendix B for an interview guide). If possible, also organize focus group interviews with recruitment and selection committee members and/or other key players might be a good addition to acquire more information. Record the interviews and focus groups in order to better analyse the data afterwards.

**Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries**
When present in the subject institute, a list and email contacts of the committee members can be obtained from the HR or personnel department. NB: Also contacting the legal office might be helpful to manage possible difficulties about privacy issues when contact details are to be disclosed.

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**Step 3: Data analysis**
First, transcribe the interview- and focus group material and conduct a content analysis on the collected documents. Second, analyze the formal selection criteria displayed in job postings. Third, analyze the actual criteria deployed when a candidate is selected and how these criteria come about by answering the following questions:
- Is there a gap between the formal criteria and the criteria applied in practice?
- How are criteria – such as the criterion of excellence – constructed by committee members?
- Which (micropolitical) processes play a role in recruitment and selection committees when they decide upon the criteria on which candidates are evaluated?

Fourth, analyze the gender practices that occur in recruitment and selection processes. The following questions may help during the analysis:
- Can some criteria be considered to be more masculine or feminine?
- How are selection procedures organized?
- How is the ‘selection game’ played and who are the key players?
- What power processes take place in the recruitment and selection?

**Step 4: Writing a research report and/or making a presentation**
Summarize the findings and conclusions either in a research report or straight away in the presentation that will be used during the reflexive working group. Focus in the report or presentation on, a) the (gap between) formal criteria and actual practices of recruitment and selection of candidates that are used to construct scientific excellence in the subject institute; and b) the gender practices in recruitment and selection procedures within the subject institute.

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**1.2 Preparing the workshop**
The following sections elaborate on the core organizational aspects that should be taken into account when organizing reflexive working groups: the participants of the reflexive working group, the facilitators of the reflexive working group, when to organize the reflexive working group and other (practical) arrangements that should be made.

**1.2.1. Who?**
The who-question refers to the participants of the reflexive working group as well as to the facilitators of the reflexive working group. We will discuss them separately.

**The participants**
The participants of the reflexive working group are the people who attend the working group. The participants could be all support and research staff who are involved in recruitment and selection committees and/or procedures or otherwise responsible for the evaluation of early career researchers. The target participants are for example full professors, associate professors and HR officers, but also the heads, directors and deans of the subject institute, and (if present) officers of diversity, equality and inclusion bodies within the institute.

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1 Or equivalent positions of early career researchers
Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries
- Aim for five to twelve participants. Although five participants may seem a small number, it could be an effective amount if these five participants are potential (and willing) change agents with appointing power. The reflexive working group then allows for a fruitful debate on gender inequalities and how to prevent them in recruitment and selection processes (see also §1.3 Challenge no. 1: Getting participants).
- Invite gender experts within the subject institute to join the reflexive working group. Having gender experts present in the room can be helpful to guide a more comprehensive discussion on change.

The facilitators
The facilitators of the reflexive working group should have knowledge of and understand how excellence is constructed in recruitment and selection processes, how micropolitics affect the evaluation of job candidates, and how gender practices play a role. It is therefore important to choose the facilitators carefully. We learned from several GARCIA beneficiaries that the organizers of the reflexive working group do not necessarily have to be the facilitators of the working group. Since possible actions for change are also an objective of the reflexive working group, it is most effective if the facilitators hold authority or status. For example, a full professor as facilitator is likely to have more authority than a postdoc as facilitator. We recommend choosing the facilitators of the working group after an exploration of the institute’s needs and particularities.

Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries
- Preferably a duo of facilitators: alternately one to present and one to observe the group processes.
- In some cases, the organizers of the reflexive working group may choose to invite an external facilitator(s). When doing so it is important to inform them about the particular context of the country and institute where the reflexive working group is organized (see §1.1 on contextualized data).

1.2.2. When?
Choosing the right time for the reflexive working group is important, in particular with respect to getting participants. Choose the date and time of the reflexive working group after a careful check of the institute’s commitments, that is, not in a holiday period or during students’ examinations.

