

# Gender Equality Plan

## Gender Equality Plan

Within the framework of Horizon Europe, research and innovation (R&I) programme for 2021-2027  
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## Table of contents

Gender Equality Plan .....	1
1. Introduction .....	3
1.1 Legal background .....	4
1.2 Political background .....	5
2. Areas of action .....	6
2.1 Work-life balance and organisational culture .....	6
2.2 Gender balance in leadership and decision-making .....	7
2.3 Gender equality in recruitment and career progression .....	8
2.4 Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content .....	9
2.5 Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment .....	10

# 1. Introduction

There appears to be an unequal presence of men and women in various fields, including scientific research and innovation, which has an impact on the way these fields develop.

It's essential to pursue efforts aimed at reducing or even eliminating the gender gap in education, in order to break away from gender clichés and enable everyone to gain self-confidence and develop the same level of aspirations, whatever their chosen field. This involves working with everyone, at various levels.

A Gender Equality Plan (GEP), as defined by the European Commission, is an official document that brings together a set of commitments and actions that aim to promote gender equality in an organisation through institutional and cultural change.

The GEP concerns public and private research organisations, higher education institutions and public bodies (ministries, research funding organisations, etc.) applying for funding under the Horizon Europe framework programme for research and innovation.

The mission of hub.brussels is not to support Research & Development & Innovation (RDI). The focus on RDI in this context falls within the jurisdiction of Innoviris, the public body that finances and supports research and innovation in the Brussels-Capital Region.

As a public company, hub.brussels' missions include supporting the sustainable transformation of the Brussels economy and making entrepreneurship accessible to all, with a focus on:

- Enabling everyone to consider entrepreneurship as a means of emancipation;
- Helping to increase the employment rate in Brussels;
- Growing the proximity economy for the benefit of the local economy;
- Increasing the number of people who create economic projects among those who are furthest from entrepreneurship, including women.

In this context, hub.brussels supports female entrepreneurship in the broadest sense. Entrepreneurship is a lever for individual emancipation, which is why it must be accessible to all.

The Awareness Business Unit, created in 2021, gives structure to the business of raising awareness of entrepreneurship and transition within hub.brussels. It ensures the appropriation of themes that are still considered new, such as:

- Female entrepreneurship;
- Young entrepreneurship;
- Entrepreneurship for jobseekers;
- Digitalisation;
- Social and democratic entrepreneurship;
- The circular economy.

With the [Kidsfriendly](#) label, an official and free recognition in the Brussels-Capital Region, hub.brussels also aims to welcome families with children, and single-parent families in particular, facilitating all their needs.

In practice, hub.brussels' internal operations are committed to fighting discrimination and promoting inclusion for all through its internal diversity plan.

As part of its missions, hub.brussels is involved in various regional equal opportunity plans, including [gender mainstreaming and equality between women and men 2022-2025](#), as well as *gender budgeting*<sup>1</sup> and the *equal opportunities test*<sup>2</sup> for public procurement contracts, subsidies, strategic planning tools and legislative texts.

hub.brussels is a participant in the European Commission's Horizon Europe programme, and the adoption of a GEP is an eligibility criterion for any participation in this programme.

hub.brussels, represented by its Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Director, supports this Gender Equality Plan and is committed to its continued implementation.

It is based on the framework drawn up by the European Commission, covering our past, present and future undertakings and focusing on the five areas of action recommended by the Horizon Europe framework programme:

1. Work-life balance and organisational culture
2. Gender balance in leadership and decision-making
3. Gender equality in recruitment and career progression
4. Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content
5. Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

## 1.1 Legal background

The regional policy to promote diversity has its origins in:

- The Ordinance of 4 September 2008 aiming to promote diversity and fight discrimination in the Brussels regional public service;
- The Decree of 3 March 2011 of the Brussels-Capital Region, concerning the implementation of the Ordinance of 4 September 2008 aiming to promote diversity and fight discrimination in the Brussels regional public service;
- The Ordinance of 29 March 2012<sup>3</sup> on the integration of the gender dimension in the policy lines of the Brussels-Capital Region and its implementing decrees, Articles 3 and 4 of which specify:

"Art. 3: Each Minister and Secretary of State shall integrate the gender dimension into all policies, measures and actions falling within his or her remit."

