

# GENDER EQUALITY TRAINING HANDBOOK

SUPPORTING EUROPEAN  
CLUSTERS TOWARDS  
GENDER MAINSTREAMING

---



WWW.PENELOPE-PROJECT.ORG



Co-funded by  
the European Union

Penel<sup>♀♂</sup>pe

# LEGAL DISCLAIMERS

The PENELOPE project has been funded by the European Union (2022-1-FR01-KA220-VET-000088824) under the Erasmus+ programme.

Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



**Co-funded by  
the European Union**

---

*All the information provided in this handbook is based on our best knowledge at the time of publication (January 2024) and is subject to change (e.g., the job positions of the interviewed persons, the organisations or actions described).*

*Please, be advised that while every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information provided in this handbook, we cannot guarantee its absolute correctness. We assume no liability for any errors, omissions, or inaccuracies in the content. Any reliance on the information contained herein is at your own discretion and risk. We disclaim responsibility for any actions taken or decisions made based on the information presented in this handbook.*

---

This handbook is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-commercial-No Derivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. Neither modifications nor commercial uses are permitted.



**CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 LEGAL CODE**

**Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 4.0 International**

## CONTACT

[www.penelope-project.org](http://www.penelope-project.org)  
[penelope@oxalis-scop.org](mailto:penelope@oxalis-scop.org)

# CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	6
What is gender mainstreaming?	6
Research, regulatory and methodological aspects of gender mainstreaming in the workplace	6
Glossary	8
<b>GET INSPIRED: GOOD PRACTICES &amp; INTERVIEWS</b>	12
Good Practices	13
Interviews	43
<b>PRACTICAL TOOLKIT FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING</b>	110
<b>1. WORKPLACE CULTURE &amp; INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION</b>	112
Tool #1: Perform a gender audit of the status quo in your organization	112
Tool #2: Establish a gender equality strategy to foster institutional transformation	119
Tool #3: Deal with resistance to change and opposition to gender equality	123
Tool #4: Set goals to improve the level of gender inclusion of your workforce	126
<b>2. TALENT RECRUITMENT</b>	129
Tool #5: Build an inclusive talent brand	129
Tool #6: Improve recruiting procedures and eliminate potential bias	131
<b>3. CAREER PROGRESSION &amp; ACCESS TO TRAINING</b>	136
Tool #7: Bridge the gender promotion gap	138
Tool #8: Invest in skills and training through a gender lens	140
<b>4. EQUAL PAY</b>	142
Tool #9: Conduct an equal pay audit and analyze potential gender pay gaps	145
Tool #10: Promote and ensure equal remuneration	149
<b>5. WORKING CONDITIONS, HEALTH, AND OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY</b>	152
Tool #11: Integrate the gender perspective in the prevention of occupational risks	152
Tool #12: Support your employees through menstruation and menopause	156
<b>6. MATERNITY, WORK-LIFE BALANCE &amp; FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS</b>	160
#Tool 13: Protect maternity and support expecting and new mothers in the workplace	161
#Tool 14: Build a flexibility strategy for a hybrid and high-performing workplace	166
<b>7. SEXISM AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE</b>	171
#Tool 15: Understand sexism to prevent gender-based harassment in the workplace	173
#Tool 16: Set in place a sexual harassment policy in your organization	177
<b>8. GENDER MONITORING, PERFORMANCE &amp; REPORTING</b>	182
#Tool 17: Create a monitoring and evaluation strategy	182
#Tool 18: Draft an evaluation report	189
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	193
<b>REFERENCES</b>	196

*To improve gender equality in the workplace, goodwill and intentions are essential, but not enough. To advance gender equality in the workplace, it is absolutely essential to have the relevant knowledge and effective tools.*

*The aim of the PENELOPE Project is to provide companies, clusters, and stakeholder organizations useful knowledge to achieve sustainable gender equality through effective processes.*

*This handbook provides in a user-friendly manner numerous elements that can be inspirational. Its purpose is both to share knowledge on actions that are already being carried out by European clusters and networks and/or their members or by public bodies involved in the ecosystem and to empower companies, through cluster facilitation, to make use of tools helping them to work on various aspects related to gender equality.*

*Currently, there is no equivalent learning material at European level that covers this topic from a cluster perspective and many clusters and representatives of various cluster stakeholders expressed their interest in the results of the project. For this reason, we have set our ambition high to look for good practices and inspirational knowledge across Europe, making this handbook the first of its kind at a pan-European level.*

*The first part of the handbook is dedicated to the vocabulary and the concepts describing the current situation of women and men at work. In order to avoid errors, misunderstandings or confusion, our expert Claire Morandea prepared a set of definitions for essential wordings used when we talk about professional equality between women and men in a business environment.*

*The second part of the handbook gathers a collection of good practices and interviews from Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Lithuania, and multinational organizations.*

*In the third part of the handbook, you will find useful and practical gender mainstreaming tools that will allow you to draw inspiration on how to design and implement processes in an organization leading to gender equality.*

*We would like to express our gratitude and appreciation to all contributors to this handbook: good practice owners, interviewees and advisors for their time, effort, and support in its development.*

**The PENELOPE Project Partnership**  
**January 2024**







# INTRODUCTION

# INTRODUCTION

## What is gender mainstreaming?

Gender mainstreaming has been embraced internationally as a strategy towards realizing gender equality. In order to promote gender equality and combat discrimination, it entails integrating a gender perspective into the planning, designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating of policies, projects, products, and/or services.

The goal of gender mainstreaming goes beyond merely preventing the creation or perpetuation of inequalities, which can negatively impact both men and women. It also entails analyzing the current state of affairs to pinpoint inequalities and creating policies (both in the public sphere at the level of local, regional, national, and European institutions, as well as in the private sphere of organizations and companies) meant to address those imbalances and reverse the processes that created them.

Gender mainstreaming requires a contextual analysis of the needs, interests, roles and experiences of women and men as well as the integration of specific actions to address any gender-based inequalities that may have emerged from this analysis<sup>1</sup>.

The 1995 [Fourth World Conference on Women](#) endorsed gender mainstreaming as a critical and strategic approach for achieving gender equality commitments.

## Research, regulatory and methodological aspects of gender mainstreaming in the workplace

### *The illusion of equality*

Sometimes it is said that equality has been achieved, that women and men are now equal. Yet the figures categorically contradict this assertion. Progress is being made, but it is often slow and not always very significant. In some cases, we are even seeing regressions that we need to pay attention to.

This is why it is necessary to look at several aspects of working life, and look for data on each point:

- The distribution of women and men by major job sectors.
- Career guidance for girls and boys.
- Equal pay.
- Professional training for career advancement.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. [Gender mainstreaming in the work of UNODC](#), February 2021.

- Percentage of part-time work.
- Percentage of women and men reporting sexism at work.
- The importance of legislation in each country.

It is essential to be aware of the legislation in force in each country regarding professional equality between women and men. Indeed, the law is an indisputable ally. So it is important for companies to be familiar with this specific legislation to make it effective. In some countries, legislation has evolved in favor of professional equality between women and men, but is little known or not applied.

Some countries have introduced severe penalties, and helping companies to comply with the law means protecting them. Ensuring that the law is properly understood also makes it possible to succeed in fostering and integrating gender mainstreaming in European SMEs.

## ***Equality diagnosis***

Every company has the potential to improve gender equality in the workplace. To find out what can be improved, it is essential to carry out a diagnosis with figures. This also makes it possible to measure changes in order to assess the relevance of the actions taken.

## ***Working collectively on these issues***

The tools presented in this handbook would lose their operational force if only a single person from the company took them up and implemented them. To succeed in this challenge, "everyone has to get involved". This means that all stakeholders should be involved, and it is therefore essential to identify all of them and determine their specific roles and contributions.

## ***Combating sexism in the workplace***

To effectively combat sexism in the workplace, in all its forms, it is essential to be trained to identify and correctly name the different forms of sexism. This is a key prerequisite for effective action and prevention that is commensurate with the seriousness of the issue.

## ***Benefits for companies***

When professional equality between women and men is effective, it is an obvious advantage for the employees, but what about the benefits for companies?

We can highlight three indisputable and measurable advantages:

- **Corporate attractiveness:** Companies that implement gender equality increase their attractiveness to both men and women.
- **Performance:** Equality between women and men and the fact of not eliminating women or not enabling their professional development are performance factors for companies. For example, it is easier to attract the skills one is looking for, since the spectrum is

broader. Several studies have clearly shown that performance does not suffer from effective equality, on the contrary, it is improved.

- **Well-being at work:** Statistics have shown that when employees are asked to rate themselves on a scale measuring their well-being at work, their score is higher in companies that take this issue into account.

## Glossary

When we talk about professional equality between women and men, it is imperative to use the right terms. This allows us to understand each other, to think in terms of the right analysis and use of concepts, and also to avoid misunderstandings. Indeed, by using one word for another, we can even say the opposite of what we mean.

**EQUALITY:** Equality is the opposite of inequality. In 1945, the United Nations included "equal rights for men and women" in its charter to promote this ideal. Equality of rights. More recently, we have seen the emergence of equality in the professional sphere and parity in politics.

Equality means equal treatment of individuals in the same situation. For example, the remuneration of individuals occupying the same position and exercising the same responsibilities is egalitarian when it is the same for each individual. Equality between women and men in working life directly covers several fields: equal pay, equal access to jobs etc. and indirectly several areas must also be the subject of particular attention such as the widening of professional choices, the reconciliation of professional and personal lives, access to training, etc.

**EQUITY:** This concept is often used instead of equality. Yet it is not exactly the same thing. In social terms, an equitable distribution does not correspond to equality in the strict sense. It is a measure that depends on a society's values, a subjective "balance". It makes the form of inequality acceptable. For example, an adult will find it fair to give quantitatively more food to a 5-year-old than to a 3-year-old, citing age-related energy needs.

However, this consideration of "fair distribution" is highly subjective and not always well-founded or relevant. It is possible that the 3-year-old has spent a lot of energy, whereas the 5-year-old ate a lot at the previous meal and had little energy expenditure. So there are no universally valid general rules when it comes to equity, which is subjective, socially, and historically situated.

**PARITY:** Parity is the numerically identical representation of individuals of different genders, ages, and social classes. It is a term used particularly in the political sphere, to refer to the equivalent number of women and men on an electoral list. By extension, the term can also be used for other types of elections (Board of Directors, etc.).



**MIXITY:** This term is not in the same register as equality or parity. It means that individuals who are socially classified as different sexes, or of different ages, or from different social classes (depending on the criterion used), are grouped together (for example, in an early-learning music class, on an electoral list, in a management team, etc.). This does not mean, however, that individuals in a mixed situation are also in a situation of equality (identical treatment in the same situation) or even parity (equivalent number of individuals of X social class, X age, etc.).

Equality between women and men in a political party or any other organization cannot be reduced to parity or gender mix and other parameters also need to be taken into consideration. For example, in some organizations, the number of women exceeds the number of men. In this case, the situation is one of gender mix, not parity, and possibly inequality. In fact, women are often relegated to positions of lesser responsibility than men, and are often paid less.

**GENDER:** Gender is a system of hierarchical dual categorization of the human species, historically and socially situated. In other words, gender is a process of categorizing individuals into two strict categories (women versus men) that does not cover all the biological variations present in the human space. It is thus said that "gender precedes sex", in the sense that it is our categories of thought, linked to socially and historically situated norms and values, which determine the physical characteristics relevant to distinguishing individuals into different, hierarchical categories. In most societies, the masculine is seen not only as the opposite of the feminine, but also as superior to it.

This hierarchical categorization is the result of a social construction, not a natural one: the process of differentiated socialization of individuals on the basis of their sex contributes to their gender. Gender is the result of the process of differentiated socialization. This is why gender is a system in the sense that it is both the process and the result of the process of differentiation and hierarchization of the human species into two categories.

Finally, to say that gender is socially and historically situated means that gender as a system (i.e., as a process and the result of a process) is variable according to situations and geographical, temporal, and social contexts. Gender is therefore evolutionary. For example, wearing lace, heels or make-up was typical bourgeois behavior in the 18th century, whereas it is expected and considered typical of the feminine gender in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This clearly shows that, depending on the period, the same attribute can be, in the same society, both a social class attribute, whatever the sex of the person, and a gender attribute, whatever the social class of the individual.

**DISCRIMINATION:** Discrimination is a behavior by which a person or group denies others the equal treatment to which they aspire or are entitled. Discriminatory attitudes and actions do not only concern issues of equality between women and men, but can apply much more widely.

**STEREOTYPE:** Stereotype is a “caricature” of a person or group based on an oversimplification of real or supposed character traits. It is an exaggeration or even a pure invention.

**GENDER STEREOTYPES:** More precisely, gender stereotypes are socially constructed beliefs about men and women. These constructions are made through sayings, songs, proverbs, the media, culture, habits, education, etc.

**FROM STEREOTYPE TO PREJUDICE, AND FROM PREJUDICE TO DISCRIMINATION:** Stereotypes are based on prejudice and create discrimination, and more specifically gender discrimination, sometimes also referred to as “sexism”. They are an obstacle to equality between men and women. They are also an obstacle to parity in politics.

**INTERSECTIONALITY:** Intersectionality is a concept that takes into account forms of oppression or discrimination at the intersection of several types of discrimination, such as race, gender, class, and many others. Taking intersectionality into account makes possible an analysis of gender relations.

This notion emerged in the 1990s from the “black feminism” movements. It is about taking into account what lies at the intersection. It is not just the total sum of discrimination experienced by women. A new form of discrimination lies at the intersection of several forms of discrimination.

To be more precise and by way of example, women can be discriminated against because they are women (sexism). At the same time, they may be discriminated against because they are black (racism). An intersectional approach looks at the new discrimination at the intersection of the two, taking into account the fact that a woman is a “black woman”. This discrimination needs to be specifically addressed in the context of a gender equality project.

Intersectionality is today an essential sociological concept for considering gender inequality in all its complexity, so as to be able to remedy it correctly and effectively.



**GET INSPIRED:  
GOOD PRACTICES  
& INTERVIEWS**

# GET INSPIRED: GOOD PRACTICES & INTERVIEWS

To make it easier to read and navigate through the good practices collected and the interviews conducted by the PENELOPE project partnership, we have categorized them by country and topics covered below:



**Austria**



**Bulgaria**



**Finland**



**France**



**Germany**



**Lithuania**



**Italy**



**Poland**



**Romania**



**Spain**



**Sweden**



**Equal pay**



**Working Conditions**



**Talent recruitment**



**Career progress and access to training**



**Maternity, work-life balance, and flexible working arrangement**



**Gender monitoring**



**Sexism and harassment**















**Workplace culture and institutional transformation**





























# Good Practices









## Public organizations

1.   Loire county – Guiding young people in their career choices.
2.   Region Värmland – Schyst! A handbook for equality and equal communication.
3.   Business Upper Austria – OÖ Wirtschaftsagentur GmbH – Working groups to exchange experience on diversity and inclusion in companies.
4.   Business Upper Austria – OÖ Wirtschaftsagentur GmbH – KOMPASS, The competence center for maternity leave and career management.
5.   Eda Municipality – Eda's women's network.
6.   UNIDO – UNIDO Guide - Mainstreaming Gender in Cluster Development.





## Clusters and groups of companies

7.   Cluster IDiA – PAMUR: Support program for women in rural and urban areas.
8.   Digital – Raise awareness in your industry with podcasts.
9.   Ecoplus Green building Cluster of Lower Austria – «New work and corporate culture» program.
10.   France Clusters – From a collection of interviews of women leading clusters towards a complete toolbox for the feminization of industry.
11.    ClosinGap – ClosinGap Index - Economic impact of gender inequality in Spain.
12.   Ligna Group – Dare to be open and creative.
13.   Oxalis – Act on remuneration pay gap between women and men entrepreneur.
14.   Oxalis – Act on entrepreneur's work-life balance.
15.   Oxalis – Act on sexism within a cooperative of entrepreneurs.
16.   RoHealth GP – BeHEALTH: Women entrepreneurship panel.
17.   IUC Dalarna – Guidelines for Gender Equality in the Swedish Steel Industry.
18.    Ocean Technology Campus Rostock – Equal opportunity in human resources work.









## Companies

-   **19. Eltra logis GP** – Freedom begins and ends with us.
-   **20. GHEPI** – Designing Circular future – Ghepi's hackathon for sustainable plastics.
-   **21. Gruppo Centoform** – Teddy SPA work balance.
-   **22. Euskalit** – Adding value to management from a gender perspective.

## Universities

-   **23. TUIASI ("Gheorghe Asachi" Technical University of Iasi)** – Together at TUIASI.
-   **24. Danubius University** – Phenomenal women series.

## European and international

-   **25. She makes** – Pro-active ecosystem providing new opportunity structures for girls and women in innovation.
-   **26. World Manufacturing Foundation** – Women in Manufacturing Expert Group.
-   **27. Women In Power** – Supporting equality and gender balanced boardrooms in traditional sectors.
-   **28. EIT Food, EIT manufacturing & EIT Urban Mobility** – Supernovas Cross-KIC project for women.



## GUIDING YOUNG PEOPLE IN THEIR CAREER CHOICES

**Activity sector: Digital Industries**

**Targets of the GP: Young people and their parents**

**Type of action: Break stereotypes / inspire for vocational guidance**

### Starting point

From high school to the world of work, girls are under-represented in the digital sector:

- 14% is the share of girls taking the Digital and Computer Sciences in the final year of secondary school in 2021-2022 (Source: Ministry of Education).
- 27% is the share of girls in engineering schools (source: Conférence des Directeurs des Ecoles Françaises d'Ingénieurs).
- 15% is the proportion of women in technical positions in the digital sector (source: National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies).

With this in mind, and in view of the societal challenges, particularly with the development of artificial intelligence, the [Loire Department](#) wishes to work collectively with local players to take up the challenge of increasing the number of women in digital professions.

### Actions

In 2021, the county already published a white paper "Digital for women: beyond the observation", organized a workshop "[Girl.IT](#)" to imagine actions to inspire young girls and women in professional retraining to move towards jobs in the digital sector, as a support and extension of the "Wi-Girls" system, carried by FACE Loire in order to inspire young girls aged 14 to 17 to move towards digital professions.

In 2022, a young woman in Civic Service created an online awareness campaign: a mission to break the codes. Accessible since September 2022, this fun tool with its varied content (videos, games, etc.) invites people to physically participate in certain events and schemes in the Loire County.

### Challenges

It also seems essential to raise awareness among parents and teachers, who are the main precursors of guidance. Raising the awareness of young girls on a massive scale requires a strong mobilization of partners, via a variety of online media but also in the context of face-to-face actions. Difficulties in finding existing educational and entertaining content.

### Objectives

- Break down stereotypes about digital professions and inform young girls (12 to 15 years' old) about the existing professions.
- Bring to their attention existing events and schemes enabling them to discover the digital sector.

### Stakeholders

- The Department of the Loire's Digital Transition Department.
- [Digital League](#), the digital cluster in Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes.

### Results

Over 1200 participants made aware of the need to break gender stereotypes about digital professions since this operation began.

### Perspectives

The organization of a cycle of webinars in order to deconstruct stereotypes and prejudices around digital technology, intended for parents of students.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Talent Recruitment.](#)



## ATTRAKTIONSKRAFT VÄRMLAND – AN INVESTMENT TO STRENGTHEN THE FUTURE SUPPLY OF SKILLS BY WORKING WITH GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSIVENESS

**Activity sector: All industries**

**Targets of the GP: Clusters, companies, organizations**

**Type of action: Communication campaign, education, awareness raising**



### Starting point

The need for skills in Värmland is great in several industries. Young people make gender-stereotypical educational choices, leading to a gender-segregated labor market, where men dominate in manufacturing and tech industry, and women in healthcare and public sector.

Analyses show that the most gender-segregated industries also have the greatest recruiting problems. This means that many of the county's employers miss out on using the entire recruitment base.

[Attraktionskraft Värmland](#) is a four-year project (2021-2024) where Region Värmland and cluster organisations collaborate around building commitment and awareness of gender equality aspects linked to skills supply, training, and recruitment.

### Actions

Attraktionskraft Värmland is focusing on four main activities:

1. Diploma courses for cluster staff to understand the benefits of an equal workplace.

2. Leadership trainings for businesses with focus on the leader's role in leading the gender equality work.

3. Breakfast seminars within different topics (why work with equality, how to lead the young, strengths of different generations, norms and prejudices, equal recruitment, macho culture, security, parental leave).

4. Development of information and tools on a unified platform, [Schyst.se](#), a user-friendly, living website where a broad target group can find inspiration, knowledge, good examples and working material linked to equality and inclusion.

### Challenges

Attraktionskraft Värmland started by investigating awareness and knowledge about equality and inclusion in different companies in Värmland. Based on the results, the actions were chosen. It was clear that knowledge-raising measures were needed in Värmland, but it may look different in other regions.

### Objectives

The main goal is an equal business life in Värmland with inclusive workplaces, equal gender distribution and diversity of backgrounds.

We want a private sector that has stronger innovative power, higher attractiveness and is more successful in the long term.

### Stakeholders

Clusters, their member companies, municipalities, associations, and private individuals have been involved in the project's activities. Business leaders are an important target group as they must take the lead for creating an equal working place, to enable an inclusive culture and equal recruitment.

### Results

- All cluster employees have received a diploma in gender equality skills.
- At least 90 business leaders have undergone leadership trainings.
- At least seven breakfast seminars within different topics have been held for a broad target group of 500 participants.
- Schyst.se is launched at Sweden's largest gender equality conference 2024 and the site is broadly used in Värmland and beyond.
- Business leaders in Värmland work purposefully in their organizations to make their companies equal and inclusive.

### Perspectives

The initiative will be evaluated in 2024 and next steps will be decided in consultation with regional decision makers, cluster managers, municipalities, and business leaders. Schyst.se will be a living site with self-assessment tools, educational films, practical exercises, statistics, and good practices.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Workplace Culture & Institutional Transformation](#)





## WORKING GROUPS TO EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN COMPANIES



**Activity sector:** All industries  
**Targets of the GP:** Companies  
**Type of action:** Awareness raising

### Starting point

Gender equality is a central pillar of diversity and inclusion. In an industrialized province like Upper Austria, the potential of women in the labor market is not yet as integrated in the labor market as it could be. A very high part-time rate and traditional role models contribute to the gender gap.

Upper Austria's regional location agency Business Upper Austria is the first address for companies and human resources managers interested in attracting skilled personnel, in HR management and organizational development. We provide an overview of the current skilled personnel situation in Upper Austria, measures to find skilled personnel, help with the training and education of your employees and advice on personnel market grant policy. [Human Capital Management](#) is operated as a network initiative, closely cooperating with the nine "classic" cluster structures embedded in the same organization. It is a competence center for cross-company cooperation, encouraging cooperation projects, promoting modern human resources management, and supporting the ongoing development of a compatible work environment.

### Actions

Diversity and inclusion are topics that every employee in an HR department will be confronted with sooner or later. The topic of diversity and inclusion will have a high priority in every company in the future. As Human Capital Management we use the cluster approach in our cooperation with companies on innovative HR topics. Within the framework of this action, we integrate the topic of gender equality into an innovative exchange of experiences.

### Challenges

Despite a wide range of measures, the Upper Austrian labor market is highly segregated along gender lines: men are often associated with crafts and technology, whereas women are often associated with nursing and social professions. At all levels of training, the proportion of women in Upper Austria is below 25 percent. Compared with the rest of Austria, the proportion of women working part-time is above average at around 59 percent. This aspect also contributes significantly to the gender pay gap. Women are not yet exploiting their full employment potential in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

### Objectives

In times of full employment, it is important for companies to address all potential groups. But finding new employees is not the only challenge; the inclusion and sustainable retention of these employees is also a challenge. It takes the courage to innovate in order to pursue these new paths. The exchange of experiences with other HR managers helps companies, especially SMEs do this. With the exchange of experience round we offer a common learning and innovation platform for our partner companies.

### Stakeholders

- Business Upper Austria (Lead)
- Betriebsservice OÖ - (cooperation partner)
- Public Employment Service Upper Austria (participant)

### Results

The project is in a pilot phase in 2023. The activation and sensitization of companies has been successful in a first step. Gender equality is only one aspect of the topic of diversity and inclusion, but a very central one. The development of the potential group of women is a central pillar that is emerging as a level of action for the participating companies.

### Perspectives

Following the successful launch of the new experience-sharing working group on diversity and inclusion in companies, we plan to continue the workshops after the pilot phase in 2024 and expand the number of participating companies.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Talent Recruitment.](#)



## KOMPASS - THE COMPETENCE CENTER FOR MATERNITY LEAVE AND CAREER MANAGEMENT



**KOMPASS**

Kompetenzzentrum für Karenz und Karriere  
Im Auftrag von LH-Stv. Mag. Christine Haberlander



**Activity sector: All industries**

**Targets of the GP: Companies**

**Type of action: Advice, awareness raising, financial support**

### Starting point

It is becoming increasingly important for companies to position themselves as attractive employers to be able to meet the demand for qualified and motivated employees in the future. An important aspect is how family-friendly and thus also women-friendly a company is. Those who actively support employees in their decision to have children and a career ultimately have a great advantage in terms of attractiveness as an employer. Furthermore, this increases retention in the company, the loyalty of the employees, and thus also the economic success of a company through motivated employees.

Active parental leave management is therefore an essential competitive factor for companies. For this reason, KOMPASS, the competence center for maternity leave and career management, was created in Upper Austria, which bundles existing activities and implements measures to support companies in the best possible way.

[KOMPASS](#) is based in the Upper Austrian location agency Business Upper Austria ([www.biz-up.at](http://www.biz-up.at)) and operated as a network initiative, closely cooperating with the nine "classic" cluster structures embedded in the same organization.

### Objectives

- Establishment of a hub for maternity leave and career management in Upper Austria.
- Creation of a network and formation of a contact point for Upper Austrian companies.
- Bundling of activities in Upper Austria.
- Raising awareness and supporting companies and employees about relevant maternity leave and career models that increase the number of people re-entering the labor market.

### Stakeholders

KOMPASS is implemented on behalf of the Women's Department of the Province of Upper Austria and the Women's Advisor of the Provincial Government Christine Haberlander in cooperation with the Upper Austrian Chamber of Commerce.

### Results

KOMPASS has positioned itself in Upper Austria as the competence center for the topics of reconciliation and women's empowerment. The number of counselling sessions in companies is constantly increasing.

The number of company-run childcare facilities is rising sharply.

### Actions

- Advice and support for the introduction of company-run childcare facilities.
- Financial support for company-run childcare projects during the school holidays.
- Award for outstanding activities and special commitment to gender equality in Upper Austria through the Upper Austrian Women's Promotion Award [StarkeFrauen.StarkesLand](#).
- Through the expert platform "[oe.speakerinnen.org](http://oe.speakerinnen.org)", Upper Austrian women are made visible both locally and internationally as experts, speakers and representatives
- Free working and information material in the form of numerous brochures and practical guides.

### Challenges

- The need to support women is often not seen as necessary in the companies.
- The operation of a company-run childcare facility is associated with high cost.

### Perspectives

- Sensitization of companies to the topic of compatibility, also for fathers.
- Making workplaces more attractive through life-phase-oriented work.
- Creation of cross-company cooperation in company-managed childcare.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Maternity, work-life balance & flexible working arrangements](#)



## EDA'S WOMEN'S NETWORK



Eda kommun

**Activity sector: Steel and industrial sector**

**Targets of the GP: Professional women in business and public sector**

**Type of action: Communication, awareness raising, women network**

### Starting point

In Eda municipality, the labor market has been fairly traditional:

- Women work in care, childcare and trade.
- Men work in sectors like industry, forestry, construction, etc.
- Men work farther away from home; daily or weekly commuting, which places a great burden on "staying at home" women.
- More women than men move from the municipality.
- Girls have better grades than boys and more often go on to university.

In order for us to be able to staff "welfare" in the future, we need to break with traditional recruitment. More men are needed in care, school, and welfare.

It is important to show female role models. For the women who are in senior positions, it is also important to have a network where they meet other women in similar positions, which reinforces the change process.

### Actions

We have partly used official statistics to demonstrate absurdities, such as if the municipality (which has over 80% women as employees) were to continue to recruit the same way as before to replace retirements, then in principle all women who finish high school would have to work for the municipality.

In the municipality, we have also been behind the start of a Women's Network, which includes both female entrepreneurs and managers and leaders in both the private and public sectors.

Creating a full-time opportunity for employees within the municipal contract area. There is a central agreement between Kommunal (union organization that represents the majority of municipal employees) and SKR (Sweden's Municipalities and Regions is the corresponding employer organization).

### Challenges

There are traditional obstacles - such as choosing a profession and the fact that it is usually the men who commute weekly.

### Objectives

- Get a more equal recruitment.
- Increase women's opportunities to earn a living from their work (full-time) and thereby increase their independence.
- Female entrepreneurs as role models can increase interest in women starting businesses.
- The women's network aims to be a forum for leading women to meet peers and support each other. The purpose is to create new contacts, get inspiration, personal development, support and new ideas through member meetings, inspiring talks, lunch meetings, study visits, etc.
- The vision is to create a dynamic network of women active in both private business and the public sector who help, enrich and develop each other - and who want to make a difference.

### Stakeholders

- Eda municipality as employer
- The Cluster IUS Stal & Verkstad - raised the issue and markets women in leading positions within the steel and industrial industry.
- Current companies

### Results

The efforts made visible that women can also be managers in industry (besides trade, care, and schooling).

Via the business cluster IUC Steel & Verkstad, the municipality received help in marketing its unique concept for having many women in leading positions in traditionally "male" industries. This was done through articles, but above all through short videos published on both their and our own website. These publications have attracted a great deal of interest.

### Perspectives

The municipality should work with gender equality to an even greater extent.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Talent Recruitment.](#)



## UNIDO GUIDE - MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT

**Activity sector:** All sectors

**Targets of the GP:** All targeted groups

**Type of action:** Gender mainstreaming in cluster development

### Starting point

Despite remarkable progress made in closing the gender gap and reducing inequalities in the economic, social, and political arenas, gender disparities are still persistent, women remaining at a disadvantage compared to men in many areas.

Ensuring that men and women benefit equally from project interventions requires an assessment of gender dynamics: in the division of labor and roles; in power relations, and in access to and control over resources.

The "[Mainstreaming gender in cluster development guide](#)" focuses on the critical factors that need to be considered in the efforts to mainstream gender into a cluster development project, with the overall purpose of guiding cluster development practitioners to carry out gender-responsive interventions.

### Actions

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) employs a twin-track approach of gender mainstreaming complemented by gender-specific interventions or targeted actions. This approach ensures that women's concerns and experiences are an integral dimension of both its programmatic work and within its organizational structure.

UNIDO has carried out efforts to advance gender equality and women's economic empowerment through projects, programmes, and policies in the three thematic areas of its programmatic work, namely creating shared prosperity, advancing economic competitiveness, and safeguarding the environment.

The guide examines key issues in gender-aware analysis and outlines the gender-based constraints faced by women in different socio-economic contexts. It further discusses the two-way relationship between gender and macroeconomic policies, analyzing how gender biases and inequalities act as barriers to economic and social development.

### Challenges

Difficulties in mainstreaming gender in cluster development range from the identification of cluster beneficiaries to the definition of concrete activities that can enhance women participation into economic activities and women leadership in general.

### Objectives

UNIDO strives to systematically adopt a gender perspective throughout the planning and implementation phases of its interventions, from cluster selection to monitoring and evaluation. The guide focuses on the critical factors to be integrated in a cluster development project. It is organized in two main parts: the first one provides context on gender and development, outlining the gender biases affecting women, and introducing key issues to consider when conducting a gender-aware analysis. It equips practitioners with the understanding of key concepts useful to tailor development interventions so that unintended gender impacts are mitigated or avoided, and that existing gaps are addressed. The second part focuses on project experiences in gender mainstreaming in cluster development with guidelines to improve gender mainstreaming practices in UNIDO's interventions through country-based examples that offered effective entry points for more equitable projects and for the advancement of women's economic empowerment.

### Stakeholders

The guide has been produced by UNIDO cluster development experts and field practitioners involved in the different projects implementation. Current companies

### Results

Vision building and action planning benefit from the adoption of a gender focus by explicitly stating gender-related objectives and incorporating them in the cluster activities. A gender-inclusive action plan builds on the systematic integration of a gender perspective in the allocation of funds and definition of activities. Awareness-raising activities on gender disparities and their economic and social impacts are important tools to facilitate a progressive mind set change in the cluster stakeholders.

### Perspectives

The guide has become the basis of the trainings organized by the organization in different countries and the checklists, tools and questionnaires included in the guide can easily be adapted to different countries and projects' realities.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Workplace Culture & Institutional Transformation](#)





## PAMUR: SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR WOMEN IN RURAL AND URBAN AREAS

**Activity sector:** Green and digital  
**Targets of the GP:** Women in Aragon  
**Type of action:** Coaching



### Starting point

Since, 2019, [Cluster IDiA](#) has been collaborating in various projects with the regional government of Aragon to promote employment and develop digital skills, prioritizing in all of them the participation of women.

In rural areas, it is increasingly difficult for women to give themselves visibility in the labor market. We consider it necessary to help them in economic activity where they are underrepresented, as well as to support them in the development of their digital skills.

The [PAMUR](#) project helps women in rural and urban areas by bringing training and resources to women who seek their inclusion in the labor market through employment or self-employment.

### Objectives

To empower women in rural and urban areas to increase their participation in the local and green economic activity by providing advice and support in the following areas: digital, technological, training, entrepreneurship and social economy linked to local production and services.

### Stakeholders

The Government of Aragon, the Town Councils of the four towns where we are developing the project, and the 55 women participating in the project.

### Actions

This EU-funded project focuses on empowering women to achieve their employment or self-employment goals, prioritizing green and digital employment.

The project is being implemented in four municipalities in Aragon, where 55 women are being mentored based on an initial analysis and a personalized work itinerary.

The actions include raising women's awareness of their professional capacity and their participation in the local economic activity, counselling in the digital, technological, entrepreneurial, and labor market fields, and training for the acquisition of skills.

### Challenges

Low digital competence of some participants, poor knowledge of the agents of economic development at local level, involvement of stakeholders in the different territories. We, at our cluster IDiA, are investing time in bilateral meetings, establishing connections between the different agents, and raising awareness of the need to facilitate women's access to the labor market.

### Results

As of the date of the report, 34% of the participating women were incorporated in the labor market, exceeding the target of 20% by fourteen points.

In total, more than 300 activities have been carried out, including several bilateral mentoring meetings with the 55 participants, 3 workshops on digital skills and jobs, 3 workshops on interviews and selection processes, 2 workshops on green skills and jobs, 1 workshop on active job search and 1 workshop on labor market information, with 92 women participating in total.

### Perspectives

- Continuation of the personalized itineraries to complete the planned actions with the participants.
- Consultation with the participants on their level of satisfaction with the actions undertaken.
- Evaluation of the results in terms of participation, incorporation into the labor market, and improvement of employability.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Talent Recruitment.](#)



## RAISE AWARENESS IN YOUR INDUSTRY WITH PODCASTS

**Activity sector: Digital industry**

**Targets of the GP: For all**

**Type of action: Awareness raising, inspire clusters and their members**



### Starting point

The digital sector has 27.4% of women in its workforce, compared with 46.8% for all sectors of activity combined. The gap widens further when it comes to the most technical profiles. According to a study by Opiiec 30 years ago, women occupied about 30% of the technical positions in the digital sector (development, operation, production, and project management). This share has been halved since then, and women are now mainly found in support positions. Only 20% of engineers and managers and 16% of technicians in the IT research and development are women.

The gap is also widening for the next generations, in fact in the 2018-2019 academic year, 18% of students in the member institutions of Talents du Numérique at Bac+5 level were female students.

[Digital113](#) therefore wishes to make digital companies, but also women of all ages, in all situations (in (re)orientation/vocational guidance, in employment, in reconversion, in job search...) aware that the digital sector needs them and offers prospects for sustainable and remunerative employment.

### Actions

The podcast project "[Les Femmes Digitales](#)" was created in partnership with the Toulouse-based radio station Campus FM. An audio format of 10 to 20 minutes, hosted by Magali Germond, administrator of Digital113 and Regional Delegate of Numeum's Femmes du Numérique programme, allows more subjects to be addressed, to create a more confidential exchange and thus, through these tête-à-tête interviews, to describe the careers, professions, and experiences of women from various backgrounds in the Digital sector...

In 2022, 4 programmes were recorded, based on four portraits of very different but very inspiring digital women.

- Amélie Leclercq, Managing Director of Digital113.
- Alexia Audevert, Founder of Datactik and Data Scientist.
- Eve Certhoux, Regional Director of Meritis.
- Ingrid Portilla, Project Manager at Medexprim.

### Objectives

The aim of this partnership and of the Femmes Digitales project is to continue to raise awareness of the fact that the digital professions lack female representation: few women in scientific fields, few female CVs, few young girls attracted by digital options.

It seemed essential to highlight inspiring women as "role models" so that every student, job seeker, returnee, career choice, or choice of option, could identify with them.

### Stakeholders

- Partnership with Campus FM, a Toulouse-based radio station.
- Digital113 member companies.
- [Numeum](#).

### Results

A very positive feedback received from Campus FM and its audience, as well as from the digital ecosystem in Occitania. Digital113 is the winner of the FILEX Feminisation and Digital Trophy of 2023 organized by France Clusters.

### Perspectives

The production of more inspiring portraits of women, but also themed programmes to highlight societal issues around women and the Digital sector. Digital113 also wants to present jobs held by women in the context of these programmes.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Talent Recruitment.](#)



## Clusters and groups of companies



## «NEW WORK AND CORPORATE CULTURE» PROGRAMME

**Activity sector:** Construction industry  
**Targets of the GP:** Companies  
**Type of action:** Awareness raising, training



### Starting point

Demographic change and the shortage of skilled workers are increasingly a key challenge for companies - this was also the result of a needs survey conducted by the [ecoplus Green Building Cluster of Lower Austria](#) in 2021 among Lower Austrian companies in the construction industry. This makes it important for a company to be attractive for its existing and future employees. The focus on the employee as an individual, with his or her competences and needs, regardless of gender, origin etc., is essential.

Based on this need, the cluster developed "New Work & Corporate Culture" 2022, a service format that provides entrepreneurs with inspiration and external perspectives to take proactive action.

### Actions

The focus of the programme "[New Work & Corporate Culture](#)" is on achieving an appreciative corporate culture and perceiving one's own employees as individuals with specific competences and needs.

With minimal resources (2.5 workshop days), the participating company representatives receive inspiration through numerous inputs from an expert and from two positive role models from the region.

With numerous methods, an intensive exchange between the participants on the topic of corporate culture is brought about, which leads to an exchange of experiences and a reflection on the situation in the companies. In this way, the participants receive inspiration for change in their own companies.

### Challenges

The daily business is a major time obstacle for SMEs. Addressing soft factors like dealing with the corporate culture are often put on the back burner until they see the benefits. After several workshop series it became clear that SMEs are interested in the topic as long as the workshop is free of charge.

### Objectives

The programme supports companies in reflecting on their own corporate culture and finding new approaches. The aim is to identify and conceptualize measures and activities for their own company.

### Stakeholders

- ecoplus Green Building Cluster of Lower Austria as program owner.
- An expert.
- Two role models (local entrepreneurs).
- Participants: representatives of companies from the management level.

### Results

With "New Work & Corporate Culture", the cluster developed a very compact programme (2,5 days) that addresses the needs of SMEs: Getting into action through inspiration and taking simple small steps as "homework" in the company, which initiate changes and thus already achieve great things. One example: A look at the competences and areas of application of women in the company resulted in a female employee being actively offered a more responsible position based on her experience, which she accepted.

### Perspectives

The programme will be offered again by the cluster in Lower Austria. Learning and inputs from the Interreg Europe project DEBUTING (Gender Equality in Business) will be incorporated.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Workplace Culture & Institutional Transformation](#)



FROM A COLLECTION OF INTERVIEWS OF WOMEN LEADING  
CLUSTERS TOWARDS A COMPLETE TOOLBOX FOR THE  
FEMINISATION OF THE INDUSTRY

**Activity sector: Industrial companies**

**Targets of the GP: Clusters**

**Type of action: Awareness raising, inspire clusters and their members**



## Starting point

[France Clusters](#) observed the following paradox:

- French industrial companies are struggling to recruit, expressing as much that they don't find the skills they need on the job market as the real shortage of motivated candidates. Because of the low attractiveness of industrial sectors to women, mainly for cultural reasons, female candidates are very rare.
- Conversely, within the national network France Clusters, both men and women serve as chairs and/or managers in the industrial clusters, and over 100 clusters are led by women, including those in industrial sectors traditionally dominated by men.

## Objectives

The objective of the actions of France Clusters is to [raise awareness on gender mainstreaming in industry](#) and on the role clusters can play to accelerate changes in their sector and territory.

Through the collection of interviews of "Women captains of sectors", the aim was to highlight the different paths taken by these women up to their position as managers of business communities in which men are in the majority, to identify the difficulties encountered in their careers and to collect their proposals to increase the presence of women in their sector. The trophies awarding exemplary initiatives aim to inspire others to do the same!

The toolbox aims to help the "how to" by presenting inspiring initiatives as well as advantages of gender mainstreaming, tools, laws, and possible financial and technical partners in France.

## Actions

In 2020, France Clusters carried out an exploratory action to consult 16 women presidents or managers of clusters on this issue of gender mainstreaming in industry. Their interviews were gathered and published in the report "[Women captains of industry](#)".

In [2021](#) and [2022](#), France Clusters organized trophies to award exemplary initiatives of clusters on the "feminization of industry" and inspire their peers.

In 2022, France Clusters created its own observatory with a [toolbox](#) to enable clusters that are not yet active on gender mainstreaming to take action. The toolbox includes inspiring initiatives, arguments, and possible financial and technical partners in France on gender equality issues

## Stakeholders

- Clusters of the France Clusters' network.
- Members and partners of the Clusters (SMEs, large companies, local authorities, partner associations).
- The Women's Economic Network ("le REF"); Women@digital ("Femmes@Numérique").
- Support of the National Agency for Territorial Cohesion and of the Ministry for Equality between Women and Men, Diversity and Equal Opportunities.

## Results

Many organizations willing to take action but not knowing how to start and what to do were inspired by the toolbox created by France Clusters and by the Trophies and the collection of testimonies.

The toolbox was created after winning a call for projects from the Ministry in charge of gender equality. This experience had a knock-on effect as a digital cluster won a project in the framework of the Ministry's 2nd call for projects.

## Challenges

The lack of knowledge/skills on the topic equality in cluster teams hinders action but also the lack of dedicated financial support.

Gender equality is a challenge for the whole society. it must be shared and appropriated by all players in civil and productive society.

## Perspectives

France Clusters won a further call for projects of the Ministry of Gender Equality to develop action already experimented in the past year and promote the identified exemplary initiatives.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Talent Recruitment.](#)





## CLOSINGAP INDEX - ECONOMIC IMPACT OF GENDER INEQUALITY IN SPAIN



**Activity sector:** Large companies

**Targets of the GP:** Business sphere, public and private sectors

**Type of action:** Policy recommendations, good practices, cross-mentoring

### Starting point

[ClosinGap](#) is a Spanish cluster created in September 2018 and made up of 11 large companies totaling around one million employees worldwide. The initiative has its origins in the Healthy Women, Healthy Economies project, launched by Merck globally in 2014 together with the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum, with the aim of addressing the barriers that prevent harnessing all female talent and fully achieving the participation of women in the economy of the countries.

Since its inception, ClosinGap has had the vocation of promoting knowledge about the inequality of opportunities between men and women from an economic perspective, thus promoting debate and raising public awareness.

### Actions

- [Decalogue of recommendations](#): a set of measures to be promoted to jointly advance equal opportunities.
- [Toolkit of good practices](#): a specific and proven roadmap, based on almost 300 practices, which is committed to harnessing female talent as a strategic axis and driving force for the country's economic recovery.
- [Cross-mentoring program](#): seeks to favor and accelerate the professional development of female talent, as well as to advance in support measures that contribute to breaking the glass ceiling.
- [Voluntary agreements](#): we created an ambitious plan made up of 15 voluntary agreements to move towards the elimination of gender gaps.

### Challenges

The report's data underscores the priority of joining forces and working together to close gender gaps in order to boost prosperity and economic growth. This is not only a matter of fairness and equity, but would have a significant and positive impact on the economy and social welfare. That is why harnessing and leveraging valuable female talent is one of the most important and empowering challenges facing our society and will be key as a lever for economic recovery.

### Objectives

Its mission is to promote social transformation from the business sphere by promoting measures and actions from the private and public spheres in favor of equal opportunities between women and men, in close collaboration between the public and private sectors, thus contributing to equity and economic development and growth in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### Stakeholders

GlosinGap is made up of the companies Merck, BMW Group, CaixaBank, Fundación CEOE, Grupo Social ONCE, KREAB, Mahou San Miguel - Solán de Cabras, MAPFRE, PwC, Repsol and Telefónica.

### Results

The [ClosinGap Index](#) is a unique indicator created by the cluster that allows us to measure the economic impact of gender inequality in Spain and to track its evolution year by year. The Index is composed of five critical categories: Employment, Education, Work-Life Balance, Digitalization and Health and Wellbeing. Within these categories, a total of 28 key variables in the personal and professional development of a society are analyzed, selected using criteria of relevance, reliability (public sources) and periodic updating, with the aim of quantifying the opportunity cost of the lack of parity for the Spanish GDP. This is the only indicator of its kind in Spain and one of the few existing worldwide.

### Perspectives

ClosinGap has the following strategic axes for the future:

- To generate knowledge and promote the debate on inequality from an economic perspective, bringing to the forefront the opportunity cost for the economy and society of the loss of female talent linked to the different gender gaps.
- To be a source of innovation in the field of business initiatives linked to the economy and women.
- To act as an agent of change and social and economic transformation through public-private collaboration.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Workplace Culture & Institutional Transformation](#)

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Career Progression & Access to Training](#)



## DARE TO BE OPEN AND CREATIVE!

**Activity sector: Interior design**

**Targets of the GP: Employees**

**Type of action: Internal procedures, coaching**

### Starting point

20 years ago the [Ligna Group](#) was founded - an interior design studio and FF&E company specializing in furnishing hotels and commercial establishments. Over the years we have accomplished a rich portfolio of interior projects throughout Europe and in the process we were able to build and grow a network of over 50 companies in the furniture industry who share our passion and business values – and so the Bulgarian Furniture Cluster was born. Together we supply furniture for the largest investors in the hotel business in Europe.

We never thought that entrepreneurship is divided into male and female. But we have noticed that we are often alone at the table in the company of other businessmen. We really want to be a role model for other women and girls in Bulgaria who want to do business and to believe that nothing is impossible as long as you truly believe and follow your dreams.

### Actions

As a cluster with close ties and daily interactions between our companies and teams, we learned that the most important thing in business is to build the right team - like-minded people who are also passionate about what they do and share our dreams! How we do this? We always strive to set a good example, to build trust and inspire others.

We have created interesting and dynamic job positions that are attractive for women, where individualism, creativity and engagement are highly appreciated and sought after. We built a friendly, supportive, and sustainable work environment that energizes and engages employees, as well as benefits their physical, emotional, and social well-being. We have a strong mentoring program - one of our missions is the development and training of young talents.

### Challenges

Trust is one of the essential elements that must be present in the culture of an organization. We work daily on building trust by: Consistency in keeping the commitments; Honesty and support even in hard times; Active communication - every member knows that their opinion matters; Celebrating efforts, successes and achievements.

### Objectives

We wanted to instigate and transfer the Ligna experience in creating a team made up of strong individuals with different profiles, backgrounds, gender, age etc., because we believe this nurtures creativity, fosters the share of ideas, knowledge, and skills, and enriches everyone and ultimately - creates amazing results. We are glad that our ambition was met with reciprocity and full support from our partners in the cluster.

### Stakeholders

We have a quite flat hierarchy and also believe that success is a teamwork, so we rely on every cluster member to be involved in this.

### Results

At Ligna Group we created a colorful, creative, and highly motivated team that is not only gender balanced, but also age balanced with people ranging from 20 to 70 years old and LGBT inclusive.

We are thrilled to see this spreading and similar processes happening in our partner companies at BFC, and all that in furniture manufacturing - an industry that traditionally employs more men than women.

We all believe this gives us a competitive advantage and also increases our ability to attract, retain and develop talent, increase productivity and creativity in teams.

### Perspectives

We always strive to set a good example, to attract and bring together people that will learn from each other, encourage their creativity, and engage them. We have been mentors in many programs and this year we are more than happy to be invited to participate in initiatives like BULGARIA WANTS YOU, "Work and Career in Bulgaria" etc. We also actively participate in the creation of the first Bulgarian accelerator in London. This is our way to share experience and "ignite" many more girls to develop their own business, because only in this way we can change the environment and the status quo.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Workplace Culture & Institutional Transformation](#)

## ACT ON REMUNERATION PAY GAP BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN

**Activity sector: Entrepreneurship – Social and solidarity economy**

**Targets of the GP: Women entrepreneurs**

**Type of action: Monitoring, coaching**



### Starting point

Gender equality is an important issue for the social and solidarity economy (SSE), which aims to contribute to a fairer and more sustainable society. But studies have shown that the social purpose of SSE structures has paradoxically amplified this "invisibilization of inequalities" within these structures, and various events have also highlighted this within Oxalis.

A diagnosis showed the existence of gender inequalities within the cooperative. For example, in 2017, there was a 30% lower remuneration for women (compared to 19% at the national level), a 35% representation of women on the Board of Directors, (even though they represent 43% of the cooperative's workforce). These data led us to question the cooperative's policy on this subject.

### Actions

In order to act on the gender pay gap, two actions have been carried out:

- Analysis of the causes of the gap by identifying indicators for monitoring the remuneration of men and women (according to turnover, type of job, type of activity, family situation, etc.) And follow their evolution and the effect of the actions implemented on this subject.
- A business workshop for women entrepreneurs, mixing inputs on gender stereotypes, business development tools, popular education methods and experience sharing. The aim was to identify and remove social barriers related to gender bias in entrepreneurial work and to build appropriate responses to reduce the gender gap in turnover (and therefore pay).

### Challenges

- Monitor the remuneration of entrepreneurs, autonomous in their organization and their commercial approaches.
- The time required to completely set up the whole workshop with little or no feedback on the same type of action (but now that this creative work is done, we will be able to easily reproduce these workshops).

### Objectives

Entrepreneurs choose their own remuneration, mainly according to their turnover. Thus, it appears that the gap of remuneration observed between women and men sometimes comes from obstacles linked to gender education (ability to negotiate, to set a fair price for the own services). The business workshop for women entrepreneurs aims to support them on these subjects.

### Stakeholders

- Gender officer of staff representatives.
- Human resources manager.
- Employees interested by the subject.
- Gender expert contributor.

### Results

All these actions are too recent to be able to observe an effect on the diagnostic data, but we can note:

- The publication of an illustrated summary of indicators for monitoring the remuneration of women and men.
- Participants at the first session of the commercial workshop were very satisfied and people have request setting up new sessions of this workshop.

### Perspectives

The current objective is to continue the actions initiated, by continuing the annual diagnostics, publishing diagnostic reports, and renewing the workshops created. Afterward, depending on future data analyses, other actions may be proposed in order to study other causes of the pay gap.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Equal Pay](#)

[Click here to read the interview with Sylvie Arnaud, from Oxalis.](#)

## ACT ON ENTREPRENEUR'S WORK-LIFE BALANCE

**Activity sector: Entrepreneurship – Social and solidarity economy**

**Targets of the GP: Women entrepreneurs**

**Type of action: Monitoring, coaching**



### Starting point

Personal life, and family life in particular, brings a lot of tasks and time constraints for workers. Even today, very often these tasks (domestic, child-related, or family-related) done by women. This often leads to a shift to part-time work, or to constrained working hours that may prevent them from participating in certain professional meetings, for example.