Allow at least two hours for the reflexive working group. This is the minimum amount of time needed to discuss the selection criteria, and to discuss the gender practices in recruitment and selection committees, and to have room for discussion to reconsider the criteria and selection processes and for participants to come up with recommendations and action points to counter gendered selection procedures. For more in depth discussion we would recommend a reflexive working group of at least three hours.

Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries
- Consider to organize the reflexive working group on a conference or an awayday of the subject institute.
- In case the subject institute has a secretary, consult them when picking a date for the reflexive working group in order to prevent overlap with other events or activities.

1.2.3. How?
Start well in advance with the organization of the reflexive working group. We advise at least two to three months. Not only because practical matters, such as the room and catering, should be booked well in advance, but also to prevent that key participants are already engaged in other activities. The following steps provide guidelines to effectively structure the organization and preparation of the reflexive working group.

Step 1: Getting support from the management
When organizing reflexive working groups, it is highly recommended to involve both formal and informal leaders within the subject institute. Get support from persons well-known and appreciated within the institute, from the HR department, and, moreover, from the institute’s management, i.e. the dean or director.
Commitment from the management possibly results in a higher number of participants as well as getting access to other necessary facilities more easily (for example to obtain contact details of potential participants, or to get budget for catering).

**Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries**
- Integrate the organization of the reflexive working group with already existing gender initiatives in the subject institute. Organizing the reflexive working groups as part of these initiatives might be beneficial, particularly when existing diversity, equality and inclusion bodies are already supported and facilitated within the subject institute.

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**Step 2: Contact details of potential participants**
Obtain a list from for example the administrative or human resource offices with the names and contact details of all support and research staff who are involved in recruitment and selection committees. If this is not possible, contact the whole department and specify the target population of recruitment and selection committee members in the invitation e-mail.

**Step 3: Sending invitations**
The text of the invitation should be fine-tuned and adjusted to the target participants of the reflexive working group. If possible, involve HR officers or, when having the commitment of the institute’s management, communicate with the management about the text of the invitation. The e-mail that is send to the potential participants should contain the purpose, the date and the location of the reflexive working group. Organizers can send the invitations themselves, but it is even better to have the management (i.e. dean or director) send the e-mail out and urge their staff members to participate (see box text 1.1 on p.10 for an example).

**Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries**
- Send out invitations at least two months before the day of the reflexive working group (especially with regard to agendas of full professors). Send reminders a week before the reflexive working group.

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**Step 4: Practical arrangements**
Book a meeting room for the working groups, ensuring that the room is set up in a way that discussion can be facilitated (e.g. tables placed in a U-shape). If the intention is to present the findings via a projector, it is necessary to ensure the room has the necessary facilities. Make sure that arrangements are made for the appropriate technical support as well as possible catering (e.g. coffee/tea/biscuits; lunch; refreshments; water – depending on the time of day the reflexive working group are organized).

**Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries**
- Secretaries can be helpful in arranging a room and catering as well as sending reminders. This can alleviate some of the organizational work.

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**1.3 Managing challenges and resistances**

**Challenge no. 1: Getting (women) participants**
One of the main challenges that GARCIA beneficiaries experienced is getting participants for the reflexive working groups. There are several actions that can be taken in order to maximize the possibility that invited participants will attend.

**Involve the management**
As mentioned, commitment from the institute’s management (e.g. the dean or director) is important and could result in a higher number of participants. Make sure the management – and other key opinion leaders in higher organizational positions – is not only involved in writing and sending invitations (see §1.2.3 step 3), but also participate in the actual reflexive working group. This will help to legitimize the topics addressed in the reflexive working group.

**Timing**
Choose the day and time of the reflexive working group carefully (see §1.2.2).

**Promoting the reflexive working group**
Do not only rely on invitations send by e-mail, but also publish the information of the reflexive working group on the news page of the website or intranet of the subject institute.
Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries
- A small number of participants does not necessarily have to be problematic. When inviting participants, focus on the front runners of change; on people who want to work as advocates. It is more effective to concentrate on willing opinion leaders or change agents with formal and informal power, and not engage too much with strong resistance.
- Organize the reflexive working group around lunch time and provide the participants with lunch.
- Highlight possible networking opportunities – especially when the institute’s management will be participating.
- In some beneficiaries, the reflexive working group is made mandatory for future recruitment and selection committee members. NB: Of course, this can only be established with the commitment of the institute’s management.