"Art. 4: In addition to the measures contained in Article 3 of this Ordinance, each Minister and Secretary of State shall ensure that, in the areas of their competence, the statistics produced, collected and commissioned by the Brussels public services and public interest bodies in their field of action are broken down by sex and that gender indicators are drawn up where relevant."

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<sup>1</sup> <https://equal.brussels/fr/themes/que-fait-la-region-bruxelloise-en-matiere-de-genre/>

<sup>2</sup> The equal opportunities test measures the impact of each instrument on 5 criteria, including gender: <https://test.equal.brussels/fr>

<sup>3</sup> See [https://etaamb.openjustice.be/nl/beschikking-van-29-maart-2012\\_n2012031171](https://etaamb.openjustice.be/nl/beschikking-van-29-maart-2012_n2012031171)

## 1.2 Political background

hub.brussels meets the objectives set out in the Agreement of 24 March 2016 of the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region relating to the adoption of diversity objectives 2016-2020 in regional public matters, which are:

1. The rise of women to middle and senior management;
2. Representativeness in public services;
3. Participation in the implementation of the youth guarantee (under 26 years, under 30 years);
4. Policy on people with disabilities;
5. End-of-career adjustments (over 50 years, over 60 years);

Following the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995, various governments adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to promote the advancement of women.

This declaration forms the basis of the Ordinance of 29 March 2012 on the integration of the gender dimension in the policy lines of the Brussels-Capital Region.

Every five years, there is a review of the progress made by the States in implementing their commitments. The next report is scheduled for 2025, aiming at Beijing+30.

As a Brussels public administration, hub.brussels contributes to a number of actions through its Women in Business programme, i.e.:

- Advancing gender equality in the world of work (including entrepreneurship);
- Reducing the digital divide;
- Reducing/eradicating poverty;
- The economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic closing the gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, education and/or health that the pandemic exacerbated;
- Integrating gender equality perspectives and concerns into environmental policies;

## 2. Areas of action

### 2.1 Work-life balance and organisational culture

For hub.brussels, the well-being of its staff is a matter of pride. Kindness is one of its values. The Agency has taken a number of progressive steps to promote an internal culture of respect and consideration for diversity.

In terms of human resources management, various measures have been put in place to enable our staff to maintain a work-life balance.

- hub.brussels staff have the option to reduce their working hours or take a career break in various ways and for various reasons: birth or adoption, welcoming a child, caring for someone who is ill, age (50 or 55 years), illness or for no particular reason.
- The Agency's basic working schedule is flexible, designed to enable staff members to adapt how they manage their working hours.
- Each member of staff is entitled to 3 days of remote working<sup>4</sup> per week, the number of days being adjusted prorata to the working time for part-time workers and giving rise to an allowance set out in the company's Articles of Association.

In accordance with Belgian legislation, in 2022 hub.brussels launched its first diversity plan "**hub.inclusion**" 2022-2023, following a quantitative and qualitative diagnosis.

In 2024, the Agency launched its 2<sup>nd</sup> diversity plan 2024-2025, based on the evaluation of the previous plan. These plans are based on 4 main areas of action. Area 3 focuses on organisational culture/internal communication and values.

In 2023, hub.brussels launched its "**hub.care**" well-being plan. This project complements the "well-being, safety and psychosocial risks at work" component, run by the prevention advisor and HR, as well as the Agency's diversity plans and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

Considered a priority project by hub.brussels management, the "hub.care" plan benefits from a dedicated budget, a multi-departmental project team (HR and Communications) and methodological support from the PMO support teams.

