Gender Equality Plan in STEM

Université libre de Bruxelles

GEP Short version (September 2021)

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This document presents the **Gender Equality Plan (GEP)** that the *Université libre de Bruxelles* (ULB) has approved for its two **STEM faculties**:

- Faculty of Sciences
- Brussels School of Engineering

within the framework of the EU-funded CALIPER project.

CALIPER is a Horizon 2020 European project that aims at **enhancing the gender balance in STEM fields**, thereby

- contributing to the **European Research Area** (ERA) priorities on gender equality, and
- stimulating **dialogue and collaboration** between academia, public authorities, professionals, and industry players to tackle gender inequalities.

CALIPER Consortium at a glance

7 research performing organizations (RPOs)
2 research funding organizations (RFOs)
2 SMEs
1 Professional association
10 countries

Gender equality plan (GEP)

A **GEP** is a set of actions aimed at:

- **identifying gender inequalities**,
- implementing **innovative strategies** to correct them, and
- setting targets and **monitoring progress** via indicators.

The present GEP seeks **to promote gender equality in STEM fields**, thus contributing to both **scientific excellence and the core values of ULB**, a committed university that defends the principle of free inquiry, refuses all arguments of authority, and promotes democracy, freedom, equality, and social justice.

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Opportunities and benefits of gender equality for universities and research organizations

Gender equality...

- fosters the attraction and retention of talents
- leads to economic benefits
- increases excellence in research quality
- creates better work environments
- is leverage for organizational change
- is a matter of fairness, democracy and credibility

European Institute for Gender Equality (2016), *Gender Equality in Academia and Research. GEAR tool*. Luxembourg: Publication Office of the European Union.

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Groups involved in GEP design

4 groups with members of ULB & the R&I ecosystem

3 Internal groups (ULB)

1 External group R&I Ecosystem

01 CALIPER Team

Project management & GEP drafting

Laurent Licata, Professor, *Project academic leader*
Patricia Mélotte, PhD, *Gender & diversity officer*
Sara Aguirre, PhD, *Researcher and project manager*

02 Steering Committee

GEP consultative & decision-making role

CALIPER team members +

- **Michel Verstraeten**, *Vice-rector for gender & diversity*
- **Olivier Markowitch**, *Dean of the Faculty of Sciences*
- **Frédéric Robert**, *Dean of Brussels Schools of Engineering*
- **Laurence Rosier**, *Advisor to the University Authorities for gender policy*
- **Christine Decaestecker, Karine van Doninck, Dimitri Leemans & Jean-Christophe Leloup**, *STEM faculties professors and gender contact persons*
- **Daniele Carati**, *Research department's director*
- **Monique Tavernier**, *University's secretary*
- **Isabelle Mazzara**, *University's director*
- **David Paternotte & Barbara Truffin**, *Gender research structure (STRIGES) directors*

03 Working Group

Gender assessment

CALIPER team members +

- Barbara Clerbaux, Dimitri Leemans, Nathalie Gypens, ***STEM professors***
- Jennifer Watchi, ***STEM PhD researcher***

04 R&I Hub

Consultative role and design of collaborative actions

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R&I Hub

Current composition as of September 2021. Other organizations/institutions may be added in the future.

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GEP design process

- Desk reseach
- Collection of indicators
- Interviews and focus groups

Identification of situations to improve across different areas

Identification of possible strategies, courses of action & collaborations

- 4 thematic workshops with 42 ULB members
- 3 workshops with external stakeholders (R&I Hub)

- 1 meeting with STEM Deans + VR for gender & diversity
- 1 meeting with consultative WG

Selection of the strategy, priorities and courses of action

Definition of actions (objectives, activities, resources, etc.)

