



GOZO REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Gender Equality Plan

2023-2025

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April 2023

OVERVIEW

Gender Equality creates better working environments that enable good quality research and helps maximise the potential and talent of employees. It thus attracts and creates talent by ensuring that all staff can be confident that their abilities will be valued and recognized fairly and equally irrespective of their gender.

The Gender Equality Plan (GEP) is an all-year round strategy that comprises the collection and assessment of data, planning, implementation, monitoring progress and evaluation of new measures or necessary revisions that need to be carried out with respect to gender mainstreaming. It shall thus make the Gozo Regional Development Authority (GRDA) a promoter of gender equality.

Mario Borg
Chief Executive Officer

DEFINITIONS

Gender refers to 'social attributes and opportunities associated with being female or male and to the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as to the relations between women and those between men' (EIGE, 2021a).

Sex refers to the 'biological attribute that distinguish male, female and intersex' (European Commission, 2020h).

Gender Identity refers to 'each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function, by medical, surgical, or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms' (EIGE, 2021a).

Non-binary is an umbrella term for gender identities that fall outside the gender binary of men or women. This includes individuals whose gender identity is neither exclusively men nor women, a combination of a man and a woman or between or beyond genders. This category can be listed as X.

Gender-Disaggregated data means the breaking down of compiled information into smaller subpopulations to elucidate underlying trends and patterns. For instance, **breaking data down into grade level within school aged students, country of origin within racial/ethnic categories, or gender among student populations** are all ways of disaggregating data.

Gender mainstreaming means integrating a gender equality perspective at all stages and levels of policies, programmes and projects. It is an approach to policy-making that takes into account both women's and men's interests and concerns.

GOZO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

A General Introduction

The GRDA has a regulatory and consultative role and addresses an important gap in the socio-economic development of Gozo by developing and streamlining regional policies and by overseeing their implementation through the adoption of modern project management tools.

This GEP was developed by the GRDA based on internal analysis through meetings with all sections, as well as a thorough analysis of its policies and practices presently in force at the Authority. Its aim is to identify gaps if any, in the GRDA's current policies and practices and to introduce new measures that better support gender equality at the Authority.

The GRDA considers where possible, all forms of gender-orientation data. This includes gender-disaggregated data for men and women as well as non-binary gender for data collection in future publications.

The Authority endorses the Harassment and Bullying Free Workplace Policy issued by the Office of the Principal Permanent Secretary while it takes into account other Government policies on gender mainstreaming such as OPM Circular 15/2012 and current Maltese Legislation. It has also created its own Gender Equality Policy that shall serve as a vehicle for the adoption and implementation of this Gender Equality Plan.

As envisaged in its Gender Equality Policy guiding principles, the Authority is committed to appoint a Gender Equality Officer who shall have the duty to oversee the running of this plan.

GEP CRITERIONS

This GEP is based on the guidance document issued by the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation within the European Commission. It is formulated on four mandatory process-related requirements and complemented by other recommended priority areas.

Mandatory Criteriaons

The GRDA is thus committed towards gender equality by:

1. Formally publishing on its website, a signed copy of the Gender Equality Plan by the Chief Executive Officer. It will likewise be communicated to all staff who shall sign it as a proof of notification and understanding. A progress report will be compiled on a periodical basis that will also be made public along the GEP as a proof of commitment by the GRDA towards gender equality.
2. Appointing a Gender Equality Officer to oversee the implementation of this plan. Given the GRDA's present size (eleven officers excluding consultants), it is felt that having one officer assigned to fulfil this task should suffice. Nevertheless, this task shall be under the supervision of the Officer responsible for compliance which position is occupied by a Senior Manager. It will enable the Officer in-charge to have a more hands-on approach towards implementing the GEP.
3. Collecting disaggregated data from among the GRDA staff periodically along with the implementation of the GEP. This will enable the GRDA to first and foremost create a set of data that should serve as a baseline for progress monitoring. However, given the small number of employees and its horizontal structure, the data collected may still not lead to properly identify areas of relative strength and weaknesses that should allow better targeting of actions to sustain gender equality within the Authority. For example, if you have 3 persons employed in a section and only one of them is a female, in percentage terms there is a huge imbalance in favour of men (from 33% to 66%). The same applies if 2 out of 3 were women, there would be a huge gender imbalance in percentage terms in favour of women.
4. Introducing awareness-raising and training activities on gender equality. These activities will be aimed to engage the whole team with the aim to increase everyone's awareness and sensitivity to gender inequality thus, equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to instil gender equality.