The aim of the 2023 Action Plan was to improve the well-being of the Agency's staff through 3 main areas:

- Best practices: mapping existing well-being initiatives within the Agency, standardising best practices, providing communications on actions, providing spaces for listening and discussing well-being issues.
- Internal life: combating sedentary lifestyles, improving areas dedicated to well-being (canteens and rest rooms), raising employee awareness of different themes, offering a range of services that meet employees' needs.
- Values: well-being also implies a coherence between the values we promote within hub.brussels and our behaviour. hub.care aims to develop behaviour in line with our

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<sup>4</sup> Arrangements for remote working established in accordance with the Agency's Articles of Association (Art. 267, 401 and 459)

values – kindness, integrity, boldness & excellence – and our internal cross-cutting priority projects:

- green.hub: reducing our environmental impact together;
- hub.inclusion: anchoring diversity and inclusion within hub.brussels;
- shifting.hub: adapting our activities and products to guide Brussels companies towards more sustainable and socially responsible business models;

## Future actions

For "hub.inclusion", during its 2024-2025 diversity plan, hub.brussels wishes to continue and refine its monitoring of the diversity situation within the Agency, by tracking parity by department. hub.brussels also wishes to continue raising awareness of discrimination among its staff, including gender-related discrimination.

Through its operations, the Agency continues to monitor respect for diversity and gender equality. Tools such as the FR/NL inclusive writing charter will continue to be promoted.

For "hub.care", the objectives of the hub.care 2024 Action Plan are:

- To encourage best practices in physical and mental well-being: sponsoring sporting activities, implementing a year-round range of activities linked to physical and mental well-being, both face-to-face and remote (sophrology, stress management, yoga, Nordic walking, etc.);
- To create links between employees: organising several internal events throughout the year, encouraging employee-led initiatives, etc.;
- To improve workspaces and work-life balance: setting up a voluntary working group on the topic of mental burdens, redesigning sanitary facilities, free weekly distribution of fruit in the canteen, etc.

## 2.2 Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

Since its creation in 2018, hub.brussels has ensured the representation of women and parity within its management bodies.

hub.brussels is managed by a Board of Directors, composed in accordance with the Ordinance of 13 February 2014 aimed at guaranteeing, within the management bodies of legal entities, a balanced presence of women and men among the members appointed by the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region. In 2024, it will comprise nine members, 5 men and 4 women.

The general management of the Agency is led by its Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Director, both of whom are women.

At management level, the Agency has 6 department directors, 3 men and 3 women.

At middle management level, there are 24 Heads of Department, 8 women and 16 men.

In the context of its missions, hub.brussels organises juries of experts as part of its calls for projects. There are no rules regarding the composition of the juries. hub.brussels aims for parity, but this is not always possible in view of the experts available.

## Future action

When inviting partners to form a jury, hub.brussels will highlight the importance of ensuring parity as far as possible.

There will be a focus on parity at middle management level, to identify the barriers to career development for women at middle management level.

## 2.3 Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

hub.brussels pursues a recruitment policy that complies with anti-discrimination legislation and is introducing objective recruitment practices that promote diversity.

- Job offers are written using inclusive writing, in accordance with the Agency's inclusive writing charter.
- Initial screening of applications by HR based on the requirements stipulated in the job description and the mandatory criteria.
- This is followed by an anonymous test and
- An interview in front of a panel of no more than 3 internal members (a member of the HR department, the N+1 and/or the N+2). The interview is guided by an identical framework for all interviews.

In terms of career progression, hub.brussels has set up a procedure to ensure internal mobility is open to all, whether at the same grade level or through promotion.

Women make up the majority of the Agency's staff:

Gender – All hub.brussels staff members						
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Women</b>	59%	60%	61%	62%	62%	63%
<b>Men</b>	41%	40%	39%	38%	38%	37%
<b>Other</b>						1%
	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Future actions

- Refine gender monitoring by including grade and position to assess the distribution of women in relation to the position held.
- Refine gender monitoring by including the department and business unit to identify any imbalances and explore solutions.
- Broaden the audience to which job offers are distributed, using an intersectional vision (people with disabilities, Dutch speakers, young people, women) by strengthening collaborations and distribution channels.
- Focus on parity at middle management level, to identify the barriers to career development for women at middle management level and work on achieving a better M/F balance.