Challenge no. 2: Finding a balance between time and effect
Participation in reflexive working groups is time-consuming and requires extra time investment of participants. A meeting of three hours or more might discourage potential participants to attend, especially those without a strong interest in gender equality issues. However, during a reflexive working group of two hours, it is difficult to go into detail and involve all the participants in the discussion. Therefore, reflexive working group facilitators need to find a balance between the time investment that is asked of participants on the one hand, and the time that is needed to effectively reflect on gender in recruitment and selection processes on the other hand.

Box text 1.1: Invitation reflexive working group on recruitment and selection at [institute]

Dear Colleagues,

Our [institute] is concerned with the implementation of actions to promote gender equality in academia. Recruitment and selection of early career scientists (postdocs and assistant professors) is a key part of these actions.

The [institute] values diversity and therefore recommends the reflexive working group on recruitment and selection. All staff members who participate in selection committees are invited to take part in the reflexive working groups that is to be organized on:

[date and time]

In the reflexive working group, [names of facilitators] will present the findings of their research and facilitate a discussion about quality recruitment and selection. The existing gaps between formal criteria and criteria applied in actual selection will be discussed, as well as different perceptions of excellent candidates, gender practices in recruitment and selection, and how to avoid these. Participants will reflect on criteria that are relevant and salient in their fields, and exchange best practices.

Unbiased recruitment of the best qualified staff is essential to the future of the [Institute], and I therefore urge all staff members who are, or expect to be, involved in recruiting, to attend this reflexive working group. Lunch will be provided. Please register before [date two weeks prior to the date of the reflexive working group] with [names and contact details of the facilitators]. If you cannot attend, I expect to be informed about the reason.

With kind regards,
[Name + Title]
Director [Institute]
2. EXECUTION
2. EXECUTION

In the following sections we will further elaborate upon the actual execution of the reflexive working group. Our description relies on a contextual approach (see §1.1) and is based on a duration of three hours. The reflexive working groups can be divided into three parts:

### Part Time allocation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Time allocation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Introduction</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>2) Core content</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>a. Overview of gender statistics</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Discussion of formal versus actual selection criteria</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Discussion of gender practices in recruitment and selection processes</td>
<td>60 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Discussion about actions for change</td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>3) Evaluation and feedback</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
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2.1 Introduction

The first main part of the reflexive working group is the introduction. The objective of the introduction is twofold. First, to make the goals and importance of the reflexive working group clear to the participants and create a constructive atmosphere. Second, it is important that the working group facilitators also know their participants and their experiences and expectations.

### Time allocation 30 minutes

#### 2.1.1. Introducing the reflexive working group

Use the first part of the introduction of the reflexive working group to 1) introduce the working group facilitators and their expertise, 2) elucidate the aim and goals of the reflexive working group, and 3) create a safe and constructive atmosphere in which participants can reflect openly on their opinions and experiences.

It is important that participants know what they can expect during the reflexive working group, but also what is expected of them. Explain why the reflexive working group is important and why active participation is even more important. Try to create a safe learning environment by inviting participants to openly discuss their ideas and to share their experiences.

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### Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries

Keep the time schedule in mind but be flexible. Make sure there is enough room for questions and remarks. Do not tell at the start of the workshop that there is room at the end to raise questions but incorporate time for questions during the presentation and discussion.

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#### 2.1.2. Introducing the participants

The second part of the introduction entails the introduction of the participants. Even if the participants already know each other, it is important for the working group facilitators to get an impression who the participants are, how often they participated in recruitment and selection committees, what their expectations of the
reflexive working group are, what they want to learn during the reflexive working group, and whether they have any ‘allergies’ or issues they do not want to discuss. Moreover, it is important for the facilitators to know how familiar the participants are with gender and gender practices. Based on the present knowledge on gender and gender practices, the facilitators can assess the level of discussion during the reflexive working group.