These difficulties exist in salaried employment, but also in entrepreneurship which can provide a certain amount of organizational freedom, but often requires a significant investment that can spill over into personal time, thus penalizing women in particular. Similarly, the arrival of a child requires a break in the entrepreneurial activity, which can have an impact on it and on remuneration, or even necessitate a total halt in the activity.

### Objectives

The objective of these actions is to introduce new practices, work habits and tools to help reconcile personal/family life and professional life for all employees and entrepreneurs, thus helping mainly women to integrate into the professional rhythm and develop their entrepreneurial activity in good conditions.

### Actions

In order to act on work-life balance, three actions have been carried out:

- A [book](#) was published on maternity in the entrepreneurial career, with feedback, tools, and tips to prepare this period
- Drafting and disseminating of a collection of good practices for organizing meetings favoring gender equality (for example: recommendations of preferential days and times not to exclude people with family constraints, or rules for speaking and decision-making that allow for greater inclusion of women)
- Proposal and financing of childcare during all major cooperative events (e.g., General assemblies) to enable parents not to be excluded from important company events and decision-making moments.

### Stakeholders

Working group consisting of:

- Gender officer of staff representatives.
- Human resources manager.
- Employees interested by the subject.

### Results

All these actions are too recent to be able to observe an effect on the diagnostic data (remuneration for example), but we can note:

- The use of the maternity guide for all new maternity situations declared.
- Babysitters were requested at all cooperative events.

### Challenges

The time spent researching and writing books on feedbacks and good practices (but which are then useful resources in the years to come or for other structures)

### Perspectives

We will continue to make these documents available to future parents to prepare for this period and employees for organizing meetings and this childcare service for the cooperative's upcoming events.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Maternity, Work-Life Balance & Flexible Working.](#)

[Click here to read the interview with Sylvie Arnaud, from Oxalis.](#)



## ACT ON SEXISM WITHIN A COOPERATIVE OF ENTREPRENEURS

Activity sector: Entrepreneurship – Social and solidarity economy

Targets of the GP: Women entrepreneurs

Type of action: Monitoring, coaching



### Starting point

In its first inventory published in 2017, the High Council for Equality (HCE) recalls that sexism sometimes manifests itself in a seemingly harmless way and that 89% of victims of sexist acts are women. The tolerance observed towards these acts is present in all professional environments. Working in a cooperative does not protect us from these acts. Sometimes, the display of values in favor of equality between women and men makes it even more difficult to report, as if sexist acts could not exist in our environment. It is therefore necessary to have a shared tool so that those concerned can break the silence, including when it takes the form of "ordinary" sexism.

### Objectives

The objective of these actions is to facilitate the awareness, the responsibility of each person, and the detection of sexist behaviors that may occur, and to allow each actor to play his or her role in a clear framework known by all: from the alert to the handling of the situation.

### Stakeholders

- Gender officer of staff representatives.
- Human resources manager.
- Employees interested by the subject.
- Members of the cooperative concerned by the training course.

### Actions

In order to fight against sexist acts at work, two actions have been carried out:

- A training course was organized and made mandatory for members of the cooperative's authorities on the prevention of sexism at work. This training aim to show how to identify sexist acts at work, to prevent them, to know the legal and internal framework of the company and to work on your personal stand so as not to be yourself the author of sexist acts.
- Development and implementation of a procedure for reporting sexist behavior, so that it can be easily highlighted, thanks to a known, clear, operational, and empowering process, and enabling the cooperative to act appropriately according to the behavior identified.

### Results

All these actions are too recent to be able to observe an effect on the diagnostic data, but we can note:

- A good participation in training: a total of 48 participants in the various training sessions.
- A good satisfaction of training participants.
- Overall increased vigilance to situations of sexism within the company.

### Challenges

No particular difficulties to note.

### Perspectives

The current objective is to continue the actions initiated, such as training or long-term actions (procedure for reporting sexist acts). New annual diagnoses will also be carried out in order to see if the impact of these actions allows to reduce the differences observed, and if additional actions should be proposed.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Sexism and Harassment in the Workplace](#)

[Click here to read the interview with Sylvie Arnaud, from Oxalis.](#)





## BeHEALTH: WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP PANEL

**Activity sector: Health and bioeconomy industry**

**Targets of the GP: Employees**

**Type of action: Internal procedures, training**



### Starting point

**ROHEALTH** is a cluster organization set up eight years ago and with over 90 members. Its motivation to carry out initiatives in favor of gender equality was determined by the discussions with the partner organizations as well as with colleagues from the cluster team.

- The reduced capacity of the entrepreneurs in the cluster to value themselves and implicitly to sell the results of their work.
- Female colleagues in abusive relationships with their life partners.

### Objectives

The inclusion in 2021 and 2022 within the **BeHEALTH** international event of the Woman Entrepreneurship panel: the objective was to create local models for young women from Romania who want to develop a career in health research and to increase the level of valorization of existing domestic entrepreneurs in the market.

### Actions

- The inclusion in the ROF (Rules of Organisation and Functioning) of the necessary articles for the management of the cases of non-compliance with the principles of gender and chances equality.
- Inclusive policy not only for gender equality, but also for the area of equality of chances, ROHEALTH having 3 people with physical disabilities as part of the team at the moment.
- Staff participation in equality of chances courses.
- Inclusion in the BeHEALTH conference of the Woman Entrepreneurship panel.

### Stakeholders

- Employees of the Cluster Management Entity.
- Cluster members.
- BeHEALTH panel participants.

### Results

The Woman Entrepreneurship panel is one of the most active and listened to by the BeHEALTH participants, being in the first three places out of the existing 10. In 2022, for the first time, men also participated in this panel, some of them being even the life partners of the autochthonous entrepreneurs.

### Challenges

- General barriers: the cultural association of domestic abuse with normality; lack of National accredited gender equality courses; the poor quality of the existing courses for equality of chances on the market; the faulty association of the notion of gender equality with the violation of Christian moral norms; lack of valuing the role of women in society.
- Specific barriers: fear of failure; fear of valorization; the association of self-confidence with lack of modesty.

### Perspectives

We will continue with this panel in 2023 and we will seek to bring our members quality courses from the point of view of the necessary information on this topic. Organization of customized courses for entrepreneurs on this subject (if we find suitable lecturers)

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Workplace Culture & Institutional Transformation](#)



## GUIDELINES FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN THE SWEDISH STEEL INDUSTRY



**Dalarna**  
Industriellt utvecklingscentrum

**Activity sector: Steel industry**

**Targets of the GP: Companies in the steel industry, women engineers**

**Type of action: Guidelines on gender equality, increasing the sector's attractiveness**

### Starting point

One of Swedish steel industry's top challenges is to provide and find engineers and other competences to the companies. This is a fact known for long. Steel industry is still a male dominated working place and the common opinion is that it is a dark, noisy, and dangerous workplace. The general opinion is out-of-fact based on the industrial society era, though it is changing in a positive direction.

All this together and the fact that strong trademarks like e.g., IKEA, Google, Volvo, (who are interesting to young engineers) become competitors in the recruitment. These circumstances make it specially challenging to attract female engineers to the steel industry.

### Actions

Together with the Nordic Centre of Excellence on women in technology-driven careers at Uppsala university we worked on a project that resulted in "Guidelines for gender equality." We spread the results to the steel industry, academy, networks for gender equality and held a conference with keynote speakers.

An important part of the work was to cooperate with other organizations to strengthen and widen our work, such as women for e.g., metal and mining industry, technical industry, academy, and research institutions.

The project Young Global Center of Excellence within Advanced Steel where we addressed doctoral students around the world also partly focused on reaching female students. The result of the work is an international network of high academic level.

### Challenges

The main difficulty in general is to change the culture within the companies that is needed to attract female employees. To set a new mindset, meaning to be aware of the importance of being a good and positive ambassador and enhance the ongoing innovations and insight that the industry is high tech and changing towards fossil free production is not an easy process.

### Objectives

The most important objective was to change the steel industry's image to female engineers and to attract female engineers to the companies. To increase the number of female employees, both blue- and white-collar level. Also to strengthen the knowledge about the Swedish advanced steel industry internationally.

### Stakeholders

Academy, representatives of the steel industry, organizations, research institutions, public authorities.

### Results

The guidelines to gender equality are widely spread and can be used in the companies' long-term strategic work, to strengthen equality and diversity needs to remain an ongoing focus work.

The increased knowledge about the steel industry as an innovative high-tech industry that is an important part in the climate change process.

The international work also contributed to spread the importance and knowledge about Swedish circumstances in gender equality and diversity.

### Perspectives

The steel industry has broadened the equality strategy to diversity and inclusion. The major expansion in the Swedish mining and steel industry demands international recruitment. Sweden is a country with a small population and therefore our engineers need to be supplemented with international talent.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Talent Recruitment](#)

## OCEAN GENDER: EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN HUMAN RESOURCES WORK

Activity sector: Underwater technology

Targets of the GP: Employees, young people, and students

Type of action: Awareness raising, inspire, monitoring



OCEAN  
TECHNOLOGY  
CAMPUS ROSTOCK



### Starting point

In February 2021, the Ocean Technology Campus Rostock was recognized by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research as a future cluster in the 'Clusters4Future' competition. It is an innovation ecosystem for underwater technology in which research organisations and companies work closely together. Yet the sensitivity for gender is not very pronounced. In the subjects and fields of underwater technology, there is a high degree of gender segregation and a strongly male-dominated habitus. There are few female junior staff and few female role models. Furthermore, there are difficulties in recruiting female professionals. The general shortage of skilled workers in this area requires an explicit and intensified addressing to the target group of women.

The [Ocean Technology Campus](#) represents a new infrastructure with very heterogeneous members; at the beginning, no cross-institutional gender equality structures/measures existed; moreover, no data on gender equality indicators in the field of ocean technology in general and in the campus were available.

### Actions

1. Governance, Gender Mainstreaming: Campus Gender Equality Network, Equal Opportunities Advisory Board, Representation in the Steering Committee.
2. Recruitment: Active recruitment and staff marketing, Development of guidelines; identification of recruiting channels; creating gender-appropriate staffing procedures, film "[Making waves for the seas](#)" (target group: young women).
3. Awareness-raising, advisory services, expert input, Talent promotion for young talents: Inventor camps for female pupils between 15-18 years old, Mentoring and lecture series for female students.
4. Data analysis: Development of gender key indicators, statistical data collection and analysis, Recommendations for action, based on the data analysis, Evaluation of the measures.

### Challenges

Generally low sensitivity to gender/equality issues, the large heterogeneity of the cluster members, the high workload of important actors, the delegation of gender topics to (equal opportunity officers) and generally the time needed for a cultural change.

### Objectives

The goals of Ocean Gender are:

- To make the professional field attractive for women.
- To contribute to good governance and location development.
- To improve gender equity/parity in the cluster.
- To reduce gender-specific discrimination.
- To inspire female junior staff/professionals for ocean technology, to motivate the location and make it inviting and attractive and to influence the choice of studies/profession.

### Stakeholders

- Steering committee, advisory boards.
- Executives, HR departments, interest groups.
- Policy makers/public authorities, ministries.
- Female professionals.
- Female pupils, schools, parents.
- Mentees, mentors.

### Results

- A positive public perception and sensitization through the image film "Making waves for the oceans" and the development of the career section on the website.
- Increased gender awareness and gender competence within the cluster through the publication of guidelines and impulse/keynote lectures.
- The availability of reliable data material (gender statistics, recommendations for actions).
- The existence of new structures (gender equality network, gender, and sustainability advisory boards).
- Concrete talent promotion with individual competence growth and network building through a mentoring programme and a series of lectures for female students and inventor camps for female pupils.

### Perspectives

We aspire to a continuation of the process in the 2nd and 3rd funding period, whereby the content focus of gender should be expanded to include diversity. The range of topics and service portfolio will be expanded based on the needs of the cluster members.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Talent Recruitment](#)

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Gender Monitoring](#)

## FREEDOM BEGINS AND ENDS WITH US

**Activity sector:** Transport and logistics  
**Targets of the GP:** Manager and employees  
**Type of action:** Internal procedures



### Starting point

The [Eltra Logis](#) organization is a transport and logistics company run by a woman and we believe that women can lead large organizations where people feel safe. In Romania, the position of women in the top management of companies is still only a desideratum and this only happens in multinational companies, not in national ones, an aspect that needs to change in the general mentality of society.

### Actions

Through the Internal Order Regulations, we have imposed rules against any type of discriminations and have provided actions and benefits for young women in their studying years, for young mothers and especially for those who wish to return to the workplace before the deadlines stipulated in the current legislation.

We have provided in the regulations extra days off for the first day of school, mother's birthday and for other employees who want to do something other than work for their birthday. We have created a workspace in which not only women, but all employees can work in peace and safety, by setting up:

- A kindergarten for after-hours, so that the mothers can work peacefully, with the children nearby, after the kindergarten schedule or if they have a day when it is necessary to take care of the child. There isn't an educator on site, but instead the children have a playground set up in the company in a glazed space where mothers can supervise their child.
- A very friendly dining and coffee space so that employees can have an informal discussion with the company's HR responsible on personal issues that may affect the company in order to find common solutions.
- An interactive meeting room in which professional training and information programs are held.

### Challenges

- Outdated legislation and lack of social involvement of the State with information programs and support for organizations that support gender equality.
- The outdated mentalities of the organizations we come in contact with within our work
- People's lack of trust that there can be an organization in which they can express themselves freely.

### Objectives

- The organization is intended to be a safe space where women and colleagues of a different sexual orientation or ethnicity can feel protected and work efficiently, without frustrations.
- Respect everyone's choices as long as they are mentioned in the regulations
- Create a favorable framework for the company's performance.

### Stakeholders

The interested parties in our actions were:

- Company employees.
- Top management.
- Customers and suppliers.

### Results

In our organization, 80% of management positions are held by women, there is no discrimination, and the workspace is a safe space.

There is no gender discrimination in our organization, and we have employees of different sexual orientations and ethnicities.

The productivity of employees has increased after creating the kindergarten.

The communication between employees and also between employees and heads of departments has improved, the problems are raised immediately, and solutions are found quicker.

### Perspectives

We want to digitize our activity as much as possible. We want a very democratic but efficient regulation for both parties. We are thinking of rewarding people who are empathetic and who can give the organization the same behavior that they receive.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topics of \*Workplace culture & institutional transformation\* and \*Maternity, work-life balance and flexible working\*](#)

[Click here to read the interview with Elena Jianu, from Eltra Logis](#)



## DESIGNING CIRCULAR FUTURE – GHEPI'S HACKATHON FOR SUSTAINABLE



Activity sector: STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics)

Targets of the GP: Female students

Type of action: Hackathon (innovation competition)

### Starting point

[Ghepi](#) is not only a member, but also has the presidency of [Clust-ER MECH Board](#). To be an active stakeholder inside an innovative ecosystem means to reach more actors, to generate more ideas and to face new challenges and new opportunities. So, on the occasion of its 50th anniversary, Ghepi created initiatives to celebrate its history as well as its important female entrepreneurship legacy, involving some other Clust-ER members.

Ghepi decided to conduct a hackathon dedicated to female engineering students to address the underrepresentation of women in STEM fields and promote women's technical talents, especially in engineering and manufacturing.

By providing a platform for female students to showcase their skills and abilities as well as mentorship and networking opportunities, Ghepi hopes to encourage more women to pursue careers in these fields, while inspiring other organizations to promote initiatives to foster a more diverse and inclusive workplace culture in manufacturing.

### Actions

A Hackathon dedicated to female engineering and industrial design students was organized. It lasted three consecutive days, and the 20 participants worked in five teams on one of two challenges proposed by Ghepi:

- Imagine applications or products made with expanded polymers to reduce CO2 emissions.
- Communicate the value of circular polymers to the customers.

The hackathon followed specific steps through which the teams were guided: 1. Technology training and inspiration; 2. Challenge Launch; 3. Benchmarking; 4. Ideation; 5. Prototyping; 6. Presentations.

Ghepi's manager and external facilitators were available to support the teams throughout each step of the process.

### Challenges

We did not face any specific difficulties or barriers; the only challenge was the communication and the attractiveness of the event itself. In order to reach the students we involved 10 University Professors who helped us with the communication of the initiative.

### Objectives

- Promotion of women's technical talent: by providing the students with a platform to showcase their skills and abilities.
- Talent attraction: by identifying talented engineering students who might be interested in working in Ghepi.
- Innovation: Gaining inspiration on new ideas and solutions.
- Encouraging STEM education: by promoting the value of female students in technical working environments.

### Stakeholders

- Companies: GHEPI S.r.l., JSP International
- University Professors from the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, the University of Bologna, and the University of Parma
- The Clust-ER ecosystem facilitated connections and interactions with these stakeholders, supporting the project development.

### Results

Supported by a safe and supportive environment, the students showed exceptional ability to come up with creative ideas to complex challenges in a very short time, as well as a wonderful ability to work in teams and collaborate to reach their common goal constructively.

Among the prizes awarded to the students at the end of the event, was the opportunity for two students to do an internship in Ghepi. One of the internships was focused on the first stages of technical development of one of the ideas emerged during the Hackathon.

### Perspectives

The hackathon was an extraordinary experience for GHEPI and the other cluster members and there is a willingness to carry out other initiatives to promote women's talent and their involvement, particularly in the STEM field.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Workplace Culture & Institutional Transformation](#)





## TEDDY SPA WORK BALANCE

**Activity sector:** Professional training

**Targets of the GP:** Employees

**Type of action:** Internal procedures

**TEDDY**  
GROUP

**CLUST-ER  
INNOVATE**  
INNOVAZIONE NEI SERVIZI

### Starting point

Gruppo Centoform (Centoform Srl and Phorma Mentis Srl) is a member of several regional Clust-ERs and Phorma Mentis Srl is also a board member of the [Clust-ER Innovate](#). Being an active stakeholder inside our regional innovation ecosystem brings more opportunities and results in terms of connections, idea generation and best practice sharing. That is why, when Gruppo Centoform supported a company named [TEDDY SPA](#) in reaching a more complete welfare system, its connection with the local ecosystem was already strong and complete.

The human resources employed at TEDDY SPA are key to managing complexity, and attention to their needs and requirements has prompted management to develop a system of concrete tools and actions aimed at work/life balance and family friendly policies geared towards Improving time management between life, work and public services, the quality of life of workers and the well-being in the company.

The reconciliation needs expressed by the workers concerned can be traced to:

- Childcare at a young age.
- Care of people with disabilities.
- Coincidence of working hours with the opening hours of public services.
- Family duties.

### Actions

- Hourly and organizational flexibility: term part-time for work-life balance reasons.
- Family support services: afternoon extension nursery of corporate daycare service, after-school corporate service.
- Birth support: baby bonuses.
- Interventions and services: time reconciliation facilitation service with "corporate butlers", employee shuttles, gasoline vouchers / restaurant ticket.

### Challenges

Cultural barriers, hours of public services in schools, care and assistance are not compatible with work schedules, rigid and inflexible business hours, inadequate labor law regulations, inadequate national collective bargaining agreements (CCNLs).

### Objectives

- Relief of care charges between men and women, with hourly flexibility
- Increase female employment, with job hiring.
- Family support, with childcare services.
- Natality growth, with baby bonuses.

### Stakeholders

- Gruppo Centoform (Centoform Srl and Phorma Mentis Srl).
- Equality councilor of the province of Rimini.
- Confindustria Romagna.
- Karis Foundation - public charter schools, Rimini.
- Municipality of Rimini.

### Results

- Overcome an organizational approach based on rigid schedules through flexibilization of performance that allows for greater autonomy and flexibility.
- Improving the internal climate with solving responses to time reconciliation needs present in the company.
- Increasing efficiency and productivity by accommodating the need for flexibility and maximizing the positive effects of work performance performed in a more serene environment.

### Perspectives

It is envisaged that the actions introduced by TEDDY SPA with this project will be permanently stabilized by making them the subject of special 2<sup>nd</sup> level company bargaining agreements, renewable periodically when the contract expires.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Maternity, Work-life Balance, and Flexible Working](#)



KUDEAKETA AURRERATUA  
**EUSKALIT**  
GESTIÓN AVANZADA

## ADDING VALUE TO MANAGEMENT FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

**Activity sector:** Organizations' management advancement

**Targets of the GP:** Basque country companies

**Type of action:** Capacity building, good practices

### Starting point

Since 2004, [Euskalit](#) has been sensitive to equality, which has been deployed through three equality diagnoses that have led them to actions with internal and external aspects. Systematizing internal actions and integrating them into their process management structure has been key to ensure that equality is not something "additional" and is integrated into their day-to-day work. Their idea is to improve from within in order to raise awareness among customers and suppliers. The turning point was in 2017 when, through the alliance with [Emakunde](#), they joined forces that have allowed us to deploy relevant actions in the Basque Autonomous Community.

### Actions

- [Search engine for Good Management Practices](#): this is a list of 65 practices that promote equality between women and men in different types of organizations in the Basque Country. You can find actions, methodologies, and tools with positive results in the elimination of gender inequality factors and susceptible of being transferred to other types of organizations or other sectors.
- [Guide for adding value to management from a gender perspective](#): the aim of this guide is for organizations to identify all areas of management where it is possible to incorporate the gender perspective and facilitate its application.
- [KnowInn Course on Managing Equality in Companies](#): its objective is to reflect on the current existence of structural inequality between women and men and the diagnosis and plan for equality between women and men in companies in the 21st century.
- EUSKALIT's second Equality Plan 2022-25: the size of our organization does not make it necessary to register it, although we wanted to do it this way, in the most demanding way.

### Challenges

- The outbreak of the pandemic and the need to adapt to the new socioeconomic conditions.
- The adaptation to the new state legislation and the new requirements that previously did not exist, such as the necessary collaboration of trade union representation.

### Objectives

- To ensure equal treatment, equal opportunities, and consideration of gender-specific needs and expectations.
- To be a socially responsible company and to provide good practices to organizations so that they can implement them.

### Stakeholders

Euskalit and Emakunde (Basque Institute for Women) signed in 2017 a collaboration agreement through which they develop different projects to improve the incorporation of equality in advanced management and contribute to the competitive advancement of companies and the sustainable development of the Basque Country.

### Results

The competitive progress of companies and the sustainable development of the Basque Country are objectives shared by both Euskalit and Emakunde. Sustainable development will only be possible if it is done by guaranteeing real and effective equality of women and men in the economic sphere as well. In order to achieve these objectives, both entities have developed a series of joint actions aimed at companies.

### Perspectives

- To give content and value to the alliance with Emakunde, anticipating social and business needs.
- to offer training and references (good practices) to Basque companies, especially industrial ones.
- To respond to the main challenges identified in the Equality Plan 2022-25.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Workplace Culture & Institutional Transformation](#)



## TOGETHER AT TUIASI

**Activity sector: All sectors**

**Targets of the GP: Employees, students**

**Type of action: Strategy plan, information**



### Starting point

Consolidating the University's mission and values, the Gender Equality Strategy and Plan aim to guarantee equality and diversity in accessing knowledge and acquiring skills for all TUIASI employees and students, aiming to protect the fair and inclusive organizational culture and promote gender equality at all levels, proactively addressing raising awareness of gender equality issues, ensuring gender balance in decision-making structures and processes, including recruitment and selection processes, as well as gender equality in teaching and research activities.

[Gheorghe Asachi Technical University of Iasi](#) (TUIASI) is member of all of the Romanian textile clusters.

### Objectives

Following the diagnostic analysis on the topic of gender equality carried out at the University level, the main objectives identified for the period 2022-2025 aim to ensure gender balance in the decision-making and management structures and, of course, the prevention of any form of violence and/or moral or psychological harassment based on gender.

### Stakeholders

All members of the TUIASI academic community by which we mean employees at all institutional levels, students, teaching staff and associated staff, collaborators.

### Actions

Up to the present date, the following actions have been carried out:

- Elaboration of the [Strategy and Plan for Gender Equality](#) for the period 2022-2025 and their publication in the Procedures Manual on the University website
- The establishment, at the level of the University management, of the Commission for gender equality and the training of the members of the commission as equal opportunities experts
- Creation of an institutional e-mail address for the Commission to which any member of the TUIASI academic community can send comments, notifications, proposals on this topic
- Conducting a first information campaign for the TUIASI academic community regarding the development and implementation of the Strategy and plan for gender equality at the University level.

### Results

Through the actions we have proposed, we believe that we will contribute to the promotion and consolidation of positive attitudes towards diversity and inclusion in all areas of activity of TUIASI, as well as to the creation of a university environment favorable to personal and family life, an essential aspect of balance and individual and professional well-being. The establishment and approval of the Commission by the University management will ensure the level of authority and representativeness necessary for the effective implementation of the principles and objectives provided for in the Strategy.

### Challenges

So far we have not encountered any difficulties, but we can expect at least one important obstacle, related to the stereotypes and sociocultural prejudices of some people, apart from the members of the Commission, of course, which can generate or lead to reactions (attitudes, behaviors more or less explicit) of ridicule, marginalization, or even the refusal to accept the principles underlying gender equality strategies.

### Perspectives

In the next period, we will organize a debate on the topic of gender equality and opportunities in higher education and research with the participation of all the members of the GEP (Gender Equality Plan) Commission and at least one representative of the TUIASI management, as well as a workshop dedicated to young women researchers.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Workplace Culture & Institutional Transformation](#)



## PHENOMENAL WOMEN SERIES

**Activity sector:** All sectors  
**Targets of the GP:** Young people  
**Type of action:** Inspiration



### Starting point

Danubius University is a private, entrepreneurial higher education institution committed to presenting leading experts and researchers in various fields with the aim of informing the public and raising awareness in the communities and constituencies served. We are dedicated to eliminating gender discrimination in all fields of activity and our university intends to inspire the next generation to actively pursue gender parity. We are proud of the fact that half of the management positions of the institution are occupied by women and this reality differentiates us, in a positive way, in the region. The Danubius University is managing several clusters from the SE region of Romania.

### Actions

In 2022, Danubius University laid the foundations for a new project, the [Phenomenal Women Series](#), which over the course of four months capitalized on the collective wisdom, experience and energy of women of different ages and qualifications, emphasizing, at the same time, the importance of community support and involvement in its life, the life of the country and the whole world. The participants in this project reached the highest professional heights and achieved enviable results in their careers, becoming an example in their fields of activity.

### Challenges

The project enjoyed support both nationally and internationally, succeeding in bringing together personalities from different fields of activity, as well as participants of different age and qualification categories. The geopolitical situation triggered at the international level had a negative impact on the continuation of this project.

### Objectives

The Phenomenal Women Series (PWS) was a first-of-its-kind event whose main purpose was to promote, communicate and amplify the influence of professionally accomplished women and was thus designed to inspire both women and men who will become the leaders of the next generation.

### Stakeholders

The topics covered were of interest to all age groups. We enjoyed the support of partners from the local business environment, as well as pre-university education.

### Results

In the "Phenomenal Women" event series, successful women from different fields of activity, such as journalism, the pharmaceutical industry, informatics, education, law participated. All the editions were a real success, bringing together over 400 physical and online participants, both in the country and abroad. The participants from the high schools in the Galati-Braila area enjoyed the experience shared by the successful personalities they met, thus contributing to the identification of career opportunities at the local level.

### Perspectives

The management of the Danubius University in Galati allocates an important role in its gender discrimination policy and the valorization of models to follow for the young generation, so in all the activities undertaken at the institutional level, aspects regarding gender equality and social inclusion are taken into account.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Talent Recruitment](#)

[Click here to read the interview with Andra Luciana Marcu, from Danubius University](#)



## PRO-ACTIVE ECOSYSTEM PROVIDING NEW OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES FOR GIRLS AND WOMEN IN INNOVATION

**Activity sector: Textile and clothing**

**Targets of the GP: Employees, European girls, and women**

**Type of action: Break stereotypes, new recruitment methods**



### Starting point

The focus of gender and diversity has for the last 10 years been focused on increasing the number of women in tech and science education and research, and in the large industries and corporations as an obligation to report of ESG issues (notably on the % of leaders at all levels).

This has now to be completed with greater emphasis on mainstream issues that are experienced by “ordinary” women, whose professional work remains invisible in manufacturing and retail professional sectors. This is true of the Textile & Clothing sector, where 74% of European employment is female, where difference of earnings gap with men is still huge (36%) and where their innovation and leadership values remains ignored in a general context of world turbulences (pandemic, wars, overconsumption of planet resources, anti-democracy movements etc.), and the comeback of anti-gender menaces after two years of home confinement, distance working or job losses.

### Actions

We have developed a series of principles to guide our actions, among which multiplicity, equality and responsibility are important ones, to engage our team of consultants to face the gender and diversity challenges, when engaged into large-sized projects consortia or selective advisership.

These actions have been inspired by our collective expertise and experience of the female issues in the textile and clothing sector and beyond, and activated/further developed when coordinating the “Opportunity structures to bridge the gender gap” in the [SheMakes](#) European project, and interacting with the Sage and Spear sister projects.

### Challenges

- Deeply rooted stereotypes regarding the respective roles of women and men, in industries that still follow hierarchical and patriarchal models.
- Large scale organisations (derived from the above) and that are still “blind” to alternative business models, mostly prompted by women and younger generations (to reach more equality and harmony in the society).

### Objectives

Our key objectives were to overcome gender stereotypes and to allow all women and girls or communities of women, and their allies, to develop their professional skills, to finally contribute to more ecologic, socially responsible, and viable industry sectors, starting from the textile and clothing example.

### Stakeholders

- Consortium partners, representing the quadruple helix: academia, business, citizens, and policy makers (among which Romanian NE cluster).
- Labs of excellence and their networks, for collective, co-creative, hands-on innovation with targets.
- Three-tiered engaged pollinators: lab leaders (for activities support in design and development, knowledge transfer and mentoring), ambassadors (for peer-sharing of experience and feedbacks), and advisors (for inspirational journeys in textile and clothing and guidance).
- Cedecs-TCBL consultants.

### Results

In two years, more than 2000 girls and women from 16 European countries were trained in tech-based innovation through 100 activities, documented in a fully accessible open toolkit, and supported by 9 lab mentors, 30 ambassadors and 9 advisors that supported the development of a methodology (defined in Q9), all actively backed by communication. An impact evaluation that captures evidence of a change-making ecosystem.

### Perspectives

The municipality should work with gender equality to an even greater extent.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Talent Recruitment](#)





## WOMEN IN MANUFACTURING EXPERT GROUP

**Activity sector:** Manufacturing industry  
**Targets of the GP:** Policymakers and industrial leaders  
**Type of action:** Sector analysis, policy recommendations



### Starting point

[Women in Manufacturing](#) is one of the focus topics of the [World Manufacturing Foundation](#), which addresses the role of women during and after pandemic and analyzes how the new normal status will help in rebalancing the gender difference in manufacturing. The new manufacturing industry needs the potential of women to ensure it gets the talent required to overcome the economic disruption the Covid-19 crisis is imposing.

Women are nowadays significantly under-represented in the industry. In general terms, around 30% is the share of women employed in industry. According to the World Economic Forum, 33% is the share of women at junior level staff, 24% at mid-level staff, 15% at senior level staff, 9% as CEOs across all industries.

### Actions

The main result of our work will be a set of recommendations for policy makers and industrial leaders to stimulate future actions for the best “back to the future” practices, which will be more digital, greener, and more inclusive.

Our work has started developing a better understanding of women situation in the manufacturing environment. To this end, the group is analyzing the main entry barriers for women in industry, why manufacturing industries are not attractive to women, why women have a limited presence in STEM fields. There is a perception of gender roles that makes women feel industry “is not for them” and role models at leadership and on the shop, floor are lacking. The very strong societal expectations regarding gender roles for men and women have a very relevant influence on organizational culture in industry (from family businesses to big companies).

### Challenges

The main barriers identified by the expert group for increasing the presence of women in the industry are the digital gap, the low interest in STEM, the poor working conditions, and the glass ceiling.

To address these barriers, the Women in Manufacturing Expert Group identified 1 strategic imperative, 3 pillars (building blocks) and 8 game-changing actions to change the rules on which to work from the industry, education institutions and public administration.

### Objectives

The group has decided to focus on the higher added value activity of the manufacturing industry, where we hope we can make a bigger impact by increasing the presence and responsibility roles of women, contributing in this way to the momentum for closing the gender gap in the manufacturing industry.

The group is devoting special attention to the presence of women in R&D fields. The industry at the “back to the future” will be more innovative and sustainable and innovation and technology are the key factors of success.

### Stakeholders

The group is integrated by 20 experts from 11 countries in three continents. Seven of them work for international organisations, eight for private companies, three in academia and two in the public sector.

### Results

The Women in Manufacturing expert group is working to stimulate an equal participation of women and men in the workplace to build a lasting and prosperous recovery of the industry. To this end, they have drafted a series of recommendations contained in two white papers ([‘Manufacturing beyond COVID-19’](#) and [‘Emerging topics for long-term resilience in manufacturing’](#)) included in the report [“Back to the Future: Manufacturing Beyond COVID 19”](#).

These two white papers make up a decalogue of good practices to close the gender gap and be promoted by industry, research centers, academia, international institutions, and organizations, as well as civil society entities that can influence and facilitate the manufacturing industry to lead pro-gender equity policies in the new processes of a sustainable, digital, and service industry.

### Perspectives

Identifying specific actions to boost the access, promotion, and leadership of women in the industry. The proposal is to develop a methodology to prove this correlation between gender equality and competitiveness.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Workplace Culture & Institutional Transformation](#)



## 'WOMEN IN POWER' PROJECT: FOSTERING GENDER BALANCED BOARDROOMS IN TRADITIONAL SECTORS

**Activity sector:** Footwear, textile, and furniture  
**Targets of the GP:** Women working in traditional sectors  
**Type of action:** Cross-sectoral capacity building



**women in power**  
 leadership and empowerment  
 in traditional sectors

### Starting point

Although women represent half of the global talent pool, one in three working women in Europe feels disadvantaged in the workplace, believing that men are offered greater opportunities at work. In spite of the general trend for gender equality policies in society and in the labour market, gender gaps persist in Europe, where the boards of largest listed companies across the 28 EU Member States had 28 % women and 72 % men in April 2019.

It is imperative that women should have the same opportunities to be at the forefront of the European economic and social scene. This will ensure that the best minds, without any gender distinction, are together addressing the challenges Europe faces.

### Actions

At the end of this European project, co-funded by the EU through the Erasmus+ programme, three main results were developed:

- A complete [report](#) that identified and compiled what skills and competences have helped women from different nationalities, sectors, and backgrounds to move up within their professions, and what learning needs they have to continue growing in their careers.
- An [online training](#) for women to build up basic and transversal skills in order to achieve executive roles within their industries.
- An intuitive and innovative platform that hosts the designed training path, increasing social capital, competencies, and professional skills of women.

The free online training is available in several languages and can be accessed at [womeninpower.eu](http://womeninpower.eu).

### Challenges

The most important barrier identified by women as a hindrance in their professional advancement was finding a balance between family and work, combined with the family responsibilities.

They also felt little support from the management, a lack of guidance/mentoring and female models and a lack of visibility within the company, which, combined with the male culture within the company suggested they feel the gender discrimination as a problem in their career.

### Objectives

'Women in Power' came up as a tool to support equality and gender-balanced corporate boardrooms by giving women working in the traditional sectors (footwear, textile and furniture) the opportunity to acquire abilities and competences that can enhance their sectoral skills and make it possible for them to reach top executive roles, therefore promoting gender equality and the advancement of women who often have little secondary and tertiary education, but who have a deep knowledge about the industries in which they work.

### Stakeholders

The European consortium gathered to carry out this project was composed by seven VET providers, business associations and professional women associations from Spain ([AMUEBLA](#), [Consorcio Campus Iberus](#) and [AMBIT](#)) Lithuania ([Jaunimo Karjeros Centras](#)), United Kingdom ([Inova Consultancy](#)), Romania ([Romanian Textile Concept](#)) and Malta ([Women Directors in Malta](#)).

### Results

Within the scope of this initiative, four areas or target groups have been impacted: learners ('Women in Power' students, especially European women), participant organizations (this Strategic Partnership), staff (people directly involved in the project) and the system (understood as industry and society). The impact of the project went beyond what partners had expected, as they received nearly a hundred expressions of interest about the training course from all over the world. Women from the five participant countries, of course, but also from Colombia, Australia, South Africa, United States, Netherlands, Moldova, Estonia, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Albania, Belgium, Brazil, France, Mozambique, and México.

### Perspectives

AMUEBLA, as project coordinator, went on to participate in other projects related to gender equality, such as '[Women Making Waves](#)' to empower double disadvantaged women to develop their leadership skills and strengths.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Career Progression and Access to Training](#)



## SUPERNOVAS CROSS-KIC PROJECT



**Activity sector:** Deep-tech startups, entrepreneurship, and venture investment  
**Targets of the GP:** Women entrepreneurs, female investors, and young women in STEAM careers  
**Type of action:** Capacity building and mentoring

### Starting point

Women are currently very underrepresented both in deep-tech entrepreneurship and venture investment, and these two facts reinforce each other:

- Only 15% of deeptech startups are founded or co-founded by women.
- Women-led startups raise less funding than their male counterparts – across Europe, only 2% of venture capital goes to all-female teams and around 5% to mixed teams.
- Venture Capitals lack gender diversity globally: 85% of investment committees are all-male and only 13% of VC partners are female.

We aim to help change this picture by helping build the next generation of women-led deeptech startups and giving women in the early stages of their career access to roles in both the entrepreneurial and investment ecosystem.

### Actions

- [Rocket up](#): to support entrepreneurs to enter a new European market with a solid strategy and local validation of the product and service. The goal is to have more women entrepreneurs growing and getting funded.
- [Women2Invest](#): We aim to help women with STEAM University studies start their careers in venture investment by training them in the fundamentals of this profession and matching them with investors for an internship opportunity.
- [Women Investors Community](#): We train female investors, both working for VC funds and investing personally (business angels), facilitate personal development sessions, networking, and access to dealflow through investment forums in deeptech sectors, prioritizing female-led startups.
- [Mentoring for women leaders](#): offers EIT community women access to a broad network, mentoring, coaching, and training opportunities to take their managerial and leadership skills to the next level.

### Challenges

As we focus on STEAM female graduates and/or female-led startups and female presence is still low in these areas, finding participants is challenging.

### Objectives

[Supernovas](#) is a programme that aspires to promote an entrepreneurial ecosystem with more women to shape the available innovations in the market. Supernovas seeks to unleash the potential of women, in order to break barriers and increase female presence in the entrepreneurship, innovation and investment ecosystem.

It also articulates a support system for women to enter and scale positions in the ecosystem, while at the same time, opening up the scope of roles that need to be more populated with women. All in all, we want to help participants in this programme to gather financial support, provide them with information and education recommendations and create networking opportunities.

### Stakeholders

[EIT Food](#), [EIT Manufacturing](#) and [EIT Urban Mobility](#) partnered to run Supernovas. Other stakeholders are EIC, EIF, organizations such as Female Founders and EU Women in VC, investment funds etc.

### Results

We exceeded all of our objectives including number of participants, level of progress and satisfaction in Rocket Up; number of participants, number of recruiting funds, number of interviews and internships in Women2Invest; and number of participants, overall satisfaction and excellence in training provided.

On the other hand, we are very satisfied with how the programme was received by funds, startups, mentors, coaches, and experts that also participated in the activities.

### Perspectives

As described, we discontinued one of the activities, but are launching a new one to facilitate that female investors will invest in female-led startups, to reduce the existing funding gap in this segment.

[Click here to browse the PENELOPE tools in the topic of Career Progression and Access to Training](#)

# Interviews

## Public organizations

1. Anne-Laure Petit – Ministry for Equality between Women and Men, Diversity, and Equal Opportunities.
2. Karolina Lipińska – Office of the Marshal of the Pomorskie Voivodeship.
3. Luis Goni – SODENA, the Regional Development Agency of the region of Navarra.
4. Päivi Ekdahl – Regional Council of Lapland.

## Clusters and group of companies

5. Camille Esquerré – Mecanic Vallée.
6. Marie-Noëlle Tiné-Dyèvre – French Maritime Cluster.
7. Massimiliano Rumignani – AMBIT.
8. Ola Svedin – Cluster of Sweden / Mobile Heights Cluster.
9. Sylvie Arnaud – Oxalis.
10. Kristina Šermukšnytė-Alešiūnienė – AgriFood Lithuania.






## Companies

11. Beatriz Coloma Rentero – ECUS Sleep.
12. Elena Jianu – Eltra Logis.
13. Marianne Sytchkov – LEXI-L.

## Universities

14. Andra Marcu – Danubius university.
15. Mihaela Cojan – "Gheorghe Asachi" Technical University of Iasi.

## Networks and trade unions

-  **16.** Ana Belén Barqueros Jiménez – UGT (General Union of Workers) of the Region of Murcia.
-  **17.** Malgorzata Woch – MEDEF AURA (French Business Association – Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Region).
-  **18.** Delphine Remy-Boutang – JFD (Digital Women's Day).
-  **19.** Paola Ligabue & Nadine Nembach – European Women's Management Development Network.
-  **20.** Elpi Petraki – WISTA International.





## Anne-Laure Petit

Policy officer at the Office for Equality between women and men

**Ministry for Equality between Women and Men,  
Diversity and Equal Opportunities**  
**Sector: Equality between Women and Men in  
Professional Life**



**MINISTÈRE  
CHARGÉ DE L'ÉGALITÉ  
ENTRE LES FEMMES  
ET LES HOMMES,  
DE LA DIVERSITÉ ET DE  
L'ÉGALITÉ DES CHANCES**  
*Liberté  
Égalité  
Fraternité*

### Could you please introduce yourself?

Trained as a lawyer, I began my career almost ten years ago in the courts (in courts and courts of appeal), in large insurance groups and also in associations. I had to work on labor law, social protection law (psycho-social risks at work, accidents at work, occupational diseases), which led me in my previous position to be a lawyer in the social department of the Tribunal de Grande Instance of Paris.

Finding the profession of lawyer fascinating but a little more confining than that of project manager, I wanted to change. With my previous skills and

experience, particularly in labor law, as well as my taste for public service and the common good and in particular the cause of women and minorities, I joined the [Ministry for Equality between Women and Men](#) for a year and a half as project manager.

Equality between women and men is a fascinating subject because it is the keystone of everything that is at stake in terms of the stakes for society, because a society that does not include half the population is a society that cannot function well. So to act for this equality between women and men is to act for a common and global well-being for society.

### Your organization and your activity sector in a few words

The Department for Women's Rights and Equality between Women and Men (SDFE) is the department responsible for implementing the policy of the Ministry for Equality between Women and Men, Diversity and Equal Opportunities. The SDFE is attached to the Directorate General for Social Cohesion (DGCS) and works on women's access to their rights, the fight against violence against them, the development of a culture of equality and the economic empowerment of women, job diversity and professional equality. I work on these last themes, and I have, among other things, professional diversity in my portfolio of missions.

Having become a political priority since 2017, equality between men and women has mobilized the entire Government, particularly since the launch of the [Interministerial Plan](#). The budget allocated to it has more than doubled in six years to reach €65 million this year.

All of the actions carried out by the funding program are carried out within the framework of national and local partnerships, in particular associations (more than 90% distributed in the form of grants to associations throughout the territory).

### Gender equality in your sector and challenges encountered

The Women's Rights and Gender Equality Department (SDFE) publishes yearly key equality figures in French and in English. With regard to professional gender equality, we can see that only

18% of professions are mixed. On all the other professions, there is a distribution of at least 60% of employees representing one of the sexes against 40% representing the other sex.

In essentially feminized professions, we observe that the most represented socio-professional category is that of employees, whereas the socio-professional categories are higher in professions where men are mainly represented. Managers are therefore more often men.

However, since 2018, gender diversity has nevertheless progressed, but this progress is slow. There are still professions that are still very behind in terms of gender diversity, such as socio-medical, construction, industry, public works and digital. The

## How to address these challenges

The Ministry of Equality has been asked to contribute to the drafting of a European Union directive aimed at combating pay discrimination and helping to close the pay gap between women and men in the EU. As a result, anyone who feels they have been the victim of pay discrimination in a company will be able to ask for information on the pay of people in the same socio-professional categories and with the same level of skills and experience. This will give them an idea of where they stand on the pay scale (without having direct knowledge of their colleagues' salaries) and enable them to ask for their salaries to be brought into line.

This transparency should exist from recruitment onwards, as it has been shown that women find it harder than men to negotiate their salaries or ask for pay rises during their careers. A man and a woman should have the same level of pay for the same skills and experience, which is not yet the case, at least not in France. This European directive could therefore be an interesting lever for reducing the pay gap between men and women.

The new interministerial Plan for Equality between women and men (2023-2027) is also providing solutions. Since gender equality has been declared a "great national cause" after the election of the French President, this plan of around one hundred measures is structured around several major themes, including

average score of the "Professional Equality Index" for companies is not yet in the high average but it has been improving since 2020.

In France, only 30% of students in scientific/engineering preparatory classes are women. On the other hand, part-time jobs are held at 30% by women. Finally, wage inequalities between women and men are reduced, from 18.6% in 2000 to 16.1% in 2019 in the private sector (source SDFE equality key figures).

professional and economic equality. Within this area, the measures aim to:

- Encourage greater gender diversity in all professions.
- Remove the obstacles to female entrepreneurship, as it has been observed that women have less access to entrepreneurship: they have more difficulty than men in setting up their own business and continuing to develop it over the long term.
- Ensuring equality in the private and public professional sphere: to this end, the professional equality index used in companies (to assess the level of equality between women and men on the basis of 100 points using five criteria and then publishing its score) will be adapted to the civil service; administrations will be obliged to have a score on the index and will be penalized if this score is not good.

Clusters can play a number of roles. They can disseminate information on the actions and tools that each cluster is putting in place to create a knock-on effect among the companies and other organisations that they bring together. They can also help to adapt the plan's measures to the situation on the ground

## Are there recruitment difficulties?

The lack of gender diversity in the professions in France today poses a real problem, not only for companies but also for the country as a whole, economically speaking. We are depriving ourselves of part of the population and therefore of a huge recruitment pool. We have 7% unemployment in France today, but we have sectors and professions that are cruelly short of applicants. Increasing the gender mix in these professions would be one way of tackling these recruitment problems. In the digital sector, for example, if there were more women training, there would automatically be more

applicants overall.

Similarly, in the childcare sector, if there were more male applicants, which would go some way to solving the problem.

Tight jobs are of course a more global problem than gender equality. Nevertheless, stereotypes mean that women or men do not apply for certain highly gendered jobs. We therefore need to take action from childhood onwards and in careers guidance to break down these stereotypes.

## Awareness of gender equality regulations in your sector

In France, the legal obligations of employers in terms of professional equality and the penalties for non-compliance are described here. Since 2018, we have moved from an obligation of means to an obligation of results with the introduction of the professional equality index, which assesses the level of equality between women and men out of 100 points based on the following criteria:

- Gender pay gap.
- Difference in the rate of individual pay rises.
- Number of female employees receiving a pay rise following maternity leave.
- Parity among the ten highest earners.
- Difference in promotion rates (for companies with more than 250 employees).

From 2021, the obligations will be strengthened:

- For an overall score of less than 75 points: obligation to publish the corrective measures, both externally and within the company.
- For an overall score of less than 85 points: obligation to set and publish improvement targets for each of the Index indicators.

In 2022, 61% of companies with more than 50 employees had published their score. The average score rose by one point compared with 2021, to 86/100. The professional equality index is implemented and accepted in large companies,

whereas in SMEs it is a less well-known tool, even

though it is compulsory for companies with more than 50 employees.

A guide to gender equality, entitled “[Mon entreprise s’engage](#)” (My Company is Committed) has been published for VSEs and SMEs, with the aim of removing obstacles linked to stereotypes and encouraging the development of action plans to promote gender equality in the workplace. It is designed to provide tools for VSEs & SMEs wishing to become involved in the gender equality process.

The [Professional Equality label](#) has also been created to encourage and reward exemplary practices by private and public bodies. To date, 53 public institutions and 59 private companies have been awarded the label. This year, the label is being updated to take greater account of violence against women, changing working practices, the gender equality index, and the use of artificial intelligence in human resources. It is a positive, global dynamic that needs to be instilled in all companies, whatever their size, as well as in other organisations.

The cornerstone of this dynamic is the [Rixain Law](#) of 2021, which includes measures for women’s everyday lives and for greater equality between women and men in higher education, business, and entrepreneurship. The main aim of this law is to set quotas for the presence of women on the executive committees and management boards of major companies and to combat the glass ceiling that keeps women in positions of lesser responsibility.

## Can other challenges be improved through gender mainstreaming?

Women often don't stay in certain professions because of the sexist and sexual violence they encounter. So even if they have chosen a very male-dominated working environment to begin with, they end up leaving. As a result, the fight against gender-based and sexual violence in the workplace is a lever for retaining female employees.

More generally, working to improve the quality of life at work is one of the keys to attracting and retaining employees in short-staffed occupations. For example, it has been observed that the few women who enter digital professions do not stay there.

Conversely, jobs where women are in the majority, such as medical and social work, childcare and home help, have a poor image, are poorly paid and involve a lot of psycho-social risks (work-related accidents and illnesses). If we worked on these three levers, we could make these professions more attractive to men too. Or is it, conversely, by attracting more men to these professions that their image, pay and level of risk would improve? There are two schools of thought!

Digital technology and the medical-social professions are the professions of the future if we consider the new professions that will emerge from the development of technologies such as artificial intelligence, for example, and if we consider the major challenge of an ageing population.

According to the World Economic Forum's 2017 Global Gender Gap Report, 65% of children entering kindergarten today will work in a job that does not yet exist (jobs in big data, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, etc.). Today, in the digital start-ups that are inventing the applications of tomorrow, there are very few women.

If France wants to turn the corner in digital technology, it cannot do so without women. So there is an urgent need for action, otherwise the economic consequences will be severe.

But we also need to think about the place of women in society and in relation to motherhood and the home. Part-time jobs are most often taken by women, often to look after children and the home. Parental leave is generally taken by women. Men are less likely to have this type of career disincentive. Extending paternity leave, as has been done in France, means that women can return to work earlier if they wish. A more egalitarian division of domestic and parental tasks is one way of enabling more women to pursue a career.

Furthermore, the more economically independent women are, the less likely they will be to be victims of violence in their personal lives, or the better they will be able to get out of violent situations. Women's economic autonomy is therefore a major issue

## Importance of gender equality for you personally

At the Ministry, we do not experience discrimination

and we are very careful about it.

## Added value, challenges, and opportunities of being a woman in your position?

I think it is a strength to be a woman myself, a mother, and the head of a single-parent family with a young child, because it gives me a good understanding of the daily lives of many women and the issues at stake.

Unfortunately, there is still a great deal of discrimination against women with children or of child-bearing age. It is very difficult to gain access to positions of responsibility when you're a woman with

children. There is a culture of presenteeism in France, where you have to stay until 8 or 9pm to prove your worth at work, so you can't make a career out of leaving at 6pm to look after your children. Unfortunately, this is still the case in many companies and government departments, even though the Ministry is working hard to improve work-life balance. Fortunately, mothers who have gone on to great careers have testified to help change mentalities.

We also need more crèche and childcare facilities in companies and government departments. Companies also need to understand the difficulties

faced by the growing number of single-parent families (guides exist).

## Closing word

Professional equality between women and men is the cornerstone of discrimination of all kinds suffered by women. Advancing professional equality will reduce all the obstacles that stand in the way of the personal and professional career of women.

