GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

2022-2025

Polytechnic University of Tirana

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1. Preface

The goal of this Plan is to promote non-discrimination and equality and to prevent direct and indirect discrimination and harassment at the University. Our university community consists of people of different age, cultural background, gender, sexual orientation and health. All of these people must have equal opportunity to participate and act as full members of the University community regardless of their characteristics and life situation. At the Polytechnic University of Tirana, equality and non-discrimination are matters that concern the whole University community, and everyone has an important role in nurturing and advancing them. Accessibility and the promotion of study and work well-being are in the heart of the work towards equality.

We are for example strengthening equality and non-discrimination related to age and sex in the University community.

- As defined in the Strategy, the common values of the University are creativity, openness, ethical principles, critical thinking, and strong community. The underlining themes of the Strategy are open science and impact, responsibility and sustainable development as well as collaboration and interaction, digitalization, and well-being.

- The Polytechnic University of Tirana has an Accessibility Policy, the goal of which is to promote the accessibility of the University and develop practices and modes of operation that support accessibility and are also required by legislation. Accessibility means the possibility for all types of actors to participate and act equally in the University community, regardless of their characteristics. Accessibility can be examined from the perspectives of the physical and mental environment, social interaction, values and attitudes, and politics. At its core, accessibility is a matter of realizing civil and human rights.

This Equality Plan follows the next strategy period of the Polytechnic University of Tirana, meaning that it has been compiled for years 2022–2025. The draft compiled has yet to be approved in a meeting of the Board of the University in the upcoming weeks.

The Polytechnic University of Tirana recognizes that its most valuable asset is its people, and achieving its mission is dependent on the performance, dedication, professionalism innovation and capabilities of its staff.

The Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan demonstrates our commitment to a dynamic and innovative culture. Fostering a culture of inclusion and diversity is crucial to achieving this goal, and in today's competitive global environment, the most successful universities will be those that fully utilize the talents and capabilities of all staff. Research has demonstrated the benefits of diversity and inclusion citing improved productivity, innovation, and creativity in organizations that recognize and harness their diversity as an asset. Furthermore, organizations which have a higher proportion of women at Board and top management levels are the organizations that perform the best.

The University recognizes that building social inclusion leads to improved student outcomes and greater innovations in learning, teaching, and research. The Polytechnic University of Tirana has been an Employer of Choice for Gender Equality for over a decade. The University has high levels of women in senior leadership positions and a long-standing reputation for fairness and equity in the workplace.

While the University has made considerable progress in creating a fair, flexible and equitable workplace, our current workforce data indicates that we continue, like many institutions around the world, to underutilize the talents of women particularly at senior levels and in the Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine (STEMM) disciplines. There is a significant gender pay equity gap due to the under representation of women in these areas. To attract and retain a high-quality workforce that reflects the diversity of the region and continue to be a leading Employer of Choice for Gender Equality, the University will promote and embed an organizational culture in which staff of all genders of a diverse range of cultural backgrounds and heritages participate equally at all levels. To achieve this, we will challenge the beliefs, attitudes, and unconscious biases that undermine our progress towards gender equality for all staff regardless of background. The leadership team at The Polytechnic University of Tirana is committed to gender equality and the Senior Executive, and Board will lead the gender equity improvements by example.

1.1 Legal and institutional framework

This strategic document properly reflects the fulfillment of standards or obligations deriving from other international documents, where among the most important we single out the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), etc. Also, during the planning of certain measures to address the main concerns in the field of equality and gender justice, the Recommendations of the European Commission sent through the "Report on Albania 2020" were taken into account, which identify the main issues to be considered for 2021, including the collection and processing of data disaggregated by sex and gender statistics, in all areas, possibly in the informal economy.

This strategy was drafted based on the findings and recommendations of the "Evaluation Report: Implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality and its Action Plan 2016 - 2020", therefore aims to expand, deepen and increase the measures envisaged and not fully implemented, or even implemented but requiring support for long-term sustainability, according to the strategic goals set out earlier in the NSGE 2016-2020.

Throughout the strategic document and action plan of the NSGE 2021 - 2030, the importance of supporting, treating and empowering women, young women and girls as a whole, including by vulnerable groups who suffer multiple discrimination such as: women, young women and girls from rural areas, from ethnic minorities, with disabilities, LGBTQ +, single mothers, raped, trafficked, elderly, asylum seekers, etc., i.e. from all groups in society.

The Gender Equality Strategy Action Plan provides a framework to assist the University in developing and implementing effective strategies around workplace culture, leadership, and employment practices to improve gender equality across the whole organization. This Strategy and Action Plan acknowledges the diverse people who constitute our community and recognizes the different lived experiences and challenges faced by individuals from a variety of cultural backgrounds, faiths, and traditions, and the richness this brings to our University Community.

These objectives were seen as important:

- To promote both women and men in ICT field
- Follow-up for gender-balanced recruiting
- To support institutional communication about equality
- To continue peer support program in the unit
- To create individual career plans
- To encourage the academic career in ICT field.

2. Reconciliation of work, studies and personal life

Concerns related to the reconciliation of work, studies, and family affect all individuals with families and they are as diverse as types of families: There are families with two parents of different genders, single-parent families, and stepfamilies. Reconciling these things is often demanding and causes concern for many working-age people with families. In addition, situations and needs may change quickly. Solutions to this issue have a significant effect on the everyday life of families and employees' use of time and, therefore, on their coping at work. Many solutions attempt to reconcile the various wishes and needs of working life and family members to find alternatives which are also hoped to sufficiently correspond to the values of the employee. The reconciliation of work and family will be supported regardless of gender or type of family. Needs for flexible working hours due to family reasons will be responded to positively. This must not result in employees with care duties being placed in an unequal position with regard to the distribution of duties, rewards or career advancement.

