



**Academy of
Entrepreneurship[®]**

GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

2024-2026

ACADEMY OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. Stefanidis', with a horizontal line underneath.

Andreas Stefanidis,
Managing Director and President

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1. Introduction

Academy of Entrepreneurship (AKEP) is a non-governmental, non-profit training and research organization, founded in 2007. AKEP's main mission is the cultivation of entrepreneurial mindsets and the enhancement of professional skills in the private and public sectors in Greece and the European Union, with strong focus on boosting employability and entrepreneurship competence through non formal education initiatives for individuals and other organizations. AKEP designs and participates in EU-funded research projects and implements training programs to achieve social inclusion and prosperity for all, having as guiding principles to raise awareness and strengthen the values of diversity, inclusion and equality, from local to EU level.

The Gender Equality Plan (GEP) serves as a strategic tool for AKEP, addressing various aspects of gender inequality and working towards creating a more inclusive and equitable environment. The plan includes the strategic areas of intervention, as agreed by the internal committee which was formed in December 2023 to design, implement and evaluate the GEP over a three-year period i.e. 2024-2026, and illustrates the strategy of AKEP to address and promote gender equality at an organizational level, encompassing a specific plan for implementation. The proposed actions, which impact both AKEP staff and beneficiaries, aim to:

- Combat all forms of gender and other social discrimination and exclusion based on gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, social class, race, and ethnicity in education, research, employment, and higher administration.
- Promote gender equality, equal access, and equal opportunities in education, research, employment, and higher administration, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, social class, race, ethnicity, and disability.
- Enhance the inclusive culture and raise awareness about various forms of social discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, social class, race, ethnicity, and disability.
- Enhance scientific research and education on gender, various forms of social discrimination and exclusion, and human rights.

The plan was drafted by a competent research team specialized in social studies and human rights in collaboration with the AKEP's internal committee. Among other things, the guiding principle of this plan is the implementation of European and National guidelines and legal commitments, as well as alignment with the standards set by Horizon Europe and the new Framework for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) of the Council of Europe, so that the research implemented by the AKEP meets the relevant standards for research and innovation. It is also foreseen to integrate the planned actions in functions of the quality management system that the organization is implementing in line with the requirements of the ISO 9001:2015 awarded certification, subject to annual audits by an external auditor.

The proposed strategy takes into consideration Gender Equality as core value of the EU, a fundamental right and key principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights, also linked to the European Commission's European Strategy for Gender Equality 2020-2025. Furthermore, Gender Equality is also one of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5), which depicts the importance of mainstreaming gender equality initiatives and practices to strengthen democratic and equal societies at global scale. Greece follows the strategic lines of the European Strategy for Gender Equality and the requirements of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), which are reflected in the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2021-2025 and has established the law 4604/2019 on Substantial Gender Equality, where Article 17 promotes substantive equality between the sexes and combats gender-based violence, as well as, encourages universities and research institutions to integrate the gender dimension in their teaching and research activities.

2. Regulatory Framework

2.1. International and European Regulatory Framework

Since 1948 and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a plethora of international and European guidelines and normative texts have attempted to promote gender equality, propose ways to effectively combat different social discrimination/exclusion and gender-based violence, and encourage social inclusiveness. Normative texts such as the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the 1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) have been pillars for mainstreaming, at the international level, the need for strong political commitment and long-term institutional intervention to promote gender equality, address gender-based discrimination, open up space for equal access to work, education, decision-making, and personal development, and combat gender-based violence.

Since 2008, the informal group of member states of the United Nations LGBTI Core Group has been working within the UN framework with the primary objective of ensuring universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, in particular for LGBTI+ persons, with a particular focus on protection from racist violence and discrimination. In July 2013, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights launched UN Free & Equal, an innovative global awareness campaign to promote equal rights and fair treatment for LGBTQ+ people.

In the same context, in successive resolutions in 2011, 2014, and 2016, the United Nations:

1. Undertakes to conduct systematic research in the field of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity;
2. Promotes the implementation of legislative measures by Member States to thwart discrimination, exclusion, torture, ill-treatment, and other forms of homophobic and transphobic violence;
3. Encourages Member States to exchange and embrace effective practices, particularly legislative initiatives, that have demonstrated the ability to eradicate inequalities and combat discrimination;
4. Presents an independent expert on LGBTQ+ protection to the UN Human Rights Council.

