

Gender Equality Plan 2023-2026

Our organization believes in the principle of gender equality and strives for its realization at every level. We uphold the values outlined in the European Commission's EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals concerning gender equality. This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) outlines our strategy to close the gender gap, redefine gender roles, and terminate gender-based violence.

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1. Gender Equality Body and Progress Monitoring

1.1 Resources to implement and oversee gender equality related actions

Gender Equality Committee: We have established a Gender Equality Committee to consistently monitor gender equality within our organisation and propose initiatives that will enhance gender balance internally and externally.

1. **Gender Equality Committee consists of 2 members, representing both genders.**
2. Our Gender Equality Committee meets on a regular basis (every 6 months) to discuss the status of our GEP, gender-related issues, and the potential for further improvements in our approach to gender equality, and to propose gender related trainings to all colleagues.

Monitoring and Further Actions: Our Gender Equality Committee (GEC) will monitor actions and progress towards our targets every 6 months. Should it be required, the GEB will propose further actions to improve gender equality, such as improving communication with consortia, promoting existing female leaders, and providing exhaustive lists of experts for advisory roles. Internal training will also be organized to increase awareness and competence in using gender-neutral language and visuals among our employees.

1.2 Data Collection and Monitoring

To better understand and address any gender disparities within our organization, we are committed to implementing a robust data collection and monitoring system that gathers sex/gender disaggregated data on both personnel, part-time workers (usually students), contractors and subcontractors.

This means we will collect data and statistics based on sex and gender to evaluate any differences in experiences, opportunities, and outcomes between different genders within our organization. This includes various data points such as recruitment numbers, salaries, promotions, project leads, board representation, attrition rates, student enrolments, course completion rates, and others, all broken down by gender.

These data shall compile an annual report based on indicators relevant to gender equality. These indicators may include:

- the gender pay gap,
- proportion of women in leadership positions (Governing Board, Supervisory Board)
- gender distribution in different internal job roles
- gender distribution in the mentors pool
- gender distribution in the participants of startup/scaleup support

This **annual report** will be used to assess the progress towards our gender equality goals and identify any areas where more targeted actions may be needed.

Regular monitoring of this data allows us to track the effectiveness of our gender equality initiatives over time and adjust our strategies as needed to ensure we are making meaningful progress toward gender equality.

2. Internal Strategy and Actions:

Our organisation is steadfast in its commitment to promoting and supporting gender equality at every level. We firmly believe that creating an environment that values diversity and offers equal opportunities for all, regardless of gender, is not only ethically right but also strategically sound. Our internal strategy and Gender Equality Plan (GEP) are designed to foster an inclusive culture and eradicate any potential gender bias or inequality.

2.1 Gender balance in leadership and decision-making.

While our immediate goal is to ensure representation of all genders in leadership roles, we acknowledge the current male dominance in our leadership. Over the next 5 years, our target is to have a minimum of 40% female representation on our Governing Board and senior management positions.

Gender Pay Gap Analysis: We are committed to regularly evaluating our salary structure to identify and address any pay disparities between male and female employees in similar roles, thereby ensuring equitable compensation across the board.

2.2 Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

1. **Career Development Opportunities:** We ensure that every employee, regardless of their gender, is offered equal opportunities for career progression. Merit and competence are the sole determinants for advancement within our organization.
2. **Inclusive Recruitment:** We are committed to fair and unbiased recruitment, ensuring that job candidates are evaluated based on their skills, experience, and fit for the role, irrespective of their gender, age, or nationality. We provide equal opportunities by preparing our job advertisements in a gender-neutral language. We will implement fair and transparent recruitment practices that eliminate gender bias. All job advertisements will include an explicit statement welcoming applications from all genders.
3. **Gender equality in Career Progression:** Recognizing the importance of a healthy work-life balance, our organisation allows for flexible working arrangements (including place and time), accommodating the personal and family needs of our employees. This approach also extends to maternity or parental leave, allowing individuals to return to work at a pace that best suits their circumstances.