2.2 Core content
The introduction should have provided the working group facilitators with a good overview of the expectations of the participants and their knowledge on gender and gender practices. The working group facilitators can now move on to the core part of the reflexive working group. This core part is based on the insights from research that was carried out prior to the reflexive working group, and consist of four parts. The first and second part are a prerequisite to the third and fourth part. In the first part, the facilitators introduce the gender statistics, which lay out the broader context of the current situation in science. In the second part, the focus is on discussing the discrepancy between formal criteria as documented in HR documents, policies, and job postings, and the actual criteria applied when a candidate is selected. When this discrepancy is elaborated upon and discussed, the working group facilitators can continue with the third part, which is the discussion of gender practices in recruitment and selection processes. In the fourth part, participants discuss solutions, recommendations and possible actions for change.

2.2.1. Overview of gender statistics
The first part of the core of the reflexive working group concerns the introduction of the existence of gender asymmetries in science. The gender statistics collected in research prior to the reflexive working group serve as a basis for the main facts and figures. These gender statistics show the necessity of gender-focused action as well as the need for committee members to reflect on their own recruitment and selection practices.

Time allocation 10 minutes

2.2.2. Discussion of formal versus actual selection criteria
The second part of the core of the reflexive working group focuses on discussing the discrepancy between the formal criteria documented in HR documents and job postings and the actual practices of recruitment and selection committees. The facilitators of the reflexive working group can make use of the steps outlined below to guide this discussion effectively.

Time allocation 30 minutes

Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries
In this part it is key to get the group to talk, and let the group do the talking. Working group facilitators should leave ample room for contributions from participants themselves and facilitate an interactive discussion between them. Questions are not to be answered by the facilitators, but should be paraphrased and guided back into the group, for example by asking if participants agree with given statements, or asking for additions.

Step 1: Ask participants what they consider as key criteria
The facilitators ask the participants what they think are the most important criteria for recruiting and selecting 1) postdocs, and 2) assistant professors. Recruitment and selection procedures for postdocs, assistant professors or equivalent positions might be different, so facilitators should make sure it is clear which position they refer to in order to minimize confusion among participants. The main purpose is to identify what the participants think are the main ‘formal’ criteria adopted in recruitment and selection processes. The following questions could guide this discussion:
- What are the official criteria for the appointment of a [position]?
- What is influencing how strictly these criteria are applied?
- Have selection criteria been changed in the last decade?
- What is influencing the application of the official criteria?
- What does it take to be able to fulfil these criteria - for instance in terms of work
generated and networks someone is part of?
- What dilemmas do you encounter during the selection process?
- What is scientific excellence?
- How to define scientific excellence?
- How to assess scientific excellence in recruitment and selection procedures?

Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries
Start with an ice breaker question such as, ‘what would you never tell someone applying for a postdoc/assistant professor position?’, or, ‘according to what criteria have you been selected?’.

Step 2: Show the formal criteria
The research conducted prior to the reflexive working group should have yielded the necessary input to show the participants what formal selection criteria are used in the job postings in their institute. The working group leaders facilitate the discussion about the formal criteria reported in official communication on the one hand, and the criteria they have just discerned during the previous step on the other hand. The following questions could be addressed during this discussion:
- How to weigh multiple criteria?
- Is there an order between criteria?
- Which criteria are most important? Why?
- Does importance sometimes differ?

Step 3: Discuss discrepancies and gender practices
The responses from the previous two steps as well as the findings from the focus groups and interviews should provide the working group facilitators with input to facilitate a discussion about the discrepancies between ‘formal’ criteria often displayed in HR documents and job postings, vis-à-vis the actual criteria applied when a candidate is selected. The questions described at step 2 allow the facilitators to lead the discussion towards the relevance of gender in recruitment and selection processes. For example, by emphasizing different perceptions of excellence and why this is relevant for the discussion about gender and gender practices. Facilitators could for instance use the following questions to guide the discussion:
- Are the criteria equally important for women and men? Or do some criteria weigh differently for women and for men?
- Is there a more masculine or a more feminine connotation to the criteria?

Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries
- Always ask about the application to women and men candidates
- Ask committee members what they would expect from an ideal candidate on a certain criterion, b) then compare the differences with the candidates at hand, and c) look for gender distinctions in this.

