

Gender Equality Plan

Europäisches Zentrum für erneuerbare Energie

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1 Preamble

The European Centre for Renewable Energy Güssing (EEE) is a well-established research institution with both regional roots and international connections in the field of sustainable energy systems. As a driver of innovation, practical implementation, and knowledge transfer, EEE is actively committed to supporting a fair and sustainable energy transition. Equal opportunity is a fundamental value embedded in EEE's organizational culture. The centre is committed to treating all employees with respect and appreciation.

With this Gender Equality Plan (GEP), EEE aims to systematically identify and address structural inequalities, implement targeted actions to promote equal opportunities, and foster a work environment that is inclusive, diverse, and free from discrimination. The GEP provides a strategic and operational framework to embed gender equality within the organization's daily practices and long-term development.

The implementation of the GEP also reflects EEE's commitment to meeting the eligibility requirements of the Horizon Europe research and innovation programme, which mandates the existence of a formal GEP for participation in funded projects. Additionally, the plan is inspired by the methodological guidance of the GENERA project (Gender Equality Network in the European Research Area), ensuring that the GEP is not only aligned with European standards, but also tailored to the specific needs and context of research organizations in the energy and STEM (*science, technology, engineering, and mathematics*) sectors.

2 Embedding Gender Equality in the Organization

At EEE, gender equality is a core value embedded in the organizational culture and understood as a cross-cutting responsibility across all areas. The promotion of equal opportunities, diversity, and inclusion is not only an ethical commitment but is actively pursued as a strategic success factor for achieving a sustainable energy transition.

Responsibility for gender equality lies at the executive level, particularly with the management team, which has signed and endorsed the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) and supports its implementation.

Gender equality objectives are integrated into EEE's overall strategic orientation and mission. As an interdisciplinary research organization with a strong practical focus, EEE seeks to achieve better outcomes by embracing diverse perspectives—both in project implementation and internal development.

Progress may be periodically reviewed and discussed with the executive management. Key measures and developments are also communicated and reflected



upon within the organization. In this way, gender equality is not merely a formal requirement but becomes a lived principle embedded in EEE's processes and structures.

3 Five Areas of the Gender Equality Plan

In line with the five priority areas defined by the Horizon Europe guidelines on gender equality plans, this GEP outlines the current starting points, proposes concrete actions and targets, and—where applicable—identifies the available resources and internal gender expertise necessary for implementation. The plan also includes awareness-raising and training activities to promote gender equality and to address unconscious gender bias among staff and decision-makers.

3.1 Work-life balance and organisational culture

The European Centre for Renewable Energy sees itself as a modern, family-friendly, and value-driven research organisation that strives not only for scientific excellence but also for a respectful, inclusive, and supportive working environment. One of EEE's central goals is to enable all employees to maintain a healthy balance between professional responsibilities and personal lives—regardless of gender, family situation, or life stage.

Baseline Situation and Working Conditions:

EEE already offers flexible working models, including part-time work, flexitime, and remote work options. Generous annual leave arrangements and public holidays contribute to sufficient recovery and rest. The organisation encourages continuous learning and is considering measures to foster staff well-being.

Planned Measures and Actions:

To further support work-life balance, EEE will:

- Develop and implement a transparent policy that applies equally to all employees regarding Father's month, parental leave and time compensation.
- Organise team-building events to strengthen social cohesion and communication.
- Engage in networking with other research and consulting organisations committed to gender equality and the advancement of women.

Family and Care Responsibilities:

EEE fosters a family- and child-friendly workplace culture. Employees are supported in arranging childcare, returning from parental leave, and balancing caregiving responsibilities. Care duties beyond the core family—such as for elderly relatives or non-



family members—are also acknowledged through flexible work arrangements and additional leave options.

Diversity and Inclusion:

Gender diversity and inclusion are core principles at EEE. An intersectional approach is applied when designing internal structures and policies, taking into account multiple dimensions of identity, such as age, origin, disability, religion, socio-economic status, and sexual orientation.