Companies and in particular SMEs are the main architects of professional equality because without them the progress imagined cannot be achieved.





## Karolina Lipińska

Innovation Architect, Deputy Director, Department  
for Economic Development



**Office of the Marshal of the Pomorskie Voivodeship**  
**Sector: Innovation and energy policy, economic promotion,  
and international cooperation**



### A short introduction

Dr Karolina Lipińska is a local government official with 20 years of experience, responsible for the development of entrepreneurship and innovation in the [Pomeranian Voivodeship](#). She worked in international structures, where she learned about the mechanisms of interregional cooperation and appreciated the importance of networking resulting in the creation of international projects and initiatives. She coordinated the actions related to the implementation of the first regional policy for cluster development in Poland. The support models and good practices introduced in the Pomeranian Voivodeship were later implemented at national level (National Key Clusters).

She currently coordinates the activities related to the Regional Innovation Strategy, the key element of which are Pomeranian Smart Specializations as well as Pomeranian Offshore Platform. Member of the

cluster policy team at the Polish Ministry of Development and Technology and of the Smart Specialization Strategies Expert Group set up by DG REGIO of the European Commission. Observing the phenomena and processes taking place in the region, she notices the essence of the importance of entrepreneurial culture, mentality, motivation, and creativity.

She has the opportunity to research these phenomena scientifically on the basis of her doctoral dissertation results on the impact of informal institutions on the financing of R&D in enterprises. She publishes and gives lectures at the Gdansk University of Technology in the field of project management, innovation processes and EU funds. Expert in Women's Council at the Marshal of the Pomeranian Voivodeship.

### Your organization and your activity sector in a few words

The Marshal's Office performs the statutory tasks of the Pomeranian Voivodeship Self-Government. The Department of Economic Development that I represent is responsible for innovation policy and energy, as well as economic promotion and international cooperation. We also conduct the process of entrepreneurial discovery as part of smart specializations of Pomerania and cluster policy in the region, cooperating with many economic partners and organizations.

The cluster policy has a long history of operation in Pomerania since already in 2009 – 2010 we organized competitions for regional key clusters, which laid the foundations for the development of four smart specializations: offshore and port and

logistics technologies, ICT, energy efficiency and medical technologies. In 2021 the [Pomeranian Women Council](#) was established, an opinion-making and advisory body of the Management Board of the Pomeranian Voivodeship. Its most important task is to raise awareness of equal treatment of women and men in terms of work, remuneration, professional opportunities, and promotion of women.

The Council analyses the activities of organizations, local governments, and other entities in the field of equality practices. Its primary task is to prepare a report on the situation in the region in terms of equal rights for women and men, diagnose barriers and recommend a system for promoting equality practices and policies in this area.

## Gender equality in your sector and challenges encountered

The gender pay gap at median earnings in Poland (10%) is one of the lowest in the OECD countries (the OECD average is 16%). Women in Poland are more likely to have permanent employment than men and to work in professional occupations. The proportion of women managers in Poland (36%) is one of the highest among OECD countries (the average is 32%).

Compared to other European countries, Poland has a relatively low gender gross pay gap of 4.5% according to EUROSTAT in 2021 (Global Gender Gap Report 2022) meaning the difference between average gross hourly earnings of male and female employees as %. In comparison, the EU average is 13%.

We have quite many women scientists who work at Polish universities, and even in eastern Poland this indicator is the highest in the EU and amounts to 53%. According to The Times Higher Education Impact Rankings, the University of Gdańsk ranks as first in Poland and 13th in the world when it comes to gender equality measures implemented and their commitment to recruiting and promoting women.

However, apart from these examples, there are still stereotypes that exist in the Polish society. It is important to raise the awareness about the shortfall in women's representation across Europe and share insights into sore spots, as well as how leaders in the industry can encourage female growth and uptake in the world of tech.

We have a lot of examples of activities and good practices that have been implemented in Pomorskie

Voivodeship for several years. A few examples are worth pointing out here. [Women Build Ships Too](#) is a project of the Gdańsk Entrepreneurship Foundation Incubator STARTER, the aim of which is to strengthen the leadership competences of women working in the maritime and logistics industry, to increase their visibility as experts and to promote their work among young people. The inauguration of the project in 2019 coincided with the World Maritime Day organized by the International Maritime Organization under the slogan "Empowering Women in the Maritime Community". The project also implemented the recommendations of the Gdańsk Model of Equal Treatment regarding non-stereotypical career choices.

The implemented activities included a mentoring program, with workshops developing key competencies for leaders: eliminating discrimination in the workplace, communication and team building skills. The one I really love is March On High Heels – a series of meetings, workshops, and webinars for women, organized by the Voivodeship Labor Office since 2014 with the participation of 1000-2000 women. It is addressed to women from the region who are looking for employment, plan to return to work or are just starting it, want to develop their skills and consciously choose the path of professional development and are looking for inspiration for new activities. We also organized the [EDU OFFSHORE WIND](#) 2023 career fair aiming to showcase comprehensive career paths for young people and to infuse them with passion for green energy, regardless of gender.

## How to address these challenges

In the face of changes and fast-progressing technologies, it is crucial to look for advantages in building competitiveness, in particular among SMEs. Therefore, the purpose of the Pomeranian Women Council is to build a stronger gender culture in the Pomeranian companies. SMEs struggle to understand the business model for gender equality. Even if they try to implement equality postulates, they often face the challenge of "how to do it in practice". Therefore, there is a need to build the capacity of

SMEs to develop gender-sensitive business models and a gender-equal working culture.

At the political level, a better framework for implementing measures to help SMEs stay competitive, innovate, and create new market opportunities needs to be developed. Clusters, as "creators of change", are an excellent tool to support SMEs in undertaking the activities, being key actors in the design and implementation of Pomeranian Smart Specializations. This is why we have decided

to participate in the project [DEBUTING](#), co-financed by the Interreg Europe Programme – a new perspective of gender equality as a factor of SME competitiveness, with an innovative approach – through clusters and smart specializations. We intend to implement new business models as well as planning to promote equality practices and policies based on inclusiveness.

In Pomorskie, we are going to concentrate on the promotion of equality in the workplace, developing culture at work that includes women, focus on those areas of education and employment where women are a minority and which are important from the point of view of the region, i.e., the modern technology sector, maritime, ICT and energy.

We also aim to make existing measures and policies more effective and to improve their monitoring and evaluation with appropriate indicators. The project goal is also increasing the awareness and capacity of policymakers and clusters to treat gender equality in industry and economy as a key factor for the development and competitiveness of SMEs.

Generally speaking, the greatest leverage is to have the knowledge and be aware of the changes taking place. This also applies to gender policy at every stage of the development of a company or institution. It is also about women's awareness of market entry barriers and how to overcome them. Showing good examples and encouraging women to face challenges is the key. Clusters play an important role in this process because as strong platforms of cooperation of companies and scientific institutions, they can break the barriers and stereotypes.

A good example of such an initiative is certainly a

project called WOMANIZE IT prepared by our biggest ICT cluster INTERIZON (also the biggest SMEs cluster in Poland – a national key cluster). According to the newest [Woman In Tech Report 2023](#), Europe's IT talent shortage is growing by the minute. Getting more women into tech could be the best solution for companies looking for skilled tech professionals. It is not a secret that women are underrepresented in tech. In Europe, around 28% of tech workers are women. By 2030, the demand for skilled tech workers is bound to exceed the supply. This creates a perfect opportunity for more female tech professionals.

The project WOMANIZE IT aims to reduce barriers in women's access to the IT market by increasing their awareness, motivation, support, and ultimately by building a proactive attitude. The project will provide real support for career development in the IT area, and what is more, it will also show the huge opportunities offered by the IT world. This initiative will verify the difficulties faced by women in the IT market, including the fear of change or the decision to work and develop this career. This is the first and most important step that must be taken consciously.

A very important challenge is also to break the common belief of women that "this industry is not for them" and that it is a "typically male profession". The main activities undertaken: a series of recordings preparing women for change, in particular: choosing the right course offer; showing at how low costs you can prepare for change; showing further actions to effectively use the opportunity for development; showing the "success story" – promotion of successful women with a history of their career development and financial support for candidates of the "Vouchers for courses" project.

## Can other challenges be improved through gender mainstreaming?

For sure, yes! In Poland, in particular regarding policy instruments, issues related to gender equality and women's representation are still way behind those of other more developed and gender-conscious economies. The greatest challenge for the Pomeranian Voivodeship is to increase the awareness of women who want to return to the labor market. Statistics show that very well-educated women stay at home (we are number one in Poland in this respect). This is one of the many barriers to

overcome and practical preparation of women to return to the professional world to unleash their potential is needed.

That is why we plan to prepare a practical handbook showing various sides and opportunities in sectors that are well-paid and underrepresented by women. The idea should provide an in-depth examination of the market focusing on industries with the highest development potential where women are

underrepresented, such as IT, maritime or energy sectors. This analysis will serve as a guideline to create policies which are tailored to the regional needs, bearing in mind the level of development, specificity of the regional economy, regional smart specialization strategy and also a rather low presence of women in certain sectors of the economy which are of particular interest to the region.

To create and design policy instruments, to increase

the share of women in those sectors and to recognize opportunities and barriers for women on the job market, we need to have a comprehensive picture of women's positions with regard to education and the labor market. The report we wish to have should take into account the current and future development trends in the selected industries and indicate the possible impact on the role of women in those sectors. We plan to have it ready by mid-2025.

## Added value, challenges, and opportunities of being a woman leading an organization

It is worth emphasizing that clusters in the Pomeranian Voivodeship are the foundation of smart specializations. Interdisciplinarity of activities and groups in which clusters operate may contribute to increasing awareness in the field of gender policy, participation of women in the labor market and the need for an individual and flexible approach to employment including flexible schedules, remote working possibilities, and a steady paycheck. Combining the professional world and the passion associated with it with family life is not easy in today's legal conditions. I believe that clusters and smart specializations are areas with the greatest development potential to allow women to spread their wings because each new talent on the market is an added and precious value.

Currently, there are many challenges related to motivating companies and regional stakeholders to

strengthen industries with the greatest development potential called smart specializations. Rapidly changing technologies and the effects of the pandemic and the ongoing war beyond our borders have completely changed the perception of conducting business including innovation processes. The digital and energy transformation leave no illusions of rapid changes and flexible response to changes. I am convinced that women are an important element of these changes and will bring great added value.

The diversity of talents today is an advantage in the global market and increases the chances of competing with partners from around the world. Such long-term changes, however, are associated with breaking stereotypes and changing mentality. And this is a process that is ongoing, and we will stay in it for a while.

## Closing word

Nobody supports a woman better like another woman who understands her dilemmas and problems. That is why, in the face of today's difficult reality, it is so important to support each other and be

together. Showing good examples and encouraging changes that often mean an improvement in the quality of life. I wish all girls to be tougher and change (their) world together for the better. I am keeping my fingers crossed for them and I believe in them!



**Luis Goñi**

Regional Strategy Manager

**SODENA - the Regional Development Agency  
of the region of Navarra**  
Sector: Innovation policy, cluster policy



**SODENA**  
DESARROLLO DE NAVARRA  
NAFARROAKO GARAPENA

## Could you please introduce yourself?

In 1998 I began my professional life as an independent lawyer, evolving progressively towards alternative conflict management. I was founder of XILEMA, a social entity, where I worked as a family mediator in a social service, member of the Board and CFO. Since September 2009, I have supported the regional government on Smart Specialization Strategies and Cluster Policy, having participated in three regional innovation strategies and the creation

of eight cluster organizations. Since 2015 I have served as Regional Strategy Director in [SODENA](#), the development agency of Navarra.

I hold a bachelor's degree of Law (University of Navarra), and have Postgraduate studies in Legal Practice, Family Mediation, Financial Management, Cluster Policy, and Strategic Innovation.

## Your organization and your activity sector in a few words

SODENA, is the development agency of Navarra and its mission is to be the instrument of the Government of Navarra to attract and develop value-added business projects, contributing to regional development and the creation of quality employment, working in:

- Coordinating the design and implementation of the Smart Specialization Strategy (S3) that promotes regional economic transformation and development.
- Capturing, identifying, and promoting the generation and development of business projects for Navarra, both locally and externally, through the use of financial tools, mainly venture capital, and facilitating the introduction of foreign investment in the region, offering at the same time advice and support.
- Boosting business competitiveness by providing value, fostering collaboration and business growth.

## Gender equality in your sector and challenges encountered

Navarra is the third region in Spain with a higher wage gap, 22,37%, due mainly to the industrial structure of our economy and the consequences of unequal distribution of caring responsibilities. Here you have the facts: only 24% of managers are women. Women account for only 27% of jobs in (better paying) manufacturing sectors, and 10% of the

manufacturing and construction workforce. The sectors where less qualified women usually work are the worst paid (food chain, care sectors). Due to family care, women have more temporary contracts (57%) and part-time jobs (x4). 90,55% of unpaid leaves to care for children were taken by women.



## How to address these challenges

Cluster organizations are key in the innovation ecosystem to bring a market-oriented view, gathering mainly private companies around the challenges that they encounter to grow and create more added value. Clusters are innovation drivers that help companies, especially SMEs, to understand and adapt to the rapidly changing world in which they operate and to learn and test rapidly, cheap, and cooperatively

possible solutions. Having a diverse and balanced workforce is key for companies to understand their customers' needs, which are constantly evolving. Companies can learn how to improve with the diffusion of best practices, technical assessment, and pilot projects, always from a business perspective which in my opinion is highly needed. It simply pays off.

## Are there recruitment difficulties?

Yes, absolutely. When talking to business managers, talent shortage is said to be the main bottleneck for companies. Especially in STEM positions, where Navarra has outstanding, highly sophisticated companies in the sectors of automotive, food, renewable energies, mechatronics, machinery, and equipment. But paradoxically, we observe not only a stagnation but even a regression in the women's

share of STEM students, even when physical strength is no longer needed in many activities. On top of that, creativity and soft skills are scaling among the most wanted capacities. Finally, many managers reported that women are better performing at detail-oriented repetitive jobs, consistent with multinational companies' Zero Defect Manufacturing requirements.

## Awareness of gender equality regulations in your sector/region

Compliance is but a last resource and not the most desirable driver of change. We should encourage the managers to see the competitive and innovative contribution of women in our companies. In a survey conducted by the Chamber of Commerce, 85% of companies acknowledged their obligations, but only 65% had an equality plan. Nevertheless, the facts we have seen say plans and rules are not enough.

Neither are support measures. Navarra has plenty of resources to favor compliance: public grants, free technical assistance, raising awareness activities, prizes, tailor-made roadmaps... What is missing? Trying. We long for companies to experiment with the benefits of a more diverse and complementary workforce. Our main anthem should be "from obligation to commitment."

## Can other challenges be improved through gender mainstreaming?

All of them are positive externalities, but the first one should be the desire for personal fulfillment and fairness to all people. It has been proved that in rural areas of Navarra population remains living in the villages when women find local jobs, so they are key to the territorial cohesion challenge. But also internally, gender mainstreaming in a company can

create a culture of respect, helping integrate more varied profiles (men of course included) in a richer and more humane organization, building a greater sense of belonging. This can boost creativity and commitment at all levels, which in a (more than ever) complex and uncertain environment can really make the difference.

## Importance of gender equality for you personally?

Personally, it is my recognition to some women who helped me with their trust and example to develop my own capacities and self-confidence. Secondly, I feel this as a matter of justice, and I have the sense that

we are so late on this... Finally, I believe a more diverse vision, holistic and integrated, can make the members of a team feel better, and thus perform better.

## A men's perspective on issue of gender equality

Over the years I have changed my understanding and attitude on this topic after realizing the benefits of a more diverse team. As men, I think we can learn new ways of managing, and sometimes we lack the ability to connect better with the people we work with. The

focus should be not only on the job to do, you know, tasks, and rules, and deadlines, but on the people that are to do the job. We can learn a lot about this from women.

## Closing word

Just try it!



**Päivi Ekdahl**

Development Director

**Regional Council of Lapland**  
Sector: Innovation policy, cluster policy



REGIONAL COUNCIL  
OF LAPLAND

## Could you please introduce yourself?

I work as the Development Director at the [Regional Council of Lapland](#), having overall responsibility on program-based regional development and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Just Transition Fund (JTF) financing on regional level as intermediate body and on Lapland Smart Specialization Strategy.

I have a Master of Education from the University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland, pedagogical qualification from the Oulu University of Applied

Sciences (OAMK), Finland and Vocational examination on management from School of Management. I have also taken studies on leadership at the University of Lapland.

My daily work is international, actively participating in national and international networks such as Northern Sparcely Populated Areas (NSPA), Barents and North Calotte. I am also a member of Baltic Sea Region Directors' network and of the DG Regio's European Community of Practice on Partnership (ECOPP-EC).

## Your organization and your activity sector in a few words

The Regional Council of Lapland is a statutory joint municipal authority, the members of which are all of the 21 municipalities of Lapland. We are responsible for regional development, land use planning and safeguarding of the interests of the most northern, geographically most extensive and the most international region in Finland. Our work centers on the wellbeing of Lapland's people, as well as the living force, pulling force and holding force of

Lapland.

We act as an intermediate body for ERDF and JTF in Lapland, and also participate actively in the implementation of the Interreg Aurora program. We are active partners in international projects, and we also support other local organizations' participation in them.

## Gender equality in your sector and challenges encountered

In the Regional Council of Lapland, we have 56 employees, of which 85 % (47 persons) are female and 16 % (9 persons) are male. As such, the situation does not cause problems, but it is well known that a more equal balance of genders in an organization has a positive effect on the atmosphere, which is why we also try to affect this via recruitment. As the most important selection criteria in recruitments is expertise and suitability to the task, gender balance is not often discussed in those situations.

In Lapland, and in Finland overall, women are

overruling men in public organizations. Today, it is more common to have female-dominating organizations and, gradually, that is visible also in higher positions. As such, this situation does not cause challenges, but having a more equal balance of genders in organizations widens the diversification of discussions and brainstorming, and also gives more room for different opinions.

What comes to the private sector, and more so in the technological sector or basic industries, the situation is different, most of the employees being males.

## How to address these challenges

We see digitalization, Industry 4.0, as one of the key solutions in increasing the interest of women towards basic industries. Via digitization of factories and the tasks that traditionally have been considered as “male-tasks”, it is possible to raise the interest of women.

## Do you encounter recruitment difficulties?

We, as the Regional Council of Lapland (RCL), have not yet faced difficulties in recruitment. Typically, we recruit persons for administrative tasks within regional development and project administration. Most of those who apply for work positions from RCL, are women, and women are chosen for those positions more typically than men.

The role of clusters in this area is important, mainly in giving good examples and sharing good practices, thus spreading a positive atmosphere towards multi-gender workplaces.

In our tasks and positions gender does not make any difference, we have not used any specific methods or approaches in our recruitment. For us, gender equality means that we offer possibilities regardless of the gender, i.e., anyone can apply and can be recruited.

## Awareness of gender equality regulations in your region

I think that overall, the public administration is very aware of gender equality rules and knows how to comply with them. An equality plan is required by law from all public organizations that have more than 50 employees.

In the private sector however, mainly in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and micro companies, the situation is not so good. Again, good examples might help in raising awareness of the issue. These could be spread in trainings and seminars, but also via visible campaigns that are easily available for all.

## Can other challenges be improved through gender mainstreaming?

Yes, it is clear that there is a connection between these.

## Importance of gender equality for you and for your organization

Gender equality increases well-being in organizations and gives the possibility to have more diverse discussions and brainstorming, and gives more room for different opinions. It enables balance in workplaces. The Regional Council can also act as

an example for other organizations and increase the awareness of the positive effects and raise gender equality as one factor of pulling the force of employees.

## Perspective of a woman enabling policy changes

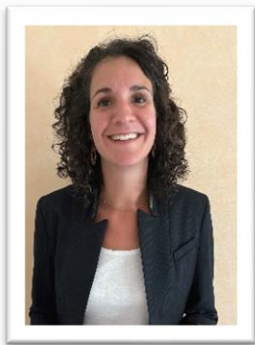
For me, it is very important to increase female-participation in higher positions, to support young women in setting their goals high and believing in themselves. As a mother of three young women, I

have always felt that I have to show, with my own example, that anyone is capable of the tasks and duties they want to achieve. It is not about gender, but it is about talent and suitability.

## Closing word

We have to acknowledge the effect of gender equality in order to be able to act accordingly and to utilize it as a

competitive factor.



**Camille Esquerré**

Deputy Director

**Mecanic Vallée**

**Sector: Mechanical engineering**



Les entreprises en mouvement

## Could you please introduce yourself?

After studying literature and the management of cultural projects and events, and with an affinity for foreign languages, I joined [Mecanic Vallée](#) five years ago, as European project manager. Then, I became HR project manager before becoming the cluster's Deputy Director, my current position in the cluster. I support member companies and organize collective actions on all HR-related issues, particularly: recruitment, training, the attractiveness of the

mechanical engineering industry's professions and training courses, raising the profile of Mecanic Vallée and its companies.

I also collaborate with local authorities on the attractiveness of the region and the obstacles to employment (mobility, housing, spousal employment, etc.) and gender diversity and professional equality.

## Your organization and your activity sector in a few words

Mecanic Vallée is a cluster, or SPL (Local Productive System), that has been created in 1999. It now has 200 members, including 160 companies, as well as training centers, research centers and economic

development partners, spread across six counties and four main sectors of mechanical engineering activity: aeronautics, automotive equipment, machine tools and energy.

## Gender equality in your sector and challenges encountered

In French industry, all sectors combined, there are only 29% of women according to the latest national statistics that I have read. In the professional branch of metallurgy, I believe it is around 22% and the female profiles found in companies in the mechanical engineering industry are mainly in support functions (back office). There are therefore very few women with a technical profile in our professions, and this at all levels of study and including retraining. This is one of the major challenges of professional equality in companies: having as many women as men in scientific, technical, and industrial training sectors and professions.

Professional diversity concerns everyone and is beneficial for all sectors. For example, encourage boys who would like to join training courses for health and social professions, in which there are conversely almost only girls.

Another important issue is to facilitate the career progression of women and allow them to access positions of responsibility.

Maternity leave should, for example, not limit the professional development of women. But to go further in gender equality in the workplace, men should be encouraged to share parental obligations, whether by taking paternity leave themselves (without being penalized either!) or by also adjusting their times to pick up the children. So, it would be a real step forward in society combining professional equality and work/life balance for all.

Moreover, equal pay has been enshrined in law for fifty years, but there are still inequalities of around 10%. So, there is really still a lot to be done there too on the culture of equality.

Finally, the fight against gender-based and sexual violence and the awareness of all companies on this



subject is also a major challenge. In companies with 250 employees, there is a mandatory referent on this

topic. But smaller companies shall deal with this topic too.

## How to address these challenges

The first lever is to inform young girls about the existence of these professions, and to raise awareness among all the key players in careers guidance: teachers, principal education advisers in lower and upper secondary schools, as well as headteachers, careers advisers and the general public.

Another lever is to work with life-long education centers on vocational retraining. In this way, we can open up the field of possibilities at all stages of life.

To activate these levers, Mecanic Vallée relies on:

- People who have made a career change in our sector and who talk to female jobseekers. They do this during their working hours, demonstrating the commitment of the cluster's companies to promoting gender equality in the workplace, in partnership with the French Agency for Employment.
- A network of mentors to raise awareness among young girls, as part of a partnership with the Elles Bougent association and schools. First and foremost, companies want to encourage their employees to get involved in this topic.

Mecanic Vallée coordinates this network of ambassadors. Mecanic Vallée, through its links with local training and education centers and in particular the Campus des Métiers et des Qualifications d'Excellence Industrie du Futur, is also offering young women studying technical subjects the opportunity to speak to schoolchildren, with the same aim of raising awareness.

Mecanic Vallée has also developed tools in partnership with the Campus des Métiers et des Qualifications d'Excellence Industrie du Futur and two organisations promoting scientific, technical, and industrial culture, with financial support from the Occitanie Region:

- «[La boîte à métiers Industrie du Futur](#) (The Industry 4.0 Job Box)»: This fun and educational

tool offers teenagers, who are starting to think about their career options, a role-playing game in which they take on the role of a professional from an industrial company or a mission leader and have to find out about the various stages in the creation and manufacture of an object, as well as the associated jobs, so that they can play an active part in their discoveries. More than 2,300 pupils and their teachers have benefited from this activity in the Mecanic Vallée area.

- «[La visite virtuelle: Vivez l'expérience Mecanic Vallée!](#)» (The Virtual Visit, experience Mecanic Vallée!): A tool that reproduces a mechanical engineering company through its various departments (administration, purchasing & marketing, design, production, maintenance and logistics) to discover the professions and training courses by clicking on the characters and consulting interviews with professionals or students on sandwich courses, as well as videos of machines in operation and a video on the evolution of industrial professions thanks to digital technologies. There is even a "gamified" trail to help you "get the Mecanic Vallée experience"! The cluster and its partners are offering the virtual tour to a wide range of young people and adults, and are providing training in the use of this tool to any organisations that wish to use it. The aim is to highlight the diversity of scientific and technical professions in industry and to counter gender stereotypes in the way science and technology are portrayed.

The issue of gender mainstreaming is a common thread in every tool created by the cluster, and this has enabled Mecanic Vallée to win the Coup de Coeur award from the [Elles Bougent](#) association and the FILEX award in the "feminization" category. Winning trophies highlights the involvement of companies in this area, gives them visibility and shows them that they are on the right track.

The role of the cluster is really to lead the network, provide information and raise awareness. On each theme, companies that have made a little more

progress can share their good practices with companies that are in demand. As Mecanic Vallée has been running these collective awareness-raising initiatives for a long time, we can see that they have a real knock-on effect, in particular when companies are facing recruitment difficulties.

The cluster can also develop collective actions and partnerships that will benefit all companies, even the smallest, so that they can all get involved. For example, Mecanic Vallée, which has more small companies in its network, is promoting membership of the “ELLES bougent” association for its companies with fewer than 200 employees, so that even they can offer their female employees the chance to join its

network of mentors to attract young girls to scientific, technical, technological, and engineering fields and careers.

Finally, in order to act on the collective imagination and really anchor a culture of gender equality in companies, it seems to me to be really important that “women role models” in industry are given media coverage. The cluster is doing this at local level, but it would be useful to draw on well-known women in industry at national level to organize conferences, for example, on all the major issues relating to professional equality (recruitment, career management and development, pay, violence, etc.).

## Recruitment difficulties

Recruitment difficulties are due to the fact that there are not enough young people overall on industrial training and education courses. The vast majority are boys. So if we could attract more girls to these courses, that would go some way to solving the problem.

Today, we are depriving ourselves of skills because girls don't go into scientific and technical courses, and women who are retraining don't choose industrial careers either. We need to inform them as well as the people who support them in their career choices.

## Awareness of gender equality regulations in your sector

Through its HR working group, Mecanic Vallée informs companies of their legal obligation to calculate and publish their professional equality INDEX if they have more than 50 employees.

For smaller companies that are not subject to these legal obligations, it is also important to help them in developing a culture of gender equality in the workplace by disseminating existing tools and offering training courses.

## Can other challenges be improved through gender mainstreaming?

Implementing gender equality initiatives within companies could not only help to retain employees, but also enhance the value of the sector and the company.

Finally, Mecanic Vallée is a cluster in a rural area, so as I said, we are working on other levers of attractiveness, such as mobility and housing, to make our region more attractive to companies.

## Importance of gender equality for you and your organization?

The cluster has been working on gender diversity and equality for over ten years. Our member companies have been very enthusiastic about this issue and are willing to work on it with the support of the cluster. That is why we've launched collective actions and organized events on this topic, but it's really up to the companies to get started.

The cluster is convinced that this is the right direction to take and is leading by example. That is why I've just been appointed deputy director after returning from maternity leave. The issue of equality between men and women in industry is embodied in this example, which shows that maternity leave and career progression are compatible.

## Closing word

The cluster can offer support to small businesses so that they too can take action to promote gender equality. By raising awareness and taking collective action, a knock-on effect is created between companies, and they are given the means to get involved and take action.

Working on the issue of gender equality in the workplace is not just about the professional world, but over a number of years, this will have a positive influence on the development of society as a whole!



## Marie-Noëlle Tiné-Dyèvre

President of WISTA France and Deputy  
Director of the CMF

**The French Maritime Cluster (CMF)**  
**Sector: Maritime**



### Could you please introduce yourself?

I chair the [Women's International Shipping & Trading Association](#) (WISTA) in France since 2018, and I am also French Foreign Trade Advisor, Member of the Board of France Clusters. Since 2007, I work for the [French Maritime Cluster](#) (FMC) as Deputy Director, in charge of administration, finance and the international development. Among my missions in the Cluster, I lead thematic working groups, including

one on gender equality in the workplace, which has resulted in numerous actions.

I am a woman of action and networks, full of energy to steer, lead and move projects forward, in particular by promoting the expertise, skills and talents of women.

### Your organization and your activity sector in a few words

Created in 2006, the French Maritime Cluster brings together all the players in the maritime ecosystem, from industry to all types of maritime services and activities. The FMC serves its 480 entities (companies of all sizes, competitiveness clusters, federations and associations, laboratories and research centers, education and training

organizations, local authorities, and economic players, as well as the French Navy) as a facilitator for the development of their business and the emergence of innovative projects. It supports its members in the sustainable and responsible development of their activities and projects in France and abroad.

### Gender equality in your sector and challenges encountered

Today, women represent only 21% of maritime employment in France, according to last figures from the Observatory on gender professional equality ("[Observatoire Cap sur l'égalité professionnelle](#)") which has been created in 2015 by the French Maritime Cluster.

Globally, according to the 2021 Seafarer Workforce Report published by BIMCO and ICS, the number of women serving as seafarers is estimated at only 1.2%, or approximately 24,059, which represents an increase of 45.8% compared to 2015.

The challenges on professional equality in the maritime sector are:

1) Attractiveness of education/training and professions of the maritime sector: Due to a lack of knowledge, young people do not go into these professions, and this is even more the case when

they are girls because of prejudices and preconceived ideas. The challenge is to break down these stereotypes and prejudices and therefore to make schoolgirls and high-school students aware of the interest of technical and engineering professions. Thus, the sector will give itself the means to have a pool of female talents.

2) Retain female HR in the sector: Various studies have shown that companies who have mixed teams perform better. Employers shall seek gender balance at all levels. With equal skills they shall offer female HR equal salaries to male HR, as well as training and career development opportunities while managing their pregnancies periods and facilitating their return to work to retain these talents in the maritime sector.

3) Feminization of governance bodies: For several years, the public authorities have implemented various measures to promote a more balanced

representation of women in the professional world and in particular in governance positions. French laws (Rixain in 2021) apply to companies (according to their number) to accelerate the balanced representation. That means by 2030 women shall be better represented in the governance bodies of all public and private organizations in the maritime sector.

## How to address these challenges

When it has a certain notoriety and is recognized for its various actions, the cluster can create a dynamic, a ripple effect by guiding and supporting companies. It brings together actors to make them think about a common theme so that lessons can be learned, a source of inspiration and ideas for new action projects and partnerships can emerge.

On professional equality, the French Maritime Cluster created the Observatory on gender professional equality in the maritime sector ("[Observatoire Cap sur l'égalité professionnelle](#)"). It also created factsheets of good practice on key levers for professional gender equality (salaries, recruitment, promotion, career management, training, private/professional life balance work conditions, communication) to raise awareness and facilitate their adoption by companies of the sector.

## Recruitment difficulties

All sectors are growing, but all professions are in tension since the end of the COVID. There are not enough applicants in general (men and women), but the ratio of women is extremely low. One of the solutions is to increase the pool of female talents by attracting them in higher education (National Maritime School, Naval School, Engineering Schools, etc.).

In general, there are not enough women, who are engineers and technicians in France, hence the creation of the association [Elles Bougent](#) in 2006. In partnership with the latter, the event "Les Elles de l'Océan" has been developed in 2018 for the maritime sector. During this first edition of "Les Elles de l'Océan", 17 companies opened their doors. This year's edition of the event "Les Elles de l'Océan" counted 28 companies participating and more than

4) Fight against harassment/sexist and sexual violence: Measures to prevent and protect female HR against harassment/sexist and sexual violence shall be implemented or strengthened.

If we tackle all these four issues at the same time, we can really change things.

The cluster also organized the initiative "[Les Elles de l'Océan](#)" to attract talents in the maritime sector.

To go further in the actions and reflection, and in the sharing of experiences, the French Maritime Cluster has created a committee of HR and CSR managers from shipping companies, shipyards, ports, and the French Navy. The objective of this committee is to accelerate the feminization of the workforce by sharing good practices in order to inspire each other and the second step is to reflect together on how to overcome the obstacles, what are the levers, tools, and solutions. Such committees of HR directors already exist but they are not from the same sector. Therefore, the creation of this sectoral committee of HR and CSR directors is a real added value enabled by the cluster, and it is a success considering the excellent participation rate in the 4 meetings organized yearly.

1000 young girls (college, high schools, students). This high increase of participation shows the willingness of companies to recruit women through the communication of the actions of Elles Bougent.

There are more and more companies that are giving themselves the means to make their jobs known to girls.

Since 2006, Elles Bougent, a public interest association, has been introducing primary schools, secondary school girls and students to the exciting careers in technological or scientific industrial sectors where there is a lack of female talent: the automotive, aerospace, energy, rail, maritime, digital, defense and construction sectors in particular.

The association Elles Bougent, sponsored by six



ministries, brings together 26 regional delegations, 320 corporate and higher education partners, a club of 1,416 secondary schools, and 10,550 sponsors

and relays around 500 actions per year that reach approximately 40,000 young women.

## Awareness of gender equality regulations in your sector

Companies are gradually becoming aware of their obligations. It depends on the size of the company. Large companies are sanctioned if they don't comply with gender equality laws. But they have departments with competent people to make sure they do comply with their obligations.

It also depends on the managers and whether their personal awareness of the feminization issue, so to implement actions towards more professional gender equality at the level of their companies.

## Can other challenges be improved through gender mainstreaming?

In the maritime sector and other sectors, it is a challenge to attract labor in coastal areas, which suffer in particular from a shortage of housing for young people.

Clusters must better work with regional authorities to make various sectors attractive to women. And regional authorities shall rely on clusters for the successful implementation of actions and the attractiveness of their territory to new labor.

Encouraging collective intelligence between a strong player, such as the regional authority, having the financial and political means to create an attractive

framework, and clusters to implement actions is a key success factor.

Sectoral associations of women can also play a key role on the challenge of women being represented in governance bodies. At [WISTA France](#) (Women's International Shipping & Trading Association), we created this year a group of women, who are boards of directors or supervisory boards in the maritime sector (Cercle "[Femmes administratrices du Maritime](#)" - FAM) to tell the maritime community that there are experienced, competent, and expert women to join high responsibilities positions in the sector. Our approach is proactive.

## Importance of gender equality for you and for your organization

To feel less alone as a woman in the sector, I joined the « Women's International Shipping & Trading Association » (WISTA) in France to meet other women in the sector. Especially as I am not originally from this sector, which discovered only in the 2000s. Therefore, I can put myself in the shoes of women/girls who are not familiar with this sector and testify about the interest of great jobs.

The fact that I am invited more and more often to give my testimony, not only to professionals but also to the general public, parents, educators, etc. shows that we are in a new era of gender equality. I want to show for example like Anne Cullerre, the first female Vice-Admiral of the French Navy, you can hold the

leading positions when you are a woman. We are seeing more and more girls entering the Navy, so it is encouraging.

I am convinced that women and men are complementary and that we cannot deprive ourselves of half the population. If we want a balanced society, we must encourage women and men to fight for gender equality.

The professional world must make even greater efforts to make more room for women at all levels of the companies. If the economy wants to be even more efficient, sustainable, and responsible, it needs women's skills and talents.

## Closing word

From the point of view of women/girls, you have to dare to take on so-called “male jobs”. And also dare to impose yourself tactfully and gently in a male environment. Trust yourself, train yourself, surround yourself with men and women who will help you to progress and understand even better the possible traps and obstacles in your professional environment.

SMEs must also be convinced of the importance and

the interest of gender diversity in their teams and give themselves the means to achieve it.

I can see that mentalities are changing. But the mobilization of all public and private actors is essential to accelerate these changes.

I have confidence in the future, I think that by 2030 that we will achieve more gender diversity at all levels in companies, both in large and small companies.



## Massimiliano Rumignani

Project manager and developer

**AMBIT**

**Sector: Furniture sector**



**ambit**  
LIVING SPACES CLUSTER

### Could you please introduce yourself?

My name is Massimiliano Rumignani, and I am Project Manager and developer at the Spanish [Cluster AMBIT](#) – Living Spaces cluster. I have worked in different roles in the private and public sector as Quality Manager, Project and Policy officer, Business developer and in many European projects with

different managerial roles.

I am an economist, and in the last 20 years I have worked on European projects, writing, managing, and implementing them.

### Your organization and your activity sector in a few words

AMBIT is a cluster in the furnishings sector. Over 150 companies are members of the cluster, and they represent the entire value chain: from producers of raw and semi-finished materials to manufacturers of

various habitat products (furniture, floor and wall tiles, lighting, home textiles, home automation, etc.) and wholesale and retail distributors.

### Gender equality in your sector and challenges encountered

I don't have exact figures, but the sector is clearly affected by a clear majority of male workers. This is especially noticeable in the production area and at the highest levels of management. But we are

beginning to detect a change in the proportions of women and men in manager or top manager positions within sector companies.

### How to address these challenges

I would suggest to increase the knowledge of all personnel in charge of human resources management about gender equality issues and the benefits it can bring to the organization.

Policies and practices that support hiring at all levels

of the organization regardless of gender should also be implemented. This requires defining clear, numerical targets. Another thing that could help would be the adoption of work-life balance policies and practices.

### Recruitment difficulties

Yes, there is a clear lack of skilled workers in the sector. One of the reasons is that the furniture sector is not seen as a very attractive one among youngsters. An aging workforce also affects the situation.

Efforts to create more gender equality offers are they a solution to overcome these difficulties. I think it can play a role, but only in some cases. I think the low attractiveness of the sector is independent of gender.

## Awareness of gender equality regulations in SMEs of your sector

I think most of them do, but properly implementing the actions to make gender equality a reality is

another issue.

## Do they know how to comply with it?

It may be that they lack some of the required knowledge and practical instruments/tools to easily

implement activities allowing them to comply with existing regulations.

## Initiatives to help SMEs in this process

The integration of training modules on gender equality issues at all levels of training provision could help. Seminars to raise awareness among top managers could also help.

integrate a gender perspective?

By making available the course developed in the above-mentioned project (Woman in Power) and trying to sensitize top management with seminars.

Your organization's support for SMEs to effectively

## Can other challenges be improved through gender mainstreaming?

I would say yes. It is clear that all policies and initiatives that favor the improvement of working conditions, the wellbeing of workers, and the working

environment help companies to face all the challenges mentioned above.

## Importance of gender equality for you and for your organization

I consider gender equality to be important because I strongly believe in social justice and equity and that all people, regardless of gender, deserve equal opportunities and rights and to be treated fairly and non-discriminatorily.

I think that at the organizational level, gender equality can provide a wide range of perspectives and skills. Diversities are an added value that can bring a lot of benefits to the organization's activities.

## Experiences or projects related to gender equality that you are proud of

I have worked with these issues only in one project, ['Women in Power'](#). That was a European project that aimed to strengthen the culture and practices of

leadership and empowerment of women workers in traditional sectors, in our specific case in the furniture sector.

## A man's perspective on issue of gender equality

I think that the integration of gender equality is fundamental in building an environment and a society that is more just, more pleasant and that can create greater well-being for all people. It is clear that

for that, there is a need to break with the traditional gender roles that have developed and been maintained in our societies.

## Importance to support women in the workplace

As I said before, I think that gender diversity can bring different perspectives and skills and that these can

enrich the whole staff and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization.

## Your main message

Gender equality, if well developed, can represent a driver of efficiency and innovation that companies in the sector need to preserve and increase their competitiveness. I think the opportunities offered by

the sector Twin transition (green and digital) can support the deployment of gender equality approaches and policies.





**Ola Svedin**

CEO and Chairperson

**Mobile Heights Cluster / Clusters of Sweden  
Sector: Tech and digital industry**



## Could you please introduce yourself?

I am the CEO of [Mobile Heights](#), the ICT cluster organization of Southern Sweden, and I am also the chairperson of the national Swedish cluster association, [Clusters of Sweden](#). I am a passionate driver of the transition of society to the digital world. Under my leadership Mobile Heights has doubled in size and is also leading the regional Digital Innovation Hub, DigIT Hub Sweden. With more than 25 years of experience from telecom, IT security,

smart card, biometrics, and space industries, I have led large mobile phone and chipset development programs, and as inventor and R&D director of a world leading fingerprint tech startup I was a pioneer in the biometrics industry.

I am also a member of the national board for IT/tech competence organized by [TechSverige](#).

## Your organization and your activity sector in a few words

Clusters of Sweden was established to highlight and channel interests, needs and opportunities of Swedish cluster organizations. We are backed by clusters from diverse industries and geographical locations across the entire Sweden, and work together to support cluster development,

collaboration, policy development and internationalization.

Mobile Heights is the tech cluster in the south of Sweden and a driving member of Clusters of Sweden.

## Gender equality in your sector and challenges encountered

Sweden is an engineering nation. The prosperity of society is dependent on maintaining and developing technology skills. In all clusters represented in the national cluster association, Clusters of Sweden, there is a strong need to accelerate digitalization to stay competitive. This makes IT/tech a crucial sector, and the demand for highly skilled IT/tech workers will only increase in the future.

In Sweden, the work force within IT/tech is

composed of 70% men and 30% women. Gender equality within this sector is a priority for employers, as there is a large overall gap between the supply and demand of IT experts nationally. In 2024 this gap is estimated to be 70 000 persons, and multiple sources of additional competence is needed to fulfill the needs of the industry. An important way to make more talent available is to improve the gender gap within the sector.

## How to address these challenges

Clusters act as spokespersons for the industry when it comes to the gender equality topics, including skills and talent supply. By working together with the government, public administration, the academia and business associations, clusters drive change. We need to work on many levels when it comes to gender equality.

Initiatives that we as cluster organizations work with to actively interest and recruit women to tech include [Pink Programming](#) and [Women in Tech](#). Another lever is the national competence board organized by TechSverige, where business associations and clusters engage in direct discussions with the

Swedish government.

## Do companies in your cluster face recruitment difficulties? Would you say that efforts to create a (more) gender equal environment lead to solutions to overcome these difficulties?

The answer is yes on both accounts.

### Awareness of gender equality regulations in your sector

In Sweden in general there is a high level of awareness about gender equality rules/laws. Nevertheless, there is a continuous need to increase knowledge in this area.

Clusters can help by integrating training and

information seminars into other development projects. As an example, training in gender equality was a mandatory part of an ERDF funded AI project in Sweden, DigIT Hub AI in which SMEs received support to introduce AI technology in their products and business processes.

### Can other challenges be improved through gender mainstreaming?

Yes, for sure. One area that needs more research is retaining female workers in male-dominated

industries. It seems quite plausible that gender mainstreaming could help with that.

### Importance of gender equality for you and for your organization?

For me personally it can be stated quite simple: I think that society will be much better for everybody if we have gender equality.

In the organizations I work for, Clusters of Sweden

and Mobile Heights, we keep the focus on gender equality all the time. We believe that you must walk the walk, not just talk the talk. It means we implement our policies in our daily work. For instance, the goal is always to have 50% female speakers at our events.

### As a man with responsibility, why is it important to support women in the workplace? What is your perspective on gender equality?

It's in everything I do. I know for sure that I make mistakes all the time when it comes to empowering women, but since I am so convinced that this is important, I try to improve all the time. As a 50+ white male I guess this comes even easier if you have daughters like I have. At Mobile Heights we are

actually more women than men. Our recruitment strategy is not only about gender equality but in fact about diversity overall. Our team of 13 is actually composed of people from 6 countries: Sweden, Germany, Albania, Poland, Afghanistan, and Ecuador.

### Closing word

Live as you learn – we all have a responsibility to work towards gender equality for a better society. We

can all do something in our daily lives if we just think about it!



**Sylvie Arnaud**

HR Manager

**Oxalis**

**Sector: Entrepreneurship - Social and solidarity economy**



## Could you please introduce yourself?

My name is Sylvie Arnaud, I am the HR Manager at [Oxalis](#) since March 2020. Previously, I was HR Development Manager at the Loire health insurance company (900 employees). I have a Master II Degree Human Resources Management and Direction. In my

experience in Oxalis, I am particularly proud of the signature of the first agreement with the representatives of Oxalis on gender equality with an ambitious action plan over 4 years.

## Your organization and your activity sector in a few words

Oxalis is a shared and mutualized company that belongs to its cooperators. For more than 20 years, we have been contributing to the creation of an economy in the service of people, by promoting a reasoned development that respects the environment and individuals. More than 250 women and men are part of Oxalis, sharing, adding, and

multiplying their skills, know-how and experience to develop and consolidate their economic activities, both individually and collectively. We pool the resources and services necessary for our activities, so that each person can devote themselves to their projects while being supported and protected.

## Gender equality in your sector and challenges encountered

Gender equality is now a shared social concern, which is reflected in the strong orientations of the public authorities, particularly with regard to companies, with the obligation to formalize an agreement, an annual diagnosis accompanied by an action plan, and through various provisions of the French Labor Code.

Gender equality is also an important issue for the

social and solidarity economy (SSE), whose values and actions aim to contribute to a “fairer and more sustainable” society. However, in the SSE, equality “has long remained a blind spot in the modes of organization”. This awareness is recent, even late, as the social purpose of these structures has paradoxically amplified this “invisibilization of inequalities”, whether they are associations, mutuals or cooperatives.

## How to address these challenges

By developing the communication, the books, freeing the word and by confronting the ideas and positions

in order to awaken the individual and collective consciousness.

## Recruitment difficulties

The specificities of the Cooperatives of Activities and Jobs make the recruitment process particular. The possible levers are essentially on the recruitment of the members of the mutualized team.

As the majority of the positions are oriented towards administrative functions, we receive few male applications, which creates essentially female teams. We do not have any difficulties with this lack

of gender diversity, but we would like to see more

balance in the teams.

## Awareness of gender equality regulations in your sector

We may think that the Social and Solidarity Economy sector is more sensitive to the subject of gender, diversity, and inclusion, but the fact is that within our structure, the awareness-raising and training

initiatives put in place within the framework of our agreement show that there is a real interest in getting more training, even for the most informed public.

## Can other challenges be improved through gender mainstreaming?

It seems to me that working on these subjects allows us to open the debate and the awareness on our

practices, to review our ways of working together and to respect each other.

## Importance of gender equality for you and your organization

Personally, I am convinced that we still have a lot of work to do on inclusion and diversity in a broad sense. I personally advocate these values and the fact that I am in HR allows me to carry them into my work organization.

It seems obvious to me that a CAE (Employment Support Contract) that wants to be inclusive should also carry these values.

## Added value of being a woman leading an organization

It is difficult for me to describe the added value of a woman in positions of responsibility without going into positive discrimination. It seems to me, whatever her gender, that we all have assets, different

approaches, and postures according to her life and professional path. It is precisely the plurality and diversity of the genders that creates wealth.

## Closing word

Let's continue this way of awakening consciousness so that the question of gender is no longer under the

seal of legislation but of evidence.



## Kristina Šermukšnytė-Alešiūnienė

CEO

**AgriFood Lithuania**  
**Sector: Agrifood**

#10



**AgriFood** DIH  
Lithuania

### A short introduction

Kristina Šermukšnytė-Alešiūnienė is a seasoned executive and innovation leader currently serving as the CEO of [AgriFood Lithuania](#).

Kristina also holds the position of Director at the Lithuanian Cluster Network association, Klaster LT, which unites 57 clusters across diverse sectors. With over 12 years of international experience as a digitalization expert, she actively contributes to national and international working groups, driving digital transformation strategies. Currently pursuing a Ph.D. in economics, her research interests lie in evaluating the effectiveness of the twin transition in industries—digitalization and the Green Deal—in EU Member States.

Since 2021, Kristina has held pivotal leadership positions as Chairwoman of the Agri-Food and Bioeconomy Committee and the Labour, Social Policy, and Human Resources Committee at the

Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists. Her influence extends globally, as she was appointed Vice-Chair of the Food and Agriculture Committee at Business at OECD in 2022. Her remarkable achievements in the industry have earned her the title of European Cluster Manager of The Year and a nomination for the EIT Women Leadership award by the EIT Food community. She is a sought-after speaker at national and international events, where she shares insights on the twin transition in the EU and actively promotes collaboration for the creation of ecosystems that transform the food sector. An advocate for fostering collaboration between clusters and European digital innovation hubs, Kristina is the driving force behind strategic initiatives, including organizing prominent events in the Baltics, such as the AgriFood Forum, Digital Sea, HAcK AgriFood, Startup Village Networking event, and Hack StartUp Village, Empowering Women in AgriFood (EWA) and others.

### Could you describe your organisation in a few words?

AgriFood Lithuania is a dynamic cluster organization established in 2011, in Vilnius, Lithuania. It plays a crucial role in fostering innovation and transformation in the agriculture, food, and associated sectors, primarily through digital-based solutions. The cluster has earned recognition from

the European Commission as a model digital innovation hub, and its ability to serve as a bridge between technology and the agri-food sector. From 2022 AgriFood Lithuania is a part of the European Digital Innovation Hub EDIH LT with one of the priorities for agrifood sector.

### Could you give us some facts and figures, or a description of the status quo related to the situation of gender equality in your region? What are the challenges encountered?

Similar to other Baltic states (Estonia and Latvia), the agrifood industry in Lithuania has undergone substantial changes in recent decades. The agricultural sectors of these nations are vital to their economies due to their rich agricultural histories and enormous potential. Nonetheless, gender equality in

this industry is indicative of more extensive societal patterns and obstacles. Some of these are:

- **Workforce Participation:** The Baltic region exhibits a significant presence of women in the agrifood workforce. Their



responsibilities, however, are frequently limited to lower-paying, less secure positions. For instance, while women constitute a substantial proportion of the agricultural workforce in Lithuania, they are inadequately represented in positions of authority.

- **Leadership and Ownership:** In comparison to men, a smaller proportion of women hold leadership positions or own agricultural enterprises. This is prevalent throughout the Baltics, where traditional perspectives frequently restrict the duties of women to particular occupations within the industry.
- **Income Disparity:** A discernible gender wage disparity exists within the agrifood industry. In Lithuania and other Baltic states, women frequently receive lower compensation than men for performing comparable duties and obligations.
- **Social Norms and Perceptions:** In the

agrifood industry, traditional gender roles and stereotypes continue to dictate who performs which categories of work. This phenomenon has the potential to restrict the progress and involvement of women in decision-making procedures.

- **Work-Life Balance:** As in numerous other regions, women in the Baltics are disproportionately impacted by the difficulty of balancing professional and familial obligations. This may impede their professional advancement and engagement in the industry.
- **Policy and Representation:** The agrifood industry requires policies that are more attuned to gender issues. Insufficient representation of women in agricultural policy-making bodies hinders the effective consideration of their needs and perspectives.

## What levers do you see possible to address these challenges or to improve the situation you just described? Where do you see clusters playing a role in the process?

To effectively address gender equality challenges in the agrifood sector in Lithuania and the Baltic region, specific, actionable strategies are needed, with clusters playing a key role in their implementation:

- Clusters can establish programs for women's leadership development and skills training, enhancing their presence in higher-level roles.
- Collaborate with financial institutions to offer gender-sensitive lending and create workshops to improve financial literacy among women in the sector.
- Use clusters to host networking events, fostering collaboration and support among women in agriculture. Clusters can bring together various stakeholders to focus on gender equality initiatives.