Since 2014, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, recognizing the crucial importance of equality for social well-being and economic development, has been conducting systematic research on issues of inclusiveness and discrimination against LGBTQ+ people.

Taking into account international commitments and guidelines, the European Union has launched a series of initiatives, strategic proposals, and regulatory commitments aimed at achieving inclusive societies that guarantee equality and work to combat gender discrimination. These draw on the European Union's fundamental, founding texts, such as the founding treaties, the European Convention on Human Rights, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The European Council also adopted the Istanbul Convention, which aimed to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence. The European Union's Council Directive 2000/78/EC established a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, aiming to combat discrimination against, among others, LGBTQ+ people and ensure their equal participation in economic, cultural, and social life, as well as in their personal development. In 2015, the European Commission drew up an Action List for the promotion of LGBTI equality, and in 2020, the European Commission, recognizing the persistent discrimination against LGBTI people, adopted the LGBTI Equality Strategy (2020-2025), which also coincides with the Gender Equality Strategy (2020-2025).

These initiatives aim to consolidate and strengthen equality within the European Union by addressing identified gaps and challenges such as gender inequality in employment and education, discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in all areas of social and economic life and combating all forms of gender-based violence and exclusion.

2.2. National Regulatory Framework

At the constitutional level, the Greek legal order protects gender equality (Article 4 §2) and provides for the adoption of positive measures to promote gender equality (Article 116 §2). More specific national laws establish measures to improve gender equality, combat gender-based violence, and combat discrimination.

Law 3896/2010, "Implementation of Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Labor—Harmonization of Existing Legislation with

Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 and Other Relevant Provisions," harmonized the national legislation with Directive 2006/54/EC. The purpose of the law is to ensure that the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of labor and employment is implemented. In addition, Article 2 defines sexual harassment in the workplace, prohibits it, and includes it among the gender discrimination in employment, which entails civil and criminal liability.

With Law 4531/2018, the Greek Parliament ratified the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, which was adopted by the Council of Europe's Council of Ministers and signed on the 11th of May 2011 at the 121st Council meeting in Istanbul.

Law 4604/2019 seeks to promote substantive gender equality and takes measures to prevent and combat gender-based violence. Additionally, it recognizes the need to incorporate gender identity and sexual orientation into anti-discrimination measures, promoting a comprehensive approach to addressing inequalities related to gender, gender identity, and sexuality.

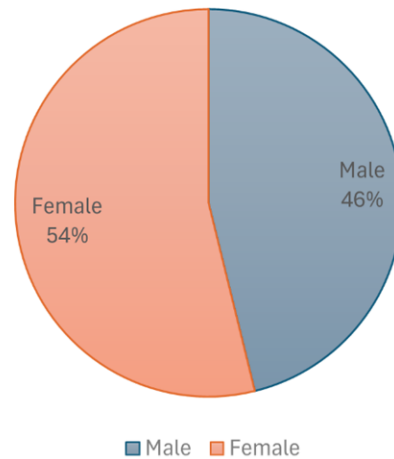
The above legislation is listed as indicative of the commitments arising from national legislation on issues related to gender equality, ensuring equal participation of all regardless of gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation in all aspects of social, political, and economic life of the country. In addition, the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2021-2025 lays out specific guidelines for the medium-term national policy on gender equality, defining its main axes as follows: 1. The prevention and combating of gender and domestic violence; 2. The equal participation of women in the labor market; 3. The equal participation of women in decision-making/leadership roles; 4. Gender mainstreaming in sectoral policies.

3. Current situation

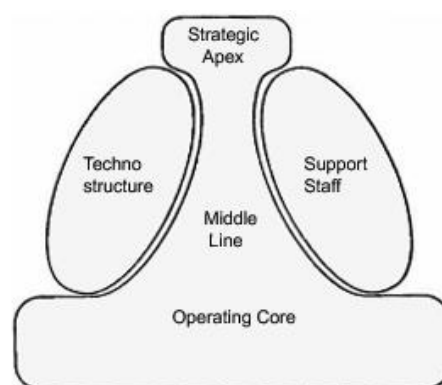
3.1 Organizational structure

In January 2024, AKEP's organizational structure consists of 13 individuals (6 male and 7 female) possessing diverse professional skill sets.

