Policy Making as Extension of Disseminating Research Results: Policy Influence Plan Canvas

Chapter 16
Policy Making as Extension of Disseminating Research Results: Policy Influence Plan Canvas

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16.1 Why Policy Influence Plans Are Needed

Meaningful change based on research results requires effective policy influence that bridges public interest, politics, and professionalism. Already in 1968, Lindblom noted that power in contemporary society is passing from those who hold conventional sources of authority, like arms, public office, or wealth, to those who know [5]. 'Those who know', that is to some extent us researchers, and this chapter offers an easy-to-adapt way to get started with policy influence based on research results.

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Definition: *Policy influence plans (PIPs)* are essential strategic tools employed by organizations, advocacy groups, and researchers to shape public policies and regulatory frameworks.

These plans aim to guide decision-making processes, ensuring that policies are informed by the best available evidence and align with societal needs and values. The significance of policy influence plans extends across various domains, including public health, environmental protection, social justice, and economic development.

One of the primary reasons for the importance of policy influence plans is their role in promoting evidence-based policymaking. Evidence-based policies are developed through rigorous research and data analysis, which provide a solid foundation for effective and efficient solutions to societal challenges. Policy influence plans facilitate the translation of scientific findings into actionable recommendations, bridging the gap between research and policy implementation. This approach ensures that policies are not only theoretically sound but also practically applicable and beneficial to the target populations.

Policy influence plans are instrumental in enhancing public engagement and trust in the policy-making process. By involving stakeholders, including citizens, experts, and interest groups, in the development and advocacy of policies, these plans foster a participatory approach. This inclusivity helps to democratize the policy process, ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered and that the policies reflect the interests and needs of various communities. Consequently, this leads to greater public trust in governmental and institutional actions, as policies are perceived as more transparent and representative [11].

Modern societal challenges, such as climate change, public health crises, and economic inequality, are complex and interconnected [8]. Policy influence plans are vital to address these multifaceted issues through coordinated and comprehensive strategies. These plans enable the integration of multidisciplinary insights and the alignment of efforts across different sectors and levels of governance. By fostering collaboration among various stakeholders, policy influence plans improve the coherence and effectiveness of responses to global and local challenges.

The long-term sustainability of policies is a critical concern in the dynamic and rapidly changing global landscape. Policy influence plans contribute to sustainability by advocating for policies that are forward-looking and resilient. These plans emphasize the importance of considering long-term impacts and potential unintended consequences, and promoting policies that are adaptable and capable of withstanding future uncertainties. This forward-thinking approach is crucial to addressing current and emerging issues in a way that preserves resources and opportunities for future generations.

In summary, policy influence plans are indispensable for the development of effective, equitable, and sustainable policies. They play a crucial role in promoting evidence-based policy-making, enhancing public engagement and trust, addressing complex challenges, and ensuring long-term sustainability. As societies continue to face pressing global and local issues, the strategic implementation of policy

influence plans will be essential in shaping policies that improve public welfare and foster a just and prosperous future.

This introduction outlines the critical and multifaceted importance of policy influence plans, highlighting their role in creating effective, equitable, and sustainable policies, and setting the stage for a deeper exploration of their applications and impacts.

The rest of this chapter is structured as follows. We introduce the most relevant background and related work in Sect. 16.2, the canvas in Sect. 16.3, its instantiation in Sect. 16.4, and its usage in Sect. 16.5. We suggest how you can apply it in Sect. 16.6.

16.2 Background and Related Work

In this section, we provide some foundational background as well as related work.

16.2.1 Background

Policy goals and means exist at different levels of abstraction. Defining and thinking about polices and policy-making in this way is very useful because it highlights how policy design is all about the effort to match goals and instruments both within and across categories. Successful policy design requires that policy aims, objectives, and targets to be coherent; that furthermore implementation, tools and calibrations to be consistent; and finally that policy aims and implementation should also to be congruent and convergent. Howlett [4] provides a contextual model for policy instrument choice.

Craft and Howlett [2] describe policy formulation, governance shifts and policy influence with regards to location and content in policy advisory systems.