2.2.3. Discussion of gender practices in recruitment and selection processes
The third part of the core of the reflexive working group builds on step 3 as discussed in the previous paragraph. The focus of this part is on how gender practices can play a role in recruitment and selection processes for early career researchers. The purpose of this discussion is to increase the awareness among participants about gender biases in evaluation criteria, about the practices that hide these biases, and about the participants’ role as selection committee members in activating and reproducing gender disadvantages in career development.
The facilitators present the gender practices found in research that was conducted prior to the reflexive working group, and elaborate on what gender and gender inequality in science comprise. It is important to emphasize and explain that ‘quality’ and ‘meritocracy’ are not objective, gender neutral concepts, but are gender biased and power-laden. These statements can be supported by examples from previous research. This is the most elaborate part of the reflexive working group and it is fundamental that the facilitators ensure that gender and gender practices remain the key topics of the discussion.
To do so, facilitators should always ask about the differences between women and men candidates, about the implications of something for women and men candidates or about the consequences for women and men candidates. The following questions may serve as examples:
- Do selection criteria play out differently for men
and women candidates?
- Are competencies of men and women candidates rated differently? If yes, which competencies? How are these competencies rated differently?
- What power processes take place in recruitment and selection procedures?
- Who are the key players and what are the implications for women and men candidates?

Time allocation 60 minutes

Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries
- Ask for concrete examples and experiences from participants and let participants reflect on these examples and experiences.
- Introduce selection interview dynamics in the discussion in order to help participants to be aware of and reflect on 1) their role in selection interviews, and 2) how these may impact their selection decisions.
- Provide examples of gender practices in recruitment and selection processes based on previous research (see example presentation in Appendix C).

2.2.4 Discussion about actions for change
The fourth and final part of the core of the reflexive working group focuses on possible actions for change. In this part the facilitators guide a discussion on recommendations, solutions and possibilities to change recruitment and selection procedures and/or criteria. The recommendations and solutions should be aimed at questions such as:
- How to recognize and intervene in gender practices in recruitment and selection processes?
- How can selection committees and procedures be arranged so that the eventual selection of early career researchers is done with awareness of gender biases?
- What changes to current procedures are needed to avoid gender bias?

Time allocation 40 minutes

Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries
- Point to participant’s own agency to change their situation and/or the scientific system.
- Make sure that possible actions are as concrete as possible and tailored to the specific context of the subject institute.
- It is important that opinion leaders or change agents with formal and informal power are present at the reflexive working group in order to ensure a follow-up on the proposed actions for change.

2.3 Evaluation and feedback
The third main part of the reflexive working group is the evaluation. During this part facilitators ask the participants for their feedback on the reflexive working group. It is important to evaluate the reflexive working groups for two reasons. First, to see if the expectations and learning points of the participants as expressed during the introduction of the reflexive working group were met. Second, the participants’ evaluations can serve as valuable input for future reflexive working groups (also see Section 3: Evaluation).

Time allocation 10 minutes

Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries
Hand out an evaluation form the participants can fill in at the end of the reflexive working group, with for example the following questions:
I. What are the most important insights you gained from the working group?
II. How did you experience the presentation and facilitation of the working group? (Pleasant, unpleasant, informal, formal, informative, etc.)
III. What could be improved about the working group?
### 2.4 Managing challenges and resistances

**Challenge no. 1: “Not a problem in our institute”**

One of the challenges that some of the GARCIA beneficiaries experiences was the inability of participants to see the problem of gender inequality in their own institute. Although these participants were keen to recognize that gender inequality is a problem in science in general, they had difficulties to see their own work environment as problematic and gender biased. When awareness of gender practices tend to be low, and beliefs in meritocratic recruitment and selection tend to be high, it presents a challenge for facilitators to discuss how to create change in the subject institute. This is the main reason why the contextual approach as described at §1.1 is recommended. As such, the facilitators can present the current facts and figures from the subject institute and thereby support their statements.