Total Staff at all Levels



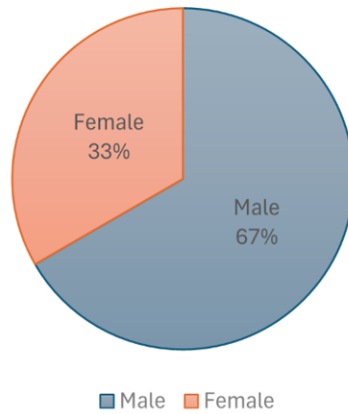
All individuals are strategically allocated to fulfill essential functional domains, including management, education, research, project management, administration, and communication, adopting Mintzberg's model. This structure is illustrated in the following chart (due to size, the middle line of the model is omitted):



(source: Accaglobal.com – [link](#))

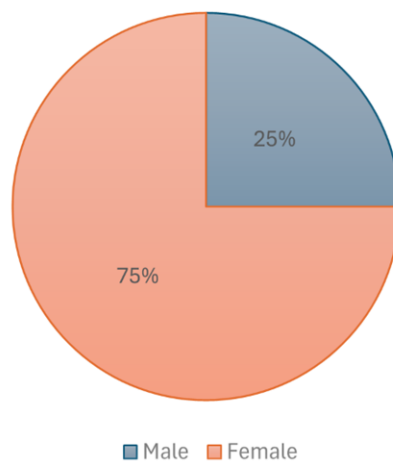
In the strategic apex is made up of 3 people, with central role in the formation of business strategy and mission alignment: a Managing Director and President, a Social Innovation Director and a Senior Project Manager.

Staff in Administrative & Decision Making Positions



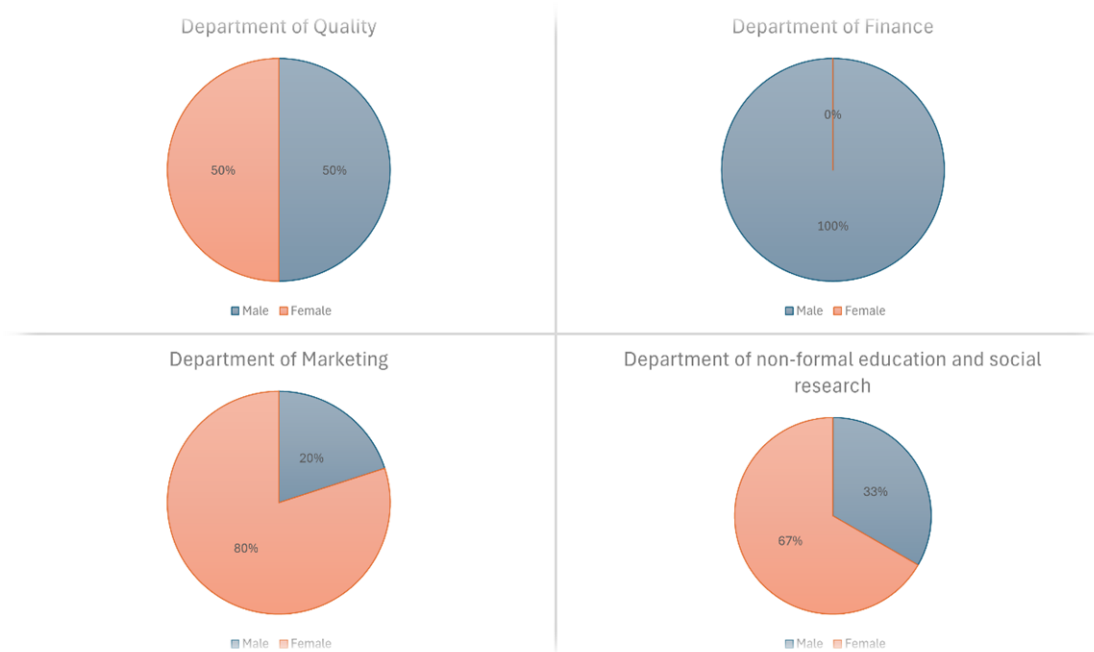
The operating core team, who is also involved in the technostructure component is comprised of 8 employees (6 females and 2 males) who undertake projects' implementation and training activities, while the support staff component includes 2 male employees, an IT expert and a financial expert. According to specific needs, AKEP has a pool of experts who serve as support professionals for business activities (e.g. trainers/mentors/policy experts).