Targets:

- A plan for parental leave and time compensation.
- One team-building event per year.
- Exchange with at least one other organisation on gender equality and women's advancement.
- Participation in at least one gender-related seminar within a three-year period.

Indicators for Monitoring:

- Availability of a written policy document accessible to all staff
- Overview of internal activities such as team-building events or networking formats
- Overview of seminars or awareness-raising sessions addressing gender and diversity topics
- Basic gender-disaggregated staff information, including voluntary data on parental leave

Outlook:

EEE is committed to continuously strengthening its support structures for work-life balance and equality. Planned developments include expanding digital work and learning opportunities, improving internal communication on family-friendly practices, and conducting regular employee surveys to evaluate and adapt measures to the needs of the team. The goal is to ensure that work-life balance becomes a lived and visible aspect of EEE's organisational culture.

3.2 Gender Balance in Leadership and Decision-Making

At EEE, leadership and decision-making processes are shaped by a flat hierarchical structure and a collaborative working culture. Positions, responsibilities, and areas of decision-making are regularly reviewed and adapted to align with the individual interests and competences of employees, as well as with the evolving needs of the organisation. EEE is currently led by one male Managing Director. The core team comprises three female and one male staff members, reflecting a balanced gender representation within the organisation's operational structure.



While the organisational structure offers flexibility and equal participation, EEE recognises the importance of ensuring gender balance across all levels, especially in leadership roles and senior-level functions such as project leaders and key researchers. To promote this, EEE is committed to actively identifying and developing female talent within the organisation.

Planned measures and actions:

To promote gender balance in leadership, EEE has defined the following planned measures and actions:

- Conduct annual discussions with all staff to identify individual development potential, with a special focus on female employees.
- Address gender equality as a regular agenda item in leadership and strategy meetings.
- Monitor the gender ratio across all organisational levels and decision-making functions.
- Support the advancement of women into senior roles whenever possible (depending on interest and qualification).
- Develop and implement a clear and transparent procedure for career development and leadership appointments based on defined criteria accessible to all staff.

These actions aim to ensure that career advancement within EEE is inclusive, fair and performance-oriented, and that all employees – regardless of gender – have the opportunity to grow into leadership positions.

Targets:

- Monitor and document the gender ratio across the organisation, especially in management and senior project roles.
- Increase the share of women in senior-level functions (if interested and dedicated female employees are available).
- Implement a transparent and standardised process for career advancement based on objective and inclusive criteria.

Indicators:

- Overview of the gender composition across different organisational levels.
- Observation of gender balance among project leaders in ongoing or submitted projects.
- Availability or development of transparent information on criteria and processes for internal promotions and leadership opportunities.



By systematically addressing gender imbalances and fostering equal opportunities for leadership, EEE aims to create a more inclusive and diverse decision-making culture that reflects its broader commitment to gender equality and sustainable organisational development.

3.3 Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

At the European Centre for Renewable Energy, equal opportunity is a fundamental principle guiding recruitment and career development. All processes – from job advertisement and selection to career development, retention, and training – are conducted to be fair, transparent, and free from discrimination.

Baseline Situation:

EEE already has a transparent, gender-equitable payment scheme in place that applies equally to all employees, independent of gender. Job advertisements are formulated in a gender-neutral way or are explicitly addressed to all genders. In cases where there is a significant underrepresentation of one gender, particularly in leadership positions or senior-level functions, positive measures are applied to give preference to women when candidates are equally qualified.

Planned Measures and Actions:

- Ensure access to salary information for all employees to promote transparency.
- Conduct annual employee appraisals to review performance relative to career development requirements and to actively promote career progression, particularly for female staff.
- Organise and promote training and continuing education programmes aimed at strengthening gender-sensitive leadership skills, particularly among senior employees.