**Challenge no. 2: Effective reflection in the reflexive working group**

A second challenge that some of the GARCIA beneficiaries encountered were difficulties to establish effective reflection in the reflexive working group due to sceptic participants. Although these sceptic participants present a challenge for the facilitators and for an effective reflection, these participants can actually contribute to the goal of the reflexive working group. By ventilating the counter-arguments of gender action plans, these participants show the resistances within the subject institute. These arguments and resistances should be addressed and reflected upon during the working group in order to have a fruitful discussion about gender and change. It is therefore important that facilitators create a safe and constructive atmosphere at the beginning of the reflexive working group, so there is also room for critical voices to surface (see §2.1.1). Another challenge that some GARCIA beneficiaries encountered and which prevents effective reflection on gender and gender practices, are discussions on the finesse of methodological aspects. This may cost too much time at the expense of discussing the key issues. What facilitators can do when this occurs, is to refer to the goals of the reflexive working group, and guide it back to the core by focusing more on gender practices.
3. EVALUATION
3. EVALUATION

After the actual execution of the reflexive working group, it is important to evaluate the working group with the team of facilitators. The feedback from the participants during the working group, possibly the evaluation forms (see §2.3), but also the experiences and reflections of the facilitators themselves are important to evaluate the reflexive working group. Discuss among the facilitators what went well and what not. Especially when the reflexive working groups are to be organized within the subject institute in the future.

The following questions can be helpful when evaluating the reflexive working groups:
- What worked when planning and performing the workshops?
- What challenges and resistances have you come across when planning and performing the working groups? How did you overcome them (or not)?
- What are the learning points gained from planning and performing the reflexive working groups?
- What feedback did the participants give?
- What do future workshop leaders need to take into account?

Tips from the GARCIA beneficiaries
- Document the results for future use in recruitment, selection and evaluation.
4. PLANNING TIMELINE
4. PLANNING

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5. PLANNING CHECKLIST
5. PLANNING CHECKLIST

Preparation
✓ 6-8 months in advance of the reflexive working group
   - Contact the management for their support
   - If possible, contact HR department and/or secretaries
   - Obtain a list of possible participants (both for interviews and focus groups as well as the reflexive working groups)
   - Optional: contact legal office
   - Research in preparation of the reflexive working group:
     - literature review
     - data collection
     - gender statistics
     - documents (job postings/HR documents/She-figures)
     - interviews with selection committee members and other key players
     - focus groups with selection committee members and other key players
     - data analysis
     - write report and/or presentation

✓ 2 months before the reflexive working group
   - Draft the invitations with:
     - purpose
     - date
     - location
   - Send out invitations to potential participants
   - Optional: contact external facilitators

✓ 1-2 weeks before the reflexive working group
   - Make the necessary practical arrangements:
     - room
     - catering
     - technical support
   - Send out reminders to potential participants

✓ 30 minutes before the reflexive working group:
   - Be sure to be in time in the room to have potential bugs fixed in time (e.g. when a projector/smartboard does not work)
   - Check if the presentation works
   - Make sure the room is set up properly for discussion (e.g. U-shape)

✓ During the reflexive working group:
   - Clearly explain the aim and goals of the working group
   - Invite participants to share their ideas and experiences
   - Create a safe learning environment by:
     - sharing your own experiences
     - acknowledging the topic as a thorny issue
   - Let participants introduce themselves:
     - their name and position
     - their experience on selection committees
     - their expectations of the working group
     - what they want/expect to learn
     - their knowledge of gender practices
   - Assess the level of discussion, based on the knowledge on gender practices of the participants
   - Get the group to talk by:
     - asking participant to reflect
     - asking for concrete examples
     - not answering questions but guiding them back to the group (by asking for agreements or additions)
   - Evaluate: Hand out evaluation forms

✓ 1-2 weeks after the reflexive working group:
   - Review participants’ evaluation forms
   - Evaluate with team of facilitators/organizers
   - Report what went well and what not for future reflexive working groups
6. REFERENCES
6. REFERENCES

APPENDIX A:
RECOMMENDED READING LIST
APPENDIX A: RECOMMENDED READING LIST

As a basis for a literature review on the construction of excellence and gender practices in science, we particularly, though not exclusively, recommend the following references:


APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview guide
Please find below our questionnaire divided in three different topics. Please start with the main question and then continue with clarifying and concretizing questions (see the last column for suggestions). Encourage the interviewee to be very specific and get as much information as possible from the interviewee on the applied criteria for a D- or C-level position, the selection process, etcetera. Use terminology that is applicable to your national/local context (e.g., regarding the D/C-level position).