- 12 meetings with 18 key ULB members (high & middle management)
- 1 dialogue with R&I Hub
- 1 meeting with consultative WG
- Drafting of GEP
- Validation by consultative WG

Approval of GEP by:

- STEM faculty councils
- ULB's academic council
- Signature by Rector, Vice-rector and STEM Deans

Approval & signature of GEP

89 people consulted

GE assessment

GEP design

Gender Equality Strategy and Key Priority Areas

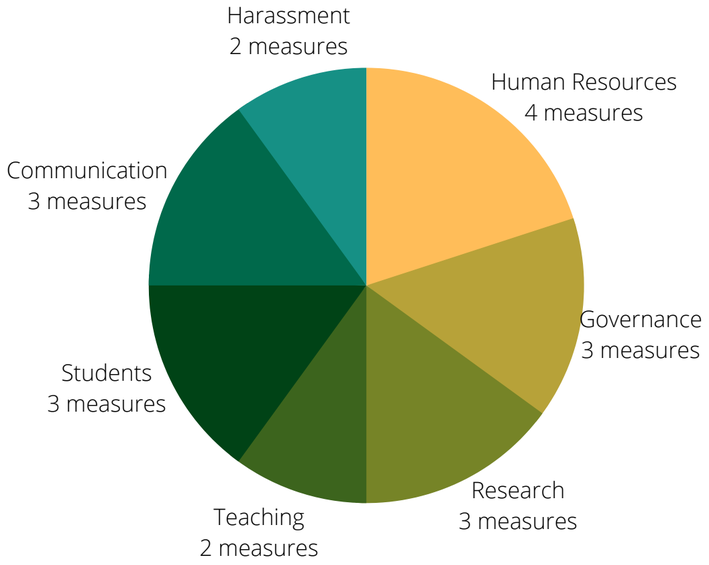
As an RPO comprising of different faculties and disciplines, the **strategy** that ULB has adopted for its GEP is twofold:

1) it focuses on **STEM-specific situations** to improve, and

2) it acts on **common transversal problems** that will be mainly addressed at the STEM faculty level. These pilot experiences will be monitored and shared with the entire University.

The GEP in STEM aims at **complementing** ULB's already **existent policy on gender and diversity**

GEP
20 measures in 7 areas



Intersectionality: the GEP adopts a gender+ strategy

- **Gender** is the main contemplated type of inequality, but
- its **interaction with other sources of inequality** is taken into account in the design and implementation of the measures.

2 years are foreseen for the **implementation** of the GEP

A **formative evaluation** between the two

To **adjust** the plan during its implementation

A **summative evaluation** at the end of the implementation –

Results will be presented in a **final conference**

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Key priority areas and interconnected challenges

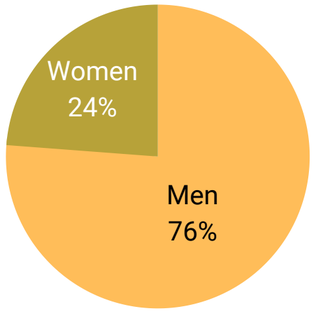
Human resources, students, and governance

1

ON AVERAGE, THE PROPORTION OF WOMEN IN STEM ACADEMIA IS MUCH LOWER THAN THE PROPORTION OF MEN

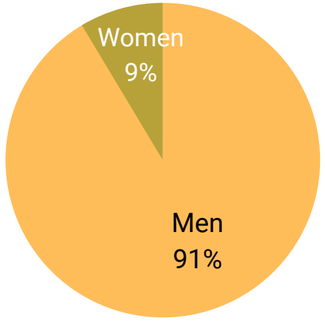
This makes it difficult, in turn, to attain gender-balanced participation in STEM decision-making bodies and commissions

Faculty of Science



Faculty 2018-2019 = 185 people

Brussels School of Engineering



Faculty 2018-2019 = 93 people

2

ON AVERAGE, THE PROPORTION OF FEMALE STUDENTS IN STEM FACULTIES IS MUCH LOWER THAN THE PROPORTION OF MALE STUDENTS

Over time, this has an impact on:

- the low proportion of female post-doctoral researchers, a key transition period in the academic career
- the low proportion of female applications received for STEM academic vacancies

↳ Mutual influence: the shortage of female role models may discourage young girls from pursuing STEM studies

3

GOVERNANCE

↳ Key: gender-balanced participation in decision-making

↳ The institutionalization of gender equality principles at the faculty level and the establishment of indicators for its monitoring will guarantee the sustainability of the GEP and its long-term impacts