- Leverage the influence of clusters to advocate for and develop gender-inclusive policies within the agrifood sector.
- Promote policies for flexible working arrangements and childcare support, helping women balance professional and personal responsibilities. Clusters' influence can drive policy changes and industry standards towards gender inclusiveness.
- Publicize achievements of women in the sector to inspire and challenge stereotypes. As a central hub, clusters can disseminate information, best practices, and provide necessary training resources.
- Clusters can help women entrepreneurs and workers gain access to new markets and business opportunities.

## Do companies of your cluster, sector/ecosystem, region face recruitment difficulties? Would you say that gender mainstreaming or gender equality approaches offer a solution to overcome these difficulties and why?

Companies in the Baltic agrifood sector do face recruitment challenges due to factors like skilled

labor shortages and urban migration. Adopting gender mainstreaming and equality approaches can

help overcome these difficulties in several concrete ways:

- **Expanding Talent Pool:** Embracing gender equality opens up the sector to a wider array of talents, particularly women who may have previously overlooked opportunities in agrifood due to existing biases.
- **Tapping Into Untapped Resources:** Women, especially in leadership roles, represent a largely underutilized resource. Leveraging their skills and perspectives can address existing skill gaps.

- **Fostering Innovation:** Gender-diverse teams are often more innovative and effective, an essential quality for a sector evolving with technological and environmental changes.
- **Enhancing Sector Appeal:** Gender-inclusive policies can improve the sector's image, making it more attractive to a broader range of job seekers.
- **Creating Inclusivity:** A gender-equal workplace culture is not only appealing for recruitment but also crucial for employee retention.

## Are the companies in your cluster aware of gender equality rules? Do they know how to comply with these rules? What would be helpful for them?

In the Baltic agrifood sector, the companies' awareness of gender equality rules and their compliance with these may vary. While larger companies might be more informed and compliant, smaller enterprises could lag behind due to limited resources or traditional views. To improve awareness and compliance, specific measures can be highly effective:

- **Training Programs:** Conduct targeted training sessions for all company levels to educate about gender equality principles and laws.
- **Webinars and Online Learning:** Offer easily accessible webinars and online materials, particularly beneficial for the geographically dispersed agrifood sector.
- **Dedicated Gender Equality Roles:** Establish a

designated person or team within companies to handle gender equality matters, ensuring adherence and providing a go-to resource.

- **Sector-Wide Initiatives:** Encourage participation in industry initiatives or clusters focusing on gender equality for shared learning and resources.
- **Policy Guidance:** Provide specialized support for developing and implementing gender-sensitive policies, especially crucial for smaller businesses.

Overall, a combination of educational initiatives, dedicated roles for gender issues, and collaborative efforts led by industry bodies can significantly enhance gender equality awareness and compliance in the Baltic agrifood sector.

## Could you please describe why gender equality is important for you personally and/or for your organization?

For me, personally: I am committed to gender equality because I believe in the fundamental right to equal opportunities for everyone, regardless of gender. This conviction is reinforced by an awareness of the unique challenges women face in the agrifood sector. I strongly believe in collaboration and adding more value to the sector. And, as a leader, I recognize my responsibility in setting an example and advocating for changes that promote inclusivity and diversity in leadership within the agrifood industry.

For my organization, Agrifood Lithuania: We understand that gender-balanced teams drive innovation and enhance performance. Gender equality is not just a moral imperative but a business strategy that contributes to a more dynamic and successful organization. And as an organization committed to the sustainable growth of the agrifood sector, we see gender equality as essential. It enables us to leverage the full spectrum of talent, to address workforce challenges, and to adapt to market and environmental changes. Our role as a

cluster organization includes advocating for policies and practices that benefit the entire industry. Gender equality is integral to creating a resilient and

competitive agrifood sector, and we actively promote this within our community and through our collaborations.

## **How would you describe the added value being a woman leading a cluster and thus leading an industrial sector so to say? What are your challenges and opportunities being a woman cluster manager?**

Leading Agrifood Lithuania, my role as a woman in a leadership position brings distinct advantages and unique challenges in driving industrial and policy change. Added value as a female leader: My perspective as a woman enriches decision-making with diverse insights, crucial for innovation in the agrifood sector. I bring an empathetic and inclusive approach to leadership, fostering a collaborative environment. And last, but not least, my presence in this role challenges gender norms and inspires other

women to aspire to leadership positions. A key challenge I see is breaking through traditional stereotypes about women's roles in leadership, overcoming biases. Building Networks is important, and while creating alliances can be challenging, it also opens opportunities for meaningful connections based on shared experiences. Finally, balancing professional and personal responsibilities is a significant challenge, amplified by societal expectations.

## **What would be your closing word? Your main message on advancing gender equality approaches in companies/clusters/public authorities/governments?**

Reflecting on the discussions about gender equality in the agrifood sector and my role as a leader in Agrifood Lithuania, my closing words center around a core message of commitment and action. Advancing gender equality in companies, clusters, public authorities, and governments is not just a matter of fairness or compliance; it's a strategic

imperative for sustainable growth, innovation, and societal advancement. It is time that we move beyond acknowledging gender inequality to actively implementing inclusive policies and practices in every organization and that leaders at all levels must champion gender equality, setting a powerful example and driving change!



## Beatriz Coloma Rentero

People & CSR Manager

#11



**ECUS Sleep**

**Sector: Furniture sector SME**



### Could you please introduce yourself?

I am Beatriz Coloma Rentero, and my current position is People and CSR Manager at [ECUS Sleep](#), a Spanish mattresses company that wants to contribute to a healthy lifestyle through rest.

My previous positions have always been linked to HR Departments in other companies. I believe in people, in the continuous improvement of processes and in socially responsible values with the aim of achieving a better society.

My academic training is aligned with what makes me most happy, which is being at the service of others. I completed a degree in Human Resources and Talent Management, a master's in Quality and Environmental Management, a master's in Occupational Risk Prevention, Safety, Hygiene, Ergonomics and Applied Psychology and a master's in Corporate Social Responsibility.

### Your organization and your activity sector in a few words

ECUS is a family business with over 40 years of experience, formed by people who, from Yecla, work sustainably and in equality, with a common goal: to contribute to a better and healthier lifestyle through

rest and sleep. We are dedicated to the manufacture and marketing of sleeping equipment, especially mattresses.

### Gender equality in your sector and challenges encountered

I can share with you the data of the company where I work, but I cannot compare it to the sector, as I don't have that data. But I am glad you asked, because I am going to make an analysis of them compared to the sector.

Ecus Sleep is owned by two women, the board of

directors is made up of 2 women, and 32% of our workforce are women. One of the challenges we have found is that in jobs like upholstery and manufacturing of structures for bases and storage beds traditionally there were only men, so we have incorporated women in both departments.

### How to address these challenges

The mechanism is to analyze jobs regardless of gender, not to have stereotypes. Jobs, as well as people, have to adapt to changes such as the digital

transformation, so we need to evaluate them to avoid potential risks. Training is very important, as well as fostering a culture of equality within the company.

### Recruitment difficulties

They have no difficulties if the company's management is convinced that equal opportunities are all advantages for a company. It is a matter of

attitude, of culture. In Ecus Sleep luckily the company's management is the first to promote gender equality. We were pioneers in our sector in

incorporating the Equality Plan in the company in

2018 on a voluntary basis.

## Efforts to create more gender equality offers are they a solution to overcome these difficulties

The difficulties come from us, the people. Of course, for many SMEs, if they incorporate gender equality into their business strategy, they will begin to enjoy a

cultural transformation with great advantages and opportunities for the business, for the people and for society in general.

## Awareness of gender equality regulations and how to comply with it

They know about it now because it is mandatory to have an equality plan. Previously I imagine they knew about it, but it was not part of their business strategy.

with regulations. Consultants have found a business opportunity. Sadly, many SMEs still see it as a rule to comply with, but not as an opportunity that will help them to improve.

They have learned due to their obligation to comply

## Initiatives to help SMEs in this process

I believe that a good way to raise awareness is through the presentation of success stories. With testimonials from people who work in companies

where they are committed to equality on a daily basis.

## Your organization's support for SMEs to effectively integrate a gender perspective

We contribute with our annual CSR report, with our own e-learning platform Senttix Academy that we offer to our customers and suppliers, with publications in social media to raise awareness, with

our work-life balance and quality policies and ensuring with gender equality within our selection processes.

## Can other challenges be improved through gender mainstreaming?

Of course, we must work in all areas, it is a fundamental right of all people. In no corner of the planet, no person should suffer any kind of

discrimination, everyone must have the same opportunities and access to decent conditions in all aspects of their lives.

## Importance of gender equality for you and for your organization

The first thing to keep in mind is that gender equality is a fundamental human right, regardless of where you live. Personally, I cannot conceive of a society where there is no equality, since there are all advantages: it favors personal growth, increases self-esteem, and enhances the quality of relationships.

equal conditions for development.

Gender equality is important to me because it allows us to live in a healthy and fulfilling environment, it allows us to achieve a society free of stereotypes, we must live in a world where one of the main values is respect and solidarity.

All of us must have the obligation to promote gender equality in all areas of society by working to reduce poverty, to provide education, to protect and promote the welfare of girls and boys, and to ensure that women and men have the same opportunities and

At the professional level, gender equality has to be part of the company's strategy to identify and reduce gender gaps by promoting and adapting work practices and policies without any gender bias.

Organizations have to work every day to avoid any



discrimination in any field: job offers, internal promotion, salaries, avoiding stereotypes, avoiding sexist language, etc.

It is very important to achieve gender equality in organizations because it has a positive impact on performance improvement, raises employee morale, contributes to have more diverse points of view which ultimately favors decision making, helps to

retain the best talent, favors the work environment, enhances corporate image, builds customer loyalty, increases economic benefits, and boosts brand image.

Working and promoting gender equality only brings advantages in both personal and professional areas, therefore, we have to educate, raise awareness and work towards effective equality.

## Experiences or projects related to gender equality that you are proud of

What I am most proud of is having implemented in the company where I work, Ecus Sleep, its first equality plan in 2018, when it was not mandatory by law. Going ahead of legal requirements is the greatest satisfaction, because when it is mandatory it loses merit. You have to do things because you believe in it and bet on it.

Since the equality plan was implemented, it is part of the company's strategy, and in this year 2023 we are in the renewal process of the plan. It is part of our training plan, awareness campaigns are organized annually, our own e-learning training platform has a specific Equality classroom where all employees of

the organization have access to it and they can consult the equality plan, its policies, and procedures such as the use of non-sexist language, harassment protocol, etc.

I am proud to promote annual training and to have developed and implemented a training platform with access to all employees. In the selection processes, when there are equal merits between men and women, the least represented is selected. In the company we have managed to increase the presence of women by 15% since 2019, in positions that have always belonged to men.

## Added value of being a woman leading an organization

It shows a very favorable trend of women in positions of responsibility. Inclusive leadership, greater listening, the desire to foster consensus, people orientation, attention to risk, management of crisis

situations, adaptation to change, greater empathy. I would highlight as the greatest added value the opportunity to bet on a new corporate culture and management style.

## Challenges and opportunities being a woman leading an organization

To achieve 40% of women in the organization, currently we are at 31%. That the work-life-balance does not fall only on women. Manage my personal life as well as continue to be a professional and team

leader, knowing how to prioritize, respect time and focus on what can really change the business and what cannot. Promote a culture and training in equality.

## Closing word

Gender equality is not only a human rights issue but a fundamental issue to ensure the competitiveness

of SMEs.



**Elena Jianu**

CEO, university lecturer & entrepreneur



**Eltra Logis**

**Sector: Logistics and transport services**



## Could you please introduce yourself?

My name is Elena Jianu, and I am a woman, university lecturer, entrepreneur, and the author of my own dreams! I try to perform all the functions above and most of the time I succeed. I have never worked in projects related to gender equality and I thank you for

thinking that I could be part of this project, but I chose to apply what I had learned, read, and seen in other countries with which my organization works, and I have success.

## Your organization and your activity sector in a few words

In a few words, the [Eltra Logis](#) company, founded in 2006, is a dynamic, young company that provides integrated logistics and transport services, as well as management and tax consulting. We have our own fleet of 37 trucks intended especially for the textile

industry, but also 11 refrigerators for the food and pharma industry, and spaces of over 4000 square meters in Romania and Spain where we offer value-added services for the textile and automotive industry.

## Gender equality in your sector and challenges encountered

I have met in my experience:

- Differences of approach regarding gender equality in developed countries and Romania that made me believe that we are still far behind the general evolution in Europe.
- The obviously misogynistic business attitude of male entrepreneurs in Romania.
- Total lack of openness at the Government

level in doing something concrete, not just declaring nice percentages in which women can reach up to 30% of 100% at the management level.

- Lack of empathy at the social level and in the business environment for the issue of women or sexual orientations.

## How to address these challenges

I think cluster organizations should get involved in:

- Permanent dialogue with its members.
- Negotiation with the Government for parliamentary initiatives of interest in this area as soon as possible and with a well-established

agenda.

- Cooperation with other gender organizations on doing something concrete related to the change in legislation and then to raise awareness of the change in the organizations.

## Recruitment difficulties

We don't face recruitment difficulties related to gender equality, the company I run is open and we are very democratic, the only problem lately is the

general lack of interest in work, no matter the gender, people in general do not want to work anymore, and it is a problem I have noticed in other industries, too.

## Awareness of gender equality rules in your sector

We are up to date with the legislation, and we update the procedures and Internal Order Regulation every 6 months, but we feel that usually something is stipulated in the legislation because it is mandatory,

but it is not put into practice, so, yes, it is necessary a training in this sense in all organizations and to make sure that their HR departments are open to discussions.

## Can other challenges be improved through gender mainstreaming?

Yes, it's true, we are practically opening PENELOPE's box, not to say Pandora's box, because the idea is to win in social evolution here. Obviously, it is the start

of a new era that can produce social movements, but it is necessary to assume them.

## Importance of gender equality for you and for your organization

For me it is important because I want confident, happy employees and if they do not feel that way at home or in the rest of society, the organization has to

lose and will be able to do very little for them. I am a woman and even I have often felt a different behavior towards me compared to a male entrepreneur.

## Added value of being a woman leading an organization

It's not difficult for me to be a female manager, I know what I want and above all I'm sure of myself, I'm a strong and self-sufficient woman when it

comes to decisions and therefore, I don't see why men would have any impediment to work with me.

## Closing word

I wish programs like PENELOPE to exist in reality and the message to be spread more in social media and I still hope for a society where women are equal to

men and not just in syrupy speeches. The world would be better and many of the social conflicts would not exist!



**Marianne Sytchkov**

Director

**LEXI-L**

**Sector: Organization and management  
consultancy/training/research**



## Could you please introduce yourself?

I became an entrepreneur in 1999 and, twenty years later, I did research on female entrepreneurship as part of a master's degree in Management & Business Administration. In 2021, I set up [LEXI-L](#), a company that studies the impact of digital technology on management practices and changes in the workplace.

At the same time, I am working on a doctoral project

in the field of entrepreneurship and its contribution to territorial dynamics, which allows me to go back and forth between the 'field' of my daily life as an entrepreneur and its 'theoretical analysis' through my research work, thereby gaining some distance. I am an entrepreneur because I'm passionate about developing projects and doing useful things. For me, female entrepreneurship is synonymous with economic independence and fulfilling projects.

## Your organization and your activity sector in a few words

Lexi-L focuses on managerial know-how and on interpersonal skills. Between the two, the storytelling method acts as a link and is used in each of our activities (organization and management consultancy, training, research). Using this method, which is unique in France, Lexi-L designs, pilots and supports projects in four areas: democratic

governance, gender equality, digital for people and territorial dynamics. We are keen to share our discoveries with as many people as possible through workshops and conferences for the general public, as well as digital literacy training courses accessible to all.

## Gender equality in your sector and challenges encountered

The main problem is the difficulty of recruiting women in the digital sector, and this problem is linked to the fact that young girls are not oriented towards the digital professions during their schooling.

"Barriers to girls' access to IT and digital careers" shows how this very gendered approach is established very early on. My aim in setting up workshops and a guidance scheme is to open the doors to these professions and try to reverse the trend so that girls and those around them change their outlook.

The Epitech survey conducted in 2022 among parents and young people of career guidance age shows that 80% of parents and young people in the sample believe that digital technology is a promising, lucrative sector that can have an impact on the future and help change the world. Yet only 33% of parents advise their daughters to go into this sector! Their parents, grandparents and teachers would rather advise them against this sector, thinking that it would be "too difficult in terms of the pace of life, too masculine, too sexist, too time-consuming..."

The other problem is the huge gap between men's and women's pay. An URSSAF study on entrepreneurship figures shows this. As this organization has access to our contributions, it has the data to carry out such a study as it is very difficult otherwise to have figures for entrepreneurs who are incorporated, i.e. legal persons, whereas when you are self-employed or a liberal profession, you are a natural person, and there the statistics on remuneration are much more easily accessible.

The study by the Centre Hubertine Auclert on

To understand the difference in remuneration, which can vary between 15% and 40% depending on the sector, you have to ask yourself what makes you successful or not. Even if you can determine your own salary as a woman entrepreneur, you don't always have the same ambition as a man, and it's this ambition in particular that will determine whether or not you'll be able to generate the income to earn the salary you've chosen. This is the problem with women's education, which tells them that they have to make do with "little" and therefore little ambition, and that they have to put themselves at the service

of others.

Entrepreneurship is a lever towards gender equality because it's the opportunity to take economic power. But if you don't have power, you can demand all the rights you want, but you won't get them. We are seeing a positive trend among female entrepreneurs to improve their profitability and take steps to improve their performance and earn better remuneration. What's more, there are "women investors" who have a targeted approach to female entrepreneurship.

## How to address these challenges

The first lever is to break down stereotypes and work with the very young on their orientation, so that in France we don't have this distribution of girls in literary streams and boys in scientific streams. These stereotypes are very powerful, as shown by a study by CNRS researcher Pascal Huguët: when he says "we're going to do this geometry exercise", the boys succeed and the girls don't, and when, to do the same exercise, he says "we're going to do a drawing", the girls succeed, and the boys don't.

So it is not enough to tell girls to go into math/science to become engineers, because that doesn't work. It is essential to start at a very young age to break down stereotypes. For the digital sector, it's all about showing girls that the jobs in this sector are not what they think!

This is how I developed two actions with my company:

- A workshop aimed at 12–14-year-old girls who are beginning to wonder about their future direction. The aim is to introduce them to computer code through a story based on the discovery of an unknown and mysterious language, in order to introduce them to the digital world in a different way from the math/science approach.
- An orientation and information tool on digital professions developed thanks to skills sponsorship and contained in a [smartphone game](#) to enable everyone (as it's open to girls and boys in the interests of gender equality) to discover which professions exist in relation to

their own abilities (creativity, logic, memory, etc.) and also to identify on a map the different places and types of training to access these professions, and finally to try their hand at the different tasks involved in these professions. The idea for this game arose from the observation that young people are often at a loss when it comes to making career choices, and that the vast amount of information available to them doesn't necessarily give them the answers they need.

Another lever would be to have a statistical measurement tool on entrepreneurship when it is a company creation, i.e., legal persons (legal entities) and natural persons (individuals such as liberal professions and self-entrepreneurs) to specifically monitor the development of female entrepreneurship and in particular the pay gap.

The cluster has an important role to play because, through the network it leads, it can guide several companies towards professional equality and therefore have a greater impact than isolated actions. And then, thanks to the cluster, I have been able to talk to the heads of schools that provide training in the digital sector.

I have also been able to talk to other company directors of different sizes. They have major recruitment problems for certain types of profile, especially network engineers. They can't find a man or a woman to recruit, so we can't just turn up and tell them to achieve their parity targets. Talking together allows us to compare different points of view. The

cluster helps to create these real-life, human

encounters, and that is very useful.

## Recruitment difficulties

There is no point in telling an SME to recruit on a parity basis if it can only find a minority of girls when they graduate from digital training courses. It is a very complex problem that we need to try and solve at a very early stage (at the level of career guidance) and with a number of players: institutions, associations, clusters, entrepreneurs, and researchers.

It's interesting to use entrepreneurship as a way of revealing talents for career guidance. You can be an entrepreneur and if it doesn't work out, it's no big deal. It's a self-revelatory experience that helps you get to know yourself better and find your bearings.

There are recruitment problems everywhere, but particularly in the digital, construction and health and social sectors, i.e., professions that are either highly skilled or physically demanding and not sufficiently valued for training. There are sectors such as construction and the army, where the fact that girls are invited to train is highlighted. They are trying to move towards gender diversity because it's part of

the specifications and, in theory, it would solve the problem, but in reality, girls don't go into these professions.

I am involved in a course for construction apprentices and there are 2 girls out of 20. In my view, the recruitment problem won't be solved simply by taking action on gender equality. What is more, it's more complicated than that because the inequalities that are created are often systemic. Women are more likely to find themselves single parents and more likely to find themselves in precarious situations, because as soon as one difficulty arises, other difficulties will accumulate.

Gender equality in the workplace goes beyond that. If we were to achieve gender equality in the workplace, we would be moving towards a society that creates more value, because gender diversity always produces more ideas and much more interaction. So collectively we would be richer and more innovative in every field.

## Awareness of gender equality regulations in your sector

The same obligations do not apply to all companies. Only companies with more than 50 employees must calculate their gender equality index. Companies with more than 250 employees must also publish the results for each indicator in the index.

The majority of companies are smaller, since almost

70% of French companies have between zero and one employee, so they are not affected by these obligations. When you have a very small company, with up to 5-10 employees, it's not so much a question of parity. It is more a question of the difficulty of recruiting, because the benefits and salaries are not the same as in larger companies.

## Can other challenges be improved through gender mainstreaming?

There are plenty of issues that can be partially resolved by taking action on gender equality. Retention is a real issue in the digital sector. Women often leave their jobs in the digital sector because they are put off by a sector that is ill-suited to their pace of life (working in start-up mode, until late in the evening). As this is a very male-dominated sector, there are no working hours or working arrangements for mothers. It's very difficult to balance work and family life.

Maternity leave often results in women losing out on pay rises, and since pay negotiations are on an individual basis with no reference to equal skills and equal tasks, women are frequently short-changed. What is more, they don't dare ask for an increase, expecting what's on offer as proof of recognition, whereas men are more likely to push open the door to ask for a raise.

Around the age of 35, women often leave their jobs in companies of the digital sector because they are not



being promoted, even though they are starting to develop their expertise. Not feeling respected, poorly paid, etc., they often opt for entrepreneurship. It's also a way for men in the sector to reinvent themselves!

Normandy is very rural, and in these areas, there are few activities and therefore few jobs, but professional diversity is not going to change that. To revitalize rural areas, we need to rethink our relationship with the land.

## Importance of gender equality for you and for your organization

As I said at the beginning of the interview, I have done some research on female entrepreneurship and my company designs, pilots and supports projects in the field of gender equality. For example, to help resolve the gender imbalance in the digital professions, I

offer a workshop aimed at girls aged 12-14 who are beginning to wonder about their career choices, with the aim of introducing them to computer code, and a guidance and information system on the digital professions.

## Added value, challenges, and opportunities of being a woman leading an organization

So for me, the main qualities needed to set up a business are tenacity, a mixture of recklessness and optimism, and a taste for adventure. It doesn't matter

whether you're a man or a woman. It's the same when it comes to running a business. It's an experience that shapes us.

## Closing word

To make progress on gender equality, we need to see things not just from the point of view of women or men, but from the point of view of humanity as a whole, otherwise we will be depriving ourselves of half the solutions (intellectual resources and energy) and therefore of half the performance. Gender

equality has the potential to take us a long way!

We can't do it alone: we need institutions, companies, associations, and politicians, because it's in society's interest not to deprive ourselves of half the talent!



## Andra Marcu

Director of the Center for Continuous Training and Technological Information and research assistant

#14



**Danubius University**

**Sector: Economic Sciences, Business Administration, Communication, and International Relations**



### Could you please introduce yourself?

I am a graduate of the Faculty of Economic Sciences of the Lower Danube University in Galati and starting with the year 2023 a doctorate in management. I have been working at the [Danubius University in Galati](#) since 2017, in different roles. Currently, I am the director of the Center for Continuous Training and Technological Information and research assistant in the HORIZON-CL5-2021- D6-01-09 project "Deployment and Assessment of Predictive modeling, environmentally sustainable and emerging digital technologies, and tools for improving the resilience of IWW against Climate change and other

extremes (PLOT0)".

I met the world of clusters 10 years ago, when together with Mr. Voicu Costica (founder of the Lower Danube Health Innovation cluster) and with the support of the Danubius University in Galati, we laid the foundations of the first clusters in Galati County: Romanian River Transport Cluster, IT&C Cluster Lower Danube, Green Solutions Low Danube Cluster as well as the Cluster Innovative For Health Lower Danube.

### Your organization and your activity sector in a few words

Danubius University in Galati is a member and an active promoter of the clusters in the South-East Region of Romania and is recognized in the space between the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea as an international university of excellence, an open and stimulating environment for personal and entrepreneurial development, as well as for the constant exchange of ideas and values. It was founded 31 years ago, and it currently includes four faculties: the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Economic

Sciences and Business Administration, the Faculty of Communication, and International Relations, the Faculty of Behavioral and Applied Sciences, with 10 undergraduate programs and 9 graduate programs masters.

At the same time, we are the first university in the country with a rector of American origin, Dr. Steve O. Michael, international expert in the field of higher education.

### Gender equality in your sector and challenges encountered

The personnel policy of the Danubius University in Galati supports gender equality, thus in top management positions there are 35% women and

65% men, in middle management positions there are 85% women and 15% men, and the total employees consists of 51% women and 49% men.

### How to address these challenges

The existing clusters at the level of the South-East region are active promoters of events through which gender equality policies are disseminated.

In 2022 the Danubius University laid the foundations of a project, [Phenomenal Women Series](#), which has

capitalized on the collective wisdom, experience and energy of women of different ages and qualifications, emphasizing, at the same time, the importance of supporting the community and of involvement in its life, the country and the whole world. The participants of this event reached the highest professional

heights and achieved enviable results in their careers, becoming an example in their fields of activity.

Another remarkable event took place at the end of March 2023. The students of the Leo Danubius Club and the [GirlUp Association](#), together with the Student

Services Department of the Danubius University in Galați, organized the first edition of the Empowering Women Conference, with the theme "Abuse and the way in which women face it". The event was a real success, so the organizers propose to hold a new edition by the end of this year.

## Recruitment difficulties

At the level of the ecosystem in which we operate, we have not encountered any difficulties in recruitment. Danubius University in Galați supports gender

equality, and this fact is reflected both in the staff recruitment policy and in the student admission policy.

## Awareness of gender equality regulations in your sector

Both our organization and the other entities that are part of the clusters in the region are aware of the gender equality policies as well as the related rules. Through the activities organized we were able to ensure an efficient communication channel with different categories of stakeholders.

We believe that this information, organized in various forms, such as workshops, round tables, should take place frequently, and the clusters, due to the fact that they have integrated the rules of gender equality into their own policy, are considered the main promoters.

## Can other challenges be improved through gender mainstreaming?

Certainly. Over time, the rise of women has been observed in increasingly diversified areas of activity, some of them considered years ago to be exclusively

male professions. This rise has been made possible by demonstrating the ability to maintain a positive balance between personal and professional life.

## Importance of gender equality for you and for your organization

It has been observed that when the work teams are made up of both female and male persons, in a

balanced number, the solutions identified in solving the challenges are much more creative.

## Added value, challenges, and opportunities of being a woman leading an organization

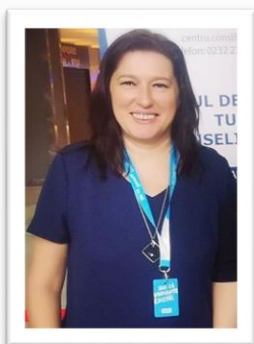
From my point of view, the advantage of being a woman at the head of an entity/structure consists in the ability to adapt to new situations in a very short

time, the orientation towards creative solutions, as well as maintaining a positive climate within the said entity/structure.

## Closing word

The struggle for the integration of gender equality, from the women's side, began many years ago, and history shows us their successes, as well as the positive impact they had on the whole society.

Through this message, I want to convey to all categories/groups of people who feel discriminated against to be united and never stop fighting for their rights.



## Mihaela Cojan

Psychologist and Career guidance counselor

***"Gheorghe Asachi" Technical University in Iași***  
**Sector: Engineering Sciences, Architecture and Urbanism**



### Could you please introduce yourself?

In my over 20 years of practical experience as a psychologist, I have always had the privilege of working with and for people, in various contexts, organisations, teams, companies, systems and projects. For seven years already I have had the joy of being an employee of one of the largest Universities in Romania, within the Career Counseling and Guidance Center of the [Gheorghe Asachi Technical University of Iași](#) (TUIASI), where I work, of course, with people, especially students.

Apart from the usual norm of eight hours a day as a career guidance counselor, since the first year of employment I have had the opportunity to work in projects with external funding as a counselor, trainer, or expert, and since last year I have been appointed by the university management in the role of Coordinator of the Gender Equality Commission at the University.

### Your organization and your activity sector in a few words

TUIASI is among the oldest and best-known institutions in Romania. Being an advanced research and education university, its mission is to carry out specific activities of creation, innovative valorization of knowledge and its transfer to society in the fundamental fields (Engineering Sciences, Architecture and Urbanism), as well as in

interdisciplinary and complementary fields, in the local community, at the regional, national, and international level. The University assumes, in accordance with the mission and objectives adopted in the University Charter, the role of an educational, scientific, and cultural research forum.

### Gender equality in your sector and challenges encountered

The strategy for gender equality for the period 2022-2025 (GE Strategy) was developed by the "Gheorghe Asachi" Technical University of Iași based on contributions from the entire university community and targets all categories of employees and students at the University.

The Strategy for Gender Equality was developed in accordance with the provisions of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers 2015-2019, the European Strategy for Gender Equality 2020-2025 and the guidelines provided by the new Union Framework Program for Research and Innovation, Horizon Europe, on gender equality plans. The

strategy for gender equality for the period 2022-2025 expresses the commitment of the management of TUIASI to respect the principles of equality, diversity, inclusion, and non-discrimination in all its fields of activity and to guarantee a safe and fair environment for all members of the university community.

Based on the GE Strategy, TUIASI developed the [Gender Equality Plan 2022-2025](#) (GEP), through which it assumes concrete objectives and measures regarding the better integration of the gender dimension in its entire activity, as well as indicators to measure the progress of implementation and of its review.

The plan for gender equality for the period 2022-2025 must be seen in correlation with the Strategic Plan of the "Gheorghe Asachi" Technical University of Iași for the period 2021-2024, as well as with the Internal Regulation, the University Charter, the Code of Ethics and university professional deontology and The collective labor contract at the level of the "Gheorghe

Asachi" Technical University from Iași, being the reference document for all those involved in the implementation of the strategic objectives for ensuring gender equality in the University. So far there have been no particular challenges/difficulties in its implementation.

## Recruitment difficulties

It's not applicable. Access to any post or function is free to any gender, without any restriction, barrier or

limiting criterion.

## Awareness of gender equality regulations in your sector

Consolidating the University's mission and values, the GE Strategy and GE Plan were brought to the attention of all members of the academic community (students, teaching staff, auxiliary/associate staff), with the aim of guaranteeing and promoting equality and diversity in accessing knowledge and acquiring skills for all TUIASI employees and students.

The strategic objectives are translated into specific actions aimed at protecting the fair and inclusive

organizational culture and promoting gender equality at all levels, addressing in a proactive manner the raising of awareness on the issue of gender equality, the development of skills and competences in the field, ensuring the balance gender in decision-making structures and processes, including recruitment and selection processes, gender equality in teaching and research activities, as well as gender mainstreaming in teaching programs and the entire research process.

## Can other challenges be improved through gender mainstreaming?

Certainly, these being explicit objectives of the implementation of the Strategy and Plan for Gender

Equality.

## Importance of gender equality for you and for your organization

For the simple fact that each of us, regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, socio-economic status, background, physical appearance, personal beliefs, etc., has equal rights in terms of access to education and work. And to quote from the

European Convention of Human Rights, no person can be subjected to discrimination by public authorities for reasons related to, for example, skin color, sex, language, political or religious beliefs or origins."

## Added value of being a woman leading an organization

Although within the University I do not have any leadership position that is included in the organizational chart, with my appointment as GEP Coordinator I was given the opportunity, but also the challenge, to assume this role as well. I don't think that being a woman gives me any advantage or

disadvantage. Perhaps only my profession gives me an extra asset, at least in terms of the role mentioned above, the dimension of diversity and inclusion being part of the very core of the profession of psychologist.

## Closing word

Personally, I believe that the next step would be to integrate gender equality approaches into a much more comprehensive one, in the form of a Strategy for Inclusion and Equal Opportunities, an objective I am already working on as an Inclusion Expert within

the consortium European university newly created this year under the name INGENIUM, of which Personally from Iasi is a part, along with 9 others from all over Europe.





## Ana Belén Barqueros Jiménez

Head of the Women's Secretariat

**UGT (General Union of Workers) of the  
Region of Murcia**  
**Sector: Defending labor rights**

#16



**UGT**  
Región de Murcia

### Could you please introduce yourself?

My name is Ana Belén Barqueros Jiménez and, at present, I am the Head of the Women's Secretariat of the General Union of Workers ([UGT](#)) in the Region of Murcia, Spain. I am a career civil servant of the Administration and Services Staff of the University of Murcia and I have a degree in Business Administration and Management.

Your organization and your activity sector in a few words

I work in a trade union organization that fights for the labor rights of working people, while raising awareness about social realities for the achievement of a fairer and more egalitarian society.

### Gender equality in your sector and challenges encountered

One of the main challenges is to achieve the elimination of gender gaps and inequalities at the labor level between women and men, in access to jobs, career advancement, training, remuneration, female under-representation, reconciliation of work, family and personal life and in situations of sexual and gender-based harassment.

Workers (UGT) in the Region of Murcia on the occasion of Women's Day in 2023, details the figures that support the gender gaps in the labor market. Another fundamental challenge is to make visible and raise awareness in society of the existence of the various forms of sexist violence against women and the need to provide regulatory, personal, and economic resources for their elimination.

The latest [report](#) prepared by the General Union of

### How to address these challenges

Equality plans and pay transparency regulations are tools that can be useful in the labor sphere, together with regulations with a gender perspective such as labor reforms, pension reforms, or the negotiation of minimum wages or job evaluation systems in companies.

Situations of male violence require affective and sexual education in educational centers and detection and prevention mechanisms through laws and agreements at national and regional level, as well as specific action protocols for potential victims.

### Recruitment difficulties

Currently, SMEs may have difficulties if they are not able to assume that the labor market is advancing and is subject to changes in its conception and development. If they try to maintain the traditional barriers, rejecting gender equality or diversity in the different jobs, not admitting that they must offer decent wages, or that the co-responsible conciliation

or flexible working hours is not only a requirement of the worker, but also a way to increase their productivity, in this case their hiring options will be difficult.

On the other hand, most SMEs require a cultural change that eliminates the horizontal segregation of

jobs and the excessive presence of women in some

positions or men in others.

## Efforts to create more gender equality offers are they a solution to overcome these difficulties

A worker who is valued accordingly, in terms of remuneration and personal status, with the enjoyment of a real and effective work-life balance, with the possibility of promotion according to her training, and with positions of equal value and equal pay, will always be more committed and therefore

more productive. And this does not happen to many women who continue to suffer direct and indirect discrimination at the workplace or simply with different treatment or lack of opportunity compared to men.

## Awareness of gender equality regulations and how to comply with it

My experience in the negotiation of gender equality plans or the contact with them through delegates shows me that there is a deep lack of knowledge about equality regulations. From the most fundamental organic law to the latest decree or regulation in effect. There are always exceptions, of course, but it would be interesting if SMEs could opt for more training and information in this regard.

The lack of knowledge of the different regulations generates, on many occasions, a conflict with your staff when they demand the fulfillment of their rights. Or a conflict with trade union organizations in case of negotiations of agreements, or in the refusal to apply some of these regulations and that can even reach a labor inspection.

## Initiatives to help SMEs in this process

Training, always training, through courses, conferences, webinars, or through examples or references of companies that are successfully

advancing by applying the gender perspective in any of their areas.

## Can other challenges be improved through gender mainstreaming?

Integrating the gender perspective, with gender impact reports, or analysis of qualitative and quantitative data to obtain a diagnosis, which puts gender inequalities on the table and the implementation of the necessary measures to

correct them, is the basis for, together with the approval of regulations also with a gender perspective, eliminating gender gaps in access to the labor market, in access to positions of responsibility, in care tasks, or in remuneration.

## Importance of gender equality for you and for your organization

One of the main demands of the General Union of Workers (UGT) is the achievement of a society that progresses in equality, eliminating inequalities of treatment and opportunity between women and men that, as the data show, are maintained in the labor

and social sphere. Personally, I consider it fair and essential in a society of progress, and undoubtedly, a difficult challenge to meet in the short term because, like any other change, it usually generates fear and rejection at first.

## Experiences or projects on gender equality that you are proud of

The most rewarding experiences are those related to intervention and action in situations of discrimination

or disregard for women's labor rights. Also, giving training in conferences or seminars.

## Added value of being a woman leading an organization

Maintaining a balance in terms of the presence of men and women in positions of responsibility is positive for a company or organization, not only for its image by showing its commitment to equality, but

also for having good professionals who do not have the opportunity to access other companies that maintain their glass ceiling, despising their abilities.

## Challenges and opportunities being a woman leading an organization

To banish stereotypes and the social demand that, because you are a woman, you must prove your worth twice as much when occupying a position of responsibility, as well as to make it clear that the

implementation of any professional challenge does not depend in any case on the fact of being a man or a woman.

## Closing word

98% of our business fabric is made up of SMEs. It is complicated to develop equality regulations for small companies, those with less than 50 employees, so their voluntary participation in policies of equal treatment and opportunity between women and men

can be extremely useful to advance in this direction, not by imposition, but by their own conviction, for having understood that this approach is positive for the company as a whole, for its progress and evolution.



## Malgorzata Woch

EU Projects Manager

**MEDEF Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes**

**Sector: Entrepreneurship**



### Could you please introduce yourself?

My name is Malgorzata Woch, and I am an EU Projects Manager at [MEDEF AURA](#) (Mouvement des Entreprises de France Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, France).

I have been working in international cooperation and

programs for the past 10 years, previously in the Higher Education Institutes sector, today in private business. I am a graduated from Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Poland with a MA in International Relations.

### Your organization and your activity sector in a few words

A non-governmental organization working to support

the development of regional companies.

### Gender equality in your sector and challenges encountered

France has made significant strides towards achieving gender equality in the business sector. In 2011, the French parliament passed a law requiring all companies with more than 50 employees to negotiate an agreement with their employees to promote gender equality in the workplace. This law has been effective in raising awareness about the issue and encouraging companies to take concrete steps to address gender disparities.

In 2019, the French government introduced new legislation aimed at closing the gender pay gap. This law requires companies with more than 250 employees to publish their gender pay gap data annually and to take steps to address any disparities. Companies that fail to comply with these requirements face fines of up to 1% of their total payroll.

In addition, France has introduced quotas for women on boards of directors. Since 2017, companies with more than 500 employees and a board of directors must have at least 40% of their members be women. This has led to an increase in the number of women in leadership positions in French companies.

Despite these efforts, gender inequality still exists in the French business sector. Women are underrepresented in top management positions and are more likely to be in low-paying jobs. The gender pay gap also persists, although it has been narrowing in recent years.

Overall, while there is still work to be done, France has made significant progress towards achieving gender equality in the business sector.

### How to address these challenges

Training, upskilling, and mentoring, empowering coaching activities, sensibilization campaigns to the

top management that has a capacity to change the current situation.

## Recruitment difficulties in SMEs

Yes, especially in sectors where manual workers are required.

## Efforts to create more gender equality offers are they a solution to overcome these difficulties

sectors that currently lack a significant portion of their workforce should prioritize diversification efforts by actively seeking to attract and engage more women. This strategic approach is essential to

meeting market demands, and it should extend to fostering increased representation of women in managerial positions.

## Awareness of gender equality regulations and how to comply with it

I believe SMEs are aware, but not all will be voluntarily making the effort to be aligned.

## Initiatives to help SMEs in this process

Via all our actions we try to underline and sensitize the SMEs on gender related standards. Sensibilization campaigns and training to HR staff

and managers, coaching to concerned women, reference persons on company level, involvement of public bodies and administration.

## Importance of gender equality for you and for your organization

Gender equality is a fundamental human right that ensures all individuals, regardless of their gender, have equal access to opportunities, resources, and benefits in all aspects of life. Gender equality promotes social, economic, and political fairness, allowing individuals to reach their full potential and contribute fully to society.

For organizations like ours, promoting gender equality is essential for creating a diverse and

inclusive workplace. A diverse and inclusive workplace benefits everyone by promoting innovation, creativity, and better decision-making. It also helps attract and retain top talent, which can lead to increased productivity and profitability. In summary, gender equality is important because it promotes fairness, inclusivity, and diversity, leading to better outcomes for individuals and organizations alike.

## Experiences or projects related to gender equality that you are proud of

There are several ongoing projects in France related to gender equality and gender mainstreaming. Here are a few examples:

- The Gender Equality Grand Plan: Launched in 2018, this initiative aims to promote gender equality in all areas of French society, from education to the workplace. It includes measures to increase women's representation in politics, reduce the gender pay gap, and combat gender-based violence.
- The 2019 Gender Equality Index: This index measures progress toward gender equality in the workplace, taking into account factors such as pay, leadership positions, and work-life balance. It is designed to help companies identify areas where they need to improve their policies and practices.
- The [#NousToutes Movement](#): This grassroots movement, launched in 2018, aims to combat sexual harassment and assault in France. It has organized several large-scale protests and campaigns calling for systemic change to address the issue.
- The Gender Equality Certification: This certification program, launched in 2019, allows companies and organizations to demonstrate their commitment to gender

equality by meeting specific criteria related to policies and practices. It is designed to encourage companies to take concrete steps to promote gender equality in the workplace.

- The Ministry of Gender Equality: Established in 2012, this government ministry is

responsible for coordinating policies related to gender equality and promoting women's rights in France. It works closely with other government agencies and civil society organizations to advance gender equality in all areas of French society.

## Added value of being a woman in position of responsibility

- Diversity of perspective: Women can bring a unique perspective to leadership roles due to their diverse experiences and perspectives. This can lead to more creative and innovative solutions, as well as a greater ability to understand and meet the needs of a diverse range of stakeholders.
- Empathy and emotional intelligence: Women are often seen as more empathetic and emotionally intelligent than men, which can be valuable in leadership roles. This can help leaders to better understand the needs and motivations of their team members, and to create a more supportive and collaborative work environment.
- Role modeling: Women in leadership roles can serve as role models for other women

and girls, inspiring them to pursue leadership positions and helping to break down gender barriers in the workplace.

- Improved team dynamics: Research has shown that teams with a diverse range of perspectives and experiences tend to be more effective and innovative. Having women in leadership positions can help to create a more diverse team, which can lead to better outcomes.

Overall, having women in positions of responsibility can bring a range of benefits to organizations and society as a whole. However, it's important to recognize that women should be valued and promoted based on their skills and qualifications, rather than just their gender.

## Challenges and opportunities being a woman in position of responsibility

Challenges:

- Unequal pay – present salary differences between women and men.
- Work-Life/Family Balance – challenging when holding a position of responsibility (can lead to stress, burnout, and difficulty in managing double responsibilities).

Opportunities:

- Mentor/role models in the closest environment (professional and private one). Women in positions of responsibility can serve

as role models for other women, inspiring them to pursue leadership roles and break through the glass ceiling.

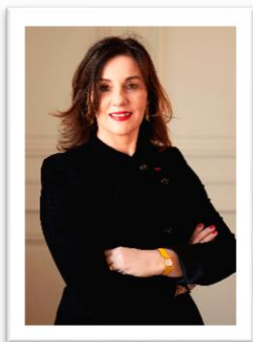
- Breaking Stereotypes: Women in positions of responsibility can help break gender stereotypes by proving that women can be successful leaders.
- Male managers supervising women with an appropriate supportive and open attitude – Empowering and encouraging women to further career growth (an easy solution that we forget to take into account, very very efficient).

## Closing word

Advancing gender equality in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is crucial for creating a more inclusive and equitable workplace. SMEs shall

foster a culture of inclusion and respect, provide training and development opportunities, or review and revise hiring practices.





## Delphine Remy-Boutang

Founder JFD & Business Angel

*Journée de la femme digitale (JFD)*

Sector: Tech industry

#18



### A short introduction

Delphine Remy-Boutang began her career at Euro RSCG Paris. She moved to London in 1997 to join IBM as Marketing Director, then EMEA Communications Director, and became Social Media Worldwide Director from 2006 till 2012.

In 2012, she founded in London and in Paris, a strategic communications group: the Bureau. At the same time, Delphine launched [JFD](#) (Journée de la Femme Digitale/Digital Women's Day), the growth

accelerator for women in tech in Europe and Africa.

An expert on the subjects of transformation, female entrepreneurship, and the place of women in tech, Delphine was promoted to the rank of Chevalier in the National Order of the Legion of Honour in 2016. She is listed in Forbes USA magazine's 2018 ranking of women who are disrupting the digital sector in France. Delphine is also an Angel Investor and has a 100% tech, 100% women investment thesis.

### About the organization and its activity sector in a few words

Founded in 2012 by Delphine Remy-Boutang, JFD mobilizes public, private and media players in Europe, Africa and since 2023 also in Canada, around three priority areas: education, role models/empowerment and funding.

JFD's mission is to increase the representation of women in the tech industry and to help a new generation of leaders to emerge. Over the past 10 years, JFD has become more than just an annual event: it has become an international growth accelerator for women taking bold technological challenges and betting on disruptive innovations to

change the world.

It is also a think tank that provides concrete responses to the findings of its annual studies: the Margaret Awards, the Margaret Foundation, the JFD Club, the White Shirt Movement, the [JFD Manifesto for an Inclusive Digital World](#) and the book "[Women who change the world](#)".

In figures, JFD is more than 10,000 talented people trained, 15 million people reached internationally, and more than 800 tech start-ups accelerated in Europe and Africa.

### Gender equality in your sector and challenges encountered

The technological transformations of recent decades have been seen through the eyes of white men with similar educational backgrounds and social origins. A single vision is dangerous for our economy.

Today, we know that by giving women every opportunity to succeed, we are creating more jobs and more value for our economy.

In fact, more and more women are taking action to

meet the environmental and societal challenges we face thanks to tech. According to our 11th annual JFD "[Invest in Her](#)" study, while 27% of impact start-ups have been founded or co-founded by women, this figure rises to 34% for start-ups less than 5 years old.

Impact is a high-potential segment, particularly attractive to investors, but financing often remains a major challenge for these women entrepreneurs, who are crucial to creating a better world.

Back in 2016, the European Investment Bank estimated that the financing gap between men and women resulted in an overall loss of around 370

billion euros for the economy, or 2.8% of the EU's annual GDP.

## How to address these challenges

A double shock is needed – societal and legislative – to create equal opportunity. We should direct more investment towards women entrepreneurs who are paving the way for the future by providing technological solutions to help our societies and the environment. I recommend three concrete actions:

- A funding cap for companies that do not have a female co-founder.
- Investment funds will have to require parity on the board if they are financing a company worth more than €1 million.
- Set up an international observatory on tech companies founded by women.

Our network is able to break the stereotypes, work

## Recruitment difficulties

Within my network and the companies that I engage with, recruitment difficulties are indeed a common challenge. The tech industry, in particular, faces a shortage of skilled professionals, which makes it even more challenging to attract and hire top talent.

In this context, gender mainstreaming and gender equality approaches can indeed offer a solution to overcome these recruitment difficulties:

- Tapping into a larger talent pool: By promoting gender equality and creating an inclusive environment, companies open themselves up to a larger pool of qualified candidates. Breaking down gender barriers and biases in the recruitment process allows companies to access a broader range of skills, experiences, and perspectives. This can ultimately lead to finding the best-suited individuals for the job.
- Enhancing company reputation and employer branding: Embracing gender equality sends a strong message to both current and potential employees. It demonstrates that a company values diversity, equal opportunities, and inclusivity. Such a reputation can make an organization more attractive to candidates,

with investors, educate and guide them to be more inclusive. At the same time, we help the government in their gender equality policy in tech, with game changing initiatives.

On 8 March 2023, we organized at the Ministry of Economy in France, a matchmaking between 100+ women founders and investors. Tired of hearing investors tell us that women receive less funding because they are less present. We were proud to direct investment towards a hundred or so women entrepreneurs in just 2 hours. To do so we have joined forces with other networks like France Digitale (a startup network), [Femmes Business Angels](#) (Women Business Angels), [Leia Capital](#) (a collective of women investors), etc.

especially those who prioritize working in an environment that values and supports gender equality.

- Fostering innovation and creativity: Gender diversity within teams has been shown to drive innovation and creativity. When diverse individuals with different backgrounds and perspectives come together, they bring unique insights and approaches to problem-solving. This can lead to more innovative solutions and a competitive edge in the market.
- Retaining top talent: Gender mainstreaming not only helps in attracting talent but also in retaining it. Creating an inclusive and supportive work environment where everyone feels valued and empowered leads to higher employee satisfaction and engagement. When employees feel that they can grow and thrive within an organization, they are more likely to stay long-term, reducing turnover rates and the associated costs.

It is important to note that gender mainstreaming should not be seen as a quick fix to recruitment difficulties. It requires a comprehensive approach that addresses biases, offers equal opportunities for

career growth and development, and ensures a supportive work environment for all employees.

At JFD, we firmly believe that diversity and gender equality are key drivers of success in the digital

world. By actively promoting these principles, companies can overcome recruitment difficulties, unlock new sources of talent, and create a more inclusive and innovative workforce.

## Awareness of gender equality regulations in your sector

Gender equality has gained significant attention in recent years, and companies in my network are increasingly aware of the importance of adhering to gender equality rules. However, it is important to note that awareness levels and understanding of how to comply with these rules can vary among organizations.

While some companies have proactively taken steps to implement gender equality measures, others may still be in the early stages of developing their understanding and processes. That said, there is a growing recognition that creating an inclusive and gender-equal workplace is not just a legal obligation, but also a strategic advantage.

To support companies in their journey towards gender equality compliance, a range of resources and initiatives can be helpful:

- **Training and education:** Conducting training sessions and workshops on gender equality can raise awareness and provide employees with the knowledge and skills needed to foster an inclusive work environment. These sessions can cover topics such as unconscious bias, gender stereotypes, and inclusive leadership.
- **Webinars and online resources:** Offering webinars and providing access to online resources, such as guidelines, toolkits, and best practices, can be valuable in helping companies navigate gender equality rules and implement effective measures. These resources can be easily accessible and offer practical advice tailored to specific industries or organizational contexts.
- **Dedicated internal resources:** Appointing a reference person or a team within the company who specializes in gender equality and can provide guidance and support. This individual or team can serve as a point of contact for employees, address their

concerns, and ensure compliance with gender equality rules. They can also play a crucial role in driving organizational change and fostering a gender-inclusive culture.

- **Collaboration and sharing of best practices:** Encouraging companies to collaborate and share their experiences, challenges, and successes can be immensely beneficial. Platforms like conferences, forums, or industry networks, such as JFD, can facilitate such collaborations, allowing companies to learn from each other, exchange ideas, and collectively work towards gender equality.

It is important to note that achieving gender equality requires a holistic approach, involving not just compliance with rules but also a commitment to cultural and systemic change. Companies should strive for an inclusive environment where gender equality is embedded in their values, policies, and practices.

