Recently, important developments have taken place regarding gender equality in higher education in Turkey. Many universities in Turkey implemented policies geared towards the prevention of sexual harassment on campus and designed university-wide courses on gender equality. Some universities developed and implemented gender equality actions plans and others are starting similar processes either in the scope of EU funded projects or with the efforts of academics involved in gender studies. However, there are also setbacks and resistance on many levels regarding the institutionalization of gender equality in universities. Based on expert interviews with academics who have been leading such efforts for gender mainstreaming in universities and the evaluation of a workshop on gender equality in higher education which took place in Istanbul in November 2018, the paper sheds light onto the structure and format of institutional transformation processes in universities and identifies three models of change: a top-down model where main actors are academics, where change is mostly institutional with administrative support legitimized by EU projects, a bottom-up model where academics-students as well as local civil society actors are involved where actions are mostly directed to awareness-raising, and a third model where individual academics push for gender equality in the lack of any collective organizing or support. The paper proposes a hybrid model of participatory change to satisfy the shortcomings of gender mainstreaming efforts identified on field which are related to inclusion, intersectionality and sustainability.