Targets:

- Monitor the number of female applications and the number of female employees within the organisation.
- Maintain the current high and balanced proportion of female employees, ensuring equal opportunities in recruitment and career development.

Indicators:

- Proportion of female applicants compared to female recruits.
- Measured proportion of female employees across different hierarchy levels.



Continuous Improvement:

While EEE follows clear principles and internal policies, the organisation recognises the importance of continuous reflection and development. Regular reviews of employee appraisal practices may be conducted, with attention given to enhancing transparency and communication of evaluation criteria. Efforts will also aim to gradually refine recruitment approaches and outreach to diverse audiences, while fostering an inclusive and supportive working environment.

3.4 Integration of gender and diversity dimensions into research and teaching content

At EEE, the integration of gender and diversity dimensions is viewed as essential for the quality, inclusiveness, and social relevance of its research and consulting work. EEE is committed to embedding awareness of gender, intersectionality, and social inclusion into its project design, data analysis, and collaboration with stakeholders.

Although EEE is not a teaching institution, it plays a vital role in research, development, and knowledge transfer, particularly in the context of sustainable energy and regional innovation. For this reason, the organisation aims to incorporate gender-sensitive perspectives into research planning and project delivery, ensuring that different societal groups and their needs are considered.

Current and Planned Activities Include:

- Raising awareness among staff and project partners about the importance of considering gender and diversity aspects in research and innovation processes
- Encouraging the use of gender-sensitive methodologies, particularly in stakeholder engagement, data collection, and energy system modelling
- Referring to existing tools and guidelines, such as the Gender Equality Toolkit for Energy Research or EU project frameworks, to support inclusive project development
- Promoting collaboration with organisations that focus on gender, energy poverty, or social innovation to enrich project perspectives and outcomes

While EEE's projects primarily focus on technical solutions, the centre recognises the importance of integrating socially inclusive perspectives that consider differences in gender, age, socio-economic background, and regional context. The goal is to contribute to a just and inclusive energy transition by developing solutions that benefit all population groups and promote equal participation in the energy system. Going forward, EEE aims to further strengthen gender and diversity aspects in its project design and implementation, while continuing to build internal awareness and capacity to address these dimensions effectively.



3.5 Measures against gender-based violence, including harassment, sexual harassment and discrimination

At the European Centre for Renewable Energy, any form of gender-based violence, discrimination, or harassment—including sexual harassment—is not tolerated. EEE is committed to creating a safe, respectful, and inclusive work environment for all employees, project partners, and stakeholders. The organisation actively implements preventive measures and provides support structures to handle cases appropriately and sensitively.

Ongoing and Planned Activities Include:

- Ensuring that internal policies and codes of conduct clearly outline behavioural expectations and explicitly prohibit all forms of harassment and discrimination
- Making information and procedures for dealing with incidents (e.g., complaint mechanisms, rights and responsibilities) easily accessible to staff
- Periodically reviewing the physical and organisational work environment to ensure it supports psychological safety and inclusion

By proactively addressing these issues, EEE underlines its responsibility as a forward-looking and socially aware organisation and contributes to a research environment where safety, fairness, and equality are a matter of principle.

4 Dedicated Resources

At EEE, the commitment to gender equality and diversity is supported by a range of dedicated resources that enable the effective implementation of the Gender Equality Plan. These resources fall into three main categories: expertise, personnel, and physical or financial resources.

Although EEE operates with a lean organisational structure, it allocates targeted capacity to equality-related efforts. Responsibilities may be assigned either as part of specific functions or carried out alongside other duties.

In terms of infrastructure, EEE utilises its physical and digital environments to promote awareness and support implementation—this includes the use of office spaces, internal events, website content, and digital communication via email and social media. Where possible, financial means are reserved to support gender equality measures such as staff training, external expertise, and participation in relevant initiatives and networks.

EEE recognises that real progress in gender equality requires ongoing investment of time, knowledge, and financial resources, and it is committed to expanding these resources as capacity allows.