Cook [1] contributes a book on lobbying for Higher Education in which she describes how colleges and universities influence federal policy making (in the USA).

Tompkins [9] write about philanthrophic influence in education policy and how foundations work in this context.

Rigby et al. [7] work on understanding how structure and agency influence education policy implementation and organizational change.

Trostle et al. [10] investigated how researchers influence decision-makers in a number of case studies on Mexican policies.

16.2.2 Related Work

There are two other important COST actions that also intend to influence policy making for gender equity in informatics.

The EU COST Action ENHANCE represents a new alliance of research-intensive universities with a focus on science and technology, based on longstanding bilateral or network cooperation among two or more of the member institutions in other configurations. The Alliance can thus draw on the experience, tested models and methods of collaboration at different academic levels in the various predecessor arrangements, scale these up to the level of the new confederation and enhance them by developing new structures and processes to make a quantum leap in cooperation.

VOICES is a COST Action that aims to increase the visibility of inequalities faced by Young Researchers and Innovators (YRIs) from a gender perspective, and to promote a sustainable dialogue between YRIs and stakeholders in the research ecosystem at the systemic level (European and national policy-makers) and at the institutional level (senior researchers, academic managers) by creating a community of gender equality practitioners composed of various stakeholders (YRIs, independent researchers, academic managers, organizations) across Europe. Over the last decades, European higher education and research systems have been characterized by deep changes. Those processes tend to exacerbate and create new forms of gendered inequalities for YRIs, first and foremost women. Those inequalities are also reinforced by disparities within academia linked to other social determinants, such as origin, socioeconomic status, sexuality, or ability.

In contrast, one of the main objectives of EUGAIN was to influence policy makers with the research results we create, hence we developed the deliverables discussed in Chaps. 2–15 of this book and the policy influence plan canvas we present in the following section.

16.3 The Policy Influence Plan Canvas

We created a policy influence plan canvas as we only had limited time, to convey the foundations of policy influence to a large set of prominent European stakeholders.

We developed the Policy Influence Canvas (see Fig. 16.1) to provide an easy and illustrative way to collaborate on a policy influence plan. It is inspired by the Business Model Canvas, a tool designed to sketch out business plans in a visual format [6].

Using our accumulated knowledge of policy influence strategies, we created this canvas to encapsulate the most relevant information succinctly and effectively. In the following, we walk through each quadrant of the canvas, and explain the purpose and content of each field: Partners and Alliances, Activities, Resources and Materials, Timeline for Communication and Actions, Relationships and Windows of