Operating Core Team

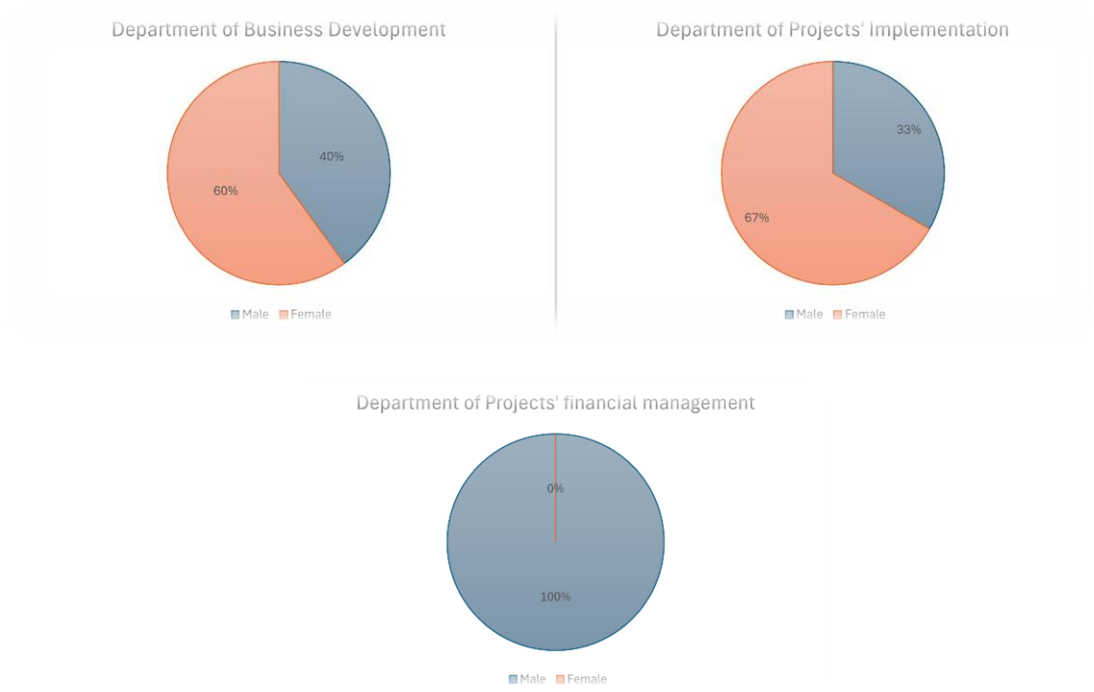


However, it should be stressed that all employees are involved in the decision-making processes, adopting a flat hierarchy and a participatory approach. This visualization rather depicts areas of responsibilities among the core members of AKEP's team.

AKEP's organizational structure consists of four Departments and the Directorate of European Programs and Social Innovation. Relevant data on gender equality per each Department is presented below:



Furthermore, the Directorate of European Programs and Social Innovation is managed by two senior-level employees (1 male and 1 female) and supported by three additional Departments. Relevant data on gender equality per each Department is presented below:



3.2 Projects & collaborations

The Academy of Entrepreneurship is dedicated to advancing gender equality and women empowerment not only within the organization but also externally. Since 2020, has participated in three projects centered around the theme of gender equality. These projects strive to enhance and advocate for the fundamental principles of gender equality, providing support, empowerment, and guidance to diverse individuals and organizations in their efforts to become more gender-inclusive and supportive. Specifically:

EUROTHON- European Hackathon: shaping youth ideas on the future of Europe (2020-2-IT03-KA205-019469) is a project focused on Europe as a great motherland of the future with learning resources and debates on roots to explore and discuss the values of Europe. Training is offered on pressing social topics, with a special focus on diversity and inclusion.