2.3 Inclusive organisational culture, work-life balance, and diversity training

Work-life balance and organisational culture are two fundamental aspects of creating an equal and inclusive company environment. The way these factors are addressed and integrated within an organisation can have a significant impact on employee wellbeing, productivity, and overall job satisfaction. Let's delve into these aspects:

2.3.1 Work-Life Balance:

1. **Flexible Work Arrangements:** To encourage a healthy work-life balance, our organisation will offer flexible work arrangements where possible. This might include flexible start and end times, the opportunity for remote work, or job-sharing arrangements.

2. **Respecting Personal Time:** Our organisation will respect employees' personal time by limiting after-hours communication and avoiding over-scheduling. We will encourage employees to take regular breaks during the workday and use their vacation time.
3. **Support for Parents and Caregivers:** We understand that many of our employees may have responsibilities as parents or caregivers. To support them, we will provide benefits such as parental leave, childcare support, or flexible schedules.

2.3.2 Organisational Culture:

1. **Shared Values and Goals:** Our organisational culture will be based on shared values and goals that prioritise equality and inclusion. We will clearly communicate these values and goals to all employees and make them a central part of our decision-making process.
2. **Open and Honest Communication:** Our organisation will foster a culture of open and honest communication. We will encourage employees to voice their opinions and ideas, and we will provide regular feedback to help them grow and develop.
3. **Recognizing and Rewarding Effort:** We will regularly recognise and reward employees for their hard work and contributions. This can help to create a positive and supportive organisational culture where everyone feels valued.
4. **Inclusivity:** Our organisational culture will celebrate diversity and actively promote inclusivity. This means ensuring that all individuals feel welcomed, respected, and valued, and that their unique perspectives are appreciated and utilised.
5. **Inclusive Internal Communication:** Our organisation is committed to using gender-neutral language and avoiding gender-based biases and stereotypes in all internal communication.
6. **Continuous Learning and Improvement:** Our organisation will foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement. This includes providing regular training and development opportunities and continuously seeking ways to improve our practices and processes.
7. **Zero tolerance against gender-based violence and sexual harassment:** A zero-tolerance policy against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, will be implemented. A formal process for reporting and addressing these incidents will be developed and communicated across the organization by the end of 2023.

2.3.3 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Training

Training plays a pivotal role in raising awareness and changing attitudes towards gender equality within our organization. We will arrange regular training sessions (1/year) aimed at staff members and decision-makers in our organization to increase understanding and awareness of gender equality and the ways unconscious gender biases can affect our judgments and decisions.

Awareness-raising sessions will provide essential information about the importance of gender equality, the benefits it brings to an organization, and how every individual can contribute towards achieving it. We will share best practices for promoting gender equality in day-to-day activities and within the larger organizational structure.

Training on **unconscious biases** will delve deeper into how implicit biases can influence our perceptions and actions, often without our conscious awareness. These sessions will help attendees identify their

own unconscious biases, understand how these biases can affect decisions and interactions, and learn strategies to mitigate the effects of these biases. This can **include biases in hiring decisions, task assignments, performance evaluations, and everyday interactions.**

Through these trainings, we aim to create a more inclusive organizational culture that acknowledges and addresses biases, and promotes equality at all levels. Continuous learning opportunities will be provided to ensure that the understanding and application of equality principles is kept up to date.

2.4 Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment.

Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment are elaborated in a non-public internal policy available for all employees and co-workers.

3. External Strategy and Actions:

Our organization is dedicated not only to promoting gender equality within our organization but also in our broader partnerships and collaborations. We are proactive in encouraging gender equality in the various stages of proposal preparation and project implementation where our organization is involved. During the scouting for startups for our Acceleration Programmes we have set a KPI of 40% female representation among founders/CEOs. With our newly developed Gender Equality Plan (GEP), we aim to formalize and monitor these actions.

