

Yes**We**Plan!

## Interview Guidelines

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How the careers of architects and engineers developed after graduation - and what their gender has to do with it



Erasmus+



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## Section I: Instructions for the interviewer

### 1. Frameworks and aims

In the framework of the *YesWePlan!* project ([www.yesweplan.eu](http://www.yesweplan.eu)), 20 interviews are supposed to be conducted in each country. Their main aims are the following:

- a) We want to get a better insight on gender inequality in the professions of architecture and civil engineering. The interview does not ask questions about women's or men's architecture in the narrower sense, but rather whether male and female architects believe that they can exercise their profession equally or whether one of the two sexes is discriminated professionally, socially, financially, etc.; to this end, both men and women are interviewed.
- b) In addition, we want to find out what ideas the interviewees have to reduce and/or eliminate possible gender inequality in these occupations. This mainly concerns measures that can be implemented directly by the partners of the project group (e.g. in the areas of awareness raising, training, coaching, lobbying, etc.). In this context, we would also like to hear about examples of good practice from all partner countries, which have proved particularly effective in achieving gender equality.
- c) The interviews should also help to validate the quantitative (numerical) data obtained in the Career Tracker online-questionnaire [*development in progress*] with qualitative (narrative) data and therefore, to better explore their background.
- d) Last but not least, on basis of the data gained by the interviews and the online-questionnaire, it should be possible for the project partners to initiate and implement concrete measures to achieve greater gender equality on long-term perspective in the individual partner countries.

However, conducting such interviews, usually requires a certain set of methodological competences and a fair deal of experience. Due to limited resources (scientific interviews are very time-, personnel- and cost-intensive<sup>1</sup>) we will perhaps not fully meet all quality standards but we still can come to very helpful results if some basic recommendations are considered. Therefore, the main purpose of these guidelines is to set a common framework to organise and implement the interviews in all countries. In that way, we should receive comprehensive, high-quality and comparable data and information that allow take appropriate actions to promote and achieve gender equality in the professions of architecture and civil engineering.

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<sup>1</sup> A good overview of general quality standards of empirical social research are given by Neuman/Lawrence (2010): *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* or by Atteslander (2007): *Methods of Empirical Social Research*.

## 2. Sample/Target group

The sample should be drawn in all countries as follows:

- a) in total, 20 architects/civil engineers should be interviewed; they should have a Master's degree in their subjects and be/were fully licensed to practice this profession independently according to the legal provisions of their country or as employee in a licensed office;
- b) at least 50% but no more than 70% of the respondents should be women;
- c) approx. half of the respondents should be below 40 years of age, the other half should be 40+ (deviation tolerance +/- 10%);
- d) approx. half of the respondents should have less the 10 years of work experience (but not less than 1 year), the other half should have 10+ (deviation tolerance +/- 10%);
- e) respondents do not necessarily have to be exercise their professions at the time the interview is conducted (for example, they can also be on parental leave or on sabbatical or already have retired etc.);
- f) generally, it should be avoided that some groups within the profession are too dominantly represented (e.g. that only persons from large offices or only from urban areas or only with high income etc. get interviewed); for getting a best possible picture from the overall situation, the sample should be selected as homogeneously as possible.

## 3. Semi-structured interviews - introduction to the method

We apply the method of semi-structured interviews in our investigation. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative method of inquiry that combines a pre-determined set of open questions (questions that prompt discussion) with the opportunity for the interviewer to explore particular themes or responses further.

A semi-structured interview does not limit respondents to a set of pre-determined answers (unlike a structured questionnaire which pre-determined questions involve the risk of uniform answers) and it allows respondents to discuss and raise issues that you may not have considered. Therefore, they are mainly used when one already has some prior knowledge about an object of investigation, but still knows little about the exact background, facts or motives of human behaviour.

However, the open form of the semi-structured interview also has the disadvantage that it must be conducted in a well-prepared and disciplined manner, as it can easily get out of hand and, above all, recording and documenting the results is sometimes time-consuming. For this reason, good preparation is important.