Key Complementary Priority Areas

The GRDA is committed to complement the mandatory criteria by other criteria that it deems essential in sustaining gender equality among its staff but also through its work in streamlining and developing sustainable socio-economic policies for Gozo:

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

1

WORK LIFE BALANCE AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

The GRDA is a relatively new Authority with ad hoc simplified policies that are being formulated in line with those introduced by the Public sector as well as in line with current legislation. Work-life balance measures are considered as key components in transforming an organization towards having a gender equality culture.

The Public Sector itself is a driving force for Work-life balance measures with a specific manual that is updated on a regular basis. As a looking-forward Authority, while it embraces all those work-life balance measures delineated in the manual applicable to the Public sector, it intends to formulate its own Working Time Policy in relation to different flexibility modes of work that can be of benefit to its employees and thus to the Authority itself. The Authority also intends to explore the possibility of introducing a workload management system and a caring leave system. These work-life balance-oriented measures aim at improving the balance between work and personal life at the Authority.

Objective	Actions	Method	Indicators	Timeline
1.1 - Flexible working time arrangements to assist employees with care-related needs and home responsibilities.	Introduction of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A remote working system; and • A hybrid system that provides flexibility at the place of work. 	Formulating new as well as updating existing GRDA policies by providing a detailed structure how remote working and a hybrid system of working modes can be implemented.	Data collected (by gender) on the preferred mode of working (whether remotely or at the designated workplace). Any such agreements in this regard as against the number of employees. Comparing of data on the work performance of the individual (by sex).	Q1 2023 to Q4 2025.
1.2 - Workload management.	Ensuring that the working tasks are distributed according to categories complementing each other and ensuring a fair distribution of workloads.	Tasks assigned to every employee shall be assessed to establish its level of complexity and whether it is being performed by the right officer (in terms of competencies and tasks complementing each other).	Tasks shall be time assessed and whether any qualification or certification is required by the performing officer.	Q1 2023 to Q4 2025.
1.3 - Introducing Caring leave in order to provide care or support to a relative, or to a person who lives in the same household as the employee, and who is in need of care or support for a serious medical reason.	A capped amount of unused sick leave from previous years in service with the GRDA can be used as a caring leave subject to terms and conditions.	By updating existing GRDA policies.	Collection and analysis of data on a yearly basis following its introduction delineating the number of requests, if approved or otherwise and the number of hours used.	Q1 2023 to Q4 2025.

2

REACHING GENDER BALANCE IN LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING

The GRDA is an all-inclusive Authority whereby it makes no preference between gender, age, colour, race, creed or any other distinctive factor, while it embraces the ability and skills of each employee. At present, top management posts are occupied by male staff while female staff occupy 25% of the second line of leadership and decision-making positions. This gender imbalance can be attributed to several issues as will be defined in the upcoming section.

Objective	Actions	Method	Indicators	Timeline
2.1 - Creating awareness among staff and interviewing board members on what may constitute gender inequality to help eliminate a sexist approach.	Training on gender equality.	Seminars in the form of participatory workshops and talks delivered by gender equality experts. Distribution of material (electronically and/or hard copy) on gender equality.	Circulating anonymized questionnaires to identify the level of knowledge on gender equality among staff and interviewing board members.	Q1 2023 to Q4 2025.

As part of its strategy to address gender inequality, the GRDA will be promoting an awareness campaign that will range from dissemination of material to workshops with the participation of experts. It will be structured through a continuous approach ensuring that gender equality will remain part of the Authority's modus operandi.