ABSTRACT REQUIREMENTS
1. Which criteria do you use to select candidates for a D/C-level position?
i. First, ask clarifying and concretizing questions on the mentioned criteria:
   . What do you mean by ...? 
   . Can you give an example? 
   . Why is that important? 
   . How does a candidate show that he/she meets this criteria?

2. Do you consider .... an important criterion for a D/C-level position?
i. Second, if the interviewee is not able to mention other criteria, please ask about criteria that are not mentioned but are relevant to your context: 
   . Education (institution that awarded PhD, topic of PhD, PhD supervisor, etc.)
   . Teaching experience: experience with lecturing, seminar groups, thesis supervision
   . Research: participation in research projects (number of projects and position within), number of publications, journals and ranking, single author, publications with supervisor
   . Acquiring research funding: how much and which funding organization?
   . Management experience/committee work
   . International mobility/experience/ network: duration of visit, location / institution, international collaborations
   . Service / outreach: media appearances, public lectures/debates, consultancy and advice
   . Fit in team: a) someone fits in the team culture? b) brings in expertise that is missing?
   . Personality / attitude of the candidate (analytical/ creative/ communicative, motivation/ enthusiasm/ energy/ bodily appearances, etcetera).

3. What are the most important criteria in your specific academic field?
i. This question is meant to discover possible disciplinary differences. Ask clarifying and concretizing questions on responses (in a similar way as question 1).

4. How would you describe the difference between a candidate with minimal requirements and a really excellent candidate?
i. Try to find out what the ‘ideal candidate’ looks like, and what the minimal requirements are for the position.

ACTUAL SELECTION (PROCESS)
5. Can you think of the latest appointment of a D/C-level position in which you were involved? Can you shortly describe the course of the selection process?
i. Make sure the appointment applies to the department under study.

6. a. What was the composition of the committee? (Number/position of people, women)
i. In case of formal recruitment, there is a standard procedure: i.e. the vacancy is made publically available (internet, newspapers, journals). In case of informal recruitment, the call is informally circulated or candidates are invited to apply through informal networks.

b. Was it formal and/or informal recruitment?
7. How did the decision making process go within the committee?
i. Ask clarifying and concretizing questions on responses:
   . Did you easily reach a consensus?
   . What did you do if you disagreed?
   . If you disagreed, what was the main point of discussion?

8. a. Which were the decisive criteria in the selection of the appointed candidate?
b. Were the decisive criteria used in the selection of the appointed candidate mentioned in the formal job description?
i. Which of the criteria under question 2 where the most important for the respondent in selecting the candidate?

9. Do you consider the appointed person an excellent candidate? Why?
i. Earlier research indicated that the formal criteria of excellence are almost not realistic, and appointed candidates often do not meet this standard of excellence (see Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012). With this question, we like to check whether this is the case here too.

10. a. Why did the runner up end up on the second position?
b. Which was / were the decisive criterion / criteria not to appoint the candidate?
i. Try to find out the difference between the selected candidate and the runner up candidate.

11. a. In this procedure, how many female candidates applied?
i. Ask clarifying and concretizing questions on responses:
   . Why were there no / so few (so many?) female candidates?
b. How many female candidates were on the long/short list?
   . Long list: list of applicants after first selection by committee. Short list: final list of applicants taken into consideration (and invited for an interview/lecture).
c. Why were they (not) appointed?

12. Can you give an example of a case in which the selection process turned out to be very successful, i.e., that the chosen candidate performed beyond expectations?

13. Can you give an example of a case in which the selection process turned out to be a failure, i.e., that the chosen candidate underperformed or left quickly?

C. GENDER

14. Does gender play a role in the selection of candidates?
i. Ask clarifying and concretizing questions:
   . Do you think gender matters (or not)?
   . Could there be a gender bias against female candidates?
   . Please also observe the emotions and non-verbal language of the interviewee with this question (e.g., agitation, etc.).

15. Do you know if there is a gender policy on recruitment and selection within your institution?

16. What is your opinion on such gender policies?
i. You can ask this question even if the question to previous question is “no”.

17. In what way do you apply this gender policy in practice?
i. Ask the interviewee to give examples.
APPENDIX C: EXAMPLE PRESENTATION
Agenda

- [time]
  1) Introduction
     - Questions/expectations
  2) Most important findings + discussion
  3) Feedback

Introduction

- Name
- Position
- Questions/expectations:
- Mujer challenges?