GreenY - Promoting Youth-led Women Entrepreneurship for the development of Inclusive Green Economy (618886-EPP-1-2020-1-EL-EPPKA2-CBY-ACPALA) aims to foster cooperation between countries in Europe, Latin America, and Asia. In the context of the project, women youth workers and young people belonging to vulnerable contexts were trained with key competencies and practical skills that promote their entrepreneurial spirit and increase their employment opportunities within the various sectors related to the green economy model. The development of these capacities will allow them to be empowered in the face of the challenges of the global context and can be considered as active agents of change within the framework of emerging sustainable development models.

MOVE UP-MOtherhood Valorisation and Empowerment for professional development – Upskilling Pathways (101087412 - ERASMUS-EDU-2022-PI-FORWARD-LOT3) intends to develop a flexible upskilling pathway for unemployed mothers, offering the opportunity of assessing, validating, and further developing their prior learning and enhancing their professional competences. The focus is on the Personal, Social and Learning to learn competence (PSL) that they gained/are gaining thanks to their role of parent. The project fosters innovation in Adult Education and contributes

to mothers' empowerment and upskilling for facilitating their access to training and the labor market.

For staying updated with latest news, methodologies and initiatives around gender equality, diversity and inclusion, AKEP has shaped partnerships with organizations and networks from local to EU level. These relationships have created a positive impact and pool of information, resources and learning activities that can benefit both the staff and AKEP's community. News about such activities is shared internally, via social media and newsletters. Indicatively, AKEP collaborates with: Anna Lindh Foundation, Women Do Business and is a member of Euclid Network & Catalyst 2030.

4. Methodology

The Gender Equality Plan for AKEP is the result of 3 brainstorming sessions, analyses and assessments carried out within the organization, using internal resources (both financial and human). Specifically, a Gender Equality committee was formed in November 2023 and is comprised by 4 members of AKEP. The committee members are 2 males (the president and 1 senior manager) and 2 female delegates (1 senior manager and 1 project manager) to ensure representation by gender/sex and different seniority levels. Their selection was based on a) expertise on gender equality topics, b) years of experience in managing employees/teams and c) problem solving skills and proactive approach and d) diversity & complementarity with regards to background.

It is foreseen that the committee will meet at least twice a year to assess the results and apply any additional measures if required. Adopting a horizontal and participatory approach, the plan draft was presented to all employees of AKEP during the last strategic meeting of 2023, so to be in effect from February 2024-onwards, after integrating a few feedback points that emerged during the consultation process with the employees. In addition, the plan is also foreseen to be integrated in the internal quality management system by the end of 2024 and be assessed by an external evaluator as part of the annual quality audit for ISO 9001:2015.

The process started with an analysis of the state-of-the-art of the key organizational procedures and business activities taking into account existing policies and aspects of the company culture that affect the gender perspective. During the initial year of

executing the Gender Equality Plan for AKEP, it is essential to develop a "roadmap" outlining significant milestones. This roadmap focuses on establishing policies and tools aimed at addressing gender equality issues at the organizational level, which have been already within the organization's culture but haven't been consolidated in a concrete plan and procedures. The GEP aims to address prior detected needs related to:

- ✓ Enhancing dissemination and increase competence about equality, diversity, and inclusion within the organization and in its diverse network
- ✓ Capitalizing on findings & results of European projects and other training initiatives to boost gender equality, equity and inclusion
- ✓ Eliminating stereotypes that influence recruitment and career development
- ✓ Support for women at all stages of their careers
- ✓ Ensuring work-life balance, with particular emphasis on childcare
- ✓ Equal representation for beneficiaries in local research, training activities, and mobilities abroad
- ✓ Combating violence, discrimination and harassment

5. Key Priority Areas & Specific Objectives

Following the above-mentioned needs, AKEP's gender equality plan is structured in 6 strategic areas, each one having a number of specific objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to be monitored and achieved within the 3-years period.

Area 1: Training and awareness programs to strengthen capacity on Gender & Equality and remove biases

Objective 1.1: Design of/Participation in trainings and provision self-paced material on gender equality and unconscious biases for all staff members & trainers

Objective 1.2: Expanding collaboration with organizations that promote gender equality through a co-design approach

Objective 1.3: Elaborating training and communication actions on the importance of gender equality and improve the use of gender-neutral language

Area 2: Gender Equality in Hiring and Career progression:

Objective 2.1: Executing a transparent recruitment process that ensures gender-neutral job descriptions, unbiased selection of candidates and diverse selection committees.