At JFD, we are committed to supporting companies in their journey towards gender equality. Through our initiatives, events, and collaborations, we aim to provide resources, knowledge-sharing platforms, and opportunities for companies to learn, network, and collectively work towards creating more gender-inclusive workplaces.

Within the JFD Club, our network of women and men in tech, we have +500 members: business leaders (start-ups, SMEs, ETIs, CAC40s), media and public players (government, regional council, MPs, etc.). The JFD Club responds to the needs of women in tech by giving them the opportunity to meet and share experiences, a source of value and job creation. We offer our members regular meetings to boost their projects and businesses. We organize exclusive events throughout the year. Renowned personalities are invited to each meeting to network, exchange ideas, share experiences and generate growth.

## Can other challenges be addressed through gender mainstreaming?

Absolutely, working on gender mainstreaming can bring solutions to various challenges that organizations face.

Gender mainstreaming creates an inclusive and supportive work environment where women feel valued and have equal opportunities for growth and development. By addressing issues such as gender biases, promoting equal opportunities for advancement, and fostering a culture of inclusivity, organizations can improve retention rates of female employees. When women feel supported and empowered, they are more likely to stay with the organization long-term, contributing to its success.

Besides, by conducting gender pay audits, identifying and rectifying wage disparities, and implementing transparent salary structures, organizations can promote fairness and eliminate gender-based wage inequalities. Ensuring that women are compensated equally not only contributes to their retention but also enhances overall employee satisfaction and trust.

Also, creating policies and practices to support work-life balance for all employees is needed, including flexible work arrangements, parental leave policies, and supportive childcare options. By implementing these measures, we can support both women and men in balancing their professional and personal responsibilities. This contributes to higher job satisfaction, increased productivity, and improved overall well-being, ultimately aiding in employee retention.

Gender mainstreaming can play a role in addressing the challenge of populating rural areas by creating opportunities and support systems for women. This includes providing access to education and training, promoting entrepreneurship and employment opportunities, and offering mentorship and networking programs. By empowering women in rural areas and addressing their unique needs, we can contribute to the growth and development of these communities.

## Importance of gender equality for you and for your network

Gender equality is of utmost importance to me personally and JFD, for several compelling reasons.

First, for social justice and fairness! It is about ensuring that every individual, regardless of their gender, has equal rights, opportunities, and access to resources. Personally, I strongly believe in the inherent value and dignity of every person, and gender equality is a crucial aspect of upholding those values.

When women have equal opportunities to thrive and succeed, it benefits not only them but also society as a whole. It brings diverse perspectives, creativity, and innovation to organizations, leading to better decision-making and improved outcomes.

Moreover, I think that gender equality is closely linked to economic growth and sustainability. Numerous studies have shown that gender equality has positive effects on economies, leading to increased productivity, innovation, and competitiveness. By ensuring that women have equal access to education, employment, and entrepreneurship, we can unlock their economic potential and drive sustainable development.

For JFD, gender equality in tech is at the core of our mission. We are dedicated to empowering women in the digital and tech fields, promoting their visibility, and advocating for equal opportunities. We believe that achieving gender equality is not only the right thing to do, but also essential for creating a more prosperous, innovative, and sustainable future for all.

## Added value, challenges, and opportunities of being a woman leading a network

Being a woman leading a network in the digital world brings unique added value and perspectives to the table. As a woman leader, I serve as a role model and source of inspiration for other women aspiring to

succeed in the digital world. Seeing a woman in a leadership position can be empowering and encourage other women to pursue their ambitions, challenge gender norms, and break barriers. By

leading by example, I aim to inspire and support other women to achieve their full potential.

Women bring diverse perspectives and experiences to leadership roles, which is crucial in the digital world where innovation thrives on different viewpoints. I can contribute with a unique lens to decision-making processes, ensuring that a wide range of voices are heard and considered. This diversity of perspectives fosters creativity, innovation, and problem-solving, leading to more well-rounded and effective outcomes.

Women leaders often bring a strong sense of empathy, emotional intelligence, and collaborative leadership styles. These qualities enable me to foster a supportive and inclusive work environment, where everyone feels valued and empowered. By cultivating a culture of collaboration and inclusivity, we can harness the collective intelligence and potential of our teams, enabling them to thrive and drive

## Closing word

Let us join forces and dare to advance gender equality and create a more inclusive and equitable future for all. Gender equality is a catalyst for positive change and sustainable development. By prioritizing gender equality in our organizations, networks, public authorities, and governments, we can unlock the full potential of women, drive innovation, and create thriving environments where everyone can succeed.

I encourage companies to embrace gender mainstreaming, adopt inclusive policies, and foster diverse and inclusive work environments. Women's networks play a vital role in providing support, mentorship, and a platform for collaboration and knowledge-sharing.

meaningful change.

However, being a woman leader also comes with its challenges. We may face biases and stereotypes that can undermine our credibility or lead to unfair expectations. Overcoming these biases requires resilience, self-confidence, and a continuous commitment to prove one's capabilities.

Women are also still underrepresented in leadership roles in the digital world. This can result in a lack of diverse perspectives at decision-making tables and create barriers to advancement. Breaking through these barriers requires determination and actively advocating for equal opportunities.

I firmly believe that diverse leadership, including women, is essential for driving innovation, fostering inclusive cultures, and shaping a future where everyone can reach their full potential, regardless of gender.

Public authorities and governments have the responsibility to implement policies that promote gender equality, enforce legislation against discrimination, and encourage equal representation in decision-making bodies. By prioritizing gender equality, we can create laws and regulations that support the advancement of women and address the structural barriers that hold them back.

I invite you to join us in this collective journey. Let us work hand in hand, break down barriers, and champion gender equality at every level. Together, we can create a future where gender equality is not just an aspiration, but a reality for all.





## Paola Ligabue & Nadine Nembach

Presidents of EWMD International Board

#19



**EWMD European Women's Management  
Development Network  
Sector: Management**



### A short introduction

**Paola Ligabue (PL):** Born in Reggio Emilia, in the North of Italy, my interests are international topics and environments, for relationships and gender issues. I have a passion for foreign languages, books, and travels. Widow, three daughters, two grandchildren, one sister, many nieces, and nephews. I have run a translation company for over 35 years, also involved in event organization, recruiting and US FDA consultancy. I sold my company in 2016 and restarted an individual firm in these two latter fields. I have been an [EWMD](#) member since 2013. I am also involved with CO.A.GE. an umbrella coordination of 12 gender associations in Reggio Emilia, whereby we organize events, address issues to the local public

entities and participate in city life.

**Nadine Nembach (NN):** Founder of N<sup>2</sup> Consulting & Training. As an international expert for leadership and customer delight, I travel the world for my customers. 34 countries and 68 nationalities so far. Passion, energy, and fun are prerequisites for this, and therefore some of the most important tools I use. My background is a diploma in psychology. Being a trainer, coach, facilitator, and speaker, I ease my customer's path for more than 20 years on the way to (re-) discovering their golden thread. I am also a board member of the [European Women on Boards](#) (EWoB) network and mentor for Ouissal.

### Your organization and your activity sector in a few words

**PL:** I have a huge network, composed of people I know personally due to my sports activities (of the past), my family's activity and to my attitude to get to know people easily, so I have a wide network of pen friends, customers, suppliers, friends, and virtual contacts. If you mean EWMD – as a network – I can say that this is the best place for me to be, as I would have never joined a "local" association/network, without the international flavor, and for sure never joined a non-professional network.

**NN:** EWMD is an international nonprofit network established in 1984 by women for women and men

in management. Our main goal is to increase women's visibility and participation in higher positions in business and society. EWMD believes that quality levels of management can be increased and enriched through more female presence and diversity. We believe that women have skills that are strong assets for successful organisations and want to leverage these strengths. Therefore, we enhance the professional and personal development of our members by offering them an international community for a mutual exchange of knowledge, experience, and ideas.

### Gender equality in your sector/area and challenges encountered

**PL:** The challenges in my country/area are many as to gender equality. I personally never felt "discriminated" as I have always been a consultant and from this perspective, companies never treated me in a bad way. I never had the feeling I couldn't get

a job because I am a woman. In many cases of my friends and women I know, they underwent bad moments, especially when coming back after a maternity leave, they found their positions occupied by someone else, or women with a perfect language



knowledge relegated to a secretary work, and men – without even knowing any languages – sent around the world to sell products or services. The pay gap is

also another issue that gender associations are trying hard to fight and to address.

## How to address these challenges

**NN:** Several levers can be used to address these challenges, such as implementing legal reforms to protect women's rights, providing better access to education and training, promoting gender-inclusive workplace policies and practices, and creating awareness campaigns to challenge harmful gender stereotypes. In this context EWMD worked on the Brussels Declaration, together with other eight gender associations, which is aiming to increase gender equality throughout Europe. This initiative strives for implementation and monitoring of gender equality in our political, institutional, economic, and social life.

There have been a lot of improvements during the past decade. Still, the COVID-19 situation has shown us how quickly we revert to old role models and

habits. We need to find a way to check what is missing through an analysis of cause and effect, to gather existing directives and monitoring systems, to improve them and connect them with a working sanctioning framework to make sure implementation is happening and follow-ups are in place. We invite you to check out more about this initiative and the launch event in Brussels in October 2022 on our website under [Brussels Declaration](#).

As we can see, Women's networks can play a significant role in promoting gender equality by providing professional and social support, offering training and development opportunities, advocacy on behalf of women, and collaborating with policymakers, employers, and other stakeholders to create meaningful change.

## Recruitment difficulties

**PL:** As a professional recruiter, I deal with companies and their requests every day. I encounter many difficulties and a big challenge to find the right profiles for the right companies. Some job positions are really hard to find. I have to say that the most difficult positions do not involve women, as they are mainly manual technical jobs and women don't apply

for them. I am talking about technicians for the installation of alarm systems, or technicians for the maintenance of heating and cooling systems. For all the other positions, women are always welcome, and they are missing in the same way as men do, especially ICT, for example.

## Efforts to create more gender equality offers are they a solution to overcome these difficulties

**PL:** I think that companies in Italy and in my network are aware of gender equality rules, and some stricter rules were enforced recently. We have the gender equality check, which has to be carried out by companies above a certain number of employees, and the Gender Certification, which would allow

companies to get a better score in case they work with the Public Administration Entities. However, training, webinars and seminars should always be carried out, because the attention should never be lowered on these topics, as sometimes I have the feeling we're going back!

## Can other challenges be improved through gender mainstreaming?

**NN:** Yes, gender mainstreaming can bring solutions to several challenges related to promoting gender equality, including retaining female human resources in organizations. By addressing issues such as

equality in wages, work-life balance, and addressing sexist acts, organizations can create a more inclusive work culture that benefits both men and women. Additionally, gender mainstreaming can also

help address challenges such as populating rural areas by promoting policies that support the economic empowerment of women in rural areas.

Overall, gender mainstreaming can be a useful approach to addressing various challenges related to promoting gender equality.

## Importance of gender equality for you and for your network

**PL:** Gender equality is extremely important. Working together, women and men can give a better contribution, a more complete vision to everything they do. They can improve our society and find the

right solutions together. Women should be much more consulted on every topic and with their input we can probably build a better world.

## Added value, challenges, and opportunities of being a woman leading an international network

**NN:** The added value of having a woman leading a cluster/network is that women tend to bring a unique perspective to leadership, which can lead to new ideas, approaches, and strategies for managing the cluster. Women can also bring diverse backgrounds and experiences that can contribute to a more inclusive and collaborative work environment. Opportunities for women cluster managers and/or presidents include the ability to serve as role models for other women in the industry, to foster a more equitable and diverse culture within the cluster and to bring new business opportunities through

networking and collaboration.

The perspective of a woman enabling policy change involves advocating for policies that promote gender equality, such as equal pay, flexible working arrangements, and family-friendly policies. Women can also promote initiatives that support the growth and development of women in the industry, such as mentoring and leadership training programs. Overall, women in leadership positions can have a positive impact on the industry, promoting innovation, diversity, and equality.

## Closing word

**PL:** We need to stand up and be united. The more we are, the more we count, and we need to create alliances with all our “sisters”. Sisterhood is an approach we have to learn and apply everywhere.

**NN:** Advancing gender equality is crucial for creating a just and inclusive society. To make progress towards gender equality, companies, women’s

networks, public authorities, and governments all have an important role to play. It is essential to recognize and address the systemic barriers that prevent women from reaching their full potential and to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of society. Only by working together and taking concrete actions can we create a world where gender equality is truly realized.



**Elpi Petraki**

President

**WISTA International**  
**Sector: Maritime, trade, and logistics**



**WISTA**  
International

## A short introduction

I am the Chartering, Operations and Business Development Manager at ENEA Management, a Greek shipping company that manages a fleet of small sized, clean, and specialized tankers.

I am also the President of [WISTA International](#), the Women in Shipping and Trade Association. Our goal is to encourage diversity and inclusiveness in the maritime sector, as well as to support women in furthering their careers, and ensure equal opportunities for all. Prior to this appointment, I was

the President of WISTA Hellas.

I am an active member of Intertanko, and I am honored to serve as the 2nd Vice President of the Hellenic Shortsea Shipowners Association (HSSA), as a board member of the Hellenic Chamber of Shipping, and on the board of the Hellenic Maritime Museum. Last year I was also invited to be an Honorary Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Shipbrokers.

## Your organization and your network in a few words

WISTA International was formed in 1974 and is a global organisation that connects female executives and decision-makers working in the maritime, trade and logistics sectors. Over the last 5 years, WISTA has grown significantly and there are now over 4,000 members worldwide and 56 National WISTA Associations (NWAs). While guided by WISTA International, NWAs provide in-country and regional support to members, business and skill-building opportunities and corporate visibility, while also facilitating relationships within the industry.

As an organisation, WISTA is committed to driving change and raising awareness of the importance of

gender equality, equitable opportunities and diversity and inclusion. It works closely with many international partners to address the challenges facing the shipping industry, and in 2018 was granted consultative status at the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). This was a significant achievement, allowing WISTA to formally contribute to the discussion for increasing capacity in the maritime industry, a critical component of which is promoting women in the industry, both shoreside and shipboard, whilst showcasing the varied technical skills and leadership that women can and do bring to the industry.

## Gender equality in your sector and challenges encountered

When I first started my career in shipping 25 years ago, there were not many women working directly in the maritime industry. Thankfully, a lot has changed since then, and today we are seeing more women in a range of professions throughout the sector. However, there is still a lot that needs to be done and the speed of change varies significantly depending

on which part of the world you are in.

In 2021, WISTA International and the IMO conducted the first [Women in Maritime Survey](#). The results were published in 2022 and offered an unprecedented insight into gender diversity across the sector for the first time and set the benchmark for progress. The survey found that women account for only 29% of the

workforce in the general industry and 20% of the workforce of national maritime authorities in Member States.

Industry data also shows that women seafarers make up just 2% of the crewing workforce and are mainly found in the cruise sector, while in shipowning companies they make up 34% of the workforce.

On a positive note, according to the 2021 BIMCO/International Chamber of Shipping Seafarer

Workforce report, the number of women serving as seafarers has increased by 45.8% compared to 2015.

Similar to other industries, there are many challenges that women still face. One of the main issues we are looking at just now is behavioral change; how to change people's mindsets in terms of acceptable behaviors – both onshore and onboard vessels – and their treatment and attitudes towards others. It is essential that we create an environment that is welcoming and safe for everyone.

## How to address these challenges

Collaboration, training, and a thorough review of existing policies. Companies need to make a concerted effort to improve diversity and inclusion in all aspects of their operations. Policies must be in place that support people through all stages of their lives, with procedures to address unacceptable behaviors and provide training to enhance understanding of the importance of diversity and inclusion. Not only will this help to remove biases, but it will demonstrate that mindsets are changing and empower women in the workplace. Further, collaboration is also essential, and as mentioned, WISTA is working very closely with the IMO and other organisations on several projects which we hope will

start to bring about real and measurable change.

Organisations like WISTA play a crucial role in progressing change as they provide insights into the challenges women face, whilst highlighting areas where change is needed. WISTA has achieved a great deal over the last few years, and I plan to continue that momentum and make real, tangible improvements to the way we work. I would like to see more women move into managerial positions, for example. We are also aiming to extend WISTA's reach from both an industry and geographical perspective.

## Recruitment difficulties

Attracting new talent and the next generation to the shipping industry is a challenge and this is another priority area for WISTA. There is a lack of awareness of the many opportunities and career paths available, and to address this we are looking at how we can work with educational institutions, whilst also considering how we can make the industry more attractive.

Part of this process is understanding what motivates the next generation. Deloitte's 2022 Gen Z and Millennial Survey provides some interesting insights into this, and in uncertain times, the survey puts cost of living and climate change as top concerns overall.

Where selecting an employer is concerned, work/life balance and learning/development opportunities were the top criteria, closely followed by salary and benefits. However, diversity and inclusion, and the

societal and environmental impact of organisations were also shown to be key factors when it came to retention; many respondents also said they would turn down a job if it failed to align with their personal values.

Companies should take these motivating factors into consideration when competing with other industries for talent.

As a key point, when we are discussing gender equality, we are not talking about women replacing men. Our aims are to create a fairer, discrimination-free environment, where there are equitable opportunities. Gender mainstreaming could help address recruitment problems when it comes to reviewing policies as it takes into consideration the views and concerns of both men and women. It is important to have policies that are inclusive and

reflect modern society.

## Importance of gender equality for you personally

Diversity and inclusion and gender equality are important to me because I fundamentally believe that people should not be discriminated against because of their gender, sexuality, race, religion, or any other characteristic. I also truly believe in the economic and societal benefits of diversity, inclusion, and gender equality, but sadly we still live in a world where this is not a reality.

We are now in 2023, yet there is a gender pay gap in many industries; it is still assumed that people in C-suite positions are men; women are still discriminated against when they are pregnant or return to work following maternity leave; and institutional racism, sexism, misogyny, and discrimination are still major issues for many.

## Added value, challenges, and opportunities of being a woman leading an international network

It is now a well-known fact that diverse teams make better decisions and deliver greater results. To be effective, different perspectives are essential.

Again, removing gender inequality is not about women replacing men; it's about working together to empower women and acknowledging that women have the skills and experience to lead effectively,

make decisions and address industry challenges.

Being a woman in a leadership role also provides greater visibility for women in such roles and in the maritime industry in general. We also all have a responsibility to be role models for the next generation, and to do what we can to improve gender equality, diversity, and inclusion.

## Closing word

Whilst I am truly passionate about this topic, I believe that all of us must play a role in advancing diversity, inclusion, and equality, for the sake of our industry, the next generation, and the planet. Through collaboration and listening to others we can continue to make progress. Today, the diversity and inclusion

discussion are in the spotlight as never before and, at this moment of opportunity, we must capitalize on the momentum. Creating even greater awareness and driving the diversity agenda forward remains a challenge, but by working together we can share the load in overcoming it.





# PRACTICAL TOOLKIT FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING



# PRACTICAL TOOLKIT FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING

In the face of a rising demand for skilled labor, women are at the forefront in occupying roles where social, functional, and analytical skills are most important, particularly in a global ecosystem where employment in those jobs is growing rapidly.

Nevertheless, **gender disparities persist**, with women still being disproportionately represented in lower-paying sectors within the labor market and lacking representation in decision-making roles.

Businesses and organizations also still have difficulty finding and keeping diverse talent, particularly when it comes to their boards and their decision-making teams. **Finding, hiring, and retaining skilled women** is quickly becoming a top priority for organizations looking to enter in globalized, highly competitive markets.

For many years, international labor standards, national constitutions, and laws have all incorporated the principles of non-discrimination in the workplace, equality of opportunity, and treatment. These concepts have gradually been incorporated by businesses all around the world into their human resource management.

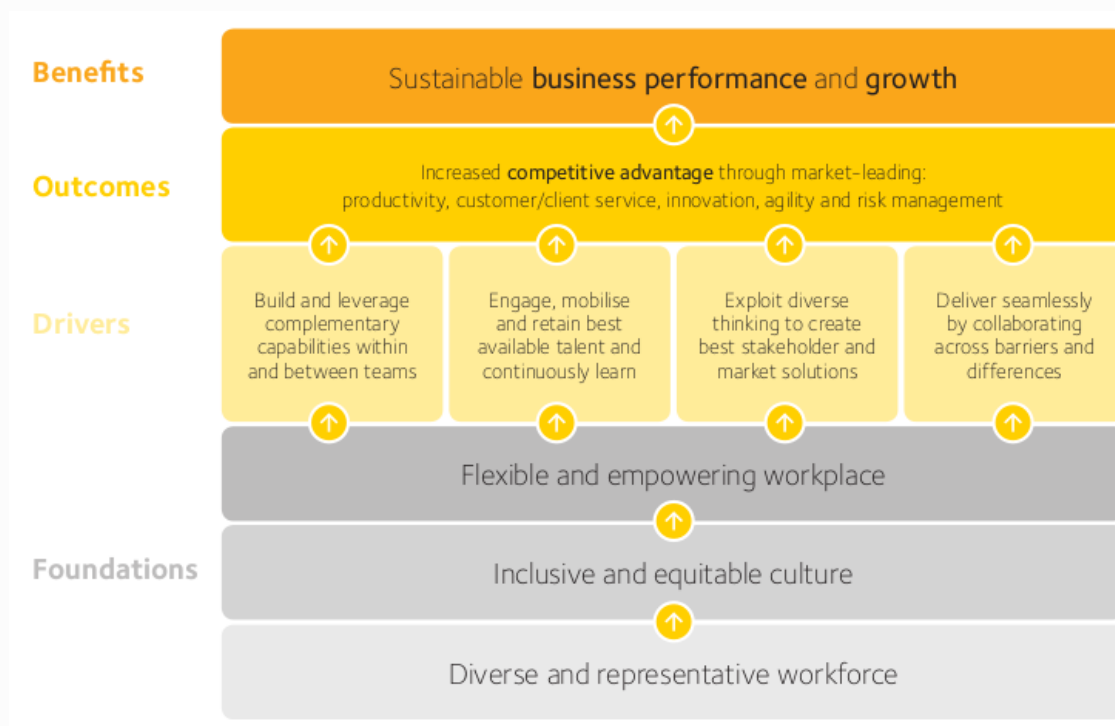


Figure 1. The business case for gender equality <sup>2</sup>

Digitalization, flexibility, diversity, social impact, and reconversion are topics that companies are developing and applying, especially due to the effects of the pandemic. Women undeniably hold a crucial position in the journey of EU countries towards greater industrialization, and it's vital to

<sup>2</sup> Australian Government, Workplace Gender Equality Agency. [Gender Strategy Toolkit](#).

emphasize that **industrial progress isn't gender neutral**. Neglecting gender considerations in the development and promotion of industrialization, technology, and innovation can lead to differing impacts on men and women, potentially resulting in unequal outcomes.

To eradicate the gaps that exist in the labor market, willingness to change is fundamental, and for this it is necessary to understand how **organizations can be drivers of change** and understand it as a process, not as a result.

Employers must create and support a culture that consistently values both women and men in order to fully realize the benefits that equality brings to organizations of all kinds. Encouraging work practices and flexible mindsets are crucial for promoting diversity, inclusion, and equality between men and women.

Addressing equality between men and women in organizations is a **process that requires time, conscious effort, and a strategic and methodical approach**, just like it is with any other business issue. It will not happen by accident. This will include, from the get-go, a review of policies, presumptions, and unconscious biases in order to develop a strategic alignment between diversity and performance.

The tools compiled by the PENELOPE partnership will assist you in assessing the culture of your organization with regard to fostering diversity in leadership and in engaging with the multilayered challenge of achieving an effective and durable change. By making this toolkit available, we hope to give organizations the knowledge and resources they need to implement significant, long-lasting change more quickly.

It is essential to understand that the implementation of this toolkit for gender mainstreaming in an organization is not a linear procedure with a start and end date, but a circular and continuous process that links the end of each strategy and its evaluation with the start of the next one according to the feedback collected and/or the new gaps identified.

Therefore, before incorporating some or all of the actions proposed here, it is important to integrate them in a comprehensive and transversal manner into the company's corporate culture as a first step.

This toolkit, crafted to effectively address the needs of SMEs, aims to initiate the foundational steps in guiding clusters to develop methodologies and assist their member companies in aspects related to integrating a gender perspective.

The subsequent project activities will delve deeper into this goal, presenting a comprehensive methodology tailored for EU clusters. This methodology will empower clusters to conduct their own training sessions on gender mainstreaming for their associated companies, thus demonstrating with the appropriate tools and support from cluster industries, they can embrace gender policies and foster equal opportunities within their workforce.

As the inclusion of gender mainstreaming in business practices must be understood **as a journey towards a more equal and fair future**, the PENELOPE partnership wishes to join you in that endeavor.

# 1. WORKPLACE CULTURE & INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION



Equal rights for women and men are one of the fundamental goals of the European Union, which was created on the principle of equality. The European Union has adopted the strategy of incorporating this subject into all its policies in order to promote equality between men and women.

The EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025<sup>3</sup> delivers on the von der Leyen Commission's commitment to achieving a Union of Equality. The Strategy presents policy objectives and actions to make considerable progress by 2025 towards a **gender-equal Europe**: "the goal is a Union where women and men, girls, and boys, in all their diversity, are free to pursue their chosen path in life, have equal opportunities to thrive, and can equally participate in and lead our European society".

Nevertheless, many organizations (specially SMEs) within the EU have not yet actively adopted a systematic policy of mainstreaming gender equality, despite a clear commitment to equality between men and women as a shared goal.

Institutional transformation refers to a **significant shift within an institution that has an impact on its surrounding environment** as a result. It includes adjustments to the fundamental principles and viewpoints that govern a particular institution as well as adjustments to the internal regulations and procedures.

Organizations are not gender-neutral entities, and gender concerns within one are sometimes overt and sometimes hidden. The presence of women and men at every level of an organization's hierarchy is merely one (visible) sign that organizations are biased toward one gender over the other. It is necessary to **induce organizational change processes** to fit the specific organizational culture.

To mainstream gender equality, an organization's entire personnel must be committed. Establishing equality between men and women as a collective value, a standard mindset, and a joint **responsibility for both management and employees** assists in harmonizing an organization's entire scope of operations with the objective of achieving gender equality. Both leaders and employees must include equality between men and women within their individual spheres of responsibility as part of gender mainstreaming.

## Tool #1: Perform a gender audit of the status quo in your organization

Recognizing gender trends in their composition, structures, workflow, organizational culture, and human resource management, is something that can be done by organizations through gender audits to **set their own structures in order, create and provision new policies and services and**

<sup>3</sup> European Commission. [Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025](#).

**change organizational culture elements** that may discriminate against women staff and women beneficiaries.

Additionally, audits help in determining how management decisions and organizational performance affect equality between men and women inside an organization. Gender audits help in identifying significant gender disparities and difficulties, which will irrevocably lead organizations to seek innovative ways to close them by proposing appropriate actions to increase gender diversity and inclusivity through improvements and new approaches.

Due to the high degree of customization offered by gender audits, any organization can use them as a baseline against which progress may be monitored over time. Gender audits are necessary to begin or advance gender diversification, and **can be conducted for the entire organization or for specific departments**. An organization-wide gender audit is recommended for those creating their initial gender baseline. Periodically, and more frequently as needed in particular business divisions or departments, it might be repeated.

Although there is no set method for conducting a gender audit, we will utilize the participatory gender **audit approach** in this toolkit because it is endorsed by the European Institute for Gender Equality<sup>4</sup> and the International Labour Organization<sup>5</sup>, one of the first organizations to conduct gender audits.

The primary goals of this type of gender audit are<sup>6</sup>:

- To generate knowledge and information on the degree to which gender mainstreaming is institutionalized within the organization and in the development and delivery of internal policies, projects, products, and/or services.
- To assess the level of resources allocated to and spent on gender mainstreaming activities.
- To provide details on the degree to which gender is incorporated into human resources policies and whether there is a gender balance among the workforce at various organizational levels.
- To establish a preliminary baseline of performance on gender mainstreaming in the respective organization to be used as a benchmark to assess/monitor progress on equality between men and women over time, across departments, and in relation to other organizations.
- To identify mechanisms that have contributed to mainstreaming gender within the respective organization and sharing them with internal and external audiences.

To this end, an organization's effectiveness at implementing gender mainstreaming in its **structures, processes, procedures, internal policies, projects, products, and/or services**, and how institutionalized gender mainstreaming is in these areas, is evaluated through a participatory gender audit.

This kind of gender audit differs from other types of audits by its participatory approach in its programming and implementation, as input and data for gender audits may come from a wide array of sources, including employee surveys, focus groups, and key informant interviews, but also

<sup>4</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality. [Gender audit](#), 2019.

<sup>5</sup> International Labour Organization. [Manual for gender audit facilitators: The ILO participatory gender audit methodology](#), 15 August 2012.

<sup>6</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality. [Gender audit](#), 2019.

reviews of corporate policies and manuals, quantitative analysis of metrics for hiring, retaining, and promoting employees, stakeholder reports and other communications, performance reviews...

Audits can and should be carried out both at the corporate and staff levels, albeit the scope may need to be adjusted based on the resources available within the organization.

## The dimensions of a gender audit

According to the European Institute for Gender Equality, there are two main dimensions to account for when performing a gender audit:

- **Internal audit:** The extent to which an organization promotes equality between men and women within its organizational, management, and internal work environments (and if these elements support gender equality in the organization) is referred to as this dimension. An internal gender audit keeps track of and evaluates the relative progress made in gender mainstreaming, supports the development of organizational capacity and shared responsibility for activities promoting equality between men and women, and enhances organizational learning on gender.
- **External audit:** This dimension tries to evaluate how well an organization integrates gender into the content, delivery, and evaluation of its structures, processes, procedures, internal policies, projects, products, and/or services. External gender audits assess the degree to which gender integration promotes the involvement of and benefits for both men and women who are affected by or participating in the organization's structures, processes, procedures, internal policies, projects, products, and/or services.

WHAT TO DO		HOW TO DO IT
1.	Enact management will and organizational readiness	<p>Gender audits are the first stage in creating and putting into practice a gender strategy, thus they require the <b>internal management's will and commitment</b> to invest resources and make the priority known to the organization.</p> <p>Keep in mind that the effectiveness of a gender audit hinges on <b>leadership's dedication and enthusiastic involvement from employees</b>, and the incorporation of discovered insights into actionable plans for enhancement, so assessing the organization's preparedness is essential prior to commencing a gender audit.</p> <p>It includes ensuring top management <b>comprehends the gender audit's purpose, benefits, and significance</b>. This evaluation encompasses analyzing the current organizational culture, openness to change, and the degree of endorsement for gender equality initiatives.</p>

2.	<p><b>Establish the gender audit core team</b></p>	<p>The core team will be tasked with formulating a gender audit strategy, establishing the gender equality objectives inherent in both internal and external policies and strategies as the initial focus of the audit. They are also <b>responsible for determining the scope of the audit</b>, selecting the organizational level at which it will be conducted, and identifying pertinent internal stakeholders while maintaining gender balance.</p> <p>The team composition may involve internal staff overseeing diversity management, gender equality, and human resources, or it could encompass a blend of internal employees and external consultants engaged to develop and oversee the gender audit methodology.</p> <p>Additionally, a contact person from the team will be appointed to act as a liaison between work staff and the core team to ensure the smooth functioning of the process of the audit.</p>
3.	<p><b>Define the conceptual and methodological framework</b></p>	<p>When performing a gender audit, the Australian Government Workplace Gender Equality Agency suggests and explains in detail in its gender equality diagnostic tool<sup>7</sup> some of the following <b>focus areas</b> on which to articulate the process:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strategic alignment of gender equality and organizational priorities.</li> <li>2. Leadership and accountability.</li> <li>3. Gender pay equity.</li> <li>4. Gender composition of the workforce.</li> <li>5. Support for caring.</li> <li>6. Flexible working.</li> <li>7. Preventing gender-based harassment and discrimination, sexual harassment, and bullying.</li> <li>8. Support for employees experiencing domestic and family violence.</li> <li>9. Professional development, networking, mentoring, sponsorship.</li> <li>10. Applying a gender lens to all policies and strategies.</li> <li>11. Recruitment, selection, and promotion.</li> <li>12. Talent management and succession planning.</li> <li>13. Workplace gender equality training.</li> <li>14. Applying a gender equality lens to everyday operations.</li> <li>15. Examining casual, contractual, short-term, and task-based employment through a gender equality perspective.</li> <li>16. Driving change beyond the workplace.</li> </ol>

<sup>7</sup> Australian Government Workplace Gender Equality Agency. [Gender equality diagnostic tool](#).



4.	<p><b>Conduct an organizational assessment</b></p>	<p>In order to achieve a higher degree of involvement of all the staff during the development of the gender audit, it is highly recommended to <b>hold a briefing session prior to the beginning of the process</b>, where the audit core team and its contact person should be officially introduced to the staff.</p> <p>The persons overseeing the gender audit will engage in various activities at different levels to collect employee feedback once the audit is initiated. This may involve the use of written surveys and/or focus groups, and in relevant cases, even conducting personal interviews with key informants. The size of the organization, the audit's geographic reach, and the breadth of the review agreed upon with the gender auditors will define its duration and scope.</p> <p>It is advised to take a tiered approach, commencing with a participatory process in which workers can offer feedback on gender equity concerns and indicators that are most important to them before exploring them through larger data collecting.</p> <p>When <b>administering surveys and/or conducting focus groups</b>, the approach you choose can vary based on your organization's typology, but in this toolkit we propose these two as examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The guide for identifying gaps in gender responsive policies and practices at the work place developed by Akina Mama wa Afrika and Hivos, available <a href="#">here</a> on its page 8.</li> <li>• The tool for organizational self-assessment and transformation developed by InterAction , available <a href="#">here</a> on its page 25.</li> </ul>
5.	<p><b>Draft a diagnostic report</b></p>	<p>The gender audit should produce an ample amount of data that can be utilized to <b>pinpoint areas that may need strengthening and improvement</b>, ultimately boosting productivity and profit.</p> <p>The results of the audit must be presented in a report and made <b>available to the whole staff</b>. Transparency is key during this process. The report must include, at least, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference to the process of <b>elaboration</b> of the audit mentioning: methodology and tools used, reference period of the data analyzed, date of collection of the information and persons involved in its elaboration.</li> <li>• Basic <b>information about the organization</b> (activity, size, management organization), a brief description of its history, foundation, and trajectory, as well as the characteristics of the company, its organizational structure and, if applicable, the peculiarities of each work</li> </ul>

		<p>center and the activity carried out. In addition, a chart of the company's organizational structure should be included.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of the <b>main conclusions obtained</b> from the analysis of quantitative data of male and female workers that allow a description of the current situation disaggregated by gender of the organization and identification of aspects such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Number of people by gender that make up the workforce at that moment and how they are distributed in the company, observing the degree of feminization or masculinization of the company.</li> <li>❖ Distribution of the workforce disaggregated by sex in relation to age, type of employment relationship, seniority, type of contract and working hours.</li> <li>❖ Distribution broken down by gender according to hierarchical level, professional groups, professional categories, job positions and level of responsibility by position (vertical and horizontal segregation).</li> <li>❖ Level of training by gender.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Information and assessment with a gender perspective will be included in each of the areas analyzed, identifying situations of inequality or discrimination, direct or indirect, that may persist in the company.</li> </ul> <p>In the conclusions section, the following will be included as a final summary produce and a table containing the findings obtained in each one of the areas mentioned above and then detail a list of potential interventions following a <b>SMART approach</b>: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound.</p>
--	--	---

Prior to performing the gender audit, it is also important to understand the concept of a **Gender Equality Continuum**<sup>8</sup> coined by the Interagency Gender Working Group. The Gender Equality Continuum shows a process of analysis that begins with determining whether interventions are gender blind or gender aware<sup>9</sup>, as described by the Health Communication Capacity Collaborative at the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs:

- **Gender blind operations** ignore gender considerations. They are designed without any analysis of the culturally defined set of economic, social, and political roles, responsibilities, rights, entitlements, obligations, and power relations associated with being

<sup>8</sup> Interagency Gender Working Group. [Understand the IGWG Gender Integration Continuum as a lens for assessing project approaches](#). 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs, Health Communication Capacity Collaborative (HC3). [Integrating Gender into Social and Behavior Change Communication: An Implementation Kit](#), 2016.

female and male, or the power dynamics between and among women and men, girls, and boys.

- **Gender aware operations** examine and address the set of economic, social, and political roles, responsibilities, rights, entitlements, obligations, and power relations associated with being female and male, and the power dynamics between and among women and men, and girls and boys.

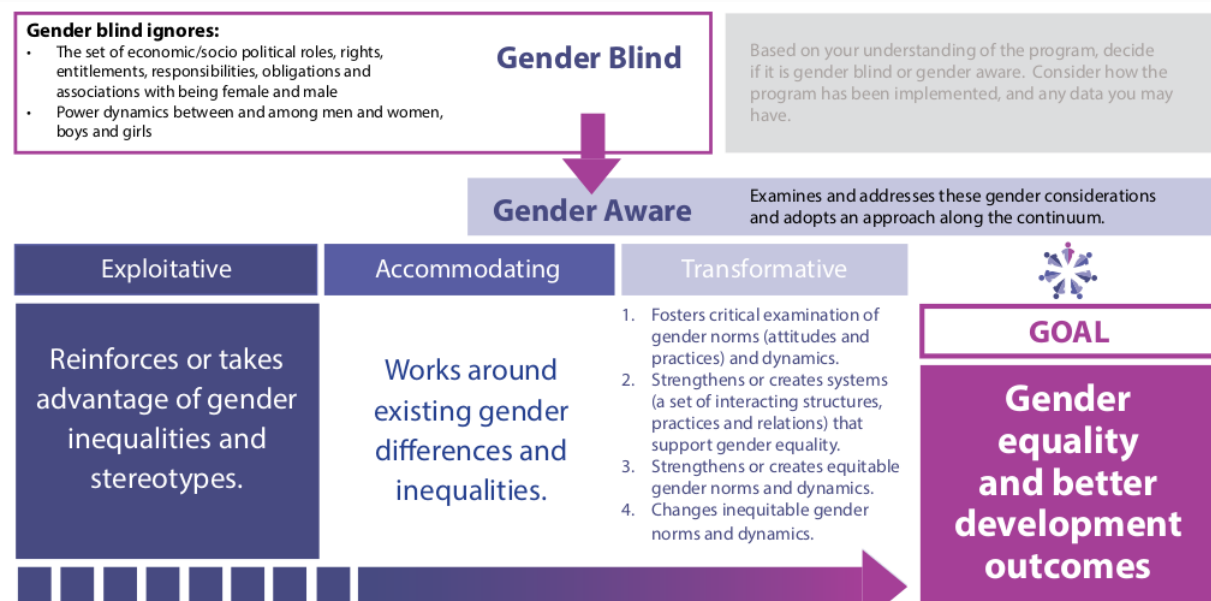


Figure 2. Gender Equality Continuum Tool<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, below is a **Gender Equity Continuum** developed by the International Finance Corporation<sup>11</sup> that can help your organization set targets, measure the integration of gender issues, and the extent to which they are considered. By identifying your organization's current spot along the continuum, you can set targets to move from one stage to the next (for instance, from *Compliant* to *Integrated*) over a set time period.

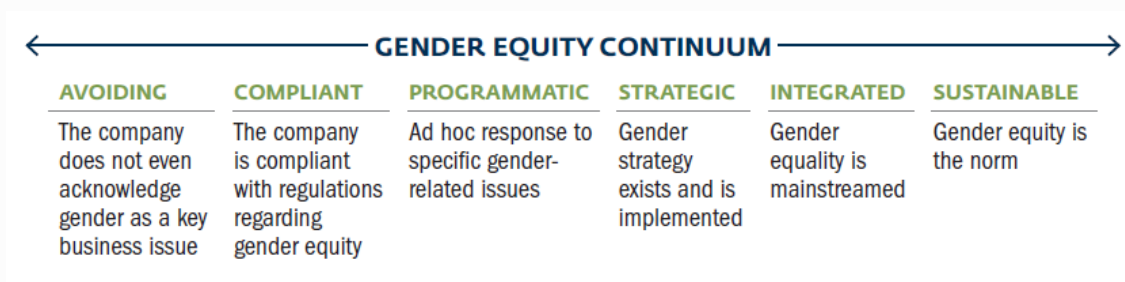


Figure 3. Gender Equity Continuum, International Finance Corporation.

<sup>10</sup> Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs, Health Communication Capacity Collaborative (HC3). [Integrating Gender into Social and Behavior Change Communication: An Implementation Kit](#), 2016.

<sup>11</sup> International Finance Corporation. [Unlocking Opportunities for Women and Business: A Toolkit of Actions and Strategies for Oil, Gas, and Mining Companies](#), 18 May 2018.

## Tool #2: Establish a gender equality strategy to foster institutional transformation

Any actions you have in mind to enhance gender diversity are built on the gender equality strategy. It offers the framework for pledges, initiatives, and progress monitoring related to equality between men and women.

The strategy should **specify goals, define activities, and allocate responsibilities**. It ought to lay out specific objectives, deadlines, and a plan for getting there. The results of the gender audit should serve as the foundation and support the business case by outlining a specific plan of action that will assist the organization in addressing flaws found.

Organizations can transcend sporadic and often unsuccessful methods for achieving gender equality by adopting a **comprehensive strategy that ensures the proper allocation of funds and resources** for gender equality initiatives while enabling seamless collaboration across all structures of the organization toward shared goals. A collective understanding of this strategy **facilitates cohesive efforts and fosters commitment**. Lacking a strategy makes it particularly challenging to assess if daily actions and decisions are effectively steering the organization toward its desired ultimate objective.

As explained by the Australian Government's Workplace Gender Equality Agency<sup>12</sup>, a gender equality strategy:

- Outlines a gender equality vision for an organization.
- Connects to the business or organizational strategy.
- Identifies practical goals.
- Includes measurable objectives linked to goals.
- Encourages active and inclusive leadership.
- Is simple to communicate.
- Holds an organization accountable for its progress on equality between men and women.
- Follows a transparent governance process.
- Goes beyond equality between men and women to consider other elements of inclusion.
- Is integrated with all divisions and organizational levels.

WHAT TO DO	HOW TO DO IT
<b>STEP 1.</b>  <b>Validate goals and set targets</b>	As previously stated, the first stage consists, unequivocally, of a firm commitment of the organization's top management and constructive willingness to be an agent of change and to champion the process of transition towards and effective equality between men and women.

<sup>12</sup> Australian Government, Workplace Gender Equality Agency. [Gender Strategy Toolkit](#).

	<p>These objectives should be centered on the organization's strategy for gender diversity since they serve as a prelude to more precise gender targets. <b>The objectives should be in line with discussions of the results obtained during the gender audit:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is our vision for gender equality? Why is the equality between men and women important to our organization?</li> <li>• What major areas for development did the gender audit identify?</li> <li>• How does senior management prioritize and support initiatives to have the biggest possible impact on the organization?</li> <li>• What role does this play in the organization's broader diversity and inclusion initiatives?</li> </ul> <p>There are a few key factors to keep in mind when creating these goals. Determine your <b>company's priority areas</b> first. Put them in order of importance, even though they are all vital. This prioritizing may be influenced by a number of variables, such as the areas that need the most improvement or the places where those improvements will have the most effects on the firm.</p> <p>A straightforward procedure can be used to <b>create goals and objectives</b>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create attainable goals with measurable outcomes utilizing feedback from stakeholder dialogue and diagnostics.</li> <li>2. Determine which group will be impacted by each aim; make sure they have been consulted.</li> <li>3. Identify potential hazards connected to your goals and objectives, then develop a plan to mitigate those risks.</li> <li>4. Select pertinent metrics and indicators for gathering and tracking.</li> </ol> <p>To monitor each of your objectives, you will need to <b>designate specific metrics that can be collected and measured</b>. So, for each goal, identify the major indicator and targets that are in line with important corporate goals, and how they will be measured.</p>
<p><b>STEP 2.</b></p> <p><b>Design the strategy and its working plan</b></p>	<p>Every organization must establish its own strategy since there is no one approach that will work for all organizations when it comes to organizational change and implementing gender mainstreaming. Instead, each organization should choose the strategy that is most effective for its particular structure.</p> <p>Outline a strategy that effectively <b>explains how, by whom, and when</b> the organization will attain these goals based on the major objectives and targets that have been set. The plan should be a <b>concise, easy-to-read document</b> that contains the components listed below</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Introduction and context:</b> this section should provide an overview of the principal gender mainstreaming objectives, the business case supporting these goals, a brief summary of diagnostics, and the organization's current status quo toward achieving these objectives.</li> <li>• <b>Important priority areas:</b> list the objectives that have been defined for each emphasis area, the steps that will be taken to achieve them, the roles and responsibilities of the persons who will be involved, the consequences of failure or success, and the metrics that will be used to monitor progress.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Monitoring, consultation, and timeline review:</b> make sure that the organization's departments are aware of how and when progress will be monitored as well as when the plan will be reviewed, modified, and updated to support ongoing progress.</li> </ul> <p>The working plan must outline the specifics of how the gender mainstreaming strategy will be implemented over a specific time period. It establishes a calendar, assigns duties, allots resources, and lists the anticipated tasks and deadlines.</p> <p>Each activity in the working plan must contain information regarding <b>key focus area, milestones, specific targets, responsible staff, strengths, threats to success, measuring progress, timeframe and resources needed.</b></p>
<p><b>STEP 3.</b></p> <p><b>Allocate resources</b></p>	<p>A critical element of success is allocating enough resources to start and support organizational change. The management of an organization is in charge of providing the essential resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Staff resources:</b> To assist with organizational transformation and to assist executive and operational personnel in implementing gender mainstreaming, a support structure for it has been built. There are many different configurations for an efficient support system for gender mainstreaming. It is crucial to select an organizational form that is appropriate for the duties the support structure is expected to carry out as well as the structure and style of operation of the organization in question</li> <li>• <b>Financial resources:</b> It can be advantageous for the gender mainstreaming support structure to have its own budget so that it can properly perform its duties. It will take careful preparation and considerable stakeholder participation to finalize a budget. Make sure to account for unforeseen roadblocks in your budget. Financial resources could be utilized, for instance, to hire outside trainers and consultants, commission the construction of gender mainstreaming approaches, conduct surveys, publish materials, or build a website.</li> <li>• <b>Skills resources:</b> It takes methodological skills in this area, specialist gender expertise, and experience with organizational development to support the process of organizational change and the implementation of gender mainstreaming.</li> </ul> <p>It may be required for staff employees to undergo further training in the area or temporarily get assistance from outside experts if they are to perform the duties allocated to the gender mainstreaming support structure.</p>
<p><b>STEP 4.</b></p> <p><b>Embed and communicate the strategy</b></p>	<p>It is time to <b>convey your plan to employees and other stakeholders</b> after your organization's vision, strategy, and actions are ready. All leaders should be able to comprehend and communicate unified messages.</p>



The effectiveness of the plan depends on effective communication and engagement with them because they frequently value being asked for their opinions, which might make them more receptive to change. All policies and actions must be prepared for execution before you reveal any information about the modification process.

**Key messages, target audiences, lines of accountability for communications, time frames, scheduling, frequency of messaging,** any communication for media, and a strategy for handling backlash should all be included in the communication plan.

Considerations for your communication plan include the following:

- Will you use social media? If so, who will you target and through what channels?
- Is there a network within the company you should contact?
- Which will be more effective: formal language or a more casual tone?
- Is there a significant event, a product launch, or a strategic turning point you can use to promote your efforts to advance equality between men and women?

As stated by the Australian Government Workplace Gender Equality Agency<sup>13</sup>, the **communication goals** for the gender strategy should be to:

- Explain and articulate the "what," "why," and "how" of the gender strategy.
- Educate and give stakeholders the information and assurance they need to articulate and promote the gender strategy.
- Engage and inspire stakeholders to actively participate in the journey toward equality between men and women.
- Convey a sense of ownership for successful outcomes at all levels.

## The gender balanced scorecard

According to the Balanced Scorecard Institute (BSI), the balanced scorecard, also called BSC, is a **strategic planning and management system** that organizations use to focus on strategy and improve performance<sup>14</sup>. It incorporates four perspectives: financial, customer, internal processes, and learning and growth, and translates an organization's mission and strategy into a set of performance measures, providing a framework for strategic measurement and management<sup>15</sup>.

The BSC was created by Robert Kaplan and David Norton as a management instrument aimed at harmonizing both financial and non-financial metrics of organizational performance, and is currently being used extensively in business and industry, government, and nonprofit organizations worldwide.

<sup>13</sup> Australian Government Workplace Gender Equality Agency. [Gender equality strategy guide](#).

<sup>14</sup> Balanced Scorecard Institute (BSI), [Balanced Scorecard Basics](#).

<sup>15</sup> Kaplan, R.S.; Norton, D.P. *The Strategy-Focused Organization: How Balanced Scorecard Companies Thrive in the New Business Environment*; Harvard Business Press: Brighton, MA, USA, 2000; ISBN: 978-1-57851-250-8.

Considering its high strategic value, the BSC must respond to the needs of each organization and be adapted to each work plan, in order to facilitate monitoring and decision making regarding the implementation of real and effective equality between men and women.

In September 2023, a research<sup>16</sup> which proposed a **redesign of the traditional BSC** to enable the strategic management of goals and indicators related to gender equality was published. This revamped BSC framework proposed represents an intelligent approach for organizations seeking to advance gender equality and sustainable development within their communities and on a broader scale.

Based on the research's paper, by incorporating all targets and indicators outlined by SDG5<sup>17</sup>, this new BSC framework enhances accountability and responsibility while also promoting immersion in gender-specific matters across organizations and civil society.

## Tool #3: Deal with resistance to change and opposition to gender equality

Gender mainstreaming calls for change, particularly change that can lead to redistribution of power and resources, and resistance is part of any organizational change. As gender is an issue that affects every person, **shifting perspectives on gender can be perceived as upsetting to people's lives, cultures, and beliefs**. That is why it also has an impact in the workplace, as it might make people fearful of the unknown and make them perceive that change may affect their comfort zone.

**Resistance is likely to take many forms**, depending on the nature of the organization and the amount and range of work required for gender mainstreaming. It may originate externally, such as from external stakeholders you are working with, or it may originate internally, from managers or employees.

### Why does resistance happen?

Generally speaking, opposition to gender mainstreaming has a myriad of causes, the majority of which are hidden from view. Here are some of the most common or frequent ones<sup>18 19</sup>:

- Staff typically oppose it because they may not fully understand gender mainstreaming or how to implement it, so it is only natural that anxiety and resistance rise when one is afraid of the unknown. One prevalent prejudice is the belief that gender mainstreaming is an attempt to disadvantage men in order to benefit women.

<sup>16</sup> Valduga, I.B.; De Lima, M.A.; Castro, B.C.G.; Fuchs, P.G.; de Amorim, W.S.; de Andrade Guerra, J.B.S.O. [A Balanced Scorecard Proposal for Gender Equality and Sustainable Development](#). Sustainability 2023, 15, 14384.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs Sustainable Development. [Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls](#).

<sup>18</sup> Ramo, Sini. [How to handle resistance to gender mainstreaming](#), Global Equality Matters.

<sup>19</sup> International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization. [Building Block 2: Dealing With Resistance Against Gender Equality](#).