3

GENDER EQUALITY IN RECRUITMENT AND CAREER PROGRESSION

At present 83% of the staff complement are male while only 17% are female. When analysing the GRDA HR data, the present outcome could be attributed to several issues. In the first place, the number of employees engaged¹ by the GRDA is relatively small which can give skewed results. Also, a smaller number of female applicants when calls were issued meant the probabilities of having a lower number of female staff increased. Initial reluctance by women to move to the Authority when it was set up also played a role in such a discrepancy.

Objective	Actions	Method	Indicators	Timeline
3.1 - To improve conditions that will incentivise career progression within the Authority (in particular to analyse women attrition causes).	Parental leave period to be added with the years of service for promotion reasons. Introducing other initiatives that will come out from the working group and questioners' findings.	Questioners to be circulated among employees in Gozo (category and sectors to be identified). Setting up working groups that will analyse the findings of the questioners ie: what may hinder career progression and what can be done (proposals).	Data collected on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take-up of the initiative; how many applied; if there were any refusals and why. 	Q1 2023 to Q4 2025.
3.2 - Formulating a set of gender-neutral interviewing questions.	Conducting a study on recruitment practices.	Research and/ or engagement of persons proficient on HR and gender equality.	Obtaining regular data through anonymized questioners from among the interviewees.	Q1 2023 to Q4 2025.
3.3 - Achieving gender balance by supporting gender sensitive recruitment and career progression opportunities.	A balanced representation of genders on interviewing boards.	Formulating guidelines on the composition of interviewing boards.	Data collected on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The composition of interviewing boards by gender. 	Q1 2023 to Q4 2025.

The recruitment and progression stages within an organization are considered fundamental in either achieving gender neutrality or tipping such balance. For this reason, the GRDA intends to formulate a set of gender-neutral interviewing guidelines while ensuring a gender-balanced representation on interviewing boards. These approaches shall be further enhanced by improving conditions that will incentivise career progression through the analysis of any attrition causes that may exist.

¹ It refers to both direct employment and subcontracting.

4

INTEGRATING THE GENDER DIMENSION INTO RESEARCH AND TEACHING CONTENT

The GRDA pays particular attention when it comes to the effective use of gender sensitive language both at communication level as well as when compiling official documents. Rather than using the gendered pronouns such as 'he' or 'she', inclusive terms like 'staff', 'employees', 'they', 'them' and 'we' are used instead. However, there is no formal policy or guidelines when and how these terms should be applied. The GRDA thus intends to identify a whole list of neutral terms that can be applied in its texts and ensuring that its writings and publications are in line with these guidelines.

Objective	Actions	Method	Indicators	Timeline
4.1 - Promoting inclusivity among the GRDA staff.	Identifying gender neutral terms that can be used.	Updating existing policy on gender equality on the applicability of gender-neutral terms within the Authority.	Vetting of texts issued by and on behalf of the GRDA on a periodical basis to verify that gender neutral terms are being applied.	Q1 2023 to Q4 2025.

5

MEASURES AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE INCLUDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Gender-based violence is an issue that is frequently underestimated at the place of work and is often regarded as a cultural habit. Though organizations operating in Malta are subject to several laws and regulations, most people are not even aware of their existence.

It is therefore significant for the GRDA to promote such rules that are at the core of our legal regime but that should also be regarded as important values at the place of work. For this reason, the GRDA will be formulating guidelines on what constitutes gender-based violence while conducting awareness sessions for a thorough understanding of this theme and its implications beyond the place of work.

Objective	Actions	Method	Indicators	Timeline
5.1 - Guidelines and awareness on what constitutes gender-based violence and sexual harassment at the workplace.	Dissemination of material on gender-based violence and sexual harassment. Awareness sessions.	Engaging professionals in the sector to conduct awareness session/s. Formulating guidelines/code of conduct on what constitutes gender-based violence and sexual harassment at the workplace.	Collecting disaggregated data by periodically circulating anonymized questionnaires to identify the level of knowledge on: 1. gender based violence; 2. sexual harassment; 3. how the person is feeling (whether it suffered any one of the above).	Q1 2023 to Q4 2025.

² Most notably: Chapter 452 – Employment and Industrial Relations Act of the Laws of Malta; Chapter 456 – Equality for Men and Women Act of the Laws of Malta; Chapter 540 – Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act of the Laws of Malta; Chapter 581 – Gender-based Violence & Domestic Violence Act of the Laws of Malta; and relevant subsidiary legislation.