5 Data Collection, Monitoring and Follow-Up

At the European Centre for Renewable Energy, systematic data collection and monitoring play a key role in ensuring the effective implementation and continuous improvement of its Gender Equality Plan. The aim is to track progress, identify gaps—especially regarding the representation of women—and assess the impact of measures to support equality and diversity.

Going forward, EEE plans to gather and analyse gender-disaggregated data more consistently. This includes tracking the distribution of women and men across roles, levels of responsibility, and project leadership. The data will help highlight trends, inform decision-making, and guide the development of targeted actions to close gaps and sustain progress already made.

Planned actions include:

- Conducting impact assessments of selected initiatives (e.g. surveys on family-care responsibilities or flexible work arrangements)
- Reviewing internal processes and structures with regard to their gender-related implications
- Identifying and piloting new strategies to address barriers or structural inequalities
- Recognising and addressing resistance or underrepresentation, particularly in leadership roles
- Applying both quantitative and qualitative indicators to evaluate success (e.g. comparison with similar organisations, internal benchmarks)

By implementing these monitoring activities, EEE will be able to evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of its actions, adjust approaches when needed, and ensure that gender equality measures remain focused, sustainable, and aligned with organisational goals.

6 Training and Capacity Building at EEE

At EEE, awareness of gender equality, diversity, and inclusion is seen as an essential part of organisational development. Although EEE operates as a small and flexible institution, it recognises that building internal knowledge and skills is critical to advancing cultural change and embedding equality into daily practice.

EEE is committed to encouraging its employees to engage in ongoing learning and professional development. This includes raising awareness about gender-related issues, as well as providing opportunities to gain practical tools for inclusive collaboration,



leadership, and communication. In line with this, EEE integrates gender, diversity, and intersectionality topics into staff development efforts.

Planned activities include:

- Sharing information about online seminars and workshops on gender sensitivity and inclusive work culture
- Supporting staff participation in diversity-related events or networks
- Encouraging managers and project leaders to develop gender-sensitive leadership skills

As part of a modern and adaptable learning strategy, EEE plans to offer more digital learning formats, including short online modules and collaborative sessions. These measures aim not only to enhance competencies but also to foster a shared responsibility for gender equality across the organisation.

7 Impact of Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the work environment, project operations, and daily routines at the European Centre for Renewable Energy. As a small, application-oriented research and development organisation, EEE responded with flexibility and care to protect staff, maintain operations, and adjust to rapidly changing circumstances.

Communication:

From the outset, EEE prioritised clear and timely internal communication. Staff were kept informed of all relevant updates related to hygiene protocols, remote work guidelines, legal requirements, and project-related changes via email and internal updates. The management team remained available for questions and ensured regular exchange of information. Important external communications (e.g. from funding agencies or public health authorities) were also shared promptly.

Practical Measures:

EEE implemented remote work options wherever possible and adapted its office spaces with social distancing, ventilation and hygiene rules. Meetings and external engagements were primarily moved to online formats. In cases where physical presence was essential for project continuation but hindered by restrictions, EEE supported project extensions in coordination with funding bodies.

Care Responsibilities:

Employees with caregiving duties—especially parents—were supported through flexible working hours, extended remote work options, and, where needed, special leave



arrangements. Individual solutions were encouraged to help staff balance professional and family obligations during periods of school closures or quarantine.

Health and Safety:

EEE provided protective equipment (such as masks and hand sanitiser) and ensured that the office setup minimised in-person interaction. Special attention was given to vulnerable groups, including pregnant staff members, who were offered extended remote work or leave based on individual risk assessments and public health recommendations.

Reflection and Future Outlook:

Although EEE is not directly involved in medical Covid-19 research, it took the opportunity to reflect on internal working conditions and team dynamics. Feedback from informal conversations and team meetings led to improvements in communication and work organisation. Going forward, EEE plans to expand online formats for internal training, collaboration, and staff support in response to lessons learned during the pandemic.