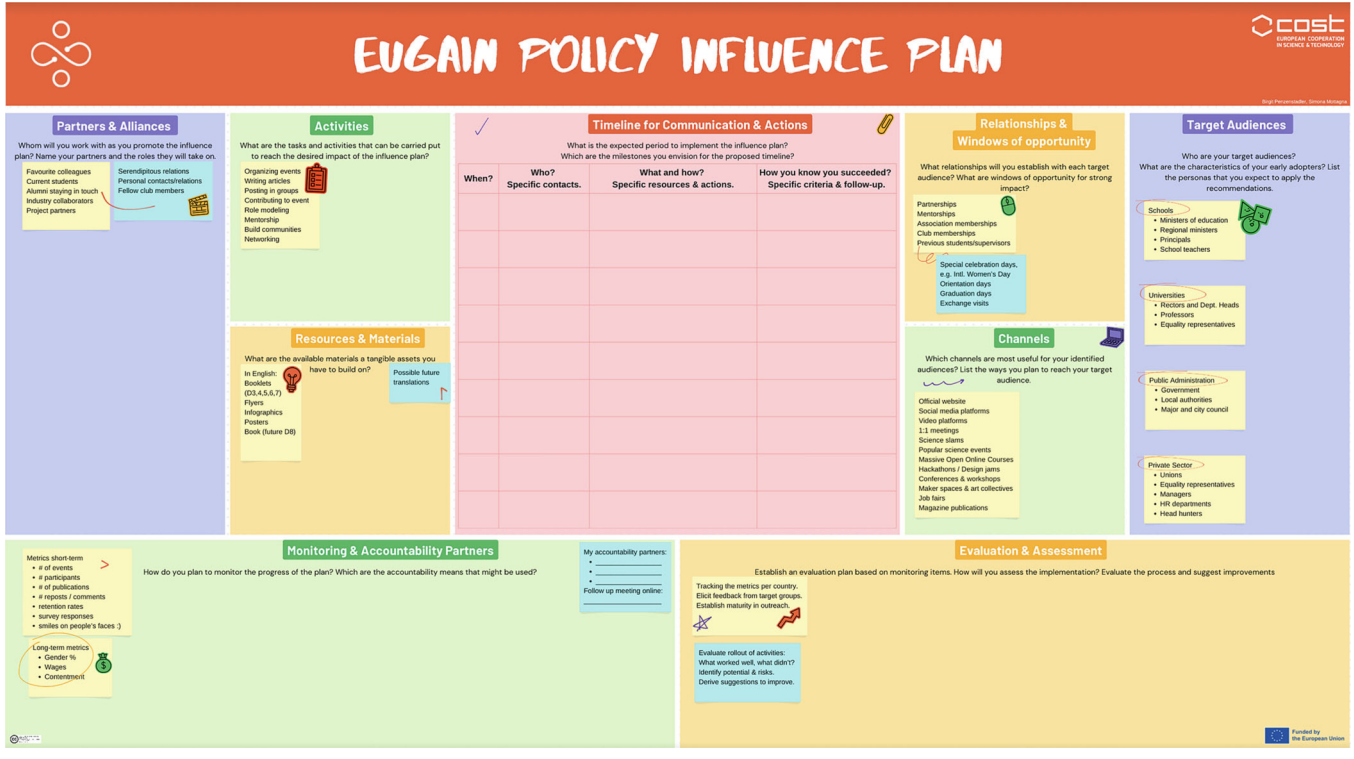

Fig. 16.1 The EUGAIN policy influence plan canvas

Opportunity, Channels, Target Audiences, Monitoring and Accountability Partners, and Evaluation and Assessment.

Partners and Alliances In this quadrant, we gather information about our partners and alliances. This section is critical for identifying key stakeholders who can support and enhance the influence plan. Partners might include colleagues, current students, alumni, industry collaborators, and project partners.

The roles of these partners should be clearly defined, ranging from serendipitous contacts to formal relationships. Additionally, forming alliances with entities such as student organizations, professional associations, and other relevant groups is encouraged. These partnerships can provide essential support and resources, helping to amplify our efforts and reach broader audiences.

Activities This section lists the tasks and activities necessary to achieve the desired impact of the influence plan. Activities can range from organizing events, writing articles, and posting in online network groups to more hands-on efforts like hosting workshops, giving talks, role modeling, mentoring, community building, and networking.

Each activity should be designed to engage stakeholders and promote the policy influence plan effectively, hence ensuring that all actions contribute to the overall goals.

Resources and Materials Here, we compile all available resources and materials that can be leveraged or developed to support the influence plan. Examples include project deliverables, booklets, flyers, infographics, posters, and books. You are welcome to use the EUGAIN deliverables for inspiration and as materials.

Creating country-specific materials by translating existing resources into local languages can enhance accessibility and relevance. This section ensures that all necessary tools and materials are at hand to support the activities outlined in the previous section.

Timeline for Communication and Actions The central timeline details the expected implementation period for the influence plan, along with envisioned milestones. For each action, this section documents when it is to occur, who is responsible, what resources will be used, the specific actions to be taken, and the criteria for success. Follow-up measures are also outlined to ensure continuous progress and adjustment as needed.

This comprehensive timeline serves as the final action strategy, integrating all aspects of the policy influence plan into a coherent schedule.

Relationships and Windows of Opportunity This section outlines the types of relationships we aim to establish with each target audience, such as partnerships, mentorships, association memberships, club memberships, and student/supervisor relationships.