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INTRODUCTION

Gender Equality is the process of justice and fairness towards women, men, transgender people, third-gender, intersex or any other gender. This process considers the different needs and historical and social disadvantages that inhibit individuals of all genders from operating from a level playing field. The process of equity leads to the state of equality.

The Gozo Regional Development Authority (GRDA) upholds the principle of non-discrimination, either directly or indirectly, as enshrined in Article 32 – Fundamental Rights and Freedoms of the Individual of the Constitution of Malta. The GRDA commits to promote gender equality as an explicit, universal human right, in the workplace, in programmes and in its internal as well as external operations. It is an equal opportunity Authority that provides an inclusive environment which promotes equality and diversity, while maintaining a healthy working environment in which the rights and dignity of its employees are respected.

Purpose

This Gender Equality Policy provides internal guidance on how the GRDA aims to integrate a gender perspective throughout policy formulation, programme development and activity implementation, including project monitoring and evaluation. In general, the policy aims to create an environment and shape a culture conducive of advancing the institutionalization of gender equality at the Authority.

Policy

All GRDA employees shall be informed and handed a copy of the GRDA Gender Equality Policy. They should also be informed that they may seek assistance from outside the Authority should it be felt that discrimination has taken place in their regard. It is therefore imperative that the following shall serve as guiding principles in the application of gender equality by the GRDA:

Gender Integration – Also referred to as gender mainstreaming, is the process whereby the GRDA will be incorporating a gender perspective or a “gender lens” into the policies, strategies, programs, activities as well in its operational and administrative functions.

Universality – It is the approach by which the GRDA pledges to apply gender mainstreaming beyond its immediate sphere of authority thereby including the application of gender equality principles when engaged with external partners.

Participation and Inclusion – All GRDA employees of whatever gender have the right to access information and participate in decision-making processes that may affect their lives, well-being and enjoyment at the place of work.

Equity towards Equality – GRDA commits to understand and where possible, address systemic and structural biases, and cultural and social norms and practices that lead to inequalities in opportunities, resources, representation, power and participation across the gender spectrum and other individual or sociocultural characteristics, in the workplace, in programs and operations, and externally as its representatives.

Gender-based Violence – GRDA will not tolerate any form of violence, exploitation, harassment, or bullying based on gender, sex, or individual or cultural difference in the workplace, in programs and operations, and externally as its representatives. It commits to investigate and respond to any reports, allegations, incidents suspected or observed concerning violence, exploitation, or harassment.

Discrimination – GRDA will not tolerate any form of discrimination, stereotyping or prejudice based on gender, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, caste, or other differences in the workplace, in programs and operations, and externally as its representatives. It commits to investigate and respond to any reports, allegations, incidents suspected or observed concerning violence, exploitation, or harassment.

Cultural Sensitivity – GRDA shall keep awareness of cultural diversity of its staff, partners, and beneficiaries and will promote respect and sensitivity for cultural differences while maintaining a position of zero-tolerance for discrimination, stereotyping and prejudice.

Gender Equality Resource Mobilization – The GRDA commits to mobilize and allocate the financial, technical, and human resources necessary to meet these commitments to gender equality.

Partnerships – The GRDA will be working with local and international organizations to address any systematic and structural barriers to gender equality that may exist locally.

Equal Career Opportunities – As part of the GRDA's wide commitment to gender equality, the Authority supports equal career opportunities for all staff and appropriate working arrangements to balance work and family life.

Capacity Building Development – The GRDA is committing itself to the continuous strengthening of staff capacity and competency in gender equality through adequate training programmes.

Knowledge and Information Management – The GRDA shall be periodically collecting and sharing good practices on gender equality knowledge among its staff to improve the way they integrate a gender perspective.

MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE

Monitoring mechanisms to assess compliance with this Gender Equality Policy are crucial for its effective implementation. This process is the basis for holding employees accountable as well as the best way to document good and bad practices for future improvement.

For this reason, the GRDA is committing to develop a common-system approach whereby indicators and evaluation methods will be applied to monitor compliance.



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