The following information<sup>2</sup> provides a checklist of what you need to consider in planning and conducting a qualitative interview. It is important to remember that a qualitative interview is not the same as delivering a questionnaire just face-to-face. It rather uses open-ended questions to prompt respondents to think, express values and provide answers in their words.

a) Preparation Make sure that you are clear as to what information you want to obtain and that you are prepared to collect the answers (e.g. by taking notes and/or audio-recording).

b) Getting the respondent on board	<p>It is important, and ethically necessary, to be open and transparent with the interviewees as to why you are wanting to speak to them, and how the information will be used. It is also important that the interviewee is convinced that this interview makes sense and that her/his answers and contributions are important in order to bring about or initiate important changes at a higher level. (building ownership). It is also crucial to explain and discuss all details of the interview and data processing with the interviewee.</p> <p><u>It is imperative that each interviewee signs the declaration of consent (Section II) before the interview starts. Please keep these declarations well preserved in your project documentation and also make electronic copies of them!</u></p>
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c) Develop a rapport with the respondent Obtaining meaningful information from a respondent will be easier if they are comfortable opening up to the interviewer. This can be done by starting a general conversation (small talk) in the beginning and creating a relaxed atmosphere (e.g. offering a drink).

In any case, it is important that you assure the respondent that all information will be treated confidentially, that all data will be passed on anonymously and that there will be no individual evaluations, but that her/his answers will only be evaluated and reported together with the results of the other interviews.

d) Recording of data	Responses can be recorded by written notes, audio-recording or
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<sup>2</sup> [http://evaluationtoolbox.net.au/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=31&Itemid=137](http://evaluationtoolbox.net.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=31&Itemid=137)

both; there are different views on this with corresponding pros and cons: In science, audio-recording is an undisputed standard; it allows you to listen to each part of the interview over and over again, especially at times when you cannot sufficiently remember every detail; another advantage is that - if necessary - other experts can also listen to the interview and give their opinion and assessment when summarising and analysing what has been said.

Minor disadvantages with audio-recordings result, for example, from the fact that some respondents do not feel completely comfortable in such situations and are perhaps less open to answering questions. Taking notes is generally perceived as less threatening, and it also gives the interviewer the opportunity to immediately highlight important points for further evaluation and reporting (appropriate space for taking notes is directly foreseen at the Guided Interview Form in Section III below). For audio-recordings, you will also need basic technical equipment and for transcribing the interviews (which is another scientific quality standard, but not mandatory for the YesWePlan! interview) we recommend using transcription software (e.g. [www.happyscribe.com](http://www.happyscribe.com) which offers good value for money, but there are many other providers, too).

In the end of the day, we leave it up to you to decide whether or not you want to record the interviews or not.

During the interview, it is important to keep the conversation - if necessary - going. Therefore, in the *Guided Interview Form* in *Section III* you will find some questions to use in your interviews. Of course, you should also ask questions yourself, depending on how the interview develops; it is even better if the interviewee talks about topics that are important to him/her.

When putting questions, it is important that you phrase them in a way that gets respondents to provide detailed answers, rather than simple 'Yes' or 'No' answers.

Examples of questions include:

- *What is your personal opinion on this/that?*
- *What strengths/weaknesses do you see in this/that?*
- *How has this/that changed the way your life/career?*

e) Ask questions that lead  
detailed answers

- *What kind of support would you have liked?*
- *What hurdles still remain to be tackled etc.?*

Additionally, questions must be avoided which - directly or indirectly - favour certain answers or influence the interviewee's opinion in the one or the other way, such as:

- One sees more and more that environmentalists nowadays spoil all the fun in life and above all harm the economy? What do you think about the Fridays for Future movement?
- Most of the intelligent people are in favour of the Corona measures - how do you assess these measures?

As already said, it is good to have a set of questions at hand, but the observer must also be prepared to extend or deepen the previously defined questions as necessary. This is the essence of qualitative interviews.

#### f) When to end an interview

The decision on when to end an interview can depend on a number of factors. For example, the interviewer may feel that her/his questions are exhausted and she/he no longer receives new information. Or the interviewee seems tired or has other obligations to fulfil.

Before ending the interview completely and separating, it is good practice to jointly summarise the most important points that the interviewer has noted, as this gives the interviewee the opportunity to confirm or deny these points and, if necessary, even to deepen or clarify them further.

Finally, it is important to thank the interviewee for her/his time. It may also be worthwhile to let respondents know how to obtain the final evaluation report, as this will give them a sense of ownership of the material they share.

#### g) Identifying and interpreting common emergent themes and forwarding results via online form

At the end of all interviews, you should have 20 completed Individual Guided Interview forms (Section III) and/or audio files.