4

OTHER AREAS: RESEARCH, TEACHING, COMMUNICATION AND HARASSMENT

Measures in these “secondary” domains will strategically support change in the 3 key priority areas by raising awareness, disseminating knowledge and facilitating access to services

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Gender Equality Plan in STEM

Actions per area of intervention

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Human Resources

Situation

A lower proportion of women academics in STEM facilities compared to their counterparts (24% in the Faculty of sciences and 9% in the Brussels School of Engineering in 2018-2019)

General objective

To increase the proportion of women in the STEM academic body (by increasing both the proportion of STEM female post-doctoral researchers and the proportion of STEM female scholars in the first levels of the academic body - lecturers)

Strategies

To increase the proportion of female applications to STEM positions	To explore the feasibility of affirmative actions at the University to increase the proportion of female applications and recruitments in STEM academic positions	To take into account childcare leave in the selection process to establish a more egalitarian research evaluation system	To support post-doc researchers in case of childcare leave

Measures

1	2	3	4
Toolkit to attract more female candidates to STEM positions	**Feasibility study ‘Affirmative actions for academic recruitment’**	**Feasibility study ‘Correction standard for career breaks due to childcare leave’**	**Feasibility study ‘Extension of post-doctoral contracts for the duration of childcare leave’**

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Governance

Situation	Limited institutionalization of GE policies at faculty level	Unavailability of gender indicators at discipline level	Low participation of women in certain key decision-making bodies at the institutional level (some Advisory Boards)
General objective	To ensure the sustainability of the gender+ policy initiated by CALIPER at STEM faculty level	To identify STEM disciplines in which women are less represented to develop more targeted actions	To increase the participation of women in the decision-making bodies in which they are under-represented
Strategies	To institutionalize the gender+ policy at STEM faculty level	To collect gender disaggregated data within STEM disciplines regarding the gender composition of the academic, scientific and student bodies	To promote a gender-balanced composition of advisory bodies at the institutional level
Measures	**5** **Gender+ commission in STEM faculties**	**6** **Gender indicators within different STEM disciplines**	**7** **Proposal for a gender-balanced participation in Advisory Boards**

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Research

Situation	Sex/gender perspective generally absent in STEM research contents		Low presence of women in STEM PhD juries
General objective	To increase the number of STEM studies including a sex/gender+ dimension		To increase the proportion of women taking part in STEM PhD juries
Strategies	To provide researchers with a clear and simple tool to include the sex/gender dimension in (STEM) research when relevant	To raise STEM researchers' and students awareness of the added value of the sex/gender+ dimension in STEM research	To raise awareness on the low presence of women in STEM PhD juries
Measures	**8** **Dissemination of guideline on the inclusion of the sex/gender dimension in (STEM) research**	**9** **Exhibition 'Sex/gender+ in STEM research'**	**10** **Gender target in STEM PhD juries**

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Teaching

Situation	Sex/gender perspective is generally absent in STEM teaching.	
General objective	To promote the integration of a gender perspective into STEM education (content and teaching practices).	
Strategies	To provide teachers with tools for gender-sensitive teaching	To establish an institutional framework in the STEM faculties to promote and support change towards gender-sensitive and inclusive teaching
Measures	**11** **Dissemination of guide on gender-sensitive teaching**	**12** **Consultation for an explicit integration of a sex/gender+ and diversity perspective into STEM curriculum competency frameworks**

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Students and Student Services

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Situation	Much lower proportion of female students than male students in STEM faculties, particularly at the undergraduate level (30% in the Faculty of sciences and 21% in the Brussels School of Engineering in 2018-2019)		
General objective	To increase the proportion of female students enrolled in STEM studies, particularly in the disciplines in which they are under-represented		
Strategies	To convey a positive sense of STEM disciplines and professions in science secondary education and science outreach	To prevent gender stereotypes and biases in science secondary education and science outreach	To inspire girls to continue and pursue STEM studies and careers
Measures	**13** **Consultation for a new ULB science and technology qualification program to teach at secondary schools**	**14** **Technical support to mainstream the gender+ perspective in ULB science outreach activities**	**15** **Joint g4g-ULB day (CALIPER Women in Innovation event)**

