

Gender Equality Plan

Introduction

The Gender Equality Plan in Podemcrane AD (hereinafter referred to as the Plan) is the main strategic document where the goals, objectives, and specific measures that the management will implement in order to promote equality between women and men in the Company.

Although it is the first attempt to define and systematize concrete measures to promote gender equality at the Company, the Plan is based on one of the Company's fundamental principles, namely the principle of ensuring equal opportunities for academic and career development for all Podemcrane employees and of a balanced representation of women and men at all levels. In this sense, the Plan is a natural continuation of the Company's inherent drive to institutionalize equal treatment of women and men and builds on it through measures to promote equality in four priority areas aimed at ensuring: gender balance in management and decision-making in the Company; equal opportunities for women and men in recruitment and career development of staff; work-life balance as part of organizational.

With this Plan, Podemcrane AD declares its commitment and determination to strictly observe in its activities the principle of equality between women and men and anti-discrimination based on gender. The Plan is in direct line with the European Union (EU) directives and initiatives on promoting institutional change through the implementation of several instruments, including the development of Plans for the Promotion of Gender Equality in Organisations, with the aim of achieving long-term positive effects in line with the principles of a safe, united and fair gender-balanced representation and equality between women and men in the European Research community.

Fundamental Principles

The right of women and men to equal treatment and equal treatment is a fundamental human right, requiring equal rights and obligations, equal opportunities for fulfilment and for overcoming obstacles, equal treatment in every aspect of society.

The promotion of equality between women and men requires not only strict compliance with anti-discrimination legislation - international, European and national law - but also the promotion of anti-discrimination awareness and the promotion of a social environment, free from gender, stereotypes and prejudices.

Equality between women and men is one of the fundamental values of the EU, enshrined in the European Treaties. The EU is committed to promoting gender equality and gender balance in all areas and is taking active steps to do so within the research and innovation sector.

In this context, Podemcrane AD will continue to work to ensure such equal treatment in its activities, ensuring for all women and men employed in the Company the provision and development of a favourable working environment, free from gender stereotypes and prejudices.

Podemcrane AD will strictly apply and ensure compliance with the legal framework guaranteeing the application of the principle of equality between women and men in every aspect of its activities and declares its firm determination to be guided by and respect the principles of justice, democracy, morality, tolerance and mutual respect.

Methodology

This Plan is the result of strategic planning based on an analysis of normative and strategic documents at international, European, national and institutional levels, statistical analysis of existing relevant aggregated and disaggregated data by gender, analysis of strengths and weaknesses in established practices and existing mechanisms, critical analysis of best practices and contextually relevant experiences.

The analyses show that over the last decade Bulgaria has registered significant progress in the area of gender equality, exceeding the European average on most of its indicators. A significant part of the problems existing in public research institutions in the EU and in individual countries on average have been practically overcome in our country, and Bulgaria occupies a worthy place on the European map of equality between women and men. However, there are several disparities in the representation of women and men that require necessary measures to be taken. Main concerns:

- the need to retain male researchers, especially young engineers, in the system;
- the increasingly visible feminisation of the public research sector in a significant number of scientific fields, which is a manifestation of so-called horizontal gender segregation (differences in the participation of women and men);
- the still significant vertical segregation of women, which requires work to redress the existing imbalance, mainly in the participation of women at the senior levels of the administrative management of academic institutions;
- the imbalance in participation on scientific boards in favour of men.

The plan is in line with key EU and United Nations (UN) strategic documents on the promotion of gender equality, with recent changes in European Commission (EC) policies in this area, as well as with the framework directives and national strategic and normative documents on gender equality.

Scope of the Plan

The Plan is developed for a period coinciding with the operation of the Horizon Europe Framework Programme, from 2022 to 2027, and covers all the main activities arising as the responsibility of the Company in accordance with the regulatory and strategic documents at European and national level containing recommendations for the promotion of equality between women and men.

The plan is a dynamic and open document. It will be periodically supplemented and/or updated according to any relevant changes that may have occurred in the Company, in European and national legislation, or as other factors of strategic importance arise.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN AND PRIORITY AREAS OF INTERVENTION

Based on the results of the gap analysis carried out on the representation and participation of women and men in research, the strengths and weaknesses of established practices and existing mechanisms have been revealed and opportunities identified to build on what has already been achieved to promote equality between women and men. On this basis, the following strategic objective of the Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality in Podemcrane AD has been formulated:

SO: Maintain positive trends towards balanced representation/participation of women and men and introduce good practices to address persistent gender disparities.

In line with the strategic objective thus formulated, the following priority areas of intervention have been identified:

For each of the priority areas, the Plan sets the following objectives:

1. Gender balance in the management and decision-making process.

Objective 1.1: Institutionalise the drive to promote equality between women and men

Objective 1.2: Assess the environment and identify gender imbalances in leadership

Objective 1.3: Achieve and maintain balance in the senior management structures of the RRC

Objective 1.4: Achieve and maintain a balance in standing committees

2. Equal opportunities for women and men in recruitment and career development of staff.

Objective 2.1: Identify and assess gender gaps in recruitment and career development

Objective 2.2: Maintain a reasonable balance between women and men in human resources recruitment

Objective 2.3: Maintain the principle of equal opportunities for women and men in career development

3. Work-life balance as part of organisational culture.

Objective 3.1: Identify employee needs in relation to work-life balance

Objective 3.2: Maintain the established work-life balance of employees

Objective 3.3: Promote a culture of equality, including with regard to caring

4. Prevent gender discrimination.

Objective 5.1: Optimise control mechanisms

Objective 5.2: Enhance institutional culture

The Commission/Group of Experts to be established under Objective 1.1 shall be responsible for the implementation of the objectives and measures, including reporting on the activities of the Plan.