**Now comes the very important step to summarise data and statements received, extract their main information and insert them - questionnaire by questionnaire - to:**

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc9GhEsChj4tPFDqDZBJq3TOPNO2sTNmJn\\_1\\_ZDPx2HZv61yw/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc9GhEsChj4tPFDqDZBJq3TOPNO2sTNmJn_1_ZDPx2HZv61yw/viewform)

It is important that the interviewer is always aware that not her/his own opinion, but only the one of the interviewees should be reproduced. It is advisable to have other people review the answers of the interviews, in order to gain new perspectives and find new interpretations of the information (for this, audio-recorded interviews would be very helpful).

#### 4. Implementation and reporting of the interviews

h) Start:	Basically, the interviews should be made after the Career Tracker has gone online and first results are available! However, if you want you also can start with interviews before.
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i) Duration of interview: approx. 30-60 min

j) Documentation and reporting of interviews:	<p>There are two forms to be used:</p> <p>i) For taking notes at each interview, please use the <i>Individual Guided Interview (Section III)</i> for each of the 20 interviewees (additionally, audio-recording is recommended but it is not obligatory).</p> <p>ii) Please insert the main information and data received/recorded please at</p> <p><a href="https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc9GhEsChj4tPFDqDZBJq3TOPNO2sTNmJn_1_ZDPx2HZv61yw/viewform">https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc9GhEsChj4tPFDqDZBJq3TOPNO2sTNmJn_1_ZDPx2HZv61yw/viewform</a></p> <p>Please be carefully not to express your own opinion but the one of the respondents</p>
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ii) Deadline for delivering 20 Google docs forms from each country **30.04.2021**

## Section II: Interview Consent Form

Dear Madam/Sir,

Welcome and thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. By doing so, you are supporting the EU project YesWePlan! (Erasmus+ N° 2019-AT01-KA202-051292; [www.yesweplan.eu](http://www.yesweplan.eu)) which is concerned with equal opportunities for men and women in the professions of architects and civil engineers. Within this framework, a Europe-wide online survey on career development in these professions will be conducted, supported by interviews implemented in Spain, France, Slovenia, Germany and Austria.

YesWePlan! is co-funded by the European education programme Erasmus+ ([https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus_en)) and started in November 2019. During its two-year course, various surveys will be carried out to find out whether and what gender-specific working and living conditions exist (which, for example, lead to the fact that in some countries many more men ultimately pursue these professions, even though, originally, almost the same number of men and women began studying them). On the basis of the surveys' results, recommendations will be made and measures implemented to sustainably increase gender equality in this professional field.

The method used to ask and document your knowledge, experience and opinions on this topic is called Guided Interview and should take between 30 and 60 min. The interviewer has prepared some questions but you can always bring in your own aspects and steer the interview in a direction of gender-specific working and living conditions which are relevant to you! Of course, you are also free not to answer any of the questions or to stop the interview at any time without giving reasons.

In order to best reproduce your answers and statements, notes and/or audio recordings will be made; at the end, the interviewer will check with you whether he or she has understood and noted everything correctly. All data and information will be treated confidentially and evaluated anonymously in strict accordance with the European Data Protection Regulation (EDPR; <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/679/oj?locale=en>). In general, your data will not be evaluated individually, but first together with all other data from your country and then together with all data from the other countries. The collected results and the findings derived from them are published electronically and in print in a report of about 20 pages, which we will of course be happy to send you.

If there are any questions or wishes from your side, please let us know.

Thank you again for your participation in this interview. Due to data protection, scientific and funding requirements, we would kindly ask you to sign this declaration of consent before the interview starts. This declaration will not(!) be archived together with your questionnaire or somehow published.

### Consent to the interview and data processing (to be signed by each interviewee)

Objective of the interview: Gender-specific frameworks in working and living conditions of architects and civil engineers  
Organised/implemented by: YesWePlan! project group (Erasmus+ N° 2019-AT01-KA202-051292; [www.yesweplan.eu](http://www.yesweplan.eu))

[Please insert]

Date: 18/09/2020

Start: \_\_:\_\_ hours

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

The aims and purpose of the YesWePlan! project in general as well as of this interview in particular have been explained to me. I agree that my statements are recorded by written notes and/or audio files. I was assured that - if I request - all written and/or electronic records of my statements will be deleted immediately. My participation is voluntary and I have understood that I am free not to answer individual questions or to withdraw at all at any time. All my data and statements will be kept fully anonymously and confidentially, always in accordance with the EDPR; they won't be shared with anyone outside of the YesWePlan! project group unless all identifying information was removed first. All data and information that I provide during the Interview will be grouped with answers from others so that I cannot be identified. Given these conditions, I consent to take part in this interview:

Name of the interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of the interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Section III: Individual Guided Interview

0.1 Country:	DE	0.2 Interviewee N°:	1	0.3 Date:	18/09/2020	0.4 Starting time:	____:____
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*(please insert before starting each interview)*

### 1. Gender, age, profession

1.1 Gender:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> female <input type="checkbox"/> male <input type="checkbox"/> diverse
1.2 Age:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 30 or less <input type="checkbox"/> 31-40 <input type="checkbox"/> 41-50 <input type="checkbox"/> 51-60 <input type="checkbox"/> 61 or more
1.3 Profession:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architects <input type="checkbox"/> civil engineer <input type="checkbox"/> both
1.3.1 Please specify your field of professional activities in a few words (academic, curator, blogger, builder, landscape architect etc.):	
1.4 Kind of employment in this profession:	<input type="checkbox"/> employed <input type="checkbox"/> self-employed <input type="checkbox"/> maternity/parental leave <input type="checkbox"/> retirement <input type="checkbox"/> other (please specify): _____
1.5 Years of working experience in this field:	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 or less <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 <input type="checkbox"/> 11-20 <input type="checkbox"/> 21 or more
1.6 Are you still working in this field:	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
1.6.1 If 'No', please explain briefly what you are doing now and why you are not working in your profession anymore:	
1.7 Additional comments to Section 1 GENDER, AGE, PROFESSION (if any):	

### 2. Reasons for choosing the profession and continuation

2.1 Why do you have decided to become an architect/civil engineer?	
2.2 Were/are there any role models (e.g. parents, friends etc.) in your family or social environment who also worked/work in this profession?	
2.3 Did you frequently interrupt your studies and/or professional practice or changed jobs? Have your training and professional career been continuous and smooth?	
2.4 Do or don't you believe that your personal study and professional career (in both positive and negative ways) have partly developed the way they have because of your gender? Why? Why not?	
2.5 Additional comments for Section 2. REASONS FOR CHOOSING THE PROFESSION AND CONTINUATION (if any):	

### 3. Profession and gender-related issues

3.1 Which situations or areas in your profession you think pose special challenges for women or men or diverse? Please think of all possible places of work such as planning and development work in the office, negotiations and meetings with customers and meetings on construction sites.

3.2 Was/is it easy or difficult for you to combine work, family and social life? Where are/were the hurdles and challenges?

3.3 Have you personally experienced gender inequality or sexual harassment while working in your profession? Have you observed that this happened to others?

3.4 In case of any problems observed and/or experienced, what do you think helps best to tackle and overcome gender-inequality? Were there any persons and/or organisations that provided support? Can you give examples of good practice for this (e.g. funding programmes, consulting and training etc.)

3.5 Do you perceive architecture/civil engineering more as a male or female profession? Or is it even possible to say that?

3.6 Statistics in many countries show that about the same number of men and women start studying architecture, but far fewer women than men finish their studies and even fewer work in their profession. What do you think are the reasons behind this? [only to be answered if valid for the country]

3.7 Additional comments for Section 3. PROFESSION AND GENDER-RELATED ISSUES (if any):

## 4. Derivatives and recommendations

What demands or recommendations do you have for policy makers and other stakeholders to address gender inequality in your country in general and or profession in particular more quickly and permanently?

Which learning and development processes are necessary at the following levels?

What investments or changes in attitudes, standards, laws, etc. are necessary to achieve improvements?

Please think on following levels:

- 4.1 The society and the state you live in in general (such as legislation on maternity/ parental leave, on the care of relatives etc., attitudes and role models in society in general etc.)
  
- 4.2 Your working environment and the workplace (e.g. equal pay, job sharing, home office, child care etc.)
  
- 4.3 What kind of support and offer would you like to receive from your employer (in case you have one)?  
What should change in your daily work routine to improve your situation?  
Which organisational or infrastructural support or offers would be important for you?
  
- 4.4 What support do you desire from professional associations, federations and chambers?  
Is there any advice or training that would help you?  
How can chambers better use their influence on labour policy and promote gender equality in this respect?
  
- 4.5 4.5 Additional comments for Section 4. DERIVATIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS (if any):

## 5. Any other business

Are there any points that have not yet been raised, but which you would like to address or notice?

Thank you very much for your time and efforts!