Additionally, it identifies windows of opportunity for making a significant impact, such as International Women's Day, orientation days, graduation days, and exchange visits. By leveraging these opportunities, we can maximize the effectiveness of our influence efforts and engage our audiences at optimal times.

Channels This category encompasses different communication means, with the purpose of finding the most suitable ones regarding the target audience and the message we want to transmit. We grouped traditional communication venues such as conferences, publications, events and 1:1 meetings, but also consider other events that can include diversity and inclusion aspects, such as hackathons, job fairs or science fairs. An important channel that needs to be exploited is represented by the online space, such as websites and social media platforms.

Target Audiences In this quadrant, we define the audiences we aim to reach. This involves identifying early adopters, supporters, advocates, and potential champions. Specific personas are listed to ensure targeted communication and engagement.

For schools, this could include ministers of education, regional ministers, principals, and school teachers. For universities, targets might be rectors, department heads, professors, union representatives, and equality representatives. In public administration, relevant audiences could include government officials, local authorities, and city councils.

The more specific the details, including contact information, the better we can tailor our approach and ensure effective outreach.

Monitoring and Accountability Partners This section describes our plans for monitoring the progress of the influence plan. We outline potential accountability measures and identify metrics to track short- and long-term progress.

Short-term metrics might include the number of events, participants, publications, reposts, comments, retention rates, survey responses, and observable engagement, such as smiles on participants' faces.

Long-term metrics could include percentages of gender representation, wage equity, and overall satisfaction ratings. We also recommend enrolling accountability partners and scheduling follow-up meetings (e.g., monthly, quarterly) to maintain motivation and peer support.

Evaluation and Assessment In the evaluation and assessment section, we establish a comprehensive evaluation plan based on the monitoring metrics. This includes tracking progress across different countries, gathering feedback from target groups, and assessing the maturity of our outreach efforts. We evaluated the implementation of activities to determine what worked well and identify areas for improvement.

After the initial implementation phase, we assess potentials and risks, using these insights to refine and improve future actions. This **continuous feedback loop** ensures that the policy influence plan remains dynamic and effective, adapting to new challenges and opportunities.

In the following section, we provide a couple of examples from instances we developed across EUGAIN.

16.4 Country-Specific Policy Influence Plans (PIPs): Implementation

During the final EUGAIN conference in Lisbon (April 2024), the organizing team decided to facilitate a session dedicated to drawing personalized policy influence plan tailored for each member country. Given the diversity of project members, the particularities of each country, and all the other specifics, the policy influence plan canvas was the template that we designed as we considered that it is capable of accommodating, on one hand, all the principles we wanted to share and follow and, on the other hand, all the specific needs of each country.

The sessions were run as a co-creation collaborative activity, in which members from different countries (grouped by geographic proximity or similar status of gender balance in Informatics) worked together and exchanged ideas to construct their country-specific policy influence strategy. The idea that governed the session was that everyone would go home with a detailed plan that can then be shared, implemented, deployed.

During two sessions, participants debated each component of the Policy Influence Plan Canvas. They were split in:

- **Session 1: What? and Who?** in terms of *Partners*, *Activities*, *Resources*, *Relationships* and *Channels* already established or produced during the 4 years of EUGAIN, and
- **Session 2: How? and When?** which consisted in (1) designing a plan to move to action, and (2) completing the *Timeline for Communication and Action* of the canvas.

In order to envision the potential of the policy influence plan, we present three examples on how participants applied the plan through different actions:

> **Example** Birgit has presented the Deliverable 7 (see https://eugain.eu/results/deliverables/) to the leadership group of her department at Chalmers Technical University, Sweden. She got positive feedback and was requested by a few colleagues to help them with individual follow-up actions.

Example Simona, as member of the Department of Computer Science at Babeş Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania has regular annual meetings with teaching staff from highschool at regional level. She presented the booklet *"From School to University"* (Deliverable 4 from https://eugain.eu/results/deliverables/) to Informatics teachers. As some of them were not even aware of some of the issues, they were pleased to have access to resources and had asked Simona for advice in designing future activities for girls in Informatics.