This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) in Podemcrane AD has been adopted by decision of the Board of Directors during their regular meeting on 20.01.2025.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) in Podemcrane AD has been developed in accordance with the following fundamental legal acts in this field:

International context:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted and proclaimed by resolution 217 A (III) of the UN General Assembly of 10.12.1948 (art. 1 , art. 2 and art. 23).

- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Ratified by Decree No. 1199 of the Presidium of the National Assembly of 23.07.1970 - State Gazette No. 60 of 1970. Issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, promulgated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State Gazette No. 43 of 28.05.1976, in force since 23.03.1976 (art. 2, para. 2, art. 3, Article 7(i)).
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by Decree No 1199 of the Presidium of the National Assembly of 23.07.1970 - State Gazette No 60 of 1970. In force for Bulgaria since 23.03.1976. Issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Official Gazette No 43 of 28.05.1976 (Art. 3, Art. 26).
- UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1979, ratified by Decree No. 1944 of the Council of State, published in State Gazette No. 76 of 1981, in force for Bulgaria since 10.03.1982, unpublished and forming part of domestic law within the meaning of Decision No. 7/1992 of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria (art. 2, letter e, art. 11).
- United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, proclaimed by UN General Assembly resolution 2263 (XXII) of 7.11.1967, published in the Collection of International Documents, 1992 (art. 9, Art. 10).
- UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993 (calling for "the universal application to women of the rights and principles relating to equality, security, freedom, dignity and respect for all human beings". The Declaration defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life").
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action on Women's Rights,
- Adopted by the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women on September 15, 1995, adopted by the Council of Ministers on July 2, 1996 - relevant in their entirety.
- The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the principle of "leaving no one behind", in particular Goal 5, which aims to achieve gender equality and improve living conditions for women).
- ILO Convention No. 100 on the Right to Equal Remuneration, 1951 (art. 2, art. 3).
- ILO Convention No. 111 concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation, 1958 (art. 2, art. 3).
- International Labour Organization Convention No. 156 concerning Equality of Opportunity and Treatment between Men and Women: Employees with Family Responsibilities, 1981 (art. 3, art. 4, art. 9).
- International Labour Organization Convention No. 190 concerning the Suppression of Violence and Harassment, 2019 - The Convention protects workers and other persons in employment, including wage earners as defined by national laws and practices, as well as employees regardless of their contractual status, persons undergoing vocational training, including trainees, students and apprentices, employees with terminated relationships, volunteers, jobseekers, and those exercising authority, performing duties and bearing responsibility (Article 9).
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Art. 3, Art. 5, Art. 6).

European context

- European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Art. 8, Art. 9, Art. 10, Art. 14).
- Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Art. 21, Art. 23).
- Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (Art. 8, Art. 10, Art. 19, Art. 153, Art. 157).
- EU General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (Art. 4, Art. 9).
- European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020).
- Strategic commitment to gender equality 2016-2019.
- Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU.
- 2020 Council conclusions on the new European Research Area (ERA).
- 2020 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - A new ERA for research and innovation.
- European Commission (2020). A Union of Equality: A strategy for gender equality 2020-2025.
- European Commission (2020) Gendered Innovations 2 [GI2]: How inclusive analysis contributes to research and innovation.
- Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing the Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down the rules for its participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013 (Text with EEA relevance).
- European Union (2021). Gender equality - Enhanced engagement in Horizon Europe.
- European Commission (2021). EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation 2021-2027.
- European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2021). Concepts and definitions.

National context

- Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria (art. 6, art. 32, para. 1, art. 37, art. 38, art. 39, Art.47, Art.48, Art.49, Art.54).
- Labour Code (art. 8, para. 3, chap. 7 "Working hours and rest periods", chap. 8 "Holidays").
- Law on Equality between Women and Men (Art.1, Art.2, Art.4, para. 1, § 1, т.1 point 7 of the EJ).
- Law on Protection against Discrimination (Art.4, Art.5, Art.7, Art.12, Art.13, Art.14, Art.15, Art.17, Art.24, Art.26, § 1,1-p.3 of the RD).
- Employment Promotion Act (Art.2, Art.23).
- Act on Health and Safety at Work (Art.4, Art.27).

- Law on the Promotion of Scientific Research (Art. 25, items 1-7).
- Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (Art, paragraph 2, item 2, item 4).
- The Law on the Regional Innovation Centre "Ambitious Gabrovo" (Art. 2, para. 1 and 2).
- The National Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality 2016-2020 (RMS No. 967 of 14.11.2016).

The Plan was adopted at a Board meeting on 20.01.2025