## 2.4 Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content

The mission of hub.brussels is not to support RDI. However, its mission is to support the Government, and as such, it is responsible for monitoring and research in the areas it works in.

The Research BU makes sure to integrate the gender dimension into its data collection, whatever the operational method used: company surveys over the phone or online, internet surveys, face-to-face surveys by our "field" team, focus groups, interviews.

The Research BU is also careful to assign a gender to companies, both natural persons and legal entities, very small enterprises consisting of one person, or represented by a board of directors.

Since 2017, hub.brussels has published various studies and barometers related to female entrepreneurship. In 2023, the barometer of female entrepreneurship, which was entirely dedicated to acquiring a better understanding of the place women hold in the Brussels entrepreneurial world, aimed to bring together public administrations, financing and support structures, and business networks or circles, as well as political decision-makers around a collective vision to support all female entrepreneurs in Brussels.

"Women in Business" is the hub for female entrepreneurship in Brussels, run by hub.brussels. It aims to raise awareness of entrepreneurship among women in Brussels, and to support and encourage those wishing to set up their own entrepreneurial project. It brings together a dynamic ecosystem of over 45 partners to support female entrepreneurs in Brussels.

The Agency's CRM assigns a gender to companies and/or contacts.

As part of the Agency's management control system, a process has been set up to ensure an analysis of gender in the Agency's results and to monitor its commitment to integrating gender equality into its missions.

As part of the gender budgeting exercise, annual gender analyses are carried out on hub.brussels' activities.

### Future actions

- Continue to support female entrepreneurship to guarantee more women in Brussels a place on the job and labour market.
- Contribute to the work and reflections of several Brussels-based structures and institutions promoting female entrepreneurship, by offering them some observations that can be used to collectively define recommendations and actions to support female entrepreneurship.
- Strategic monitoring – gender dimension (concept): the Research BU will pilot a collaborative, cross-cutting monitoring strategy using a specific tool, a strategic monitoring platform. This tool will enable us to keep a strategic watch on the gender dimension in the business community, at the level of Brussels, Belgium and beyond.
- The Research BU will also assess the possibility of integrating this gender dimension into the surveys of Brussels-based shops carried out by the hub.brussels field team.
- It will actively collaborate with the Agency's other BUs (Awareness, Export, etc.) to ensure that this dimension is integrated into the surveys or data collection carried out by these departments.

## 2.5 Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

Since 2018, the Agency has implemented an active prevention policy<sup>5</sup> concerning psychosocial risks at work. This policy requires the employer to take measures to prevent and/or limit psychosocial risks at work, as well as the damage resulting from these risks, including any act of violence or (moral or sexual) harassment in the workplace.

We have set up an in-house department for prevention and protection at work, as well as trusted persons to provide information, and to listen to and advise employees, while remaining bound by professional secrecy.

In addition, the Agency makes use of the services of an External Service for Prevention and Protection at Work, as well as an autonomous external Social Service, independent of hub.brussels.

Every 2 years, a survey on psychosocial risks is carried out among all employees. The last one took place in 2021. The measures identified as a result of this survey, including actions to encourage social contact between employees and the organisation of activities linked to well-being, have been put in place.

### Future actions

The global prevention plan, validated in June 2023, includes for a call for applications in 2024 to increase the number of trusted persons. Other measures, such as the introduction of key indicators to monitor the people supported by these trusted persons, will be organised in collaboration with the prevention advisor – Psychosocial Aspects – from the External Service for Prevention and Protection at Work.

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<sup>5</sup> Royal Decree of 10 April 2014 relating to the prevention of psychosocial risks at work.