Example Patricia, a full professor in the Netherlands, mentioned open access to the booklet *"From Ph.D. to Professor"* (Deliverable 3 from https://eugain.eu/results/deliverables/) at a weekly meeting of the Software and Sustainability Research Group that she is leading at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Young female researchers felt inspired and encouraged to consider academic career as a future option, and asked Patricia to further discuss the subject.

We aim to provide actionable steps that can be tailored to specific contexts and needs, ensuring a sustainable impact. These recommendations can serve as starting points to raise awareness, implement change, and at the same time promote Informatics as an indispensable science in today's life. Following the principles stated in [3], we outline in the following steps our Policy Influence Plan based on our template:

1. **Collect the available resources, find potential partners and devise the potential activities:** iteratively complete sections *Resources and Materials, Partners and Alliances* and *Activities* to determine all available assets;
2. **Determine connections, establish audience and find ways to reach it:** in successive steps, envision how you want to achieve your goals by filling the quadrants *Relationships and Windows of opportunity, Target Audiences* and *Channels*;
3. **Establish indicators and evaluation procedure:** to track progress and improve the influence plan, complete *Monitoring and Accountability Partners* and *Evaluation and Assessment* sections;
4. **Outline concrete steps:** summarize all available assets and transform them into actionable points with specific details in *Timeline for Communication and Actions*.

The steps are illustrated in Fig. 16.2 and show which elements of the Policy Influence Plan (Fig. 16.1) get affected.

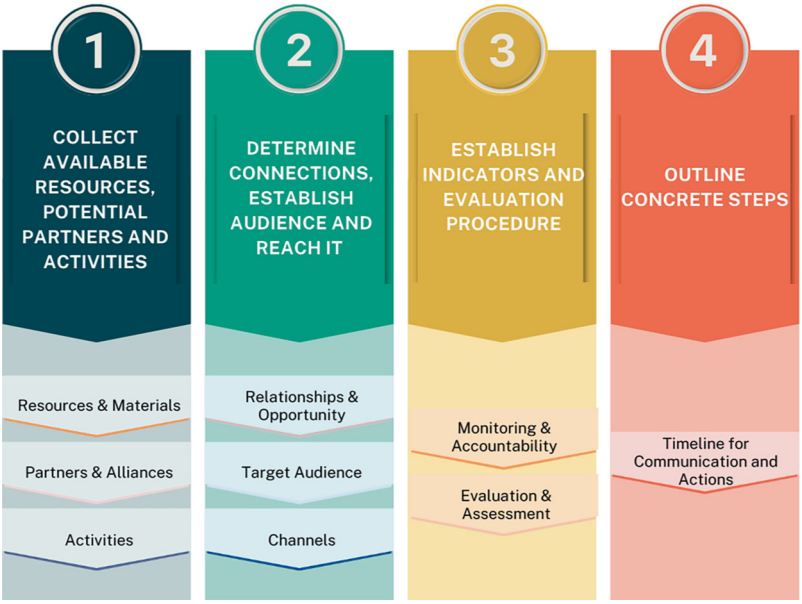

Fig. 16.2 The steps of developing a policy influence plan

16.5 Following Through and Following Up

Following up on the evaluation of policy influence plans involves several key steps to ensure that the desired outcomes are being achieved and to make the necessary adjustments. First, it is crucial to establish a clear monitoring and evaluation framework. This framework should outline specific indicators and metrics that will be used to measure progress and impact. These indicators should align with the goals of the policy influence plan and be both quantitative and qualitative. Regular data collection and analysis are essential to track these indicators over time. This can include surveys, interviews, focus groups, and other methods to gather feedback from stakeholders and target audiences. By systematically monitoring these indicators, organizations can assess whether their strategies are working as intended and identify areas for improvement.

Figure 16.3 shows an example instance after a couple of hours of work at the EUGAIN PIP workshop at the final conference in Lisbon.

