

Introduction

Gender equality is a core value of the European Union. Most of the countries at the top on gender equality worldwide are EU members. However, there is still room to further progress in closing the gender gap. The European Commission has pledged to tackle this challenge by setting out the Gender Equality Strategy for the 2020-2025 period. One of the objectives under the renewed framework is to strengthen gender equality in research and innovation.

To enhance gender equality in the research field, the Commission will introduce new measures, such as the possibility to require a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) from applicants of Horizon Europe. The purpose of the Gender Equality Plan is to promote female participation in the Programme, at both the level of recruitment and decision-making.

As an organisation participating in the Horizon 2020 Programme, KEHSIA asbl has chosen to support the Commission's effort to strengthen gender equality within research and innovation fields. The association strongly believes that diversity is the key to succeed in the green and digital transitions and build the Europe of tomorrow.

Consequently, KEHSIA asbl is willing to adopt the Gender Equality Plan, anticipating the measures announced by the Commission. This document aims to present the company's gender strategy for the next two years.

The Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

The GEP is a flexible tool developed to take into account the characteristics and needs of each organisation. As the organisation evolves, so does its gender equality plan. This process encompasses three steps:

1. **Diagnosis:** In this phase, the organisation assesses the gender challenges to address. The analysis looks at the disaggregated gender data on the personnel. These data are collected annually and integrated using additional information, like the results of the focus groups with the employees, collaborators and volunteers.
2. **Action planning:** The next step is to define how to address the gender inequalities previously identified. The company should therefore adopt a set of actions to tackle these inequalities. It is essential to focus on policies that deliver measurable results. Reliable indicators are needed to monitor the implementation progress.
3. **Evaluation:** This is the final stage of the process. The association has to evaluate if the action plan has been effective. Outputs from the evaluation process are the building blocks to further develop the association's gender strategy.



This three-step process ensures the overall quality of the plan and its sustainability in the long term. Starting from 2024, KEHSIA asbl will go through the process every two years to review and update its Gender Equality Plan.

KEHSIA's GEP 2024-2026

KEHSIA formally starts to roll out its gender equality strategy in 2024. The plan formalises the efforts that the firm has carried on since its foundation in 2023. Being a woman-led company, KEHSIA has always championed gender equality, both within the association and among its partners. The Gender Equality plan represents a step-up of this commitment in a better-structured strategy that can be measured and monitored over time.

That said, the overall goal for the 2024-2026 GEP is to move from an active engagement to a strategic approach. The association turns its commitment toward gender equality into actions. These actions respond to specific objectives and have dedicated resources.

Where we are:

KEHSIA is a non profit association that operates relying on members, collaborators and volunteers. All of the members are specialised in managing European funded projects. Additionally, the association started hosting young volunteers and trainees. Some of them decided to continue their professional experience in the research field after their involvement in EU funded projects. The association has developed an effective model of transfer knowledge and professional training to support volunteers, young researchers and trainees. This experience represents a valuable learning opportunity to start a career in the project management field.

Where we are heading:

The association, as previously said, is not new to gender equality. However, it aims to scale up its commitment by introducing a better-structured gender strategy. This strategy has three main objectives:

1. Promoting a gender equality culture among the association's partners, incoming trainees and network organizations;
2. Promoting a gender-sensitive approach in the development of gender sensitive project's design;
3. Promoting a gender sensitive approach in the recruitment and career development of the association's trainees;
4. Promoting integration of work with family and personal life

How we are getting there:

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KEHSIA has planned to implement a set of actions to accomplish the goals mentioned above. The implementation of these actions starts in 2024 and last until 2026. Then, the association will review its plan and eventually adopt a new set of measures.

The following paragraph presents the planned initiatives for the coming two years, highlighting:

- Which objectives they address;
- How the association will implement them;
- How the association will measure the results and monitor the implementation process.

Action 1: Website page about gender equality

- Objective: Promoting a gender equality culture among the association's partners, incoming trainees and nwetowrk's organizations.
- Description: KEHSIA will add a page to its website dedicated to the gender equality issue. This page will illustrate the association's gender strategy. Visitors will be able to download the Gender Equality Plan and the letter of commitment signed by the association President.
- Indicator: the annual number of visitors that access the dedicated page. The goal is to redirect at least half of the yearly website visitors to the dedicated page.

Action 2: Gender-sensitive communication approach

- Objective: Promoting a gender equality culture among the association's partners, incoming trainees and nwetowrk's organizations .
- Description: KEHSIA will adopt a communication approach free from gender biases. This approach aims to balance the representation of men and women in both internal and external communications campaigns.
- Indicator: Yearly number of reclaims from end-users and partner organizations about gender issues in the association's communications materials. The target is to keep the reclaim rate low.

Action 3: Gender awareness campaign

- Objective: Promoting a gender equality culture among the firm's partners, incoming trainees and clients.
- Description: KEHSIA will promote its gender equality strategy among trainees and project partners. To raise awareness about the issue, members, collaborators,

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volunteers and trainees will receive a fact-sheet about the association's commitment toward gender equality. This procedure will ensure that people who collaborate with KEHSIA share its values and efforts.

- Indicator: Yearly number of new trainees, volunteers, collaborators and members who join the association. The goal is to inform all about the firm's gender equality plan.

Action 4: Ensure gender balance within the association's working groups

- Objective: Promoting a gender-sensitive approach in the recruitment and career development of the association's partners and trainees;
- Description: KEHSIA will work to improve gender balance among its members, collaborators, volunteers and trainees. The goal is to achieve an equal representation of both sexes in the association's working groups. Consequently, the selection process of these categories will guarantee equal opportunities for men and women.
- Indicator: Yearly disaggregated gender data on these categories who collaborated with the association. The ultimate goal is to achieve a balanced gender mix (50-50) in each working group.

Action 5: Mentorship for women trainees

- Objective: Promoting a gender-sensitive approach in the recruitment and career development of the association's partners and trainees;
- Description: KEHSIA will support the career development of its trainees. In particular, women trainees will benefit from specific mentoring sessions with the senior members. Starting a career as a project manager could be challenging, especially for women. The firm will ensure that trainees receive adequate mentorship and support to set their professional path as project managers.
- Indicator: Yearly number of mentoring session offered to women trainees. The goal is to provide at least one session for each trainee that joins the association.

Action 6: Mainstreaming flexible working

- Objective: Promoting integration of work with family and personal life
- Description: Flexible work enables individual employees to balance the needs of work and home. KEHSIA will ensure that all its members, consultants and trainees can access remote working when needed. The association will plan its operations adopting a flexible methodology. This approach should allow trainees and collaborators to join the association's activities also from remote.

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- Indicator: This action has no specific indicator. The association will evaluate annually if the flexible approach is working for everyone. The goal is to make this option accessible to all trainees and consultants.

Sources:

- Gender equality plan of the University of Bologna ([link](#))
- Gender equality plan of the Erasmus University of Rotterdam ([link](#))
- Gender equality plan of project IBERUSTALENT ([link](#))
- Research paper "A Positive Perspective to Implementation of a Gender Equality Plan: a question of design, time and participation" from the University of Minho ([link](#))
- Gender equality diagnostic tool from the Australian Government ([link](#))
- A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, from the European Commission ([link](#))
- Gender Equality in Academia and Research - GEAR tool ([link](#))