Objective 2.2: Implement a fair and transparent promotion process.

Area 3: Gender Balance in leadership and decision-making

Objective 3.1: Ensure equal representation in strategic meetings and decision-making processes

Area 4: Facilitating work-life balance

Objective 4.1: Providing flexible working hours and remote working options

Objective 4.2: Establishing parental leave policies that support both genders

Area 5: Equal opportunities for participation of beneficiaries in training/research and mobilities

Objective 5.1: Ensuring equal representation in training/research activities

Objective 5.2: Setting up a transparent process for selection in mobilities and limited-seats training (when applicable)

Area 6: Combating harassment and discrimination for staff and learners

Objective 6.1 Establish clear policies and procedures to avoid and react properly on incidents

Objective 6.2 Foster a supportive environment where staff feel safe to voice concerns and seek assistance

6. Implementation, Monitoring & Assessment

Based on the defined areas and specific objectives per area as identified by the Gender Equality committee, an action plan was created to define specific measures, timelines, staff responsible for coordinating implantation and monitoring of KPIs associated with each objective.

The following figure illustrates the timeline of implementation process for the present plan by the Academy of Entrepreneurship.



About the monitoring process for the implementation of the plan, the gender equality committee will organize bi-annual meetings and conduct an annual audit, within one month after the end of each year. For this purpose, a specific audit tool will be used, available via the project Plotina (plotina.eu). Leveraging results from EU-funded projects the committee will also utilize the quality standards booklet which was developed in Gender Equality (GE) Academy project (<https://ge-academy.eu/>) and support material, as well as other tools from the Plotina project.

Once the plan is in effect, the monitoring process will include:

- Regular progress reviews on established objectives and metrics: bi-annual meetings to review initiatives, milestones, and performance against established metrics.

- Data collection and analysis: Collection of relevant data on gender diversity, representation, promotions, training/research participation, and other relevant indicators and analysis to identify trends, gaps, and areas for improvement in gender equality within the organization.
- Employee feedback mechanisms: anonymous surveys and/or focus groups to gather input on the effectiveness of gender equality initiatives and the overall workplace climate
- Review of policies and practices: Review of existing policies, practices, and procedures to ensure they are aligned with the objectives of the gender equality plan including identification of any potential barriers or biases that may hinder progress towards gender equality
- Report and communication: Preparation of reports after annual audits on the implementation of the gender equality plan which will be shared with all employees, transparent and open discussion during strategic meetings about successes, challenges, and opportunities for improvement
- Continuous improvement: Review and refinement of the gender equality plan based on monitoring findings, feedback from employees, and changes in the external environment. Strategies and initiatives will be adapted as needed to ensure continued progress towards gender equality goals.

7. Dedicated Resources

To ensure the successful implementation and sustainability of the Gender Equality Plan (GEP), AKEP is committed to allocating dedicated resources. These resources include a dedicated budget, personnel, and infrastructure to support gender equality initiatives across all levels of the organization. A Gender Equality Committee will oversee the plan's development, implementation, and monitoring, while regular training sessions, workshops, and awareness campaigns will be organized to foster an inclusive environment. Additionally, the organization will invest in data collection and analysis tools to track progress and make data-driven decisions, ensuring continuous improvement in gender balance and inclusion within the organizational structure and in all the implemented activities.

8. Action Plan

As an integral part of the plan, the gender equality committee has compiled a detailed action plan for each identified key area and specific objectives, establishing concrete measures and clear targets, referent persons for implementation and monitoring, and KPIs for measuring each of the defined objectives per year.