- At the same time, they may not see the concept's relevance to anything they do in their function or work, or they may feel threatened by it because it seems to undercut their abilities. They might believe that with their "actual work duties" already, they don't have time for these "extra burdens."
- Another common point of resistance is related to the perception by some people that the so-called 'feminist ideologies' and "gender equality agenda" are being forced on them. They may feel it contradicts their personal belief systems, which most often is not connected to any specific culture or religion.
- Some resistance may come from misconception that gender equality is about blaming men for systematically discriminating against women or that gender equality is a 'women's issue'.
- Certain objections to gender mainstreaming and gender equality stem from deeply entrenched beliefs, such as the idea that women and men are essentially unchanging biological entities with inherent differences that should not be altered.
- People might worry about the ramifications for themselves. Self-interested individuals who oppose gender equality frequently have preconceived notions about how it might impact their lives, their economic interests, or the long-standing patterns of vested power. Men might believe, for instance, that when women have equal opportunities, their career opportunities will decrease. Women may believe that, with gender equality, their career path may now require them to act in a different way.
- People frequently follow the structures, norms, and practices that are already in place, so a feeling of unease, especially for individuals who require order, stability, and security, may also be the cause of resistance, as they want to stick to their routines and places of comfort. Resistance or opposition will arise to any changes made to their work environment, including gender mainstreaming.

So, what does gender equality resistance most often look like in organizations? First, it is important to understand that, according to the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization, **resistance can be divided into two categories**<sup>20</sup>:

- **Active resistance** includes things like outright challenging the purpose of gender equality, isolating those who are dealing with it, stereotyping the issue, presenting arguments and viewpoints against it, downplaying, or even denying it, and frequently attempting to convince others to join the "camp of opposition" against gender equality.
- **Passive resistance** to the implementation of gender mainstreaming is subtle and challenging to identify. It requires time to unveil those who outwardly express support for gender equality but harbor internal opposition. When faced with the practical application of gender policies in their own work, their resistance becomes evident, and they discreetly work to undermine or sabotage the implementation. Alternatively, some may claim support

<sup>20</sup> International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization. [Building Block 2: Dealing With Resistance Against Gender Equality](#).

for gender equality but argue that other more pressing priorities demand immediate attention.



Figure 4. Graphic adapted from the three phases of the process of adaptation to diversity<sup>21</sup>.

## How to deal with resistance

- Understanding the "why" and being able to explain it to others to get them engaged in the subject is crucial for devising effective strategies to address resistance. When introducing the issue of gender equality to your employees, **begin the discussion from an informed position**. This means that you must have done your previous thorough research about gender equality issues relevant to your sector. Seeking input from women's organizations or labor unions is also advisable.
- Approach the discussion with a commitment to gender equality as an organizational developmental goal and as a further step to strengthen the organization's culture. **Openly explain the business case for gender equality**, emphasizing its positive impact on innovation, employee satisfaction, and overall organizational success. Connect gender equality initiatives to the company's overarching goals and values.
- Show how integrating gender issues into the team's broader discussion and operational organization will improve employee morale and productivity as well as promote an enhanced and more effective decision-making process, and how **a diverse and inclusive workplace is crucial for competitiveness** in an increasingly globalized business environment.
- Clearly articulate the issues **using language that makes sense to your employees** and emphasize the basic human right aspect. Avoid patronizing and illustrate how gender mainstreaming can enhance their work. Demonstrate the practical benefits of gender mainstreaming with relevant examples and case studies tailored to their work.
- Enhance transparency in implementing gender mainstreaming by **communicating the process openly across the entire organization**. Employ a non-judgmental communication style, actively listen, and use internal channels like newsletters to address arguments and tackle potential resistance. This will allow you to engage and involve staff, thus fostering ownership of change.
- **Encourage employees to discuss the issue**, allowing them to express concerns. Focus on a common goal and the benefits of institutional transformation. Support arguments with facts, figures, and scientific studies to avoid ideological debates.

<sup>21</sup> Sánchez Gardey, Gonzalo & Cerdán Chiscano, Mònica. *Diversidad e inclusión en las organizaciones*. October 2022, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya.

- Highlight that gender mainstreaming involves structural changes within an organization and assure employees that **their private lives are not under scrutiny**. Emphasize that gender equality is a professional strategy leading to improved work outcomes.
- As gender mainstreaming encompasses not only women but also addresses the broader social context, occasionally, it can be beneficial to emphasize this aspect to clarify the scope of those affected and **identify who stands to gain from the implementation of gender equality initiatives**.
- If resistance is impeding a process to a considerable extent or even obstructing it, seeking the **assistance of an external expert** or facilitator might be a prudent course of action.

## Tool #4: Set goals to improve the level of gender inclusion of your workforce

The 'Women in the Workforce' report<sup>22</sup>, created by McKinsey and the Lean In organization in 2022, reveals a significant gap between how men and women perceive their companies' efforts to advance women.

While it may not come as a surprise that **women and men have different perspectives on attempts to promote gender diversity in the workplace**, the survey included in the above-mentioned report also found divergent ideas on what would constitute "enough" in terms of the gender composition of their organizations.

For instance, just one-third of women stated that women were "well represented" in senior ranks in organizations where only one in ten senior leaders are female, compared to nearly half of males who said the same.

**Data is a powerful instrument to start the dialogue about change**, so the following tool will allow companies and organizations to complete some simple data points to measure, set annual goals, and track results regarding equality between men and women and diversity every year.

By completing this comprehensive and useful table developed by the Shell Foundation<sup>23</sup>, which **compiles information and goals for representation**, you will be able to find out in a very visual way where gender underrepresentation may lie in your organization, as well as to set your own goals to achieve a more gender-balance workforce. You can also use it to evaluate and plan steps towards recruitment, retention, and advancement, which this toolkit will go into more detail in upcoming chapters.

<sup>22</sup> LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Organization. [Women in the Workplace](#), 2022.

<sup>23</sup> Shell Foundation; UK Aid; Carbon Trust; University of Cape Town. [Hiring for Equity in Clean Energy: How energy SMEs can attract, retain, and advance female talent in digital jobs](#), 2021.

Representation					
	Metric	Current Status	12-Month Goal	EU Benchmark	Ultimate Goal
Board Members	% of women			30.6% of board members in the EU's largest publicly listed companies are women <sup>24</sup> .	50% of women
Top Management				On average, large European companies currently have 30% female non-executive directors <sup>25</sup> .	50% of women
Employees by Level/Position		(E.g., mid-level management)		50% of women	
		(E.g., sales representative)			
Recruitment					
	Metric	Current Status	12-Month Goal	Ultimate Goal	
Applicants	% of women			Will vary significantly depending on labor market realities	
Interviewed	Ratio of female applicants interviewed			At least 50% of women	
Formal Offers	Ratio of female candidates who are given formal offers				
Retention and Advancement					
	Metric	Current Status	12-Month Goal	Ultimate Goal	

<sup>24</sup> European Parliament. [Women on boards: deal to boost gender balance in companies](#), 7 June 2022.

<sup>25</sup> Institute of Directors. [The European Women on Boards Directive: What it means and why it matters](#), 3 April 2023.



RETENTION	% of female employees who left the organization in the last year			Equal to the organization's gender split (or lower)
ADVANCEMENT	% of female employees promoted in the last year			



## 2. TALENT RECRUITMENT

Women and men typically work in different sectors and occupations. This is due to a variety of factors, including **stereotypes regarding the abilities, interests, and skills of women and men**, access to education, and the culture around various professions.

Cleaning, caring, and retail are among the professions where women are more likely to work. These positions are typically low-paying and offer few opportunities for advancement. Men are more likely to hold senior or managerial positions in these industries where women predominate. While restricting choices for both men and women, **employment segregation also reduces the skill pool** that is accessible to employers.

A 2017 study by PwC<sup>26</sup> found that growing numbers of women feel employers are biased in favor of male candidates when attracting talent. In fact, more than a fifth of the study's female participants reported having personally **experienced gender discrimination during a job application process or interview**.

When acquiring female talent, organizations will need to do more than just search outside their organization. If they want to **successfully deliver gender inclusive hiring**, they will also need to look within their own procedures. This same PwC report showed that 71% of employers who said they had adopted diversity practices stated that these were having a positive impact on their recruitment efforts.

Your key resources are the people who work for your organization. How motivated, eager, engaged, and enthusiastic your employees are about their jobs, management, and supervisors will influence how successful your organization is. It is essential to **establish gender-inclusive and discrimination-free hiring policies** if you want to get the maximum performance out of your potential and future staff.

### Tool #5: Build an inclusive talent brand

Before deciding whether to join a company, candidates are increasingly more interested in getting an authentic and honest image of what working there is like. The **workforce must mirror the society** in which the organization operates and must develop an inclusive talent environment where all employees may reach their full potential.

Over half of women consider active diversity progress when selecting whether or not to work for a certain firm, as it is showcased in the previously mentioned PwC global study published in 2017<sup>27</sup>. So, it is **no longer sufficient for an employer brand to just mention diversity**.

The PwC study also showed that, when deciding whether to work for an employer, these were the most crucial factors for women:

<sup>26</sup> PwC. [Winning the fight for female talent: How to gain the diversity edge through inclusive recruitment](#), March 2017.

<sup>27</sup> PwC. [Winning the fight for female talent: How to gain the diversity edge through inclusive recruitment](#), March 2017.

- The employer publicly discloses their organizational diversity targets.
- The employer publicly shares its progress on diversity (for example increased levels of workforce or leadership diversity).
- Checking the diversity of their leadership.
- The employer publicly shares information about the diversity demographics of its workforce and leadership team.
- Exploring if they felt they had positive role models who were similar to them.

WHAT TO DO	HOW TO DO IT
Ask yourself the tough questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you have the right <b>female role models</b> in place to aid in attracting in and retaining female talent?</li> <li>• How will you ascertain how your workforce's diversity initiatives and demographics are perceived both within and outside of your workforce?</li> <li>• What <b>risks and opportunities</b> are presented by these perceptions?</li> <li>• How do diversity and inclusion fit into the larger effort to increase trust and transparency?</li> <li>• How will you ensure that you are moving in the direction of tangible and measurable progress? And how will you track your success and showcase it?</li> </ul>
Establish your core values and commitment	<p>It is critical for organizations to establish their core values as well as a clear commitment to diversity and inclusion before beginning the inclusive employer branding journey. The <b>purpose, vision, and corporate culture</b> of the organization should all reflect this commitment.</p> <p>Organizations can ensure that their inclusive branding initiatives are genuine and consistent by having a solid foundation of principles.</p> <p>You can evaluate the existing condition of diversity in your organization with the use of a <b>gender audit</b>. Data on gender equality must be examined at all organizational levels and across all divisions.</p>
Develop inclusive policies and practices	<p>An inclusive employer brand goes beyond representation. It entails creating guidelines and procedures that <b>empower and support workers from various backgrounds</b>.</p> <p>Involve employees in the process. Getting input from workers of diverse backgrounds and ensuring that their views are heard entails this. By doing this, you will be able to <b>spot any unintentional biases or obstacles</b> that might be</p>

	<p>preventing particular groups from feeling included.</p> <p>Establishing specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) diversity and inclusion goals is the next step after having a thorough grasp of your present diversity landscape. These objectives will serve as a road map for your actions in support of diversity and inclusion, ensuring that you have a clear path and can track development along the way.</p>
<p><b>Provide training and education on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI<sup>28</sup>)</b></p>	<p>Employees that have received DEI training are better able to interact with others. This covers <b>variations in age, physical capabilities, neurodiversity, nationality, religion, gender identity, and sexual orientation</b>.</p> <p>The emphasis of this kind of training is on how managers and staff can be inclusive of everyone they come into contact with at work. Additionally, DEI training teaches staff members the advantages of diversity. Team members will be better able to reach consensus on decisions when they become cognizant of unconscious prejudice.</p>
<p><b>Engage in partnerships with stakeholders and diverse communities</b></p>	<p>Organizations can show their dedication to fostering a diverse and inclusive environment by actively taking part in external activities. <b>Work with outside groups and projects that promote inclusion and diversity</b> and participate in mentoring initiatives that promote varied talent.</p> <p>Engaging diverse communities is a successful strategy for luring diverse talent. You can attend job fairs and events geared toward underrepresented groups to spread the word about your organization's dedication to inclusion and diversity. Create <b>talent pipelines for underrepresented groups</b> by collaborating with local organizations that support them.</p>

## Tool #6: Improve recruiting procedures and eliminate potential bias

The occurrence (and persistence) of implicit gender bias in the assessment of recruiting, performance and promotion has been demonstrated by numerous studies, as summarized in a 2018 policy brief<sup>29</sup> by the European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) Standing

<sup>28</sup> Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is a term used to describe programs and policies that encourage representation and participation of diverse groups of people, including people of different genders, races and ethnicities, abilities and disabilities, religions, cultures, ages, sexual orientations and people with diverse backgrounds, experiences, skills and expertise (Source: [Training Industry](#)).

<sup>29</sup> European Research Area and Innovation Committee Standing Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation. [Tackling gender bias in research evaluation: Recommendations for action for EU Member States](#), 28 March 2019.

Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation.

Evidence suggests that the **identical piece of work is judged as superior if it is thought to have been created by a man** because various gender roles are associated with women and men, and a different value is given to each.

## Positive action vs. positive discrimination

If you have found that particular groups of people are underrepresented in a given function within your organization, you can adopt '**positive action**' measures to try to remedy this. This can be done in the hiring process either before or during the application phase.

This may entail promoting the application of members of certain groups or assisting individuals with specific protected characteristics<sup>30</sup> to the best of their abilities (for instance, by providing them with training or support that is not available to other candidates).

When there is a **tie between two applicants** but only one candidate has a protected characteristic and the other does not, positive action can also be utilized to break the tie, and you could choose the female candidate over the male candidate in support of the employer's attempts to establish a more representative staff, given that she was equally qualified.

This differs from '**positive discrimination**', which is forbidden. Even if they were specifically targeting women in an effort to address the gender imbalance in their workforce, the employer would have to award the job to the male applicant if he applied after the position had been advertised and was more qualified than a female applicant. It is discriminatory to give a job to someone who is less qualified just because they share a protected feature.

Women and men should have **equal opportunities to improve their professional careers** through recruitment, selection, and career advancement assistance initiatives. The systematic and structural discrimination against women along their professional pathways must be avoided and remedied. Steps to establishing equality between men and women include critically evaluating current selection methods and procedures at all stages and addressing any biases.

<sup>30</sup> Chapter 3 of the [EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#) establishes that any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, color, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited.

WHAT TO DO	HOW TO DO IT
<p><b>Gender neutral job description</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Avoid job titles that are explicitly or implicitly gendered, such as 'Waitress'. Use phrases like 'Waiting staff' instead, or both genders, if neutral phrases do not exist. These <b>gender-neutral phrases</b> are more likely to demonstrate that your organization values diversity and is not focused on any particular demographic or collection of characteristics.</li> <li>2. When describing positions, responsibilities, and requirements, <b>make sure your terminology is fair</b>. According to research, terms like 'ambitious', 'competitive', and 'determined' are regarded to be male-gendered, but phrases like 'committed' and 'collaborative' are thought to be female-gendered<sup>31</sup>. Superlatives like 'world-leading' should be avoided as well because they may deter women from applying if there are few female experts in a given sector.</li> <li>3. Be <b>specific and concise</b> in stating your demands and trim down requirements to only the most important ones. Men apply for a job when they meet only 60% of the qualifications, but women apply only if they meet 100% of them<sup>32</sup>. <p>Also, according to studies, male applicants are less likely to apply if the prerequisites are short, while female applicants are less likely to do so if the requirements are long. It is crucial to find a balance and <b>only include criteria that clearly indicate the required work skills</b>.</p> <p>Consider phrasing like 'some experience in...', 'familiarity with...', or 'the ideal candidate will have all or a good selection of the following...' if there are certain talents you need to mention.</p> </li> <li>4. While you might expect certain knowledge, expertise, or credentials from employees in order for them to perform a job, you must <b>make sure that such demands can be objectively justified</b>. This indicates that you can prove the qualifications you list in job postings, candidate profiles, and job descriptions are necessary for the position's needs. <p>If applicants must have recent experience, for instance, women who took a career break to raise children or who are now on maternity leave may not be eligible.</p> <p>You can hire from the largest potential talent pool by accepting alternative or similar qualifications and/or experience as</p> </li> </ol>

<sup>31</sup> Gaucher, Friesen and Kay. [Evidence That Gendered Wording in Job Advertisements Exists and Sustains Gender Inequality](#), Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 2011, Vol. 101, No. 1, 109 –128.

<sup>32</sup> Mohr, Tara Sophia. [Why Women Don't Apply for Jobs Unless They're 100% Qualified](#). Harvard Business Review, 25 August 2014.



	<p>acceptable criteria for vacancies.</p> <p>5. Use this simple <a href="#">tool</a> to <b>assess if your job description includes terms that could deter women's applications</b> and diagnose sources of bias.</p>
<p><b>Outreach and vacancy advertising</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Include language that makes it clear you are actively in favor of equality between men and women. It is critical for candidates to understand that <b>your organization values inclusion and diversity</b> and that your hiring procedures are nondiscriminatory. It has been shown that including a simple line in the job description committing to gender equality increased female applicants by 40%.</li> <li>2. To reach a larger pool of potential candidates, <b>make sure a variety of channels are employed</b> to market job openings. Think about posting any openings in online publications and local, regional, or national newspapers; online recruitment sites; social media channels; and private and public employment services.</li> <li>3. Preferably conduct <b>open and publicly advertised</b> recruitment and selection procedures over closed ones and introduce blind CVs.</li> <li>4. Always <b>check the visuals in an advertisement</b> for employment to make sure they do not appear to favor or imply a specific demographic should apply for the position (for instance, white, male, or young). The attraction of the advertisement will be increased by the use of gender-neutral images or photos that depict both sexes.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Shortlisting of candidates</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure that search and appointment <b>panels are gender balanced</b>, or, if not possible, including a minimum number of women.</li> <li>2. All those involved in the selection process should be <b>trained in gender equality issues</b> or at the very least made aware of the issues and familiar with the job requirements. Train them also in the impact of stereotypes, assumptions, and unconscious biases.</li> <li>3. When evaluating professional experience, <b>consider career breaks and deduct time spent on leave</b>. You should also give due consideration to non-traditional career choices, such as obtaining a certain type of training or degree or working in a different industry.</li> <li>4. Use <b>objective skill-based assessments</b> to assess applicants. Implicit bias can enter into the recruiting process without hiring managers being aware of it and is difficult to identify and account for.</li> </ol> <p>Employers should prevent gender bias from being used to evaluate candidates' potential by utilizing assessments to gauge</p>

	<p>relevant abilities and ensuring that evaluations don't gauge attributes that are more prevalent in women, such as risk aversion.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Emphasize team diversity by ensuring that selected candidates respect the <b>gender balance of all applicants</b>. Pay particular attention to male/female applications in professions with a high male/female ratio.</li> <li>6. If only men or only women <b>have held the position historically</b>, it is important to determine why this is the case and if it is supported by the job's actual requirements or merely reflects stereotypes.</li> </ol>
Interviewing process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Panels comprising women and men with a variety of experiences who are skilled at conducting interviews and have a solid grasp of the job's needs should conduct interviews. Having interviewers who have undergone <b>sensitivity and awareness training about issues related to gender and diversity</b> is especially beneficial.</li> <li>2. A set of <b>standard interview questions</b> based on the job description and the list of necessary abilities and competencies should be used for all candidates.</li> <li>3. As they are prohibited and unrelated to the job requirements, <b>inquiries into a candidate's personal life</b> (such as their marital status, the number of children they have or plan to have, or their sexual orientation) should not be made.</li> </ol>
Onboarding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Integrate diversity and gender equality education</b> and outreach into the onboarding program for new hires.</li> <li>2. Pair the new employee with a <b>mentor/sponsor</b> with consideration for diversity of talent.</li> <li>3. Share specific information about <b>diversity initiatives</b> that new recruits would find interesting (for instance, by providing information on professional women's networks to female hires).</li> </ol>
<p><b>IMPORTANT: If you are utilizing the services of an external recruiting agency or a headhunter, identify firms with a credible and extent record of building diverse candidate pools and share the diversity strategy, commitment, and targets of your organization with them.</b></p>	

### 3. CAREER PROGRESSION & ACCESS TO TRAINING



Given that female millennials, a generation who will soon make up 50% of the global workforce, and female generation Zs regard possibilities for career advancement as the most desirable employer trait according to a research done by PwC<sup>33</sup>, **career ambition must no longer be seen as a primarily male trait.**

Women today demand considerably more from their professions than did women in past generations, and organizations must keep up if they want to attract the talent necessary to expand their businesses.

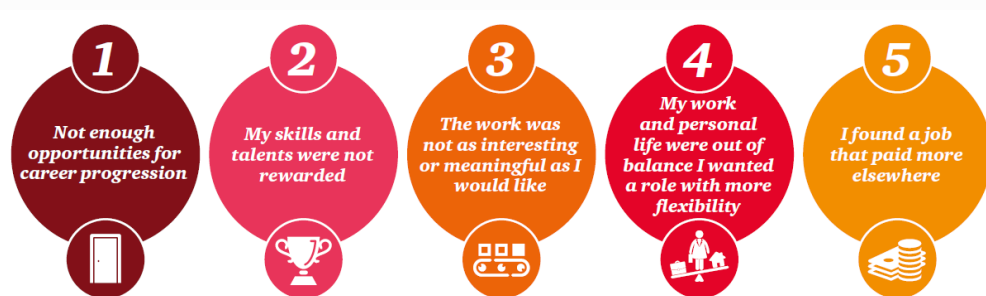


Figure 5. Top five reasons women said they left their former employer<sup>34</sup>

In all occupational sectors, women often hold fewer senior positions than males do, and they are more likely to be concentrated in lower levels of most organizations. The **'glass ceiling'** refers to the unseen barrier that, despite what may appear to be fair recruitment and promotion processes, hinders women from rising to high positions. Employers often discover that there are two glass ceilings: one for top management and one for senior administrative staff.

Nevertheless, often times it is not just the glass ceiling that prevents women to advance to top management positions and boardroom seats. The presence of **so-called "old boys' networks"**, which prevents women from accessing the same informal mentoring opportunities that men do, the perception of a lack of work-life balance at senior levels, the absence of senior female role models or recruitment and selection procedures that lack transparency, among several other factors, can deter women from applying for promoted positions.

This is called the **'sticky floor'**, a metaphor for a biased employment pattern that traps employees, primarily women, in lower-level positions with limited mobility and insurmountable obstacles to career advancement. Most of the workers who experience the "sticky floor" are "pink collar workers," such as secretaries, nurses, or waitresses.

<sup>33</sup> PwC. [Winning the fight for female talent: How to gain the diversity edge through inclusive recruitment](#), March 2017.

<sup>34</sup> PwC. [Winning the fight for female talent: How to gain the diversity edge through inclusive recruitment](#), March 2017.

## Women's work and men's work

Women and men tend to be clustered into different occupations and sectors due to a variety of factors detailed in previous sections of this toolkit. The jobs that women are more likely to perform have poor pay and few opportunities for advancement, which limits both men and women's choices. While restricting choices for both men and women, employment segregation also reduces the skill pool that is accessible to employers.

Gender stereotypes and expectations placed on women when historically they have performed comparable responsibilities in the home, such as caring for children and cleaning, are linked to the undervaluing of roles. Due to the perception that women naturally possess the talents needed for these tasks, "women's work" has a lesser status and worth. The task is therefore not fairly compensated.

These professions, or "women's work," mostly involve care, cleaning, catering, retail cashiery, and office labor. Men are more likely to hold senior or managerial positions when they do work in these industries where women predominate.

The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2023<sup>35</sup> reveals that the Healthcare and Care Services sector maintains its status as a predominantly female-dominated field, with women constituting 64.7% of the workforce. In Education and Consumer Services, women also outnumber men, comprising the 54.0% of the workforce.

Notably, the Government and Public sector stands out as the only one demonstrating a relatively balanced distribution of men and women across occupations, with women accounting for almost half (49.7%) of the workforce in 2023, slightly down from 50% in 2022.

According to this report, industries where women are underrepresented but still make up over 40% of the workforce, include Retail (48.7%), Entertainment Providers (48.4%), Administrative and Support Services (46.5%), Real Estate (44.7%), Accommodation and Food (43.3%), and Financial Services (42.4%).

Lastly, women face substantial underrepresentation in sectors such as Oil, Gas, and Mining (22.7%) and Infrastructure (22.3%), where they account for less than one-quarter of the workforce.

Sectors that have witnessed a distinct rise in the representation of women since 2016, despite a minor decline at the start of 2023, encompass the Government and Public, Agriculture, Infrastructure, Consumer Services, Professional Services, and Technology, Information, and Media.

<sup>35</sup> World Economic Forum. [Global Gender Gap Report 2023](#), 20 June 2023.

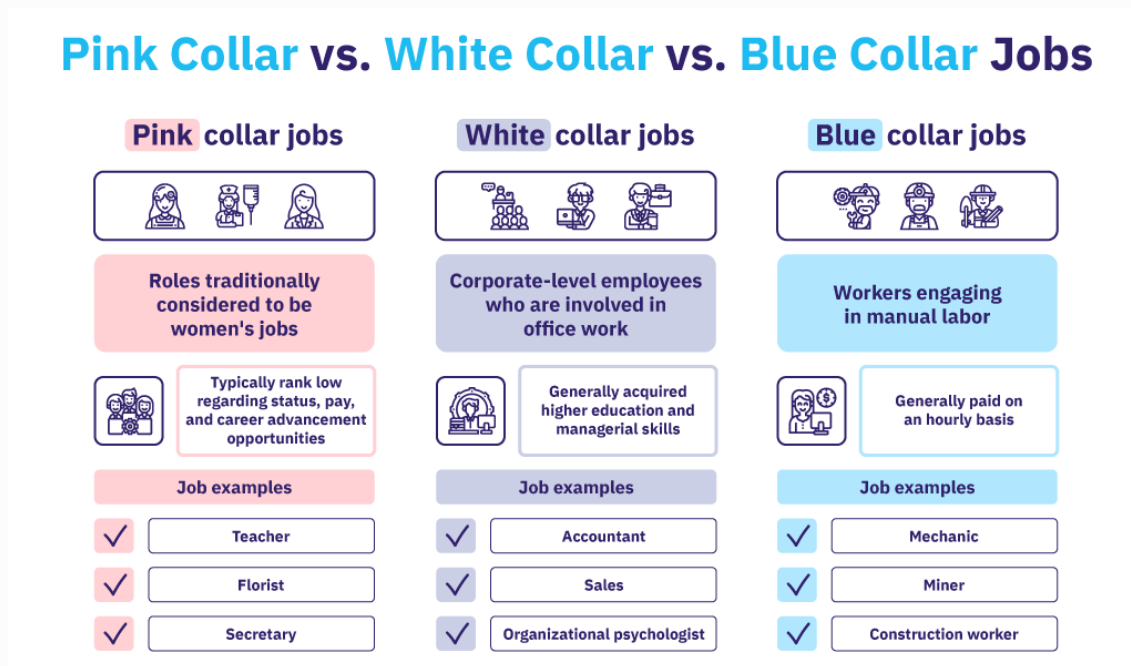


Figure 6. White, pink, and blue collar jobs: The differences<sup>36</sup>.

## Tool #7: Bridge the gender promotion gap

Despite outperforming them and being less likely to resign, **female employees are less likely to be promoted than their male counterparts**, according to a 2022 study<sup>37</sup> which showed that women receive lower potential ratings and higher performance ratings than men. As a result, female employees had an average 14% lower chance of being promoted than their male counterparts.

The study also showed that potential ratings systematically **understate the future contributions of women**: women are more likely to stay with the company and have higher future performance ratings than men do when comparing potential ratings from the same current period.

Additionally, regardless of whether the feedback was favorable or negative, women were consistently less likely than males to receive "specific feedback tied to outcomes," according to research<sup>38</sup>.

### Gender bias and the myth of meritocracy

Researchers have shown that managers in organizations that explicitly promote themselves as meritocratic (hiring, rewarding, and promoting the "best" people based on their individual merits) are more likely to favor men over equally qualified women.

This is called the '**paradox of meritocracy**', and was demonstrated in a series of three experiments<sup>39</sup> involving 445 participants with managerial expertise who were asked to make

<sup>36</sup> Academy to Innovate HR (AIHR). [Pink Collar Jobs](#).

<sup>37</sup> Benson, Alan; Li, Danielle; Shue, Kelly. ["Potential" and the Gender Promotion Gap](#), June 22, 2022.

<sup>38</sup> Correll, Shelley J. & Simard, Caroline. [Research: Vague Feedback Is Holding Women Back](#), Harvard Business Review, 29 April 2016.

<sup>39</sup> Castilla, Emilio J., & Benard, Stephen. [The Paradox of Meritocracy in Organizations](#). Administrative Science Quarterly, Johnson Graduate School of Management, Cornell University, 2010, 55(4), 543–676.

bonus, promotion, and termination recommendations for several employee profiles. Researchers altered evaluations' focus on meritocracy in both evaluations and compensation, as well as the gender of the staff members being evaluated.

The key finding was the same in all three studies: when an organization is expressly portrayed as meritocratic, people in managerial positions favor a male employee over a female employee who is similarly qualified by giving him a higher financial compensation.

This result shows that the quest for meritocracy in the workplace may be more challenging than it first seems, and that there may be **hidden risks** lurking behind some organizational initiatives made to reward excellence.

## HOW TO BRIDGE THE GENDER PROMOTION GAP

### TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- Promote **openness and accountability** by creating unbiased, explicit criteria for promotions and making sure that all employees are informed of them and have an equal opportunity to apply for an internal vacancy.
- To reduce subjective decision-making, implement a **clear promotion process** that includes frequent reviews and feedback.
- If short-listed together with external candidates, they should be posed the **same questions as everyone else**. Using different questions for internal and external candidates could be used as evidence of discrimination

### MENTORSHIP AND SPONSORSHIP

- Encourage formal **mentorship and sponsorship programs** that pair highly talented people with senior executives who can offer advice, support, and advocacy for their professional progress. Men and women should be urged to take part in these programs, both as mentors and mentees.
- For many women, mentoring provides the ideal space to learn from **someone who understands the particular challenges faced by women in the workplace**. A mentor can guide women to find the right direction and who can help them to develop solutions to career issues.
- **Reverse mentoring**, which pairs a younger, junior employee serving as a mentor to share expertise with an older, senior colleague acting as the mentee, can also be a cost-effective talent development technique to incorporate new ideas regarding equality between men and women and diversity.
- Both male and female employees require sponsors, who will **advise and support their participation in high-visibility projects and networks** while actively planning for their advancement, in order to succeed. Studies reveal that sponsorship chances frequently go to men; thus



	senior management needs to make a conscious effort to sponsor both high-potential men and women.
<b>EQUAL ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that men and women have <b>equal access to high-profile projects, assignments, and training opportunities</b> will equalize access to opportunities. This keeps women from being marginalized and gives them the experiences and abilities needed for progress.</li> <li>• Because managers frequently believe that women are less motivated to pursue careers than men, they may try to "protect" their female staff members from being overworked. These presumptions result in <b>less career development possibilities for women</b>, including challenging assignments, training, and career encouragement.</li> </ul>

## Tool #8: Invest in skills and training through a gender lens

Once a person starts working, **skill development continues**. One of the biggest challenges facing organization is finding and keeping skilled workers. Smaller organizations may find it simpler to retain talented workers by creating effective training options for them and supporting lifelong learning, as well as gain from higher morale, increased productivity, innovation, and creativity.

This is where organizations can benefit from reskilling and upskilling by giving their employees **new skills to satisfy organizational needs**. The difference between these two concepts is in the goal of the training:

- **Reskilling**, also known as professional recycling, attempts to train people to adapt to a different post within the firm, which produces workers who are more adaptable.
- **Upskilling**, on the other hand, strives to teach employees new skills to optimize their performance, which produces workers who are more specialized, productive, efficient, and innovative.

Nevertheless, **women still face more barriers to education and training**, especially in rural, informal, and traditional economies where household chores and care work remain the primary responsibility of women<sup>40</sup>, and working hours and travel are often common obstacles for women to attend trainings.

Women who work part-time and earn low wages are frequently the group of employees who are least likely to receive training opportunities at work, but they are also the ones who are most likely to be performing tasks below their skill level. Making sure **all employees have the chance to grow** and use their abilities represents smart business.

For any skills development project (whether through formal training or otherwise) to be successful, it must be able to respond to rapidly changing features of the labor market at the same time as

<sup>40</sup> International Labour Organization, [The Gender Divide in Skills Development: Progress, Challenges and Policy Options for Empowering Women](#), 2020.

addressing the social and cultural contexts which affect women as they learn and work.

The fact that training programs are frequently designed on the basis of antiquated and static assumptions about who participants are likely to be, the opportunities available in the labor market, the participants' practical needs, and other constraints females face, is the main cause of the discrimination and **marginalization women experience** in skill development programs.

Men engage in more learning activities connected to their jobs than women do, according to the Eurostat Adult Education Survey<sup>41</sup>. Training programs should be **flexible to people's life cycles** and modify their schedules, costs, and content to the individual requirements of learners in order to overcome access hurdles in order for lifelong learning to promote equality between men and women or redress inequalities<sup>42</sup>.

76% of professional women who have taken career interruptions wish to go back to their jobs<sup>43</sup>. However, three out of every five highly qualified and competent professional women who return to work may land in lower-skilled occupations that pay less. This is due in part to the **negative prejudice towards the 'CV gap'** held by recruiters and potential employers, who frequently believe that a lack of recent experience equates to skill erosion.

## WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN FOSTERING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STAFF

Ensure that all employees have access to training, development and certification must be available to everyone, even those who work part-time, remotely, or flexibly.

Encourage and support workers (especially women) in continuing their education throughout their careers to increase the employability of those with lower levels of education.

Respect training schedules and locations, and let your staff know in advance so that everyone who wants to attend may do so.

Avoid hosting training sessions or team-building exercises after work hours or on the weekends. These may be challenging for staff members who have caring obligations to attend.

Employees returning from extended leaves for family reasons should be given preference in training programs.

Skills training delivery should be made more flexible, as shorter, or modular training courses would allow women to reduce the time needed away from work or home.

Offer post-training support or resources, such as job aids, reference materials, or follow-up sessions, to reinforce learning and facilitate its application.

<sup>41</sup> Eurostat. [Adult Learning Statistics: Characteristics of Education and Training](#). August 2023.

<sup>42</sup> Gouthro, Patricia. [A Critical Feminist Analysis of the Homeplace as Learning Site: Expanding the Discourse of Lifelong Learning to Consider Adult Women Learners](#), International Journal of Lifelong Education 24, No. 1 (2005): 5–19.

<sup>43</sup> PwC. [Women returners, The £1 billion career break penalty for professional women](#), November 2016.

## 4. EQUAL PAY



The principle of “**equal pay for equal work or work of equal value**”, which has been a legal requirement in the EU since 1958, remains nonetheless difficult to put into practice because women are still frequently paid less than men for performing the same task. According to the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report 2023<sup>44</sup>, at the current rate of progress, it will take **131 years to reach full parity**.

The gender pay gap in the EU, according to the European Commission<sup>45</sup>, was 12.7% in 2021 and has barely altered over the previous ten years. It indicates that on average, **women make 13.0% less per hour than males do**. Additionally, women in so-called ‘non-standard jobs’<sup>46</sup> face even greater gender wage gaps.

The gender pay gap overall, which accounts for the influence of average hourly wages, the number of hours worked on a monthly average (before accounting for part-time work), and the employment rate, was 36.7% in 2018.

It is also important to note that, according to a 2023 research report<sup>47</sup>, in Northern and Western European countries, the so-called ‘**motherhood penalty**’ is now the **most significant driver of the gender pay gap**, accounting for 75% of income inequality. Simply put, the ‘motherhood penalty’ refers to the lost earnings of women who have children. Studies show<sup>48</sup> that mothers can see their salaries drop by as much as 5% per child compared to women without children.

The gender pay gap analyzes more than just wage discrimination; it also takes into account the **barriers women encounter** to advancement, rewards, and entry to the workforce as follows:

- **Sectoral segregation:** the so-called “horizontal gender segregation,” in which males predominate in highly compensated industries like ICT and women are concentrated in low-paying fields like care, health, and education jobs, is a major contributor to the gender pay gap. The overrepresentation of women in these fields accounts for about 24% of the gender pay gap, as highly feminized jobs frequently suffer from systemic undervaluation.
- **Unfair distribution of paid and unpaid work:** the OECD argues<sup>49</sup> that gender inequality in unpaid care work is the missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labor outcomes, such as labor force participation, wages, and job quality. In 2022, a briefing document<sup>50</sup> by the European Parliament stated that, as most unpaid care work within households is carried out by women, the ‘unpaid care penalty’ for women in the EU, which is equivalent to the earnings

<sup>44</sup> World Economic Forum. [Global Gender Gap Report 2023](#), 20 June 2023.

<sup>45</sup> European Commission, [The gender pay gap situation in the EU](#), 2022.

<sup>46</sup> According to the International Labour Organization, “[non-standard forms of employment](#) – also referred to as diverse forms of work – is an umbrella term for different employment arrangements that deviate from standard employment. They include temporary employment; part-time and on-call work; temporary agency work and other multiparty employment relationships; as well as disguised employment and dependent self-employment. As working from home does not take place at the employer’s premises, but rather at the worker’s home or at another location of their choosing, it too is considered a diverse employment arrangement”.

<sup>47</sup> PwC. [Women in Work 2023. Closing the Gender Pay Gap for good: A focus on the motherhood penalty](#), February 2023.

<sup>48</sup> Staff J, Mortimer JT. [Explaining the motherhood wage penalty during the early occupational career](#). Demography. 2012 Feb;49(1):1-21. doi: 10.1007/s13524-011-0068-6. PMID: 22037996; PMCID: PMC3272159.

<sup>49</sup> OECD Development Centre. [Unpaid Care Work: The missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labour outcomes](#), December 2014.

<sup>50</sup> European Parliament, European Parliamentary Research Service. [What if care work were recognised as a driver of sustainable growth?](#), September 2022.

they lost because of this unbalanced distribution of care responsibilities, is estimated to reach €242 billion per year.

- **The glass ceiling:** less than 8% of top company CEOs are women. The position in the hierarchy affects the amount of pay. However, managers had the biggest gender pay gaps in the EU, with women earning 23% less than males in their occupation.
- **Pay discrimination:** despite the concept of equal pay being incorporated in the European Treaties (article 157 Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union<sup>51</sup>) since 1957, there are instances where women are paid less than men for doing the same or similarly valued work.

Nevertheless, the vast majority of the gender pay gap in the EU is still unexplained and cannot be connected to worker or workplace factors like education, occupation, working hours, or the type of economic activity a person is employed in.

It would be easier for victims of pay discrimination to seek redress and uphold their right to equal pay if there were greater **pay transparency** because it would be easier to spot unjustified gender-based pay inequalities for similar or equal-value work.

On April 2023, the Council of the European Union adopted new rules<sup>52</sup> to **combat pay discrimination and help close the gender pay gap in the EU**. In accordance with the pay transparency directive, companies in the EU must disclose information about their pay gaps between men and women for work of equivalent value and take corrective action **if the disparity is greater than 5%**. The new guideline also contains measures on compensating pay discrimination victims and imposing fines on violating companies.

The following are a few examples of how this directive will significantly affect company reward policies:

- The first wage level or **pay scale must be disclosed by the employer** in the job posting or prior to the interview. Future employers are not permitted to inquire about past salaries of workers.
- Employees have the right to **inquire about their specific income level** as well as the average salary level, broken down by gender, for groups of employees performing similar or equally valuable work. No matter the size of the company, all employees are entitled to this right.
- Companies with more than 250 employees are required to **submit an annual report** to the appropriate national body detailing the gender pay disparity in their organization. Smaller organizations are subject to a three-year reporting requirement. Organizations with fewer than 100 employees are exempt from reporting requirements.
- A **joint pay gap assessment** must be conducted with employee representatives if the gender pay gap exceeds 5%.

<sup>51</sup> Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union - Part Three: Union Policies and Internal Actions - [Title X: Social Policy - Article 157](#) (ex-Article 141 TEC).

<sup>52</sup> Council of the European Union. [Gender pay gap: Council adopts new rules on pay transparency](#), 24 April 2023.

## How could pay transparency help reduce the gender pay gap?

Pay transparency is the practice of providing job applicants and employees with **information about their pay**.

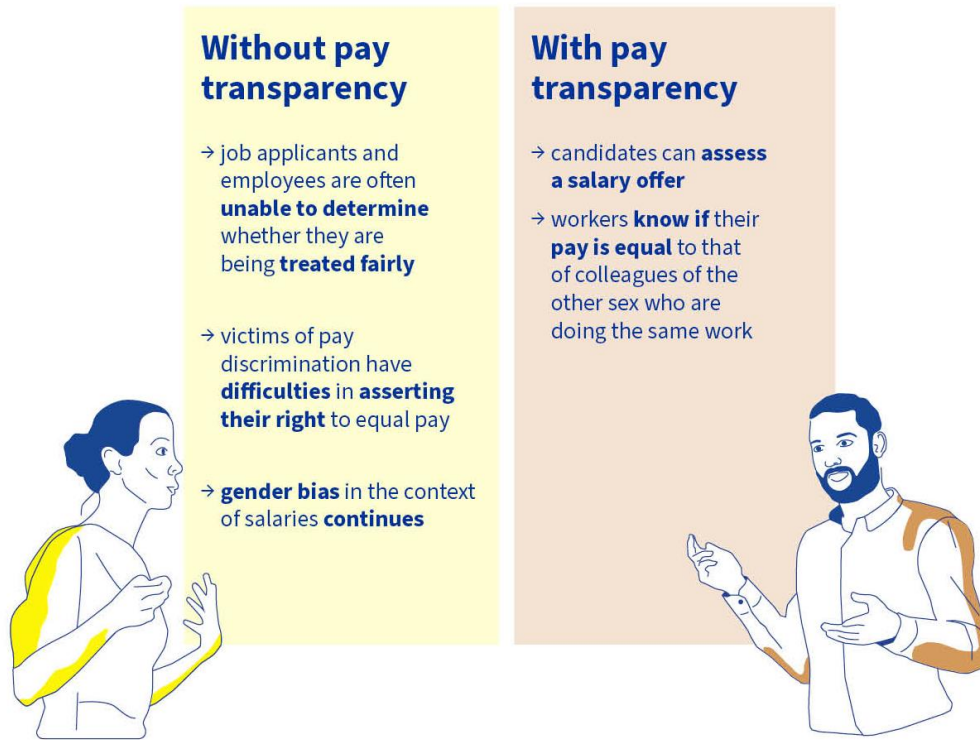


Figure 7. How pay transparency can help reduce the EU's gender pay gap<sup>53</sup>

This new EU directive also included penalties for not complying, such as:

- Compensation for workers who have experienced gender pay discrimination, including **complete reimbursement of owed wages** as well as any relevant bonuses or benefits.
- In cases where the employer has not complied with its transparency duties, it is the **employer's responsibility**, not the employee's, to demonstrate that there was no wage discrimination.
- Member states must set forth **explicit penalties** for breaking these rules, including fines, as part of the sanctions.
- In legal or administrative processes, organizations overseeing equal treatment and **employee representatives** may speak for employees.

So, how can companies become ready? Member states now have **three years to enact this directive** into national law, thus time is running out. Employers can get ready by:

- Using objective data and statistics to map the potential current wage gap.
- Creating an environmental, social, and governance (ESG) future-proof wage policy.

<sup>53</sup> Council of the European Union. [Why pay transparency can help reduce the EU's gender pay gap](#), 2023.

- Establishing specific goals and a plan of action to close the wage gap.
- Creating policies and procedures.
- Implementing and monitoring the changes step-by-step.
- Communicating with all interested parties.

## Tool #9: Conduct an equal pay audit and analyze potential gender pay gaps

An equal pay audit examines pay data to see if **all employees are being paid fairly** or if some groups are receiving preferential treatment. The salary packages of employees from various categories are compared after factors including job role, part-time status, and length of service have been taken into consideration. The audit's main goal is to ascertain whether women (or anyone with other protected characteristics) are working in a setting that may be considered to be "equal work" when compared to the work of other groups who receive higher wages.

This covers circumstances in which men and women are engaged in 'like work' in that their tasks and abilities are the same or similar, despite the fact that they are generally separated in the workplace (for example, men work in warehousing and driving, while women work in catering and cleaning). If, for instance, the needed level of training or the amount of responsibility is comparable, the audit might also evaluate whether their work is of "**equal value**".

In order to perform this equal pay audit is extremely valuable to **put together a steering committee** early on in the planning process to help manage the audit's work. The steering committee should ideally include a manager or Human Resources representative, as well as individuals with knowledge of how present pay systems were formed, how any changes that may result from the audit can be implemented, how the compensation system and grading structures are created and how to evaluate jobs.

If the organization is small and has no dedicated HR staff, it is essential that the committee **includes someone knowledgeable about gender equality and the organization's pay structures**, or that they resort to external consulting or administrative services that can support them in this process.

The steering committee should decide on the audit's general scope during an early discussion. If this is the organization's first audit, it could be helpful to decide on a **pilot phase** that focuses on a department or division where there are recognized issues. All pertinent employees and workers should be included in an equal pay audit, which should also take gender pay disparities into account.

The following is a combined and abridged version of the guidelines developed by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)<sup>54</sup>, the Australian Government Workplace Gender Equality Agency<sup>55</sup>, and the Equality Trust<sup>56</sup> to help organizations routinely perform pay audits to prove that

<sup>54</sup> Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). [Equal pay audit for larger organisations.](#)

<sup>55</sup> Australian Government Workplace Gender Equality Agency. [Guide to gender pay equity. Practical steps to improve pay equity between women and men in your organisation.](#)

<sup>56</sup> The Equality Trust. [Toolkit for Achieving Equal Pay in your Workplace.](#)



their workplace is free from pay discrimination.

## THE SIX STEPS OF AN EQUAL PAY AUDIT

### STEP 1: PREPARE

To perform a **staff's payrolls analysis**, you must gather all the relevant pay information. Besides data regarding gender and salaries, you will need:

- Items enabling calculation of full-time equivalent employee numbers, for example, actual hours employees work and fulltime ordinary contract hours for the positions.
- Items enabling calculation of total annual full-time equivalent remuneration (for employees who are not full-time, employers need to calculate what would be their full-time equivalent base salary and full-time equivalent total remuneration), for example, base pay, allowances, higher duties, superannuation, bonuses, job title/classification.

In the case of employees who have worked for less than 12 months prior to the point in time selected for analyzing your data profile, employers need to calculate the equivalent 12-month base salary and the equivalent 12-month total remuneration.

You can also gather more pertinent information about the outcomes, such as **tenure, performance rating, and geographic location**. To identify gender pay gaps, all data is required to be annualized and in full-time equivalent amounts.

### STEP 2: CATEGORIZE

There are three ways of categorizing what we mean by equal work:

- **Like work:** work where the job and skills are the same or similar.
- **Work rated as equivalent:** work that has been rated as equivalent, using a job evaluation system.
- **Work of equal value:** Work that is not similar but is of equal value. This could be because the level of skill, training, responsibility or demands of the working conditions are of equal value.

### STEP 3: ANALYZE

Get an Excel spreadsheet with a list of all your employees' names and the annualized full-time equivalent pay that each receives. Next, **arrange the employees in the spreadsheet according to their pay** (for example, from highest to lowest pay).

Compare the pay for workers doing equal or comparable work. Determine the areas where there are distinctions between roles and how a worker's gender affects these. Consider **job size, performance, and other variables** that could affect pay levels while doing your assessment to determine whether compensation is fair and devoid of gender bias (either intentional or unintentional). You must be able to **justify the variations**

	<p>and attest that they do away with any intentional or unintentional gender bias.</p> <p>When comparing the compensation for each gender, you might find like-for-like gender pay discrepancies by evaluating your pay information. If there are pay differences between men and women doing work of similar or equivalent value, you will observe differing amounts in one or all of the base wage, additional components of payment, and total compensation on your payroll spreadsheet. The <b>average base pay for women and men</b> in each occupational category should be calculated. Apply the same logic to total compensation.</p>
<p><b>STEP 4: ESTABLISH</b></p>	<p>The steering committee's job is to determine <b>why these unfair inequalities exist</b> when a wage gap has been proven. The pay practices and regulations that determine pay must be evaluated along with all other facets of the pay system.</p> <p>This should look at things like how starting pay is determined and how employees and workers are treated with regard to pay growth, for instance. The steering group's important job in this situation is to <b>examine the pay structure</b> from the viewpoint of members in the group and consider how it affects women and men differently.</p> <p>Whether there are valid explanations for differences in pay between men and women is a crucial question for the committee to address. '<b>Genuine material factors</b>' are what these are called. These elements include, for instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Skills shortages and market forces:</b> It is possible that an organization is paying more for a certain kind of labor because of regional, international, or national problems that have an impact on production, service delivery, or the quantity of individuals available to fill positions.</li> <li>• <b>Pay disparities due to geography:</b> It is well known that salaries for particular jobs can differ from region to region. Additionally, it can be difficult for companies in various regions of the nation to fill open positions for specific job roles.</li> </ul> <p>It is advised that you summarize your payroll study's findings, identify the key gender pay discrepancies, and discuss the key takeaways. Make a <b>list of all the gender pay inequalities that cannot be justified or explained</b>, considering both base income and overall compensation.</p> <p>Also, indicate the frequent causes, such as the disparity in performance evaluations for full-time and part-time employees or workplace discrimination and gender bias, and outline the main causes of each of these gaps. Once you have done this, <b>prioritize the areas of concern</b>.</p>
<p><b>STEP 5: PLAN</b></p>	<p>Now you are prepared to start developing an <b>action plan</b> to address concerns since you have finished analyzing and investigating the gender</p>

## STEP 6: REVIEW

pay discrepancies in your organization and have obtained data to explain and justify them where necessary.

You can choose to incorporate your strategy for pay equality into your larger plan for equality between men and women. There are particular steps that can be taken to **lessen and eliminate gender wage inequalities** when addressing like-for-like gaps.

Many of these steps should be included in a larger **gender equality strategy** that may include establishing gender diversity goals, mainstreaming flexible work schedules, and creating a gender inclusive culture in order to diminish and eventually eliminate by-level and organization-wide gender pay discrepancies.

- **Where do we want to go?** Once your pay equality objectives have been established, make sure they are in line with your overall gender equality strategy and that your remuneration strategy and policy reflect these aims. Establish precise deadlines and think about what may be done to gradually close the gender wage gap in your organization over the course of one, two, and five years.
- **How will we get there?** Determine the strategies and action plans that will ensure your organization reaches its goals once you have set them. In the beginning, it is advised that your organization prioritize closing like-for-like gender pay gaps and that, as part of your gender equality policy, efforts be taken to close level-by-level and organizational-wide gender pay gaps.

The **alignment with other strategies and procedures** that may already be in place within your organization, such as talent management strategies, retention strategies, and performance measurement systems, should also be considered when choosing the proper tactics.

Make sure that **responsibility and accountability** for the governance and implementation are clear while establishing the strategy. A mechanism for **periodic assessments** of gender pay gap data, execution of the strategy and measures, and adjustments as a result of actions should all be included in the governance structure.

Consider gender pay parity when making salary decisions and during your organization's performance management process. It is advised that you undertake a payroll analysis and review of your approach **at least once a year**.

## Tool #10: Promote and ensure equal remuneration

Paying women and men equally for doing the same job can greatly **help your organization** by:

- Attracting and maintaining a bright and diverse workforce.
- Retaining knowledgeable and skilled workers to lower employee turnover and boost organizational effectiveness.
- Increasing staff morale and productivity by making them feel appreciated.
- Supporting a culture of equality between men and women at work.
- Establishing the organization as a prominent leader for families and women.
- Increasing productivity and profitability as a result of a contented staff.

### Women are asking for a raise, but not getting it

According to research<sup>57</sup>, employees who put in more hours are more likely to claim that their salary was determined through negotiation and to have been successful in getting a pay raise. **Women are at a disadvantage** since they tend to work part-time or flexibly and spend more time providing unpaid care. Male employees in particular are less likely to request a pay raise if they work fewer hours. Additionally, women are less likely to work in jobs where the salary is negotiable.