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g4g

Communication

Situation	Symbolic association of STEM studies and professions with men and masculinity still remains		
General objective	To build a more inclusive image of STEM studies in the external communication of STEM faculties to encourage girls to pursue them		
Strategies	To equip administrators of STEM webpages with a range of tools to implement inclusive communication	To use inclusive communication in STEM faculties websites	To make visible the gender+ policy in the STEM faculties
Measures	**16** **Hands-on training on inclusive communication for STEM webpages administrators**	**17** **Review and update of the communication of current STEM websites**	**18** **Dedicated webpage for the gender+ measures of STEM faculties**

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Sexism and Sexual Harassment

Situation	Limited knowledge of, and thus access to, existent services and protocols to prevent and effectively deal with cases of discrimination and harassment	
General objective	To contribute to the prevention and better management of discrimination and harassment cases in STEM faculties	
Strategies	To improve STEM faculty authorities and departments/services leaders' skills and knowledge to prevent and effectively deal with cases of discrimination and harassment	To improve the access of STEM faculties' members to available protocols and services to prevent and handle cases of discrimination and harassment
Measures	**19** **Advertising of training on discrimination and harassment**	**20** **Permanent poster campaign**

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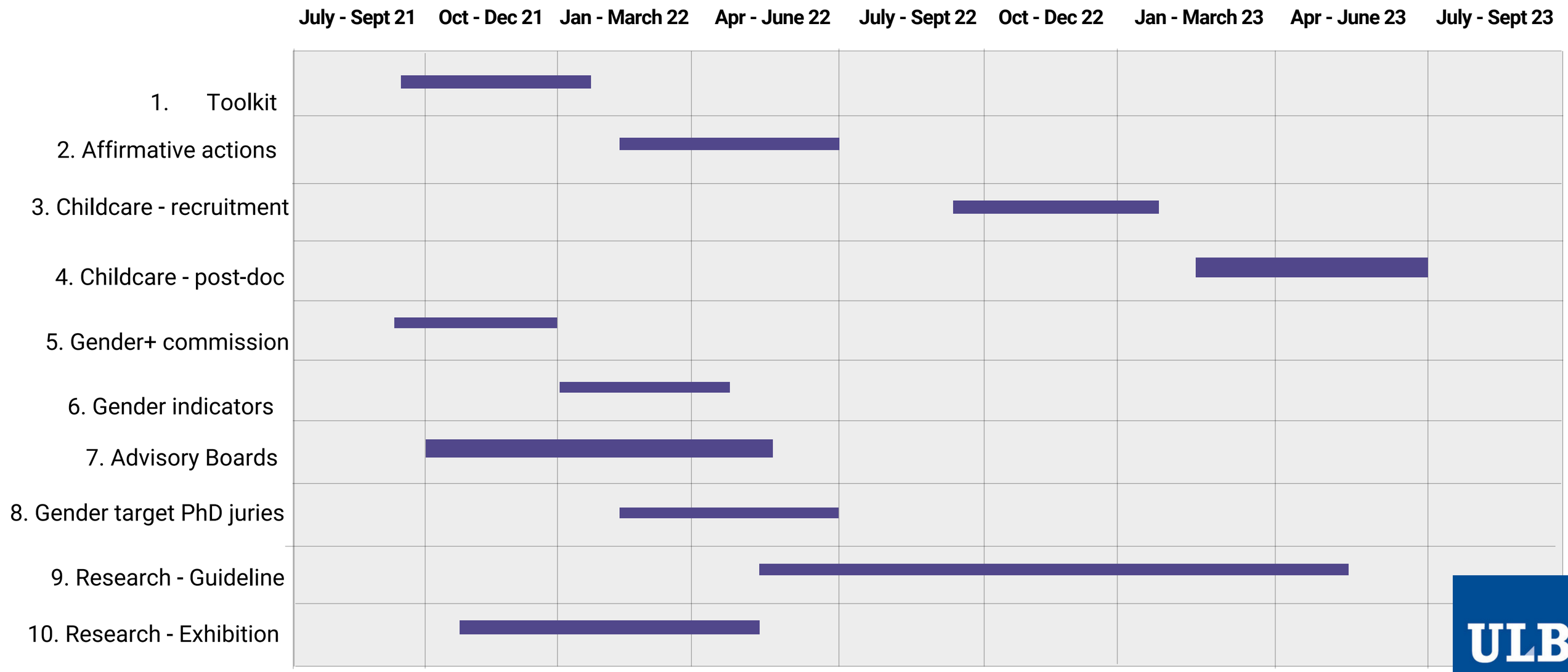
TIMEFRAME OF MEASURES