Care responsibilities may include not only childcare but also, for example, care given to elderly parents. Although more fathers have begun to take parental leave in recent years, women still take most of the available parental leave. This may indirectly weaken their status at work. Men will be encouraged to use their right to parental leave.

The University will also offer childcare benefits to students: they help students to reconcile studies and family life and thus ensure fewer delays in graduation.

2.1 Age equality

Individuals of varying ages work and study at the Polytechnic University of Tirana. The broad spectrum of ages is a source of richness for the community, and it enables the transfer of knowledge and skills between generations. Individuals of all ages encounter challenges in life, which can only be tackled through systematic age management. The work cultures of different generations are formed differently at different times. As the baby boom generation retires, the University is faced with the great challenge of systematically passing on know-how to the younger generations as well as directing resources to support coping at work. In addition to ageing employees, more mature students may be subjected to discrimination due to their age. Their learning ability may be doubted, and they may experience social exclusion. Age discrimination may also be directed at young or youngish employees: their efforts may be belittled, and their working conditions may be worse than those of their older colleagues. Both men and women may be subjected to age discrimination, but typically women are more often affected. Hence, we talk about gender-related age discrimination, which means that ageing men and women are treated differently.

The Polytechnic University of Tirana aims to promote coping at work through occupational wellbeing and age management efforts. Age-sensitive management means good management which considers the particular needs and life situations associated with employees of different ages. Supervisors will be provided with information and tools relevant for employees of various ages. The coping of aging employees is supported by appreciating their strengths and experience and enhancing their expertise and job satisfaction. Mature employees often have invaluable experience that should be passed on to the next generation of employees. Support for passing on this experience is a central component of age management. Employees with extensive careers should be seen as a resource and their job descriptions should be adjusted so as to leave time for sharing their experience with their younger colleagues.

On the other hand, support should also be provided for sharing the special expertise of younger employees with their older colleagues. Such considerations will be taken into account in the development of the University's human resources policy. Students of all ages must be treated equally.

3. Guidelines for the promotion of equality and diversity

3.1 Objectives for the prevention of discrimination and harassment

The University must be a professional and academic community which treats all of its members with respect. The University does not condone inappropriate treatment, discrimination or harassment of its staff or students.

Supervisors are aware of their right and duty to intervene in situations of harassment and discrimination. They will address cases actively and promptly by intervening at an early stage. The employer can issue a reprimand or a written warning to an employee found guilty of discrimination or terminate their employment. The privacy of students and staff must be secured in order to prevent discrimination and harassment. A central component of privacy is that no individual is required to disclose their personal details without a statutory reason.

Legislation and University guidelines specify the types of sensitive data which should not typically be processed. Such data include information on an individual's race or ethnic origin, social, political or religious conviction, criminal history, punishments or other criminal sanctions, health, sickness or disability, medical treatment or other comparable measures directed at the individual, sexual orientation or behavior, and social welfare needs. Expressed consent must be requested before an individual's personal data can be published on the Internet or through another medium.

3.2 Organisation and resources for equality work

The responsibility to promote equality applies to all University activities and all members of the University community, both staff and students. The promotion of equality is, in particular, the duty of the University leadership as well as the heads of departments. The University leadership monitors the equality situation in faculties and other units. The equality development of faculties and units is reported on and discussed as part of the operations management process.

4. Evaluation of the current plan

The draft equality plan includes numerous proposals for action. Based on them, we compiled an action programme which prioritized, scheduled, and allocated responsibilities for the action proposals.

Our proposals are the following:

- teaching and learning materials have to support the realization of equality. According to the Equality Plan of the Polytechnic University of Tirana, students must be able to participate as full members of the University community irrespective of their personal characteristics and life situations. Understanding and accepting diversity is also part of the professional life skills required nowadays and in the future.

- annual statistics describing non-discrimination and equality among the personnel

- updating the action plan included in the Equality Plan: overview of the follow-up of the actions and including new actions to the Plan

- Inciting female students to participate in initiatives like "Code like a girl"

- Commemorating 11th of February – Women in STEM day.

- Strengthening and supporting the diversity of the University community (e.g. age, ethnicity, state of health, gender).

- Promoting zero-tolerance for racism in all activities: Identifying structures and practices that have racist characteristics and increasing commitment of all members of the University community to consider cultural sensitivity in their activities.

- Impact of digitalization of teaching and working on non-discrimination: new modes of operation are planned and performed in a way that gives the different members of the University community as equal footing as possible.

- Promoting inclusion in the course selection: considering how feasible and accessible the studies are for e.g. adult students, working students, students with families e.g.

- Directing student marketing with the objective to decrease differences in gender ratios between different study programs.

- Promoting equality and non-discrimination of doctoral candidates and researchers (including grant researchers). Supporting researchers in combining work and family.

- Non-discrimination in recruitment processes: Recognizing the impact of unconscious biases and prejudices on recruitment decisions and increasing awareness on this matter among people involved in recruitment processes.

- Monitoring the diversity of experts in the recruitments or professors and when granting docents and also monitoring the transparency of the decision processes.

- Carrying out a survey for the employees who retire or leave for other reasons, and utilizing the feedback in the development of the organization.

- Increasing the personnel's preparedness to encounter different gender identities and sexual orientations.

- Including equality and non-discrimination themes as well as information about addressing harassment and discrimination in management training.