Based on this research's results, a study concluded that there were no differences in the chance of 'asking' for a pay raise between males and females. Women did not seem to be more anxious than males about how negotiations might affect their relationships at work. However, when they did ask, **women were less successful in obtaining a pay rise than men were**. In other words, according to the data, women are asking for more, but they are not obtaining it.

This might not be the case for women under the age of 40, according to further age-disaggregated statistics, as they were more likely to say that they had requested and been granted a pay raise. This can be a sign of a **different negotiation style approach between generations**.

WHAT TO DO	HOW TO DO IT
<b>Create systems to uphold equal pay</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Transparency in salary information</b> is a must, and any rules that forbid employees from discussing pay should be changed.</li> <li>• Display the organization's pay equality plans and pay policies where employees may see them.</li> <li>• Establish a bonus and promotion system that is both competitive and open.</li> </ul>

<sup>57</sup> Artz, Benjamin; Goodall, Amanda H. & Oswald, Andrew J. [Do Women Ask?](#), September 2016.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that each position's description is current.</li> <li>• Create a <b>structured and transparent approach for performance evaluations</b> that evaluates an employee's work with objectivity. The evaluation of employees should consider all pertinent aspects, such as the job description and the expectations of the manager.</li> <li>• Early on, establish <b>pay scales and levels</b>. Continually follow them. Consider how these relate to the many phases of the employee life cycle, such as the stages of the offer letter, performance review, and promotion. After that, perform market research to develop competitive salary ranges for various roles.</li> <li>• Supervisors should receive training on how to evaluate staff members successfully and keep track of pertinent records that attest to performance. Additionally, training on the value of the evaluation process for employees is necessary.</li> <li>• Establish a <b>procedure for examining each employee's remuneration package</b> on a regular basis to prevent perks and professional development opportunity gaps.</li> <li>• Create and distribute an annual report that tracks your success in elevating women into senior positions.</li> <li>• Make it simpler for staff members to apply for promotions.</li> <li>• Stake out <b>more female directors</b> for your organization.</li> <li>• Prioritize data. <b>You cannot combat what you don't measure.</b> Invest in analytics and people operations tools that show how pay differs based on an array of variables, including job functions, gender, race, age, experience, tenure, performance, and more.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Make sure that the process of salary negotiation is fair</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure your staff is aware that discussing compensation at work is completely acceptable.</li> <li>• If your organization has a policy requiring employees to negotiate their pay, it is crucial to <b>be upfront and sincere</b> about it. Do not presume that all employees will attend a meeting with the intention of negotiating their pay.</li> <li>• Teach employees how to discuss and negotiate their salaries, and <b>match them with mentors</b> so they can practice.</li> <li>• Do away with any formal terminology associated with the negotiation process and redefine it as a chance to ask in order to encourage your staff to feel more at ease. A study<sup>58</sup> showed that when women feel that they are asking and not arguing, they are</li> </ul>

<sup>58</sup> Artz, Benjamin; Goodall, Amanda H. & Oswald, Andrew J. [Do Women Ask?](#), September 2016.

	<p>less afraid.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recognize that the <b>obstacles that women and men encounter are different</b>. Researchers have theorized that women underperform because negotiations are a construct associated with men and are inconsistent with the traditional social role of women.</li><li>• According to social research, women typically find it challenging to negotiate since they are thought to be more community-minded, whereas assertiveness and self-advocacy are more strongly associated with men.</li><li>• Asking job applicants about their past salaries may disadvantage female candidates. This is so because <b>women are statistically more likely than their similarly competent male peers to earn less money</b>. The gender pay gap may continue to exist if employees are promoted or paid their first salary at your organization based on their prior compensation rather than the market worth of their position.</li></ul>
--	--



## 5. WORKING CONDITIONS, HEALTH, AND OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY



Based on the prior premise that occupational health and safety for women workers is a fundamental right, it is necessary to **integrate the gender perspective into the analysis of health**, considering the irreversible damage caused by the combination of work with other factors outside the workplace that sometimes interact with each other to increase occupational hazards.

For a long time, the international standards that pioneered the treatment of women's occupational health were mostly based on strictly biological occupational health policies and therefore focused on pregnancy and maternity, without paying the necessary attention to other aspects of working conditions that can also affect their health. As a result, **women's occupational health problems have traditionally been underestimated**, and it is often thought that occupational risk prevention measures aimed at protecting pregnancy and breastfeeding are sufficient.

However, there are substantial differences in the working lives of women and men, so gender inequalities can affect the occupational safety and health of women at work and influence their productivity. This is why the European Union argues<sup>59</sup> that, in order to improve occupational aptitude and the quality of working life, it is necessary to **make progress in the field of gender equality** and to take more account of the specific health and safety aspects of women.

Undoubtedly, advancing towards the effectiveness and efficiency of occupational risk prevention measures, incorporating the gender perspective, will allow us to take an especially important step towards **improving working conditions**, achieving equal opportunities for all workers, and developing the competitiveness of our society and our companies.

### Tool #11: Integrate the gender perspective in the prevention of occupational risks

Women and men are in different social and economic conditions and positions in the labor market, which means that they are **exposed to different risks** and will develop different health problems. Thus, feminized jobs are characterized by mostly ergonomic and psychosocial risks, while men are more exposed to safety risks.

The most prevalent health issues at work are musculoskeletal disorders (MSD). Research<sup>60</sup> has found that the occupational origin of women's MSD problems tended not to be believed, and that men's MSD compensation claims have been accepted almost twice as often as those from women.

Because of the repetitive nature of both office and factory jobs, **women typically have more upper back and upper limb pain**, which is aggravated during pregnancy. Women are more likely than men

<sup>59</sup> European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. [Mainstreaming gender into occupational safety and health practice](#), 2014.

<sup>60</sup> Trades Union Congress. [Gender in occupational safety and health](#), April 2017.

to have jobs which require prolonged standing (and potentially being required to wear high heels could add to the risk). Men typically have lower-back pain as a result of exerting high force at work.

Consequently, different health effects are produced; in the case of women, these are often long-term effects that appear in the long term and are of multi-causal etiology, where various **occupational and extra-occupational risk factors combine** to generate the damage. Men, on the other hand, suffer more traumatic accidents.

Gender mainstreaming in occupational risk prevention entails looking into issues that are important to female workers but have not gotten enough attention so far, recognizing the risks they face at work, **increasing their participation in occupational health decisions**, and making sure the preventive measures taken are effective.

## Differences even in the same occupation

According to research, even when women and men hold the same position, they may do different duties and view the hazards associated with their jobs differently. As a result, people might experience different impacts on their health.

One study<sup>61</sup>, for instance, examined the many tasks historically performed by men and women hospital cleaners. In reality, the 'light' activities given to female hospital cleaners involved high workloads with postural restrictions, repeated motions, a steady work speed, minimal downtime, numerous static postures, and bent or stretched positions. Male hospital cleaners were given "heavy" jobs like sweeping to complete while standing up, which was less taxing.

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work has developed the following table<sup>62</sup> compiling some examples of gender **differences in workplace risks** and its potential health outcomes.

## Some examples of gender differences in risks and health outcomes

Hazard/health outcome	'More exposed/greater incidence'	Comments
Accidents	Men	Men have a higher rate, even after adjustments are made for fewer hours worked by women.
Upper limb disorders	Women	High incidences are found in some highly repetitive work carried out by women such as 'light' assembly-line work and data-entry work, where they have little control over the way they work.
Heavy lifting	Men	But, for example, women in cleaning and catering and care work suffer injuries from heavy lifting and carrying.

<sup>61</sup> Salerno, Silvana; Kolman, Valentina; Livigni, Lucilla; Magrini, Andrea; Bosco, Maria Giuseppina; & Talamanca, Irene Figà. [Women's working conditions in hospital cleaning: a case study](#), EA 2012: 18th World congress on Ergonomics - Designing a sustainable future, 2012.

<sup>62</sup> European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. [Factsheet 42 - Gender issues in safety and health at work](#), 2003.

Stress	Women	Both report high rates, but stressors particular to 'women's' work include sexual harassment, discrimination, low status jobs with little control, emotionally demanding work and double burden of paid work and unpaid work in the home.
Violence from the public	Women	Women workers have more contact with members of the public.
Noise/hearing loss	Men	Women in textile and food production can be highly exposed, for example.
Occupational cancer	Men	Women have higher rates in certain manufacturing industries, for example..
Asthma and allergies	Women	For example, from cleaning agents, sterilizing agents and dust in protective latex gloves used in healthcare and dusts in textile and clothing manufacture
Skin diseases	Women	For example, due to working with wet hands in jobs such as catering, or from skin contact with cleaning agents or hairdressing chemicals.
Infectious diseases	Women	For example, in healthcare or work with children.
Inappropriate work and protective equipment	Women	Many work clothes and equipment have been designed for the 'average man', causing problems for many women and 'non-average' men.
Reproductive health	Both	Neglected areas include fertility, menstrual disorders, menopause, and male reproductive health.
Inappropriate work hours	Both	Men are more likely to work very long paid hours, women do more unpaid work in the home. Both want a better work-life balance.

## PHASES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A GENDER-SENSITIVE OCCUPATIONAL HAZARD PREVENTION PLAN

### PHASE 1:

#### Preparatory activities

The integration of the gender perspective in this phase involves **compiling and analyzing specific national legislation, guides and technical standards related to women's working conditions** that may apply to the organization due to its activity and characteristics, such as maternity and breastfeeding regulations, legislation on equality or technical notes on risk prevention, among others.

It is recommended that the person responsible for occupational risk prevention in the organization has training in gender equality that allows them to transmit these concepts to the rest of the organization.

At the same time, it is necessary to **work on the culture of the organization** to make all its members aware of the reasons why it is necessary to consider the gender perspective in risk prevention management.

<p><b>PHASE 2:</b></p> <p><b>Consultation and participation of workers</b></p>	<p>Any safety and health program must include the <b>active involvement of employees and their representatives</b> in order to be successful. All employees must be encouraged to engage in the program, feel at ease offering feedback, and report any safety or health problems for it to be beneficial from a safety and health perspective.</p> <p>Additionally, <b>incorporating workers' input</b> at every stage of program design and implementation improves your ability to spot workplace hazards and their root causes, fosters a sense of program ownership among employees, improves their comprehension of how the program functions, and aids in the program's long-term sustainability.</p> <p>The way in which this participation is conducted, the <b>procedures and channels of communication</b> to be established, as well as the representation of the workers' collective, must be defined in such a way as to <b>guarantee a balanced participation of women and men</b> both in terms of access to information and at decision-making levels.</p>
<p><b>PHASE 3:</b></p> <p><b>Hazards identification and risk assessment</b></p>	<p>Including a gender perspective in the safety and risk prevention strategy entails <b>highlighting the differences between men and women in terms of their exposure to workplace risks and the results of those risks</b>. It also helps to end gender disparities in employment, which put women in a position of greater job insecurity. This makes it easier to offer more appropriate solutions to enhance working conditions and quality of life for both men and women.</p> <p>The steps to follow during this phase are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze the actual work activity to <b>describe the working conditions</b>, encouraging women to report issues that they think may affect their safety and health at work. If women and men working in the same employment perform the same tasks and in the same manner, it should be verified throughout the risk assessment process.</li> <li>• Identify hazards and <b>perform a risk analysis by involving female workers</b>, being careful about gender bias, paying attention to gender issues and not making assumptions about risks exposure. The gender approach is integrated into this process by making the potential differences between men and women in terms of the working conditions they engage in, which will lead to different exposure to risks, as well as the different consequences that the risk may have for men and women depending on their personal characteristics and situation, visible in all of its phases (information gathering, hazard identification, and risk analysis).</li> </ul>
<p><b>PHASE 4:</b></p> <p><b>Design of the health and</b></p>	<p>The principles of <b>preventive action from a gender perspective</b> must be utilized while choosing and prioritizing the most suitable methods to address the risks and building the catalog of preventive measures, as well</p>

<p><b>safety prevention system</b></p>	<p>as the specific actions and interrelationships of the different units of the organization's management system.</p> <p>Assigning to each measure the <b>human and material resources</b> required for its implementation, as well as the economic resources allocated to it and the training and information measures for male and female workers, is part of converting the catalog of measures from the health and safety prevention system into the planning of the organization's daily activity.</p> <p>It is crucial to strike a balance in how men and women are given responsibility for carrying out preventive measures, with a focus on <b>empowering women workers</b> to implement policies that directly impact them.</p> <p>Paying attention to <b>diverse demographics and</b> tailoring work and preventive measures to workers are crucial during this time. For instance, choosing protective gear that is appropriate for women and tailored to their specific needs.</p>
<p><b>PHASE 5:</b></p> <p><b>Implementation of solutions</b></p>	<p>The employer is responsible for ensuring the successful implementation of the health and risk preventive measures outlined in the planning, performing ongoing monitoring of the same, and confirming through <b>periodic controls</b> that the measures are adequate for the intended protection objectives.</p> <p>It is advisable to <b>define indicators</b>, if possible <b>measurable and disaggregated by gender</b>, which make it possible to monitor the evolution and changes brought about by the planned measures in order to evaluate the effectiveness of preventive action and the organization's compliance with the health and safety objectives.</p>
<p><b>PHASE 6:</b></p> <p><b>Monitoring, review, and improvement</b></p>	<p>The need to monitor, review and/or improve the system is required when an incident or damage occurs, as well as when a substantial change in working conditions is foreseen, but it can also be due to an audit or a <b>periodic dynamic of continuous improvement</b> within the organization.</p> <p>Ensuring female employees engage in monitoring and review procedures and are informed of new knowledge regarding gender-related occupational health issues is important.</p>

## Tool #12: Support your employees through menstruation and menopause

Menopause and periods can have a **negative effect on a worker's personal and professional life**. While not everyone experiences symptoms, helping those who do will enhance their overall well-being and lessen any negative effects on attendance and productivity.

Nearly half of employees who have periods (48%) indicated there is a **noticeable stigma**

surrounding the issue at the organization they work for, according to a 2019 study<sup>63</sup>. The survey, carried out with 2,000 employees who menstruate, found that this stigma is affecting how people act in the workplace. Three-quarters (74%) feel it is necessary to hide sanitary products at work, and 60% stated they would be/uncomfortable discussing the topic of menstruation at all with colleagues or managers.

A third (32%) of respondents said that their coworkers did not take period pain seriously and a number of survey respondents had even been told that their period pain "is not a real illness". As a result, 57% of those who experience symptoms related to their period reported having to **make up an excuse for missing work** and taking sick days.

Failure to manage period stigma might result in more serious issues, such as **hostile remarks**. One in ten menstruators, according to the survey, has directly experienced nasty remarks regarding their period at work. They include insulting terminology, sexist microaggressions and even accusing remarks like "you're just lazy" and "it's just an excuse to act like a bitch."

## Support trans, people with variations of sex development and non-binary employees

Currently, the menstrual health discourse in most countries excludes gender-diverse people<sup>64</sup>. Employers must keep in mind that the majority of women and **other people who menstruate** are impacted too by both periods and menopause. This can apply to anyone who identify as transgender, intersex, or non-binary. Employers should treat everyone fairly and maintain the privacy and confidentiality of all conversations. This is crucial because someone may share their gender identity when talking about the symptoms of periods or menopause and may not want it to be made public.

Additionally, **trans, and non-binary individuals who menstruate**, for example, usually experience heightened gender dysphoria during their period, and, to add to this fact, a recent systematic review<sup>65</sup> has shown that they do not find the men's washrooms safe to change their period products, as waste bins are not available in the cubicles of men's washrooms. A simple but effective way to support them would be to place small sanitary bins in men's facilities.

If someone asked you to name the fastest-growing workforce demographic, chances are that you would not guess at menopausal women<sup>66</sup>. However, with eight out of 10 menopausal women employed, this is a growing population of workers and a pertinent subject to tackle in any organization.

Even while **menopause has been a natural occurrence for women for millennia**, which does not make it any less important. Increasingly more skilled, seasoned women in their 40s, 50s, and 60s

<sup>63</sup> DPG. [Overcoming Period Stigma in the Workplace](#), 19 May 2019.

<sup>64</sup> Lowik AJ. ["Just because I don't bleed, doesn't mean I don't go through it": Expanding knowledge on trans and non-binary menstruators.](#) International Journal of Transgender Health. 2021 Sep 25;22(1-2):113-125.

<sup>65</sup> Defreyne J, Motmans J, T'sjoen G. [Healthcare costs and quality of life outcomes following gender affirming surgery in trans men: a review.](#) Expert Rev Pharmacoecon Outcomes Res. 2017 Dec;17(6):543-556.

<sup>66</sup> Brewis, Joanna; Beck, Vanessa; Davies, Andrea & Matheson, Jesse – University of Leicester. [The effects of menopause transition on women's economic participation](#), July 2017.



have entered the workforce over the previous few decades. And that is significant. Nevertheless, the management of gender-specific health issues other than pregnancy are rarely discussed in the workplace.

A woman may experience **severe physical, emotional, and mental effects** during menopause. And if she works for your organization, she might want assistance in order to keep producing her best work even when she is dealing with symptoms.

Many women have said they frequently find managing their menopause symptoms in the workplace to be particularly challenging, especially as many women find it difficult to talk about menopause at work. Employers have responsibilities for the health and safety of all their employees, but there are also clear business reasons for proactively managing an age-diverse workforce.

According to a survey<sup>67</sup>, 45% of women felt that menopausal symptoms had a negative impact on their work, and 47% of those who needed to take a day off work due to menopausal symptoms say they would not tell their employer the real reason for fear of being stigmatized for being menopausal.

The most frequently stated **difficulties menopausal women have at work** include having poor attention, weariness, impaired memory, feeling low/depressed, and diminished confidence. Additionally, problematic hot flushes<sup>68</sup> at work have been connected to women's higher intention to leave the workforce. It is important to know that, on average, symptoms of the menopause usually last between 4 and 8 years.

## SUPPORTING STAFF THROUGH PERIODS AND MENOPAUSE

### Periods and menstruation

- **Talk about menstrual health:** Having open discussions about menstrual health, which should be entirely normal but has been ignored and suppressed for too long, can help to break down stigma and taboos. Employees who receive education on these topics learn that menstruation has many other symptoms other simply the actual bleeding, especially if they are dealing with premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD), endometriosis, or polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). Headaches and migraines are two examples of symptoms.
- **Provide period care and free sanitary products:** Tampons, pads, and even pantyliners fall under this category, among others. Many people may choose to stay at home since they are unable to buy period supplies. Offering items at work removes the worry of being unprepared and really provides an additional motivation to show up. Additionally, periods frequently arrive unannounced, and employees might not have anything with them or enough to last the day. Lastly, providing the right facilities can reduce the amount of time

<sup>67</sup> NHS inform. [Menopause and the workplace](#), 2023.

<sup>68</sup> Hot flushes are short, sudden feelings of heat, usually in the face, neck, and chest, which can make the skin red and sweaty. Severe flushes can cause sweat to soak through clothing (Source: The Faculty of Occupational Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians. [Guidance on menopause and the workplace](#), 2016).

	<p>employees spend away from their desks if there would be more toilets available.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Develop policies:</b> Implement measures to address menstruation in order to empower women and foster their wellbeing and productivity at work. Make sure that sickness and absence regulations do not unfairly penalize women because of possible symptoms like cramping, memory loss, or lack of concentration.</li> <li>• <b>Implement flexible working:</b> Flexibility in the workplace is encouraged to help employees who are experiencing menstrual symptoms. It is preferable to be able to work from home rather than needing to take an entire day off.</li> </ul>
Menopause	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Get the conversation going:</b> The first step is to eradicate the stigma and silence around menopause. It is crucial to do this in a considerate and courteous manner without being condescending or dismissive. Do not forget that many workers could have feelings of guilt or embarrassment if they are required to discuss the menopause and how it is impacting them.</li> <li>• <b>Offer adaptability:</b> For employees experiencing menopause symptoms, flexibility might be a lifesaver. For instance, flexible hours, such as earlier start times or compressed hours, may be beneficial to a worker going through menopause who may be having trouble sleeping. These hours may help this worker manage their symptoms/their consequences at work.</li> <li>• <b>Conduct a risk analysis and make the necessary adjustments:</b> Risk assessments should consider the unique requirements of menopausal employees and make sure that the workplace will not exacerbate their symptoms. Making small adjustments to the workplace can frequently reduce the severity of some symptoms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reconsider the use of <b>certain materials in any uniform or corporate apparel</b> to minimize the impact of hot flushes, ensure access to restrooms, and ensure availability of cold water are all things that should be considered in a risk assessment.</li> <li>○ Review the <b>ventilation and temperature controls</b> in the workplace and consider how you might modify them to better suit the needs of different people. This could be as simple as placing a desktop fan in an office or positioning a workstation away from a heat source or next to an opening window.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## 6. MATERNITY, WORK-LIFE BALANCE & FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS



Many things have changed in the world of work after the COVID-19 pandemic, and one of the most notable ones is that **people have become more focused on work-life balance than salary**. According to a study<sup>69</sup>, more workers said they were attracted to their current role for the work-life balance (41%) than the salary (36%).

Out of the employees surveyed, a greater proportion of male employees (43%) expressed they were drawn to salary rather than work-life balance (34%), while female employees preferred work-life balance (44%) over salary (33%).

This represents a change in the rankings from 2019, prior to the pandemic, when a greater percentage of workers stated that they were drawn to the salary (41.02%), with work-life balance coming in second (40.97%).

In addition to being beneficial for relationships and overall health, a healthy work-life balance can also **raise employee productivity and, eventually, performance**. Simply put, employees will work harder, make fewer mistakes, and be more likely to become brand ambassadors if they don't see their jobs as a chore.

Over the last years, the EU has provided a series of legislative acts creating minimum EU rights of citizens to combine work with family responsibilities by setting out minimum **standards for paternity, parental and carers' leave** and establishing additional rights, such as the right to request flexible working arrangements, which will ultimately help people develop their careers and family life without having to sacrifice either.

In August of 2022, new work-life balance rights<sup>70</sup> for parents and carers approved in 2019 started applying in the European Union, and they come on top of the existing maternity leave rights. These new rights will make it **easier to share responsibilities between parents** and for every parent and carer to balance family with professional careers and to take time off when needed to care for family members who require assistance.

This new directive<sup>71</sup> seeks also to **increase women's employment participation**, as, in the EU, women's employment is 10.8 percentage points lower than men's overall. Furthermore, compared to 81% of men who have similar responsibilities, only 68% of women who provide care also work.

<sup>69</sup> Aviva. [Work-life balance overtakes salary post-pandemic](#), 24 August 2022.

<sup>70</sup> European Commission. [New rights to improve work-life balance in the EU enter into application today](#), 2 August 2022.

<sup>71</sup> The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. [Directive \(EU\) 2019/1158 of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers](#), 12 July 2019.

## #Tool 13: Protect maternity and support expecting and new mothers in the workplace

Maternity protection is a **fundamental human right** and an essential component of thorough work-family policies worldwide. It is crucial not only for boosting mother and child health, but also for eliminating employment discrimination against women.

Safeguarding the health of expectant and nursing mothers and **protecting them from job discrimination** is a precondition for achieving genuine equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women at work and enabling workers to raise families in conditions of security<sup>72</sup>.

The ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183)<sup>73</sup> represents the minimum standards, whereas the accompanying ILO Maternity Protection Recommendation, 2000 (No. 191)<sup>74</sup> encourages additional measures. Key elements of **maternity protection** include<sup>75</sup>:

- **Maternity leave duration:** The mother's right to a period of rest in relation to childbirth is a crucial means of safeguarding health and nutrition of the mother and her child.
- **Amount of maternity leave cash benefits:** The right to cash benefits during absence for maternity leave is intended to ensure that the woman can maintain herself and her child in proper conditions of health and with a suitable standard of living. Maternity leave cash benefits aim to replace a portion of the income lost due to the interruption of the woman's economic activities, giving practical effect to the provision for leave.
- **Breastfeeding breaks and breastfeeding facilities:** The right to continue breastfeeding a child after returning to work is important since duration of leave entitlements generally is shorter than the WHO recommended duration of exclusive and continued breastfeeding.

Regardless of the specifics of national laws, **current EU regulations**<sup>76</sup> sets the minimum period for maternity leave at 14 weeks, with 2 weeks' compulsory leave before and/or after confinement and an adequate allowance subject to national legislation. These are currently the types of leave in the EU<sup>77</sup>:

- **Maternity leave:** leave from work for mothers in the period immediately preceding and following birth.
- **Paternity leave:** leave from work for fathers or recognized second parents, similar to maternity leave.
- **Shared parental leave:** leave after maternity/paternity leave which can be taken by either parent.

<sup>72</sup> International Labour Organization. [Maternity protection](#).

<sup>73</sup> International Labour Organization. [C183 - Maternity Protection Convention](#), 30 May 2000.

<sup>74</sup> International Labour Organization. [R191 - Maternity Protection Recommendation](#), 30 May 2000.

<sup>75</sup> World Health Organization. [Maternity protection: Compliance with international labour standards](#).

<sup>76</sup> European Parliament, [Maternity and paternity leave in the EU](#), March 2022.

<sup>77</sup> European Parliament, [Maternity and paternity leave in the EU](#), March 2022

## PERFORM A HEALTH AND SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT

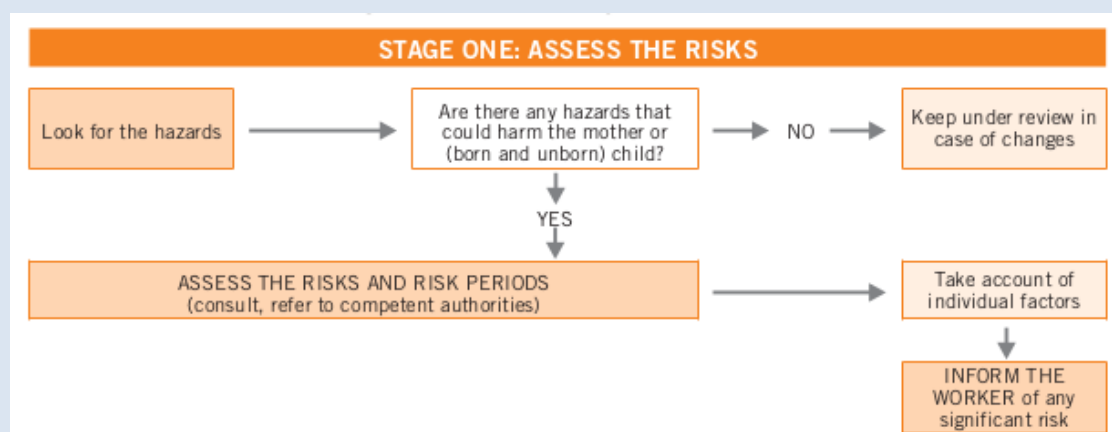
A pregnant worker is more vulnerable to harm at work, to both herself and the unborn child. Consequently, it is imperative that control measures be implemented. A workplace pregnancy risk assessment's goal is to make sure that the pregnant worker's or new mother's health and safety are considered, and that the **required control measures are implemented** in the workplace.

If an organization neglect to do an assessment and address any hazards to new or expecting moms posed by the staff member's work, they could be held **liable for gender discrimination** or pregnancy and maternity discrimination.

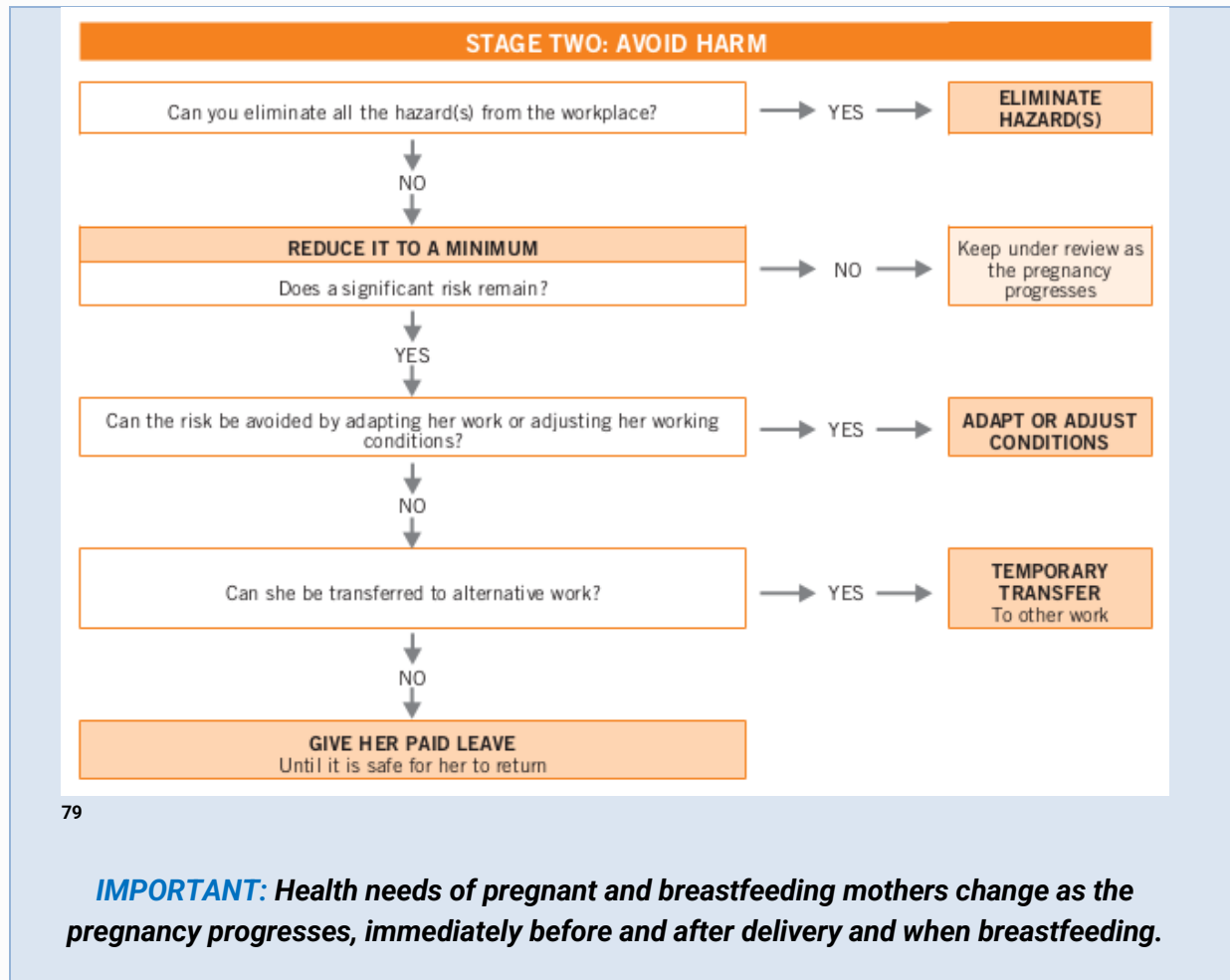
Reduced agility, speed, reach, or balance, exhaustion, stress, and elevated blood pressure are just a few of the **pregnancy symptoms that can be dangerous to health and safety**. Severe morning sickness is another.

Among the risks associated with work-related activities and/or the workplace for **both the expecting mother and their unborn child** that must be considered and planned for include physical and mental demands, manual handling, posture, and position, working hours and conditions, personal protective equipment, hazardous substances, biological agents, and display screen equipment.

An example of a **pregnancy at work risk assessment** template can be found [here](#), but the following table shows the hierarchy of management of those risks which is provided by Recommendation No. 191<sup>78</sup> on maternity protection Recommendation by the General Conference of the International Labour Organization.



<sup>78</sup> General Conference of the International Labour Organization. [R191 - Maternity Protection Recommendation](#), Geneva, 88th ILC session (15 Jun 2000).



HOW TO EFFECTIVELY SUPPORT NEW MOTHERS	
<p><b>Return to work</b></p>	<p>An essential component of employment protection during pregnancy is the ability to return from maternity leave to the <b>same or a position that is at least as good as the one held before</b>.</p> <p>Discrimination and lack of work protection that results in gender-based discrimination occur when a woman is put in a lower position after returning from maternity leave. Also, <b>women often don't receive the yearly wage increase the year of their maternity leave</b> if it was a short leave. Such actions increase the wage gap between men and women in the workplace and drive women away from the labor force altogether.</p> <p>So, how can you facilitate a return to work for new mothers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan a <b>return to work session</b> with the employee that informs them of any changes that have occurred in their position or the</li> </ul>

<sup>79</sup> J. Paul, 2004, op. cit., adapted from [UK Health and Safety Executive: Health and safety of new and expectant mothers in catering](#), HSE Catering Information Sheet No. 19 (London, 2001).



	<p>larger workplace since they left.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As the body and mind adjust, going back to work after maternity leave can be challenging on both the physical and mental levels. One of the most important aspects of developing a supportive culture is to <b>keep an open mind and maintain flexibility</b> by offering her several employment possibilities, such as part-time job, remote work, flexible hours, and more.</li> <li>• To stay current with job standards and help them reframe their career goals, mothers returning to the workforce after maternity leave may need a <b>refresher course or skill development training</b>. A return to work meeting is an excellent time to talk about any training that she may have missed and set up a time for it so that her abilities and skills are maintained current. It will not only boost the mothers' morale and confidence, but it will also make it easier for them to return to the workforce.</li> <li>• Make sure her <b>workspace is prepared for her return</b> and that she has the tools, documents, and materials she needs to complete her job, including monitors, keyboards, and any other equipment they might require.</li> <li>• Maintain open and honest communication with <b>single mothers</b> about company policies, expectations, and resources available to support them. Offer flexible work hours, remote work options, or part-time schedules to accommodate the needs of single mothers. This can help them balance their work and family responsibilities more effectively.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Breastfeeding in the workplace</b></p>	<p>A sensible course of action to safeguard the health and safety of a breastfeeding woman is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permit a <b>flexible schedule to promote lactation and pumping</b> while working and have a good understanding of time expectations (most nursing moms need 2 or 3, 15-20 minute breaks to pump).</li> <li>• Give women access to a <b>separate, private, and clean room</b> with a power outlet, a table, and a comfortable chair, close to a location that has sink access and with a door that locks from the inside so they may express or breastfeed. Never suggest that the nursing mother pump in the bathroom.</li> <li>• Provide women with access to a <b>clean refrigerator</b> to store freshly expressed milk to avoid any potential health and safety concerns.</li> <li>• Be <b>encouraging and supportive</b>. Talking about this can be awkward and highly emotional at times, especially with a male manager.</li> </ul>

## HOW TO SUPPORT EMPLOYEES IN CASE OF ADOPTION OR FOSTER CARE

Although member states in the EU shall assess the need for additional measures to address the specific needs of adoptive parents, the Council Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010<sup>80</sup> implementing the revised framework agreement on parental leave recognizes that men and women workers are **entitled to an individual right to parental leave** on the grounds of adoption of a child.

Most EU countries have also passed legislation to support employees early on in the adoption procedure by giving them **paid time off to attend pre-adoption visits**. Appointments are scheduled to facilitate interaction between the employee, their partner, and the child. This includes fostering a connection with the child prior to placement to establish a meaningful bond. Furthermore, these appointments serve other adoption-related purposes, such as meeting with the child's caregivers and addressing any essential legal paperwork.

Adoption involves a momentous change in a person's life, and it may take some time for both the adopted kid and the adoptive parents to become used to their new family dynamics. Adoptive parents might take the time they need to adjust to their new roles by taking an **adoption leave**. Adoption leave is critical for new parents who have adopted a child because it allows them to spend quality time together, which is **crucial for creating a secure attachment**.

Adoption leave will assist in decreasing the stress that adoptive parents may encounter during this sensitive and important period. It allows adoptive parents to concentrate on their new family and settle into their new duties by giving them time off from work.

**As an employer, what can you do to support your staff when they are going through an adoption of foster care process?**

1. Recognize the difficulties parents face and **comprehend the adoption process** to better understand what your employee is going through. If you do not, it may be challenging to empathize with their predicament. Being understanding of how unique each person's adoption story is a crucial first step in showing support.
2. **Show empathy** and never assume anything about someone else's adoption process. When discussing these subjects, especially adoption, use language with care and be inclusive and accurate.
3. Despite uncertainties, **plan ahead** for leave time. The timing for adoption is unpredictable and can range from a few months to several years, which is one of the hardest aspects. Setting up a plan in advance can help both the organization and the employee when the time to take the leave comes, even if it is earlier than expected.

<sup>80</sup> [Council Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010](#) implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC and repealing Directive 96/34/EC.

## #Tool 14: Build a flexibility strategy for a hybrid and high-performing workplace

More people than ever seek to alter their working habits in order to strike a balance between work and life. Although the work-life balance agenda first centered on parents, other employee groups are increasingly prioritizing this issue and **searching for employers who provide flexible working options**, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Flexibility has always been viewed as a perk for employees, with little attention paid to any potential advantages for the organization. However, **leaders must also play a part** in fostering flexibility, whether it be through resource allocation, personal flexibility modeling, or establishing accountability for the shift.

Did you know that flexible working can be **beneficial for companies** too?

- It has the potential to significantly increase attraction and retention, especially for mothers who must juggle job and family obligations after they return from maternity leave.
- It can result in scaling back of office space, thus reducing costs related to space rental, electricity, water, and heating bills... and lowering the firm's carbon footprint.
- It has been demonstrated that it helps to increase organizational performance and work performance, at the same time it decreases absenteeism and attrition rates.
- It may result in reduced travel or childcare costs for staff, further contributing to improved job satisfaction.
- It aligns the organization with the modern workforce mentality.

Also, by offering remote work options, companies can attract talent without being constrained by geographical location.

The current challenge the organisations are facing is to increase their capacity for flexibility so they can benefit from the opportunities it offers and **produce better results for their organization and employees**.

### Basic types of flexibility in the workplace

- **Part-time work:** A regular work schedule when staff work less than full time and are compensated proportionally. Although not all part-time jobs are flexible by nature, many do provide flexibility to employees who have other obligations or lifestyle choices that conflict with full-time employment.
- **Flexi time:** Employees must put in a certain number of "core" hours, sometimes within a minimum time frame determined by the organization, but they have some discretion over when to start and stop working.
- **Compressed working hours:** Employees may put in the same number of compressed weekly (or fortnightly or monthly) working hours. For instance, a forty-hour week could

be completed by working ten hours per day for four days as opposed to eight hours per day for five. Salary adjustments are not necessary

- **Time-in-lieu:** Employees are permitted to work authorized overtime and get time-in-lieu pay. It may also involve "flextime" arrangements, in which a person works overtime over a period of days or weeks and then gets to take those hours off.
- **Remote work:** sometimes known as telecommuting or working from home, is a flexible work arrangement that permits workers to spend most or all of their working hours outside of a traditional office setting.

Flexibility is no longer limited to the working relationship between an employee and their management because it is becoming increasingly important for organizations to develop their flexibility capability. To achieve a **successful transition**, multiple organizational components must collaborate.

Flexibility is considered as a significant organizational issue when it is approached strategically. When problems are viewed as organizational rather than personal, it is understood that they require a **complete approach that considers every aspect of the organization**.

## HOW CAN YOU BUILD A FLEXIBILITY STRATEGY?

### 1. ANALYSE

- Understand your organizational context by performing an internal flexibility diagnostic, both for each job type and for the leadership of the organization itself.
- Establish where your organization is now and set manageable and attainable goals of where it wants to be in the short, medium, and long term and why.

### 2. DEVISE

- Consider and integrate all relevant **legal requirements**. Ensuring compliance with applicable laws and regulations is paramount to the successful implementation of such policies.
- Outline the organization's flexibility strategy with a fair and realistic **step-to-step roadmap**.
- Include clear definitions of key terms, define the positions eligible for flexible working arrangements and outline the **conditions and exclusions** applicable for employees.
- Allocate resources to implement **suitable technology** that can optimize workflows and provide employees with necessary tools. Supply remote workers with laptops, headsets, and other essential gadgets. Additionally, establish a secure internal system for data sharing and communication.
- Establish expected **timelines and key performance indicators**.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine the <b>decisive requirements</b> in terms of human resources, technology, and infrastructure necessary to achieve change.</li> <li>• Take into account the following factors when formulating the flexibility policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Availability of employees for frequent communication.</li> <li>○ Response time required.</li> <li>○ Maintaining a balance between departments.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3. IMPLEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train your top and middle management staff to <b>equip them with solid skills</b> in gender equality, communication, outcomes management, and technology use for flexible work.</li> <li>• Make sure that employees acquire <b>the skills essential for maintaining productivity and efficiency</b> in a flexible work setting. Cover a range of topics, including time management, self-motivation, digital literacy, mastering remote work tools and technologies, strategies for maintaining a healthy work-life balance while working remotely, and techniques for managing potential feelings of isolation.</li> <li>• Establish a <b>trust-based culture</b> and make sure that all your staff is aware of the flexibility strategy steps, requirements and review process.</li> <li>• Educate your team about flexibility to make sure everybody understands the <b>benefits and challenges</b> of flexible work.</li> <li>• Ensure that flexible working arrangements are not restricted to particular groups of staff and <b>include them in job advertisements</b>.</li> <li>• Keep track of the <b>gender of employees</b> making requests for flexible working, allowing monitoring of applications and decisions to be broken down by gender.</li> <li>• Make sure that <b>each employee feels equally appreciated and involved</b>, regardless of whether they are working from the office, home, or any other remote location.</li> </ul>
4. REVIEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review frequently key performing indicators for flexible working arrangements at the individual, team/department, and manager level. This will allow you to <b>determine</b> whether a person is meeting their objectives or might need some help.</li> <li>• Introduce <b>transparent results</b> to employees.</li> <li>• Take a look at general data, but keep in mind that people within the same organization may experience flexibility in vastly different ways and understand that the <b>success of flexibility</b> depends on a variety of circumstances.</li> </ul>

## Examples of key performance indicators

- % of the organization's staff who take up flexible work options.
- Cost savings related to space rental, electricity, water, and heating bills...
- Level of satisfaction of employees.
- % of employees who state they have the flexibility arrangements they need to manage their work and non-work interests (caring responsibilities, study, sporting interests etc.).
- % of employees who state it is easy for them to adopt a flexible working arrangement because of support from their supervisor.
- % of employees who state they are able to access ad hoc flexibility when their needs change on short notice.

There are many different ways to assess if your organization is ready for a strategic approach to flexibility. In this toolkit we recommend to apply a simplified version of the guidelines developed by Close the Gap. Their internal readiness assessment<sup>81</sup> aims to assist organizations in **performing a flexibility assessment**, thus allowing them to determine which specific jobs are suitable for flexible working and which are not.

The methodology is based on a **questionnaire that must be filled out by both the manager or team/department leader and the employee**. A conversation about whether a job may be performed on a flexible basis will be based on the findings of both questionnaires. Additionally, it will assist in defining how each party sees the job and give a better knowledge of the reasons why a given position might or might not be appropriate for flexible working arrangements.

MANAGING OTHERS			
1. Is the job holder managing other people? If so, how many?			
None	Between one person and five people	More than five people	More than 10 people
2. What percentage of the job holder's time is spent managing others apart from the rest of their workload?			
None	15%	25%	Over 50%
DEPENDENCY ON OTHERS			
Who mainly controls the job holder's workload and priorities?			
They do	The supervisor and/or manager	Determined by production process	The client
How frequently does the job holder need to liaise with manager/supervisor to report or for direction?			
Once a day	Once a week or less	Several times a week	Continually throughout the day

<sup>81</sup> Close the Gap (SCIO). [Think Business, Think Equality](#), 2015.



How frequently does the job holder need to liaise with colleagues?			
Once a day	Once a week or less	Several times a week	Continually throughout the day
<b>TIME MANAGEMENT</b>			
How much of the work needs immediate attention as opposed to long-term deadlines?			
Majority is longer-term	About half is immediate	Majority is immediate	Determined by production process
<b>WORKPLACE DEPENDENT</b>			
Is the equipment and/or paperwork needed to do this job only available in the workplace?			
No, rarely uses such equipment	Yes, sometimes uses the equipment	Yes, often uses the equipment	The equipment is portable
<b>CONFIDENTIALITY</b>			
Is the work highly confidential/sensitive?			
Yes		No	
<b>AVAILABILITY</b>			
Can the job holder be contacted by colleagues/manager when away from the workplace site?			
Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never

## 7. SEXISM AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE



Article 1 of the Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)<sup>82</sup> of the International Labour Organization broadly defines ‘violence and harassment’ as “a range of **unacceptable behaviors, practices or threats** thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm”.

This Convention applies to violence and harassment in the world of work occurring in the course of, linked with, or arising out of work:

- In the workplace<sup>83</sup>, including public and private spaces where they are a place of work.
- In places where the worker is paid, takes a rest break or a meal, or uses sanitary, washing and changing facilities.
- During work-related trips, travel, training, events, or social activities.
- Through work-related communications, including those enabled by information and communication technologies.
- In employer-provided accommodation.
- When commuting to and from work.

### The dynamic of violence and harassment

- **Horizontal violence:** violence and harassment perpetrated between coworkers.
- **Vertical violence:** violence and harassment perpetrated between supervisors and subordinates.
- **Third party violence:** violence and harassment perpetrated by clients, customers, patients, ...

The ILO’s ‘Safe and healthy working environments free from violence and harassment’<sup>84</sup> guideline states that there are **several types of harmful behaviors, gestures, and actions** which may be understood as violence and harassment. The offending conduct may be:

- **Physical:** any act or threat of physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior that occurs at work, which includes beating, biting, kicking, pushing, slapping, stabbing, and shooting.
- **Psychological:** actions or behaviors that cause harm to an individual's mental and emotional well-being within a professional setting. It involves verbal abuse, withholding information, devaluation rights and opinions, giving impossible goals and/or deadlines,

<sup>82</sup> International Labour Organization, [C190 - Violence and Harassment Convention](#), 2019.

<sup>83</sup> The term ‘workplace’ covers all places where workers need to be or to go by reason of their work and which are under the direct or indirect control of the employer (See: [Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 \(No. 155\), Article 3\(c\)](#)).

<sup>84</sup> International Labour Organization. [Safe and healthy working environments free from violence and harassment](#), 2020.

underutilization of talent and the use of power, control, manipulation, and intimidation to undermine, slander, ridicule, belittle, isolate, gaslight, discriminate or demean someone.

- **Sexual:** unwanted behavior of a sexual nature that creates a hostile, intimidating, or offensive working environment and violates an individual's rights, dignity, and personal boundaries.

Quid pro quo sexual harassment takes place when a job benefit (a pay rise, a promotion, or even continuing employment) is made dependent on the victim acceding to demands to engage in some form of sexual behavior.

Sexual harassment is widespread. Although it can happen to anyone, **women are more frequently the victims and males the offenders**. Regardless of whether the offender intended to distress or damage the victim, if the behavior makes the victim feel uneasy or unsafe, it constitutes sexual harassment.

## Examples of behavior which constitute sexual harassment

### Physical conduct:

- Unwelcome physical contact including touching, patting, pinching, stroking, kissing, hugging, fondling, and touching of breasts, buttocks, or genitals, but also things such as a hand on the knee or lower back, or shoulder rubs.
- Physical violence, including sexual assault.
- The use of job-related threats or rewards to solicit sexual favors.

### Verbal conduct:

- Comments on a worker's appearance, age, private life, etc.
- Sexual comments, stories, and jokes.
- Repeated unwelcome sexual advances.
- Repeated and unwanted social invitations for dates or physical intimacy.
- Insults based on the sex of the worker.
- Condescending or paternalistic remarks.
- Sending sexually explicit messages (by phone or by email).

### Non-verbal conduct:

- Display of sexually explicit or suggestive material.
- Sexually suggestive gestures.
- Whistling.
- Leering.

A recent report<sup>85</sup> showed that **almost three in five women (58%)** have experienced harassment at work. The figure rises to 62% of women aged between 25 and 34 years old. Most of these cases were not isolated incidents, with 57% of women saying they had experienced three or more incidents of bullying at work. More than two in five (43%) had experienced at least three incidents

<sup>85</sup> Trades Union Congress. [New TUC poll: 2 in 3 young women have experienced sexual harassment, bullying or verbal abuse at work](#), 12 May 2023.

of sexual harassment.

Outside of the workplace or during non-working hours, sexual harassment is also possible. Additionally, it takes place **online, via text, and via email** in addition to face-to-face interactions. Most incidents of sexual harassment, bullying or verbal abuse happen in work premises (71%), but they also happen over the phone or by text message (12%), or online, by email, on social media or on a virtual meeting (8%).

Because they are afraid that no one will believe them or that it would negatively damage their careers, **women typically do not disclose sexual harassment**. Women occasionally choose not to report because it is their department manager or another senior employee. Also, women find it more difficult to feel that they will be believed when they are undervalued at work.

## #Tool 15: Understand sexism to prevent gender-based harassment in the workplace

Sexual harassment is not just an issue between two people but a part of a **wider problem with workplace culture**. Dismissing sexual harassment as 'just a joke' or 'banter' is harmful for everyone<sup>86</sup>.

Women tend to have **less prestige and power** in the workplace due to gender inequality, and there are several reasons for this, including:

- Women's greater responsibility for childcare and caring for older, sick, and disabled relatives.
- A lack of flexibility in working times, especially in senior jobs.
- Male-oriented workplace cultures that exclude women, whether intentionally or unintentionally, and normalize and enable sexual harassment.
- Gender norms and stereotypes that steer women and men into very different roles in work and in society as a whole.

### Types of sexism

- **Hostile sexism:** refers to attitudes and actions that are overtly antagonistic toward a particular group of people due to their gender or sexual orientation. Hatred of women, often known as misogyny, is an example of hostile sexism. Hostile and sexist individuals may have an unfavorable perception of women as manipulative, deceptive, and capable of using seduction to manipulate and control males and needing to be put in their place.
- **Benevolent sexism:** includes views and behaviors that frame women as innocent, pure, caring, nurturing, fragile, beautiful and in need of protection. In comparison to hostile sexism, benevolent sexism can be less obvious. It is a more socially accepted form and is much more likely to be endorsed by men and women. However, despite its name, this type of sexism is not truly benevolent.

<sup>86</sup> Close the Gap (SCIO). [Think Business, Think Equality](#), 2015.

- **Ambivalent sexism:** it has both friendly and antagonistic aspects. Depending on the circumstance, people who practice ambivalent sexism may alternate between viewing women as manipulative or deceptive and as virtuous, pure, and innocent. Hostile and benevolent sexism work together as a system to support one another. Benevolent sexism offers women protection in exchange for them adopting a more subordinate role, while hostile sexism targets those who deviate from this.
- **Subtle sexism:** it is frequently difficult to see, but it can be very significant. Subtle sexist comments or the use of gendered language to define positions or responsibilities are two examples of this. Both sexes are affected by this; for instance, males are frequently expected to perform difficult and "dirty" jobs because they are perceived as strong and resilient, while women are thought to be better at domestic duties.
- **Casual sexism:** unconscious bias and gender stereotypes that are strongly embedded in many societies, similar to subtle sexism. It might involve a waiter giving the food bill to the men rather than the ladies during a workplace lunch, or men shaking hands solely with other males during a meeting.

Although different, **sexism is connected to sexual harassment**, and it refers to the non-sexual but sexist behaviors that many women face on a daily basis. For instance, women may experience gendered comments about their appearance or be spoken over in meetings or forced to take minutes regardless of their function.

It also covers behaviors that can qualify as sexism, such as the practice of routinely assigning women lower-value clients than their male coworkers. Sexual harassment is enabled and encouraged by **sexist behaviors and mindsets**.