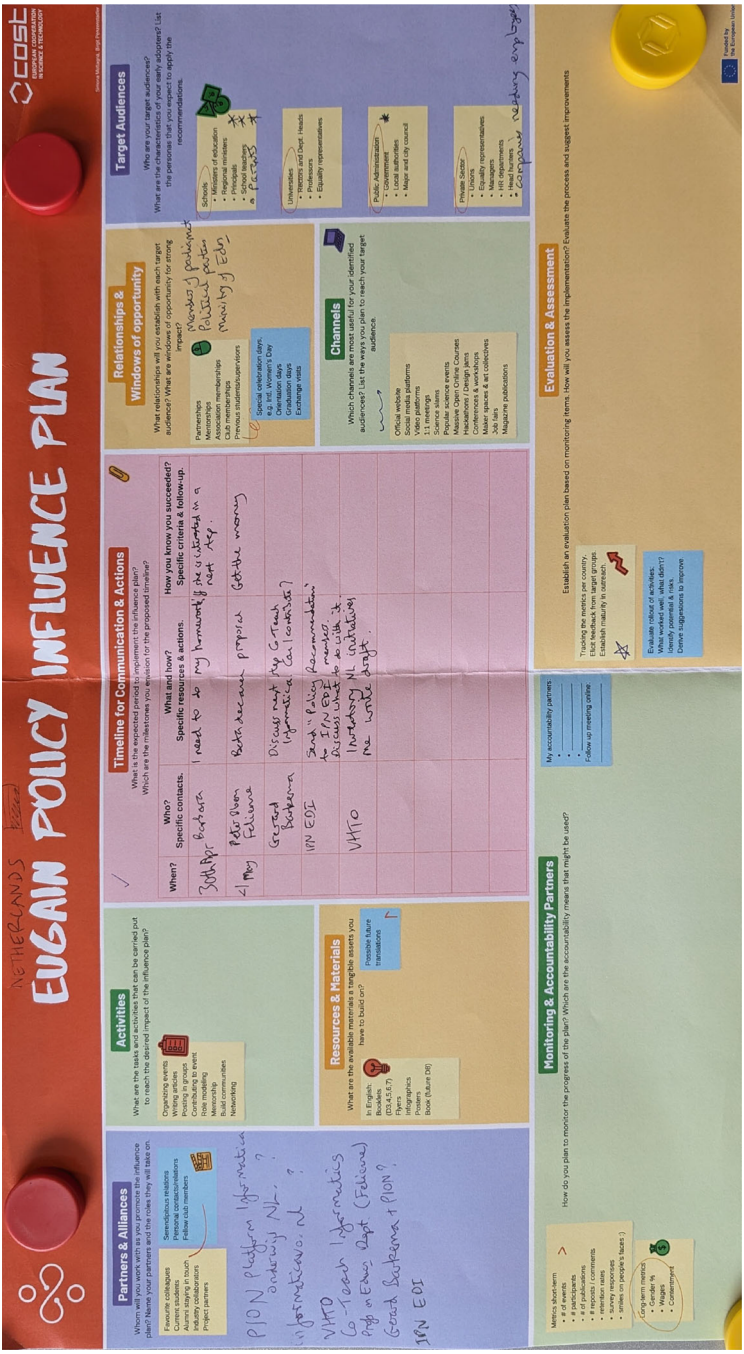

Fig. 16.3 PIP instance for EUGAIN in the Netherlands

Patricia, the university professor. During the brainstorming session, we mainly focused on identifying the most important partners and alliances part of our network and that have influence nation wide. We then discussed the Timeline for Communication and Actions by identifying (1) the key members of the partners to whom we have direct access, (2) what specific actions would resonate the most (e.g., share the policy recommendations, discuss how to implement follow-up actions in the specific context of the partner, etc.), and (3) filled the PIP Timeline. We also sketched which elements in the other PIP fields were applicable.