Academic R&S is challenging

- Selecting the right new colleagues is difficult!
  - How to predict who will contribute in the future?
  - Comparing candidates is difficult
  - We all have implicit bias
- Recruiting is critically important
  - Research can help

Recruitment and selection criteria

Assistant professor job posting

- PhD in XXX
- Proven track record of conducting independent research in one of the leading areas of XXX
- Regular publications in leading journals
- Postdoctoral experience, preferably gained abroad
- Experience in acquiring for external funding
- Clear vision on research and teaching
- Good communication skills and the ability to work with colleagues from other fields
- Good teaching skills and a university teaching qualification (or the willingness to obtain such a qualification)
- The ability to teach in English and Dutch (the latter to be acquired within two years)

Academic R&S is challenging

- Academic culture is very important
  - Different cultures, different expectations
  - Cross-cultural communication skills are necessary

Findings I

- Multiple criteria, selectively applied
  - Formal criteria in HR, job profile, vacancy text
  - Actual criteria in appointment reports, interviews, case reconstructions
- Variable weight of criteria, level of specification of criteria
- Key criteria: track record in publications, funding, international experience
- Tacit criterion of personality and behavior

Findings II

- Informal recruitment for post docs
- Short term, project based decisions... yet consequences for academic careers
- Outsourcing selection to funding organizations
- Little awareness of gender practices
- Gender ≠ number of women
  - Gender practiced in construction of criteria
Persistent gender inequality

Scientific quality?
- Myths around scientific quality
  - Ideal of meritocracy
  - Gender does not matter in meritocratic systems (Kramer 1994)
  - Criteria are objective, easy to measure and clear
- However:
  - No objective measurement of merit in real-life evaluations
  - Power and socio-political play a role (Kramer, 2000)
  - Criteria are multi-interpretable, negotiable, can change during process
- Quality as a social construct (Lemon 2000, Van Dam & Van Ween, 2002)

Gender and scientific quality
- Proven gender bias in experimental research
- Proven gender bias in real life research and teaching
  - Reference letters (Yin-Prima 2003)
  - Grants (Watersman & Wolf 1987, Von der Lee & Ellemers 2010)
  - Student ratings (Makx et al. 2013, Borings 2015)
- Accumulation of advantage for men (Vulliam 1981) women are considered risk (van den Brink 2010)
- Gender stereotypes: dominance prescribed for women, dominant women face backlash for status incongruity (Kraaij 2005)

Informal recruitment
- Scouting is the active search and inviting of candidates
- Scouts: academics on key positions of influence who are involved in decision making process
- Scouts determine which candidates are nominated and who remain excluded.
- This is gendered:
  - Similar mindset effects (Johns Knapp et al. 2012)
  - Trust the proven success model (van den Brink & Verhees 2010)
  - Women receive less support from their networks (Bagchan & Bovens, 2005)
  - Qualities of women systematically underestimated
    - Preference for men legitimized by quality

Interview dynamics
- Personal questions – questions not asked
- Personality becomes criterion in interview
- Constructs excellence in two ways:
  - Positive individual capital: flexibility as quality
  - Positive individual capital: too difficult or too modest

General, women do not "bang their fists on the table" and say "we are going in that direction". No, that is not the case. However, there are a few who do, but those women are exceptions. And when they do display that kind of attitude, then you’ll immediately get the reaction (among committee members) of 'no, not that one'. That is pretty clear. When a man acts like that, it is more acceptable, he is still in the race, but when a woman displays that behavior, she is out. (natural sciences, man)

Possibilities for change?
- R&S protocols necessary but not sufficient
- Accountability of decision makers
- Not formalization of criteria
- Intersubjectivity in selection committees
- Awareness of micropolitics
- Committees as learning environment for key players
- Train and prepare candidates

Conclusion
- Gender equality in R&S does not come naturally or in due time, it needs a lot of work
- Break and defy stereotypes: they are there, they want to and yes, they can!
- Construct criteria carefully, question assumptions
- Be aware of informal processes
- Start scouting, supporting and sponsoring talented, ambitious woman