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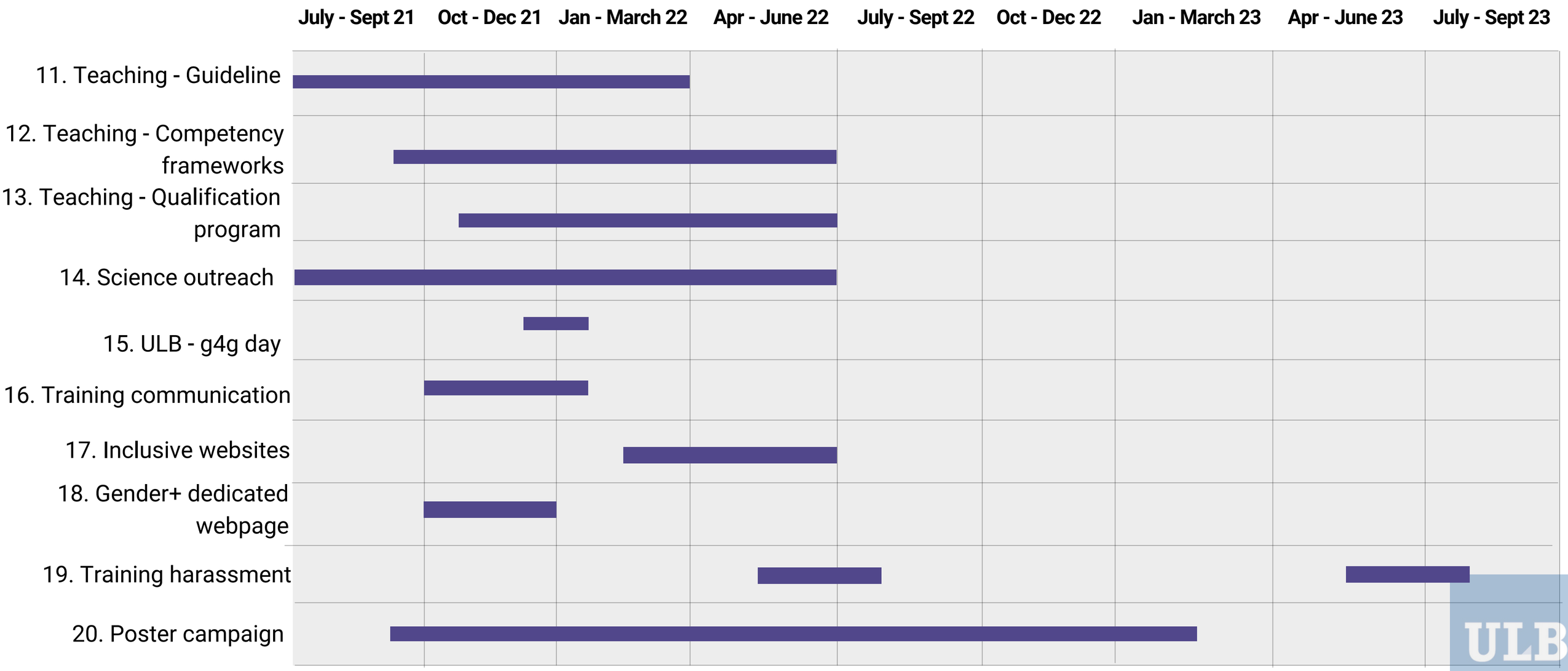

https://caliper-project.eu/gender-equality-plans-ulb/
https://www.ulb.be/fr/diversites/egalite-des-genres
https://polytech.ulb.be/fr/ecole/egalite-des-genres
Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9MMEJV-Gb_M

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