Key Priority Area 1: Training and awareness programs to strengthen capacity on Gender & Equality and remove biases						
Objectives	Actions	KPIs	Timetable			
			2023	2024	2025	2026
1.1 Design of/Participation in trainings and provision self-paced material on gender equality and unconscious biases for all staff members & trainers	Offer and guide staff/trainers to attend trainings on gender related topics	Number of trainings attended by staff ≥ 3	3			
	To create a repository with learning/ supporting material on how to implement gender sensitive training and design training/research considering the gender perspective	Number of supporting material in repository available to staff ≥ 10 files	10			
1.2 Expanding collaboration with organizations that have expertise on gender equality through a co-design approach	Co-design and implementation of training projects/ and activities	Number of implemented projects on gender equality, diversity and inclusion ≥ 1	3			
	Extend the network with relevant organizations at local/national EU level	Number of new relevant partnerships ≥ 3	6			
1.3 Elaborating training and communication actions on the importance of gender equality and improve the use of gender-neutral language	Promote gender equality via social media posts/ website content	Number of relevant SoMe posts & website articles ≥ 10	18			
	Creation and delivery of training curricula incorporating the gender & sex dimension in content	No of trainings ≥ 2	4			
	Elaboration of an informative toolkit for the use of gender sensitive language	Information toolkit (Yes/No)	No			

Key Priority Area 2: Gender Equality in Hiring and Career progression						
Objectives	Actions	KPIs	Timetable			
			2023	2024	2025	2026
2.1 Executing a transparent recruitment process that ensures gender-neutral job descriptions, unbiased selection of candidates and diverse selection committees	Guarantee equal opportunities in recruitment of new staff members	Establishment of assessment criteria per vacancy (Yes, No)	No			
		Number of female and male candidates applying for job positions	n/a			
	Balanced composition of interview committee	Balanced ratio of interview committee (Yes, No)	Yes			
2.2 Implement a fair and transparent promotion process	Establishment of assessment criteria for promotion and creation of document	Promotion criteria documentation, accessible to all employees (Yes/No)	No			

Key Priority Area 3: Gender Balance in leadership and decision-making						
Objectives	Actions	KPIs	Timetable			
			2023	2024	2025	2026
3.1 Ensure equal representation in strategic meetings and decision-making processes	Increase and maintain balanced the number of women in decision making positions	Percentage of women in decision making positions	33%			
	Strategic team meetings composition: balanced in terms of gender and seniority level	Balanced composition in strategic meetings (Yes/No)	Yes			
	Annual survey among employees to measure the perception of equality in decision making	Level of satisfaction on equal representation and decision making ≥ 85%	n/a			

Key Priority Area 4: Facilitating work-life balance						
Objectives	Actions	KPIs	Timetable			
			2023	2024	2025	2026
4.1 Providing flexible working hours and remote working options	Flexible options for remote work, arrangements connected to children care, adjustment of working hours according to specific needs	Number of absence days taken by women and men	M: 157 F: 182			
		Percentage of male and female employees working on a flexible pattern	M: 20% F: 20%			
		Percentage of male and female employees working remotely	M: 16% F: 22%			
4.2 Establishing parental leave policies that support both genders	Additional days of parental leave taken by women and men apart from the days foreseen by the national law	Extra days of parental leave (maternity and paternity) \geq 14	n/a			
	Establishment of "Back to work training" to get informed about recent developments	Back to work training (Yes/No)	No			

Key Priority Area 5: Equal opportunities for participation of beneficiaries in training/research & mobilities						
Objectives	Actions	KPIs	Timetable			
			2023	2024	2025	2026
5.1 Ensuring equal participation in training/research activities	Consider gender equality to ensure a transparent, fair and inclusive selection process	Number of male, female and non-binary participants in training activities	M:72 F:125 NB: 0			
		Number of male, female and non-binary participants in research activities	M:25 F: 35 NB: 0			
5.2 Setting up a transparent process for selection in mobilities and limited-seats training	Definition of selection criteria	Criteria checklist (Yes/No)	Yes			

Key Priority Area 6: Combating harassment and discrimination for staff and learners						
Objectives	Actions	KPIs	Timetable			
			2023	2024	2025	2026
6.1 Establish clear policies and procedures to avoid and react properly on such incidents	Creation of Anti-harassment & Anti-discrimination Policies and processes	Anti-harassment Policy document (Yes/No)	Yes			
		Anti-discrimination Policy document (Yes/No)	Yes			
		Incident log (Yes/No)	Yes			
6.2 Foster a supportive environment where staff feel safe to voice concerns and seek assistance	Promoting psychological safety	Open-Door Policy (Yes/No)	Yes			
		Access to resources and support services (Yes/No)	Yes			
		Number of incidents	0			