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

### What is the prevalence of sexual harassment?

In companies where men predominate and in workplaces where women are less likely to hold leadership positions, sexual harassment rates are more prevalent. This is due to the fact that **gender norms and stereotypes** are particularly pronounced in corporate cultures that lean toward men.

People frequently remain silent when they observe sexual harassment. Both men and women experience sexual harassment, but **when men fail to report it**, it strongly suggests to the offender and other men in the workplace that it is acceptable.

When men are sexually harassed, it is far more likely that another man will do it rather than a woman. When males, especially gay men, do not conform to traditional male stereotypes, they are more likely to experience sexual harassment. The **stigma associated with sexual harassment at work** may make men hesitant to disclose it.

<p><b>Where can it happen?</b></p>	<p>In the process of performing their duties, your workers may interact with a variety of persons. They might experience harassment from a management, a coworker, a client, or a customer, but it is more prevalent for men to harass women in the workplace if they are senior to them. The <b>disparity in power between men and women at work</b> is reflected in this abuse of power.</p> <p>Sexual harassment in the workplace can occur outside of the office, too. It may occur <b>during regular business hours or after working hours</b>. It can also occur in other settings, such as a client's office, a business trip, or a work-related gathering, such as a Christmas party, for example.</p> <p>This does not preclude you from hosting professional social gatherings or allowing workers to visit clients, but it means that you <b>should be aware of the risks</b> potentially connected to several types of settings and events.</p>
<p><b>Why don't women report it?</b></p>	<p><b>Sexual harassment is under-reported</b>, with one survey<sup>87</sup> finding that 79% of targets of sexual harassment in the workplace did not report it. Another study<sup>88</sup> found that women who work in low-wage jobs are more likely to experience sexual harassment and less likely to report it, due to the fear of losing their jobs or being retaliated against by their employers.</p> <p>Some of the <b>reasons why women</b> have stated that they do not report sexual harassment are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They fear it might have harmful effects on their personal lives, such as harming their chances of getting promoted.</li> <li>• They think that no one will believe them or that the claim will be taken as a joke, flirty behavior or 'just office banter'.</li> <li>• If women challenge or report unacceptable behavior, colleagues may assume they lack humor or are unable to take a joke because of stereotypic assumptions about them.</li> <li>• Their manager, a senior executive, or a significant client of the organization is the harasser.</li> <li>• They are unsure about where or how to file a formal report.</li> <li>• They reported it to their coworkers or friends, but nothing happened.</li> <li>• They believe it is pervasive and that nothing will change.</li> <li>• Because they do not recognize the behavior as sexual harassment, some women don't disclose their experiences of sexual harassment. For many women, a sexist workplace culture eventually feels 'normal.'</li> </ul>

<sup>87</sup> TUC, [Still just a bit of banter? Sexual harassment in the workplace in 2016](#), TUC, London, 2016.

<sup>88</sup> Lui, C. K. [Sexual harassment at work: Who is protected?](#), 2018, Texas Law Review, 97, 713–768.



## How can it impact your organization?

It is obvious that sexual harassment has negative financial effects. The detrimental influence on employee productivity and morale **impairs the effectiveness of the organization**. Employees who are subjected to violence and harassment are also more likely to commit mistakes and have a lower performance at work.

**Additional expenses may be incurred** due to administrative challenges brought on by unanticipated time off, lost wages, and sick pay, which are likely consequences of the emotional and psychological toll victims of sexual harassment endure.

Coworkers and the larger organization are negatively impacted by sexual harassment as well. When sexist jokes and remarks are widely accepted, it can even result in **more severe occurrences of sexual assault or rape**, but also do harm to the organization's reputation, cause the departure of talented workers, and create a poisonous work atmosphere.

An organization with a reputation for sexual harassment **may lose customers or fail to attract new ones** since they will have a smaller pool of candidates to choose from when hiring. If organizations do not address sexual harassment, they also run greater financial and reputational consequences.

## Sexist microaggressions in the workplace

Sexist microaggressions (or 'micromachismos', in Spanish) are small everyday actions, subtle and almost imperceptible gestures, which **symbolize the historical domination of men over women**. Spanish psychologist Luis Bonino Méndez<sup>89</sup> coined this term in 1991 to denounce this set of behaviors, until then called 'petty tyrannies', 'intimate terrorism', or 'soft violence'.

Most of these attitudes are not deliberate; they are involuntary **reflections of gender socialization and of a profoundly sexist and patriarchal society**. Thus, sexist microaggressions lead women to act according to gender roles, to diminish their decision-making capacity and to coerce their freedom.

The Sorli Foundation<sup>90</sup> offers some common **examples of day-to-day sexist microaggressions**:

- Asking a female colleague to be the one to take notes in a meeting when both have the same position in the organization.
- Commenting on female colleagues' clothes but not on your male colleagues'.
- Handling extra-work-related tasks (birthdays, party planning, fundraising, or retirement gifts) exclusively to women.
- Asking "Are you on your period?" to invalidate the emotions or anger of female co-workers.
- Being asked to meet potential male clients to increase the likelihood of winning business.

<sup>89</sup> Bonino, Luis. [Los micromachismos](#), Revista La Cibeles N°2, Ayuntamiento de Madrid, november 2004.

<sup>90</sup> Fundació Sorli. [Micromachismos en la empresa: qué son y cómo detectarlos](#).

- The use of language which diminishes, infantilizes, or sexualizes women, e.g., referring to female colleagues as 'the girls'.
- Men taking over tasks because they believed themselves to be more suitable.
- Ignoring the proposals made by a female worker and valuing only those of a man.
- Making sexist jokes.
- Using sexist images in internal and external communications.
- Taking up all the time in a meeting without allowing female colleagues to express themselves.
- Inappropriate or patronizing nicknames.
- Referring to a female manager as 'bossy' or 'pushy' while male managers are seen as assertive and strong.
- Mansplaining, i.e., clarifying to a woman some concept of a subject about which she is assumed to have little knowledge (such as those related to sports, cars, or fields in which she is even an expert).
- Maninterrupting, i.e., interrupting a woman when she is speaking, especially in meetings or professional conversations.
- Not having specific containers in restrooms for menstrual hygiene products.
- Not having spaces set aside for breastfeeding.

## #Tool 16: Set in place a sexual harassment policy in your organization

Having a distinct, focused policy on sexual harassment is effective practice, although smaller companies with fewer resources can find it more difficult to create a unique strategy. You should, at the at least, **include a section on sexual harassment in one of your workplace policies** and make all employees aware of it.

By doing this, you will put in place a **zero-tolerance culture** and guarantee that your employees have a straightforward process for reporting sexual harassment, and you can assist your managers in handling and looking into such reports.

Your policy should, at least, have the following elements:

- A clear declaration that sexual harassment constitutes **violence against women**.
- Clear **examples of sexual harassment** that are applicable to the workplace and show the wide spectrum of individuals it may affect.
- A statement outlining your **organization's policy** against sexual harassment and victimization.
- Indication of **who is covered by the policy** and what duties managers and employees have when they witness a case of sexual harassment, or a complaint is reported to them.
- Indication of **where and when** the policy is applicable, as it is important for managers and staff to understand that sexual harassment does not need to happen at work for it to be a workplace matter.
- The formal, informal, and outside **complaints mechanism**.

- Information on the handling of harassment complaints and its **confidentiality protection**, assuring staff any information they disclose about sexual harassment will be treated in the strictest confidence.
- Details on **aggravating circumstances** that will be taken into consideration when determining what disciplinary action to take, such as the power imbalance between a woman and a colleague that is senior to them in the organization.
- What the complaints procedures entail and the **preventive measures** to be taken by the organization while the case is being investigated.
- Detailed information on potential **sanctions and disciplinary measures**, such as verbal or written warning, suspension, or even dismissal.
- The proceeding for a **periodic monitoring and evaluation** of the policy.

Anyone can be a victim of sexual harassment, regardless of their sex and of the sex of the harasser, so your internal policy must recognize that sexual harassment may also occur **between people of the same sex**. What matters is that the sexual conduct is unwanted and unwelcome by the person against whom the conduct is directed.

The International Labour Organization has developed a **thorough and customizable sexual harassment policy template**<sup>91</sup> intended for use by private and public employers to help them develop their own sexual harassment policies. It is based on international good practices and includes all the components which make a sexual harassment policy comprehensive.

Also, Close the Gap, through its program 'Think Business, Think Equality'<sup>92</sup>, has established the following **step-by-step procedure** to deal with both formal and informal reports of sexual harassment successfully and fairly in the workplace.

Similarly, the Spanish Ministry of Equality has published two model protocols for the prevention of and **action against sexual harassment, harassment based on sex and other conduct contrary to sexual freedom and moral integrity** in the workplace<sup>93</sup> (one for those organizations that have a harassment plan, and the other for those that do not), which is an effective and directly applicable instrument for organizations of any size and scope. In addition, it includes a model complaint form to be used by organizations.

The following methodology is a combination of these three resources, and it will assist any employee who is sexually harassed determine how they would like to proceed with their report and ensuring that any staff member who is in charge of handling a report knows what to do.

As it is a significant responsibility to respond to a sexual harassment complaint, managers and/or HR representatives who are in charge of this duty should **undergo specific training** on how to manage reports diligently, safely, and sensitively.

Remember that incorporating guidelines for situations where the person to whom a victim would typically report sexual abuse is also the alleged abuser is a crucial aspect of creating a

<sup>91</sup> International Labour Organization. [Sample sexual harassment policy](#), 24 September 2015.

<sup>92</sup> Close the Gap (SCIO). [How to: deal with reports of sexual harassment](#), Think Business, Think Equality, 2015.

<sup>93</sup> Subdirección General para el Emprendimiento, la Igualdad en la Empresa y la Negociación Colectiva de Mujeres. Ministerio de Igualdad, Gobierno de España. [Protocolo para la prevención y actuación frente al acoso sexual, el acoso por razón de sexo y otras conductas contrarias a la libertad sexual y la integridad moral en el ámbito laboral. Manual de referencia](#), 2023.

comprehensive and supportive policy.

HOW TO DEAL WITH REPORTS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT	
Record details of the incident	<p>A plan should be made by the investigators before they start their inquiry. Errors might occur when an investigation is rushed in without proper planning.</p> <p>As part of their strategy, they should think about the questions they must pose in order to <b>gather data and provide a complete picture</b> of what was reported. Investigators must be careful not to ask the denunciatory employee inappropriate questions, such as ones concerning their sexual history.</p> <p>Follow these steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Record the dates, times, and facts of the incident(s).</li> <li>Interview both the accused employee and the victim separately.</li> <li>Separately interview any additional pertinent third parties, such as witnesses or coworkers who may have offered the victim support.</li> <li>Keep a confidential record of all discussions.</li> <li>Collect any further relevant evidence, such as copies of emails or other messages, copies of pictures, and absence records.</li> </ul> <p>Remember that throughout the complaints procedure, the victim is entitled to be helped by a counsellor within the company.</p>
Perform an internal investigation	<p>Investigations should be conducted diligently, thoroughly and in as timely a manner as possible. The activation of the harassment protocol must be carried out within 3 working days.</p> <p>Use all the evidence you have to determine the likelihood that the incident(s) of sexual harassment occurred. For this stage of the procedure, an <b>in-depth investigation</b> and a thorough comprehension of workplace sexual harassment are necessary.</p> <p>You must record, at least, the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Person reporting the facts.</li> <li>Details of the person who has suffered the harassment.</li> <li>Details of the alleged perpetrator.</li> <li>Description of the facts reported, indicating date/s and place/s where they occurred and including possible witnesses.</li> <li>In case there are witnesses indicate name(s) and surname(s).</li> <li>Attach any means of evidence you consider appropriate (emails, WhatsApp, voice recordings, calls, videos, medical leave, etc.).</li> </ul> <p>Then, produce a report describing the investigation, its results, the suggested course of action and all necessary steps to be taken. This report must be ready within a maximum of 10 working days after the start of the proceedings.</p> <p>If it is determined that harassment took place, decide what action should be taken, such as training for the harasser, a written apology to the victim or survivor,</p>

	<p>disciplinary action, or termination.</p> <p>Even if the investigator cannot reach a conclusion that the harassment took happened, they may nevertheless suggest steps that will improve the working environment, such as staff training on sexual harassment.</p>
<p><b>Respond effectively by supporting your employee</b></p>	<p>You must <b>explain the reporting and investigation process</b> to the victim in detail during this phase. They can use this to decide whether they want to handle the situation formally or informally moving forward. You must also ascertain the views of the victim as to what outcome she/he/they wants, and make sure that she/he/they knows that <b>they can lodge the complaint outside of the company</b> through the relevant country/legal framework.</p> <p>Supporting victims and survivors of sexual harassment through the reporting process involves making sure that there are <b>no negative repercussions or potential retaliation</b>. You should take action to make sure that workers are safe, are not treated unfairly, and are not put in even more danger.</p> <p>Offer ongoing support and tell the victim what to do if they experience victimization or retaliation, and assure them that it will not be tolerated.</p> <p>Assure them that their needs are a top priority, that you are aware of how it can impair their ability to perform at work, and describe what can be done to help. <b>Offer tangible assistance</b>, such as the option of flexible scheduling, an employee assistance program, or mental health care. Identify any additional ways you may help them out during the process by asking.</p> <p>There are several ways you can help your staff during the investigation phase. Examples include moving the alleged perpetrator to a new location, changing desk position or office layouts to move the alleged perpetrator away from them, encouraging the victim to keep records of any workplace incidents or any continued inappropriate behavior, and making sure that any personal information on the victim-survivor is kept in a place that is inaccessible to other employees.</p> <p>If, after investigation, it has been proven that there was indeed an incident of harassment, determine the <b>suitable redress for the victim</b> through collaboration with them. This may involve options such as an apology, modifications to working conditions, consideration for a promotion if the victim experienced demotion due to the harassment, training for the perpetrator or other more severe disciplinary measures detailed below.</p> <p>You should <b>accept the wishes of the harassed person</b> if they do not want any action taken. However, you should be aware that sometimes an informal solution is neither necessary nor feasible, such as in circumstances involving more severity. In this situation, it is important to inform your employee that formal action must be taken to resolve the problem.</p>
<p><b>Manage the alleged</b></p>	<p>The requirements of the employee who has reported sexual harassment should be given priority while managing an alleged perpetrator in the workplace, but it is critical to <b>understand that both employees have rights</b>, and that any investigation</p>

<p><b>perpetrator</b></p>	<p>will be conducted in accordance with the law. You must give an opportunity to the alleged harasser to respond to the complaint and make sure that she/he/they understands the complaints mechanism</p> <p>The accusing part can also get support from the employer during this period in a number of ways, including by allowing flexible working hours, considering job reallocation, and directing them to specialized support services.</p> <p>The accused employee or alleged perpetrator may be relocated, but the person who reported sexual harassment should not be asked to move against their will. Making sure that whatever measures you take are fair and in keeping with best practices is crucial.</p> <p>To decide how to manage the circumstance most effectively, you might also <b>perform a risk analysis</b>. Since they are the ones who know the situation best, the employee who reported the sexual harassment should participate in the risk assessment. The threats posed to other coworkers and the larger workplace should also be examined.</p>
<p><b>Listen to your staff and encourage feedback</b></p>	<p>Open communication with your staff fosters trust, which ultimately creates a positive working culture. Knowing what is going on in your organization allows you to ensure that it is a place where your staff may feel secure and thrive.</p> <p>On the contrary, a <b>"culture of silence"</b> at work, when inappropriate behavior goes unquestioned and no one feels safe to raise concerns, is a telltale symptom of a <b>toxic workplace environment</b>.</p> <p>Other characteristics include downplaying people's experiences, preventing or stalling sexual harassment complaints, giving the go-ahead to "quiet" resolutions, and preserving the organization's brand at all costs.</p>
<p><b>Sanctions and disciplinary measures</b></p>	<p>Anyone who has been found to have sexually harassed another person could be liable to any of the following <b>sanctions</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal or written warning.</li> <li>• Adverse performance evaluation.</li> <li>• Reduction in wages.</li> <li>• Transfer.</li> <li>• Demotion.</li> <li>• Suspension.</li> <li>• Dismissal.</li> </ul> <p>The severity and scope of sanctions will be determined based on the gravity of the harassment. Appropriate preventive measures will be enforced to prevent the trivialization of sexual harassment incidents. Instances involving serious offenses, such as physical violence, may lead to the immediate dismissal of the individual responsible.</p>



## 8. GENDER MONITORING, PERFORMANCE & REPORTING



As a gender equality plan or strategy generally addresses multiple issues at once, resulting in a complex set of actions, monitoring and assessment are crucial components of the transformation process within an organization.

The revolutionary potential of the intended interventions is, however, frequently undermined precisely by the lack of efficient monitoring and assessment tools. It is challenging to **determine whether the organization is genuinely transforming** if objectives are not based on pertinent progress, success, or outreach indicators. This can also make stakeholders less committed to achieving those goals.

Putting in place an adequate **monitoring and evaluation plan** can help to assure accountability, assist the execution of measures, engage staff, and improve the knowledge, understanding of continuing developments and, when needed, make the necessary adjustments.

In short, it is a critical analysis of the process as a whole, whose main objectives are:

- To know the **degree of compliance** with the plan and to know its development.
- To verify whether the plan has **achieved the proposed objectives**.
- To assess the **adequacy of resources, methodologies, tools, and strategies** used in its implementation.
- Identify **areas for improvement or new needs** that require the modification of the measures modification of the measures adopted or the design of new actions.

### #Tool 17: Create a monitoring and evaluation strategy

The main goal of this tool is demonstrating what has been accomplished so far within your organization in terms of effective transformation towards equality between men and women. This kind of assessment can be **conducted on a regular basis** as a form of progress audit. Monitoring, measuring, and routinely reporting the results of core activities over time will be key to determine whether the implementation of a gender policy is having the desired effect.

In order to measure results before, during, and after certain activities and interventions, the processes and timing for tracking and reporting should ideally be in place before the strategy implementation starts, and **outlined in the gender equality plan document**, as well as should be all relevant quantitative and qualitative indicators to be monitored.

When drafting the monitoring system to be followed, you must ask yourself the following questions:

- How is the organization progressing in respect to each of the gender strategy's objectives?

- Is there enough information to accurately evaluate progress and quantify results?
- How can this knowledge be applied to address problems when there is a lack of progress or issues come up?
- What actions or activities need to be changed, stopped, or started?
- In light of the experience to date, does the strategy or individual targets need to be adjusted? If so, what are the implications (what does this concretely mean)?

## Persons and bodies involved

- The **organization's management**, ultimately responsible for ensuring equal opportunities between women and men within the organization and for allocating the necessary resources.
- The **monitoring committee** or persons responsible, which will receive and analyze information relating to the implementation of actions, follow-up reports and any other information relating to the implementation of the plan throughout its term.
- The **staff** can participate in the completion of questionnaires that will support the preparation of the evaluation report.
- Other bodies involved could be Human Resources management, trade unions, employees' legal representatives, the equality committee, or external consultants.

The evaluation of the plan is crucial to the success of incorporating equality between women and men in business management, since it allows a critical assessment of the actions taken and the definition of future strategies. It responds, therefore, to **three basic questions** that correspond to the axes on which the plan's evaluation procedure is based.

<b>What has been done?</b>	<b>Outcome evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Degree of compliance with the objectives set.</li> <li>• Degree of achievement of the expected results.</li> <li>• Level of correction of the inequalities undertaken.</li> </ul>
<b>How has it been done?</b>	<b>Process evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of development of the actions undertaken.</li> <li>• Degree of difficulty encountered and/or perceived in the development of the actions.</li> <li>• Type of difficulties and solutions provided.</li> <li>• Changes in the actions and development of the plan.</li> <li>• Degree of incorporation of equal opportunities between women and men in the management of the organization.</li> </ul>

<b>What has been achieved?</b>	<b>Impact evaluation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in corporate culture: management and staff attitudes, human resources practices...</li> <li>• Reduction of imbalances in the presence and participation of women and men.</li> </ul>
--------------------------------	--------------------------	---

To facilitate this task, the following recommendations should be followed:

- Establish and maintain a **rigorous system for collecting and systematizing the information and documentation** generated during implementation and follow-up.
- Obtain information on the **opinion and assessment** of the plan by the management, the staff and the people who have participated in its design, implementation, and follow-up.
- **Define the periods** in which the plan will be evaluated, taking into account that at least one intermediate and one final evaluation must be carried out.
- Draw up a **proposal for improvement** of the measures included in the plan in order to add, reorient, improve, correct, intensify, mitigate, or stop applying those that require it according to their effects.

Your organization will be able to build a standard against which performance can be evaluated over time thanks to the diagnostic process. It is critical that you **keep gathering data and broaden your data collection**, just as you need data to finish the diagnostic procedure. A crucial step in the continuing monitoring and evaluation process is data analysis.

As previously mentioned in this toolkit, it is important to establish a series of **key performance indicators** as a system or standard of measurement in order to monitor the progress and achievement of the actions conducted. In this case, the Australia Workplace Gender Equality Agency<sup>94</sup> and the Responsible Jewelry Council<sup>95</sup> suggest the following.

<b>Retention, promotion, and training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total employee breakdown by employment type, employment contract, and region, by gender.</li> <li>• Comparison of job definition and job title, by gender.</li> <li>• Comparison of employees' duration of stay in same job by gender.</li> <li>• Turnover rate, by gender.</li> <li>• Absenteeism rate, by gender.</li> <li>• Promotion rate, by gender.</li> <li>• Percentage of employees participating in training programmes, by gender.</li> </ul>
<b>Employee and customer engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee engagement results by gender.</li> <li>• Customer gender composition and engagement.</li> </ul>
<b>Leadership accountability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achievement against gender targets, business scorecards and individual KPIs.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy and business</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee / manager awareness of gender strategy and business</li> </ul>

<sup>94</sup> Australian Government Workplace Gender Equality Agency. [Gender Strategy Toolkit](#).

<sup>95</sup> Responsible Jewelry Council. [Gender Equality Toolkit: A Practical Guide on How to Embed Gender Equality At The Core Of Your Business Strategy](#), June 2022.

case	case.
<b>Policies and processes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements in process outcomes from a gender equality.</li> <li>• Redundancy / involuntary exits by gender.</li> <li>• Frequency of policy / process audits.</li> <li>• Number of health &amp; safety assessments conducted (with consideration of gender inclusivity) and number of corrective actions taken.</li> </ul>
<b>Supply chain</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and ratio of suppliers and vendors that have a gender equality policy.</li> <li>• Number of women-owned businesses sourced from.</li> </ul>
<b>Gender composition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender composition of board, executive, senior managers, managers, total workforce.</li> <li>• Workforce composition by occupational category and job level.</li> </ul>
<b>Gender pay equity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pay disparity between roles of equal or comparable value and address anomalies.</li> <li>• Gender pay gaps (by level and organisation wide) for base salary and total remuneration.</li> </ul>
<b>Flexibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilization of flexibility policy options by gender proportion of flexibility requests declined.</li> <li>• Parental leave return rate.</li> </ul>
<b>Talent pipeline</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender of external (experienced) job candidates (long-list, short-list, interviewee, new hires).</li> <li>• Gender composition of graduate recruits.</li> <li>• Gender composition of talent and promotion pools or leadership development participant groups.</li> <li>• Outcomes from potential and succession readiness assessments by gender.</li> <li>• Rates of progression and promotion by gender.</li> <li>• Performance ratings by gender</li> </ul>
<b>Leader and manager capability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements in performance ratings against key capabilities e.g., gender inclusive leadership behaviors for managers and employees with gender-related responsibilities / accountabilities.</li> </ul>
<b>Gender inclusive culture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage employees who have received gender equality training.</li> <li>• Positive response rates and trends against benchmark inclusion question(s) in employee engagement survey.</li> <li>• Incidence and resolution rates of discrimination / harassment complaints by gender.</li> <li>• Number of employees volunteering with gender equality causes/organisations.</li> </ul>

To gather information about the opinion on the extent and implementation of the strategy and the measures implemented, the Ministry of Equality of the Spanish Government has developed

templates for **three types of questionnaires**<sup>96</sup>: one for the management of the organization, one for the monitoring committee and one for the employees (in the case of this questionnaire, it is important to emphasize that it is anonymous and strictly confidential).

MANAGEMENT			
1.	Do you consider that the company's equality situation has improved with the equality strategy implemented?	YES	NO
2.	Do you think that the equality strategy has helped to change the company's culture?	YES	NO
3.	Have the actions that have been developed served to sensitize you and make you more aware of situations of gender inequality?	YES	NO
4.	Do you think that the decisions taken in the organization are analyzed to know the gender impact they have on the employees?	YES	NO
5.	Has the equality strategy influenced business decisions in any way? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positively: Indicate which ones.</li> <li>Negatively: Indicate which ones</li> </ul>	YES	NO
6.	Have there been any difficulties in the process that have made it impossible to implement some actions in your area of responsibility? If yes, which ones?	YES	NO
7.	Do you think that it has added value to the organization or to your area of responsibility?	YES	NO
8.	Has the management structure changed in relation to the number of women and men?	YES	NO
9.	Has the Equality Strategy been made visible externally as an added value of the organization (among customers, suppliers, stakeholders...)?	YES	NO
10.	Do you think it has been useful to:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjust working conditions for women (salaries, contracts...)?</li> </ul>	YES	NO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve work-life balance policies in the company?</li> </ul>	YES	NO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve co-responsibility policies in the company?</li> </ul>	YES	NO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase the presence and participation of women in decision making?</li> </ul>	YES	NO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change the mentality of time use and presence at work?</li> </ul>	YES	NO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Become aware of barriers, discriminations, and gender stereotypes? Balance the workforce in relation to the number of women and men?</li> </ul>	YES	NO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extend the use of non-sexist language and communication?</li> </ul>	YES	NO
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That women and men have effectively the same opportunities?</li> </ul>	YES	NO
11.	What would you highlight as the most positive aspect of the implementation process of the equality strategy?		

<sup>96</sup> Subdirección General para el Emprendimiento, la Igualdad en la Empresa y la Negociación Colectiva de Mujeres. Instituto de las Mujeres & Ministerio de Igualdad, Gobierno de España. [Guía para la elaboración de planes de igualdad en las empresas](#), January 2021.

12.	What would you highlight as the most negative aspect of the implementation process of the equality strategy?
13.	What actions do you consider to have been most effective?
14.	What actions do you think need to be improved?

MONITORING COMMITTEE	
1.	What is the overall degree of compliance achieved with the equality objectives? From 1, Minimum compliance to 5, Maximum compliance.
2.	Have the compliance with the objectives and the proposed actions obtained the expected results towards the improvement of equality in the organization?
3.	Have changes in attitudes towards equality been perceived among the people of the organization and its culture?
4.	What difficulties have been encountered in relation to the implementation process of the equality strategy?
5.	If there have been difficulties, how have these difficulties been overcome?
6.	Has there been any perceived resistance in the implementation of the strategy? Indicate how.
7.	Have new actions been incorporated that were not initially foreseen in the strategy? Indicate which ones.
8.	Have any of the planned actions or objectives had to be modified? Indicate which ones and what modifications have been made.
9.	Have any of the planned actions or objectives had to be dismissed and cancelled? Indicate which ones.



10.	Has there been staff participation and support for the equality strategy? From 1, Minimum involvement to 5, Maximum involvement.
11.	Has there been management participation and support for the equality strategy? From 1, Minimum involvement to 5, Maximum involvement.
12.	Have the economic resources allocated been sufficient?
13.	Has the timeframe for meeting the objectives been respected?
14.	Has the committee been adequately committed to the fulfillment of the strategy's objectives?
15.	Indicate the barriers encountered by the strategy and proposals for improvement.

STAFF			
1.	Do you consider that the company's equality situation has improved with the equality strategy implemented?	YES	NO
2.	Do you think it has been useful to:		
	• Adjust working conditions for women (salaries, contracts...)?	YES	NO
	• Improve work-life balance policies in the company?	YES	NO
	• Improve co-responsibility policies in the company?	YES	NO
	• Increase the presence and participation of women in important decision-making processes?	YES	NO
	• Change the mentality about flexibility at work?	YES	NO
	• Become aware of gender barriers, discriminations, and stereotypes?	YES	NO
	• Balance the workforce in relation to the number of women and men?	YES	NO
	• Balance the workforce in relation to the number of women and men?	YES	NO
	• Facilitate equal opportunities for men and women?	YES	NO
3.	Have the actions that have been developed served to sensitize you and make you more aware of situations of gender inequality?	YES	NO
4.	Do you consider that you have been sufficiently informed about the process?	YES	NO
5.	If you had any doubts or questions about gender equality issues, would you know where to address them?	YES	NO

6.	Have you received training on gender equality?	YES	NO
7.	Do you think that the whole organization has been adequately and sufficiently involved in the equality strategy?	YES	NO
8.	Do you consider that the objectives of the equality strategy initially proposed have been achieved?	YES	NO
9.	Your overall rating, from 1, Very dissatisfied to 5, Very satisfied, in terms of satisfaction with the equality strategy.		
10.	What would you highlight as the most positive aspect of the implementation process of the equality strategy?		
11.	What would you highlight as the most negative aspect of the process of implementing the equality strategy?		
12.	What actions do you consider to have been most effective?		

## #Tool 18: Draft an evaluation report

Based on the information and data gathered during the applicable time frame, the monitoring committee will be in charge of creating the reports corresponding to the interim and final evaluations (or any others that may have been previously established).

The **evaluation report compiles quantitative and qualitative data** on every area of the equality plan during its validity period and provides a comparison of the company's equality condition. As a result, it provides a solid foundation and a wealth of knowledge for a fresh diagnosis that leads to the revision and adoption of a new equity plan.

Once the monitoring and evaluation data have been collected, it will be possible to compare the actual results with those that were initially proposed, determine if deviations, whether significant or not, have been made, and determine whether it is required to **suggest changes**.

They will be structured around the three analysis and evaluation axes stated above, making it feasible to compare the suggested results with those that were ultimately obtained:

- **Outcome evaluation:** refers to the level of execution of the plan, degree of fulfillment of the objectives set, beneficiaries.
- **Process evaluation:** analyzes the adequacy of the resources, methods and tools used during the implementation of actions; the difficulties encountered, and the solutions adopted.
- **Impact evaluation:** assesses the changes, in terms of equality, which have occurred in the organization as a result of the implementation of the equality plan (reduction of

inequalities, changes in the working environment or the company's image (internal and external), increase in the balanced presence of women and men...).

As a guideline in drafting the evaluation report, which must be made available to all employees once it is finished, the following template of the Ministry of Equality of the Spanish Government<sup>97</sup> can be used:

OUTCOME EVALUATION			
Degree of compliance with the objectives defined in the gender equality strategy.	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Level of implementation of the actions foreseen in the gender equality strategy.	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Level of achievement of expected results.	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Degree of compliance with the objectives of each action according to indicators set out in the gender equality strategy.	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Degree of actions for new needs detected.	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Level of correction of the inequalities detected in the diagnosis.	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Status of the company's level of commitment to equality.	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
PROCESS EVALUATION			
Level of development of actions	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Degree of staff involvement in the process.	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
The planned budget has been...	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Compliance with the planned schedule was....	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
IMPACT EVALUATION			
Have there been changes in the company's culture?	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Have the imbalances in the presence of women been reduced?	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Have the imbalances in the presence of men been reduced?	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Have there been changes in the attitudes and opinions of the management team?	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Have there been changes in the attitudes and opinions of the staff?	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Have changes been detected in relation to the external image of the company?	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH

<sup>97</sup> Subdirección General para el Emprendimiento, la Igualdad en la Empresa y la Negociación Colectiva de Mujeres; Instituto de las Mujeres & Ministerio de Igualdad. [Guía para la elaboración de planes de igualdad en las empresas](#), Enero 2021.

The report must also include information regarding:

- An overall evaluation of **how the gender equality strategy evolved** during the reference period.
- Changes that could be made to enhance or **correct any deviations** that were found, both now and when the equality plan is revised in the future.
- Adequateness of the **resources allocated**.
- **Difficulties, roadblocks, or opposition** to the implementation and solutions that might have been used.
- Data from the measure **monitoring sheets** used to provide information on the implementation of the measures.
- An **overview** of the facts pertaining to the level of execution, the accomplishment of planning, and the success of goals.
- **Conclusions drawn** from the analysis of the data and information from the questionnaires that the management, staff, and monitoring committee all filled out.
- A general review of the reference period that highlights the **most notable outcomes** of the gender equality strategy's implementation to date and explains, if any, why the intended actions have not been implemented.





**CONCLUSION**

# CONCLUSION

The best practices, interviews, and tools presented in this document are the result of research, observation, and analysis of real-life experiences. They are not intellectual constructs, but real-life business practices with potential for a practical application in multiple professional environments.

## Now, how can you take action?

If you represent a cluster organisation, you can find in this handbook the inspiration, knowledge, methods, and tools to train and support SMEs to develop, integrate and foster gender mainstreaming strategies and develop their own gender equality plans. Also, the PENELOPE project makes additional resources available for you to succeed, including videos, a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and training methodologies.

The PENELOPE Project aims to empower you with a concrete offer for an additional and innovative support service for the SMEs that will contribute to innovation and job creation.

If you represent a company, we encourage you to reflect on the information provided in order to operationalize the lessons you can draw from this document, taking into account your specific context. For example:

- What are the priority areas for me to initiate action(s) towards an efficient implementation of gender equality in my organization?
- What are the priority actions to be taken?
- Which partners (internal and external) can I involve in building and implementing a gender mainstreaming strategy?

The smoother the collaboration among various stakeholders like middle management, employee representatives, etc., is, the easier it becomes to formulate an action plan and put it into effect.

And if the implementation of the action plan is difficult, you should be aware of the support you can get from your ecosystem that includes clusters as well as other relevant stakeholders.

You can progress at your own pace, starting with the first actions that will help you to build the next ones and become thus an agent of change.

To help you along the way, the PENELOPE project offers other resources besides the handbook, including videos and a Virtual Learning Environment.

Videos are very useful tools, as their short duration makes them easy to understand the messages and use and the Virtual Learning Environment will allow you to choose the topic that seems most appropriate or interesting to you and your professional context. These videos can be used in a variety of ways: at meetings with smaller or larger groups, to encourage debate. Your selected videos could also be distributed to your employees, partners, and collaborators. They can be distributed "as you go along", in line with the chosen areas of progress and the progress of your project.



The PENELOPE toolkit, which can be found in this handbook (or in the Virtual Learning Environment) provides SMEs with a centralized source of useful resources and information on gender mainstreaming, further supporting companies in their efforts to increase female participation in the labor market and to ensure equal treatment.

Ultimately, it will help the promotion of institutional change in European companies to remove barriers to gender equality and engage all such organizations to implement gender equality plans.

**Join the movement for workplace equality.**

**Use the PENELOPE handbook and start making a difference today!**



# REFERENCES



# REFERENCES

- AAB People. [Dignity in the Workplace. Period.](#)
- Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service. [Menopause at work.](#)
- Akina Mama wa Afrika & Hivos. [Gender Audit Tool. A Guide for Identifying Gaps in Gender Responsive Policies and Practices at the Work Place.](#)
- Arquilla, Emelia & Leonard, Jayne. [6 types of sexism, examples, and their impact](#), 16 February 2023, Medical News Today.
- Artz, Benjamin; Goodall, Amanda H. & Oswald, Andrew J. [Do Women Ask?](#), September 2016.
- Asian Development Bank. [Monitoring and Reporting on Gender Action Plans](#), April 2013.
- Australian Government Workplace Gender Equality Agency. [Readiness Assessment.](#)
- Australian Government, Workplace Gender Equality Agency. [Gender equality diagnostic tool.](#)
- Australian Government, Workplace Gender Equality Agency. [Gender equality strategy guide.](#)
- Australian Government, Workplace Gender Equality Agency. [Gender Strategy Toolkit.](#)
- Australian Government, Workplace Gender Equality Agency. [Guide to gender pay equity: Practical steps to improve pay equity between women and men in your organisation.](#)
- Aviva. [Work-life balance overtakes salary post-pandemic](#), 24 August 2022.
- Balanced Scorecard Institute (BSI), [Balanced Scorecard Basics.](#)
- Benson, Alan; Li, Danielle; Shue, Kelly. ["Potential" and the Gender Promotion Gap](#), June 22, 2022.
- Bonino, Luis. [Los micromachismos](#), Revista La Cibeles N°2, Ayuntamiento de Madrid, November 2004.
- Brewis, Joanna; Beck, Vanessa; Davies, Andrea & Matheson, Jesse – University of Leicester. [The effects of menopause transition on women's economic participation](#), July 2017.
- British International Investment & CDC Group Plc. [Gender Toolkit: Guidance on gender-smart investing and gender-smart approaches to build value for businesses.](#)
- British Menopause Society. [Menopause and the workplace guidance: What to consider.](#)
- Castilla, Emilio J., & Benard, Stephen. [The Paradox of Meritocracy in Organizations.](#) Administrative Science Quarterly, Johnson Graduate School of Management, Cornell University, 2010, 55(4), 543–676.
- Close the Gap (SCIO). [Think Business, Think Equality](#), 2015.
- Cluster Maritime Français. [Bonnes pratiques égalité Professionnelle Hommes Femmes : Les fiches du CME](#), 2020.
- Consolidated version of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union - Part Three: Union Policies and Internal Actions - [Title X: Social Policy - Article 157](#) (ex-Article 141 TEC).
- Correll, Shelley J. & Simard, Caroline. [Research: Vague Feedback Is Holding Women Back](#), Harvard Business Review, 29 April 2016.
- Council of the European Union. [Gender pay gap: Council adopts new rules on pay transparency](#), 24 April 2023.
- Council of the European Union. [Why pay transparency can help reduce the EU's gender pay gap](#), 2023.
- Defreyne J, Motmans J, T'sjoen G. [Healthcare costs and quality of life outcomes following gender affirming surgery in trans men: a review.](#) Expert Rev Pharmacoecon Outcomes Res. 2017 Dec;17(6):543-556.
- DPG. [Overcoming Period Stigma in the Workplace](#), 19 May 2019.
- EQUAL4EUROPE Project: Gender Equality Plans for Social Sciences, Business & Management Schools. [D3.2 Gender Inclusive Recruitment & Selection Toolkit for HR Professionals](#), 28 July 2021.
- Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). [Equal pay audit for larger organisations.](#)
- EURAXESS - Researchers in Motion. [Code of conduct for recruitment.](#)
- European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. [Gender issues in safety and health at work - A review](#), 2003.
- European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. [Mainstreaming gender into occupational safety and health practice](#), 2014.

- European Commission, [Maternity and paternity leave in the EU](#), March 2022.
- European Commission, [The gender pay gap situation in the EU](#), 2022.
- European Commission. [Diversity for Talent and Competitiveness: The SME Business Case for Diversity](#).
- European Commission. [EU legislation on family leaves and work-life balance](#).
- European Institute for Gender Equality. [Data regarding the gender employment gap in the EU](#), January 2017.
- European Institute for Gender Equality. [Gender audit](#), 2019.
- European Institute for Gender Equality. [Gender awareness raising](#), 2019.
- European Institute for Gender Equality. [Gender Equality in Academia and Research - GEAR tool](#).
- European Institute for Gender Equality. [Gender equality in recruitment and career progression](#).
- European Institute for Gender Equality. [Gender Equality Training - Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit](#), 2016.
- European Institute for Gender Equality. [Institutional Transformation - Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit](#), 2016.
- European Parliament, European Parliamentary Research Service. [What if care work were recognised as a driver of sustainable growth?](#), September 2022
- European Parliament. [Women on boards: Deal to boost gender balance in companies](#), 7 June 2022.
- European Research Area and Innovation Committee Standing Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation. [Tackling gender bias in research evaluation: Recommendations for action for EU Member States](#), 28 March 2019.
- Eurostat, [Adult learning statistics - Characteristics of education and training](#), June 2021.
- Eurostat. [Adult Learning Statistics: Characteristics of Education and Training](#). August 2023.
- Fundació Sorli. [Micromachismos en la empresa: qué son y cómo detectarlos](#).
- Gaucher, Friesen and Kay. [Evidence That Gendered Wording in Job Advertisements Exists and Sustains Gender Inequality](#), Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 2011, Vol. 101, No. 1, 109 –128.
- General Conference of the International Labour Organization. [R191 - Maternity Protection Recommendation](#), Geneva, 88th ILC session (15 Jun 2000).
- Global Entrepreneurial Talent Management 3 Project (GETM3). [Global Talent Management Best Practices for SMEs](#), January 2020.
- Gouthro, Patricia. [A Critical Feminist Analysis of the Homeplace as Learning Site: Expanding the Discourse of Lifelong Learning to Consider Adult Women Learners](#), International Journal of Lifelong Education 24, No. 1 (2005): 5–19.
- Government of Canada. [Feminist International Assistance Gender Equality Toolkit for Projects](#), 2 February 2023.
- Inclusive employers. [Understanding menstrual leave & periods in the workplace](#).
- Institute of Directors. [The European Women on Boards Directive: What it means and why it matters](#), 3 April 2023.
- InterAction. [The Gender Audit Handbook. A Tool for Organizational Self-Assessment and Transformation](#), 2010.
- Interagency Gender Working Group. [Understand the IGWG Gender Integration Continuum as a lens for assessing project approaches](#). 2017.
- International Finance Corporation. [Unlocking Opportunities for Women and Business: A Toolkit of Actions and Strategies for Oil, Gas, and Mining Companies](#), 18 May 2018.
- International Labour Office. [A Manual For Gender Audit Facilitators. The ILO Participatory Gender Audit Methodology](#), 2012.
- International Labour Organization & United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. [Empowering Women at Work: Company Policies and Practices for Gender Equality](#), 22 September 2020.
- International Labour Organization, [C190 - Violence and Harassment Convention](#), 2019.
- International Labour Organization, [The Gender Divide in Skills Development: Progress, Challenges and Policy Options for Empowering Women](#), 2020.

- International Labour Organization. [10 Keys for Gender Sensitive OSH Practice – Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming in Occupational Safety and Health](#), 2013.
- International Labour Organization. [C183 - Maternity Protection Convention](#), 30 May 2000.
- International Labour Organization. [Gender Diversity Journey - Company Good Practices](#), 2017.
- International Labour Organization. [Integrating gender equality in monitoring and evaluation](#), June 2020.
- International Labour Organization. [Manual for gender audit facilitators: The ILO participatory gender audit methodology](#), 15 August 2012.
- International Labour Organization. [Maternity Protection Resource Package: From Aspiration to Reality for All. Module 8: Health protection at the workplace](#), 2012.
- International Labour Organization. [Maternity Protection Resource Package: From Aspiration to Reality for All. Module 9: Employment protection and non-discrimination](#), 2012.
- International Labour Organization. [Maternity protection](#).
- International Labour Organization. [Non-standard forms of employment](#).
- International Labour Organization. [Promoting Equity: gender-neutral job evaluation for equal pay. A step-by-step guide](#), 10 January 2009.
- International Labour Organization. [R191 - Maternity Protection Recommendation](#), 30 May 2000.
- International Labour Organization. [Safe and healthy working environments free from violence and harassment](#), 2020.
- International Labour Organization. [Sample sexual harassment policy](#), 24 September 2015.
- International Labour Organization. [Shaping skills and lifelong learning for the future of work](#), International Labour Conference 109th Session, 2021.
- International Labour Organization. [The Women at Work Initiative: The push for equality](#), International Labour Conference 107th Session, 2018.
- International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization. [Building Block 2: Dealing With Resistance Against Gender Equality](#).
- J. Paul, 2004, op. cit., adapted from [UK Health and Safety Executive: Health and safety of new and expectant mothers in catering](#), HSE Catering Information Sheet No. 19 (London, 2001).
- Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs, Health Communication Capacity Collaborative (HC3). [Integrating Gender into Social and Behavior Change Communication: An Implementation Kit](#), 2016.
- Kaplan, R.S.; Norton, D.P. *The Strategy-Focused Organization: How Balanced Scorecard Companies Thrive in the New Business Environment*; Harvard Business Press: Brighton, MA, USA, 2000; ISBN: 978-1-57851-250-8.
- Karan Babbar, Jennifer Martin, Pratyusha Varanasi, Ivett Avendaño. [Inclusion means everyone: standing up for transgender and non-binary individuals who menstruate worldwide](#), The Lancet Regional Health - Southeast Asia, Volume 13, 2023, 100177, ISSN 2772-3682.
- Knox, Claire-Louise. [How to create a menstrual-friendly workplace – and why it's crucial to company success](#). See Her Thrive.
- Lean In. [50 Ways to Fight Bias](#).
- Lean In. [8 Powerful Ways Managers Can Support Equality](#).
- LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Organization. [Women in the Workplace](#), 2022.
- Lowik A.J. ["Just because I don't bleed, doesn't mean I don't go through it": Expanding knowledge on trans and non-binary menstruators](#). International Journal of Transgender Health. 2021 Sep 25;22(1-2):113-125.
- Lui, C. K. [Sexual harassment at work: Who is protected?](#), 2018, Texas Law Review, 97, 713–768.
- Massachusetts Office of Economic Empowerment (OEE). [EqualPayMA: Employer Tool Kit: A Guide to Promoting Equal Pay in the Workplace](#), 2020.
- Ministerio de Sanidad, Servicios Sociales e Igualdad. [Herramientas de Apoyo a la Igualdad en la Empresa](#).
- Mohr, Tara Sophia. [Why Women Don't Apply for Jobs Unless They're 100% Qualified](#). Harvard Business Review, 25 August 2014.

- NHS inform. [Menopause and the workplace](#). 2023.
- OECD Development Centre. [Unpaid Care Work: The missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labour outcomes](#), December 2014.
- Oelz, Martin; Olney, Shauna & Tomei, Manuela. [Equal Pay - An introductory guide](#), 04 October 2013, International Labour Organization.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. [Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls: Guidance for Development Partners](#), 6 May 2022.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. [Same Skills. Different Pay. Tackling Gender Inequalities at Firm Level](#), November 2022.
- OSALAN - Instituto Vasco de Seguridad y Salud laborales & Emakunde - Instituto Vasco de la Mujer. [Pautas para la integración de la perspectiva de género en la prevención de riesgos laborales](#), 2017.
- PwC. [Winning the fight for female talent: How to gain the diversity edge through inclusive recruitment](#), March 2017.
- PwC. [Women in Work 2023. Closing the Gender Pay Gap for good: A focus on the motherhood penalty](#), February 2023.
- PwC. [Women returners, The £1 billion career break penalty for professional women](#), November 2016.
- Ramo, Sini. [How to handle resistance to gender mainstreaming](#), Global Equality Matters.
- Randstad. [Gender Equality in the Workplace 2022](#).
- Responsible Jewelry Council. [Gender Equality Toolkit: A Practical Guide on How to Embed Gender Equality At The Core Of Your Business Strategy](#), June 2022.
- Salerno, Silvana; Kolman, Valentina; Livigni, Lucilla; Magrini, Andrea; Bosco, Maria Giuseppina; & Talamanca, Irene Figà. [Women's working conditions in hospital cleaning: a case study](#), EA 2012: 18th World congress on Ergonomics - Designing a sustainable future, 2012.
- Sánchez Gardey, Gonzalo & Cerdán Chiscano, Mònica. *Diversidad e inclusión en las organizaciones*. October 2022, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya.
- Sands, Laura. [Supporting employees through the menopause](#), 13 October 2022, Breathe.
- Shell Foundation; UK Aid; Carbon Trust; University of Cape Town. [Hiring for Equity in Clean Energy: How energy SMEs can attract, retain, and advance female talent in digital jobs](#), 2021.
- Shoesmith, Kate & Collett, Kathleen. [Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2012: Gender and Skills Development](#), 2012/ED/EFA/MRT/PI/03, UNESCO.
- Staff J, Mortimer JT. [Explaining the motherhood wage penalty during the early occupational career](#). Demography. 2012 Feb;49(1):1-21. doi: 10.1007/s13524-011-0068-6. PMID: 22037996; PMCID: PMC3272159.
- Subdirección General para el Emprendimiento, la Igualdad en la Empresa y la Negociación Colectiva de Mujeres. Instituto de las Mujeres & Ministerio de Igualdad, Gobierno de España. [Guía para la elaboración de planes de igualdad en las empresas](#), January 2021.
- Subdirección General para el Emprendimiento, la Igualdad en la Empresa y la Negociación Colectiva de Mujeres. Instituto de las Mujeres & Ministerio de Igualdad, Gobierno de España. [Protocolo para la prevención y actuación frente al acoso sexual, el acoso por razón de sexo y otras conductas contrarias a la libertad sexual y la integridad moral en el ámbito laboral. Manual de referencia](#), September 2023.
- TARGET Project: Taking a reflexive approach to gender equality for institutional transformation. [Gender equality monitoring tool and guidelines for self-assessment](#), 31 July 2018.
- The Equality Trust. [Toolkit for Achieving Equal Pay in your Workplace](#).
- The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union. [Directive \(EU\) 2019/1158 of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers](#), 12 July 2019.
- The Faculty of Occupational Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians. [Guidance on menopause and the workplace](#), 2016.
- The Happiness Index. [The Importance of Work-Life Balance](#), 21 September 2022.
- Trades Union Congress. [Gender in occupational safety and health](#), April 2017.



- Training Centre of the ILO & Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry (EUROCHAMBRES). [Break gender stereotypes, give talent a chance: Toolkit for SME Advisors and Human Resource Managers](#), 2008.
- TUC, [Still just a bit of banter? Sexual harassment in the workplace in 2016](#), TUC, London, 2016.
- United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). [Guide on Gender Mainstreaming Business, Investment and Technology Services for Private Sector Development](#), 2015.
- United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs Sustainable Development. [Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls](#).
- University of Connecticut, Office of Engagement & Wellness. [Breastfeeding Support in the Workplace Tips for Managers](#).
- Valduga, I.B.; De Lima, M.A.; Castro, B.C.G.; Fuchs, P.G.; de Amorim, W.S.; de Andrade Guerra, J.B.S.O. [A Balanced Scorecard Proposal for Gender Equality and Sustainable Development](#). Sustainability 2023, 15, 14384.
- We Empower G7 Project (UN Women, International Labour Organization (ILO) & International Training Centre (ITCilo). [Achieving pay equity in your organization: An online module for business leaders and human resources professionals](#).
- We Empower G7 Project (UN Women, International Labour Organization (ILO) & International Training Centre (ITCilo). [Achieving work-life balance taking action in your organization](#).
- We Empower G7 Project (UN Women, International Labour Organization (ILO) & International Training Centre (ITCilo). [A world of work free from violence and harassment against women: safe, healthy & respectful workplaces](#).
- World Economic Forum. [Global Gender Gap Report 2023](#), 20 June 2023.
- World Economic Forum's System Initiative on Education, Gender, and Work. [Accelerating Gender Parity: A Toolkit](#), 2017.
- World Health Organization. [Gender equality, work, and health: a review of the evidence](#), 2006.
- Yours App. [Sexism in the Workplace: A Guide for Employees](#), 01 August 2022.
- Zavy. [How to Successfully Implement Flexible Work Arrangements in Your Company](#), December 2023.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The PENELOPE project partnership would like to thank all those who collaborated in the preparation of this document for their time, support, and generosity in sharing their life stories, knowledge, and experiences with us.

Last but not least, our heartfelt gratitude and sincere appreciation to Raquel Ortega Martínez, Lucia Seel, Audrey Demore, Mirela Greti Puiu, Lisa Besnard and Claire Morandea.

Their collective efforts and encouragement have been instrumental in the successful completion of this handbook.

January 2024

---

*Image credits: Flaticon, Pexels, Freepik, Canva, Mikhail Nilov, This Is Engineering, Fauxels, Tima Miroshnichenko, Vlada Karpovich and Attraktionskraft Värmland.*

---