Second, maintaining open and ongoing communication with all stakeholders is vital. This includes not only those who are directly involved in implementing the policy influence plan but also those who are affected by the policies. Regular updates and reports should be shared with stakeholders to keep them informed about progress and any changes to the plan. Engaging stakeholders in this way helps to build trust and ensures that their perspectives are considered in the evaluation process. Additionally, soliciting feedback from stakeholders can provide valuable insights into how the policy influence efforts are being received and perceived, which can inform adjustments to the strategy.

Patricia, the university professor. We made sure to get on the agenda of regular meeting with our partners, the identified gender balance actions. In addition, we reached out to the target audience organizations in the whole value chain, like parents and pupils in the school system, and IT companies looking for new hires.

Lastly, it is important to conduct periodic reviews and reflections on the overall effectiveness of the policy influence plan. These reviews should involve a comprehensive analysis of the data collected, comparing actual outcomes with the anticipated goals. Based on this analysis, organizations should be prepared to make informed adjustments to their strategies. This could mean refining the messaging, reallocating resources, or changing tactics to better achieve the desired policy changes. Reflecting on what has worked well and what has not can also provide lessons for future policy influence efforts. By committing to an iterative process of assessment and adaptation, organizations can enhance their ability to influence policy effectively and sustainably.

Patricia, the university professor. It is early days, but we have periodic meetings with nation wide alliances where we discuss and evaluate the progress on national target metrics. To this end, we use the metrics of the Women Professors Monitor presented yearly by the Dutch Network of Women Professors (LNVH).

16.6 How You Start Using the Canvas

Here are concrete suggestions for the target audience on what you could do with the policy influence plan and how you can start putting it into practice.

Kim, the university professor. Kim needs to promote females in academic careers in Computer Science and Engineering. They decide, as a department strategy, to promote the department as a safe and pleasant place for women to work. *Actions:* Her assistant will create weekly posts on social media using EUGAIN YouTube shorts and will track numbers of views and likes; the posters from Deliverable 7 will be printed and displayed in the department's hall.

Bazyli, the industry manager. Bazyli needs to address the request of gender equity in the company. They decide, at a board meeting, to run a campaign to attract female students to the domain. *Actions:* Senior women executives are encouraged to dedicate time for the next 12 months to act as mentors for university students, and an assessment report will be produced at the end of the period. EUGAIN Deliverable 8 can be used as a primary resource.

Nicole, the activist. Nicole needs supportive data from research for their campaigns. They decide to make a report on different career stages of educating women in IT. *Actions:* A team of volunteers within the organization will combine the analysis produced in EUGAIN deliverables with the detailed data by Informatics Europe to produce a report on the current situation in the region by the end of the year.

Alex, the school principal. Alex needs to find ways to support their students in succeeding. Alex decides to form a task force of teachers to organize extracurricular STEM activities for the next academic year. *Actions:* He translates the brochure for teachers provided by EUGAIN and discuss Deliverable 4 with the task force. Then establishes a monthly meeting to organize activities

Deniz, student about to graduate. Deniz needs to choose between academia and industry. Denis decides to search for opportunities for an academic career and explores its advantages. *Actions:* She follows the activities of the EUGAIN's Young Researchers and Innovators group and contacts some of the members for advice

James, school teacher. James needs to propose in-class activities to inspire students. James decides to discuss with fellows teaching Informatics in his school. *Actions:* James translates the EUGAIN brochures for schools and during meeting with fellows, they decide to engage parents and older siblings in these activities that will be organized monthly for the whole academic year. Inspired by EUGAIN posters, he also organize a drawing contest for poster with his class.

16.7 Conclusion

In this chapter we introduced the Policy Influence Plan Canvas, a useful tool to get started on policy making, transforming key finding from EUGAIN projects into actionable points that can be implemented by everyone. We also reported from our experiences of using it and make suggestions for how to get started.

We have focused our attention throughout the chapter on the collaborative and iterative nature of the proposed influence plan template. It is our believe and approach that efficient and sustainable change can be achieved only in collaboration with key partners and only by proposing concrete actions that are achievable in a foreseen period of time.

We hope you choose to use it. We encourage stakeholder from education, academics, industry and public administration to adopt and adapt this canvas to their specific needs.

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