3.1 Encouraging Active Participation of Women in Leadership Roles

We strongly support our partners in including activities that champion gender equality during project proposal preparation and execution of funded projects. If gender equality activities are non-existent within our partner organizations, we will share our best practices and stimulate them to enhance their efforts towards gender equality. In consortia we are involved with, we will encourage higher female representation as coordinators, Work Package leaders, and external advisors. Moreover, we will promote more female-friendly meeting schedules that accommodate working parents.

3.2 Use of Inclusive Language and Gender-Neutral Visuals for External Communication

Similarly to our internal strategy, we will advocate for the use of inclusive language and gender-neutral visuals in our external communication, but also by our partners during the proposal preparation stage and the project implementation stage. Our GEB will regularly review proposal and communication materials to ensure the use of inclusive language and visuals.

3.3 Gender Dimension in R&D and teaching

The integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content is an essential aspect of fostering gender equality within our organization. It promotes an understanding and acknowledgment of the different ways in which men and women experience the world and contributes to more accurate, robust, and equitable outcomes in research and education. Here's how we plan to approach this:

3.3.1 Gender Dimension in R&D

4. We expect that all research and technological development associated with our organization takes into consideration the gender dimension. This includes ensuring women are not disadvantaged or have less access to innovations, and that diseases are not misdiagnosed due

to biased data. We strongly encourage following the Sex and Gender Equity in Research (SAGER) guidelines during proposal preparation and we support the consideration of gender dimensions as a requirement in most European funded topic calls. Our target is that 95% of the proposals, where our organization provides full support in preparation, will not receive negative comments on the gender section of their Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) of Horizon Europe/EIT Community applications.

5. During project implementation, any data on individuals who are target groups of the project shall be broken down by sex and gender (where appropriate). Prior to the collection of data, that hypothesis, concepts, definitions and methods used in data production shall be conceived to reflect gender roles, relations and inequalities in society.
6. **Promotion of Female Representation:** We aim to promote the active participation of women in professional events and sectors traditionally dominated by men. We commit to empowering our female employees to take the lead in discussions, events, and projects, and we pledge to support initiatives that encourage women's participation in STEM fields.

3.3.2 Gender Dimension in Teaching Content

1. In terms of teaching content, integrating the gender dimension means ensuring that our curricula, courses, and teaching materials adequately represent and engage with gender issues. This includes presenting balanced perspectives, acknowledging the contributions of both women and men in various fields, and discussing the impacts of gender inequalities and stereotypes.
2. Moreover, it also involves using gender-inclusive language and examples in teaching, ensuring equal representation in case studies and readings, and incorporating topics related to gender in a wide range of subjects - not just those traditionally associated with gender studies.
3. By doing so, we can provide students with a more comprehensive, diverse, and equitable understanding of their fields of study. It also promotes critical thinking and allows students to better understand and challenge gender biases and stereotypes.

In both research and teaching, integrating the gender dimension not only improves the quality and equity of our work but also helps to challenge gender stereotypes, inspire diverse participation, and promote a more inclusive and gender-equal culture within our organization. It's a continuous process that requires regular review and updates of our research methods and teaching content to ensure they stay relevant and equitable.

Summary

In conclusion, the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) 2023-2026 represents our firm commitment towards creating an inclusive and equitable work environment. This comprehensive plan outlines proactive strategies to address and eliminate gender inequalities at every level within our organization, and externally in our partnerships and collaborations.

From establishing a Gender Equality Committee and conducting regular data-driven assessments, to ensuring gender balance in leadership roles and practicing unbiased recruitment and career progression - our efforts are centered on creating a work culture free from gender bias.

Furthermore, we strive to maintain a healthy work-life balance for all employees and uphold a zero-tolerance policy against gender-based violence. Through regular training and awareness sessions, we aim to tackle unconscious biases and foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

Externally, our plan extends to include gender considerations in our research, teaching, and collaborations, ensuring that gender equality principles are integrated in every facet of our operations.

Overall, the GEP 2023-2026 is a testament to our unwavering commitment to advancing gender equality. We believe that this initiative will not only foster a diverse, inclusive, and respectful work environment, but will also strategically position our organization for greater innovation, productivity, and overall success.