



"INITIATIVE FOR CIRCULAR ECONOMY, INNOVATION, AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP"
CREATE

Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

CREATE NGO

(2025-2027)

CREATE
Durrës, Albania
2025



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Prepared in alignment with:

- EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025
- Horizon Europe GEP Eligibility Requirements
- European Charter for Researchers
- National Legislation on Equal Opportunities

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1. Introduction

CREATE NGO is a civil society organization operating in the fields of innovation, circular economy transition, and sustainable development, working in close cooperation with local communities, educational institutions, public bodies, and international partners. In line with European Union values—particularly transparency, inclusiveness, democratic participation, and institutional integrity—CREATE is committed to embedding equality and non-discrimination across all its activities and governance structures. The Gender Equality Plan (GEP) represents CREATE's formal strategic framework for ensuring equal opportunities, promoting gender-sensitive practices, and mainstreaming a gender perspective across organizational processes. The GEP establishes a coherent set of principles, objectives, and operational measures that guide the organization in integrating gender equality into internal management, human resources, capacity development, project design, applied research, and international cooperation. The plan is fully aligned with EU requirements under *Horizon Europe*, the *EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025*, the *European Charter for Researchers*, and the *UN Sustainable Development Goals*, ensuring compliance and readiness for participation in European-funded programmes. Through this document, CREATE demonstrates its institutional commitment to fostering a safe, inclusive, and professional working environment where gender balance, equal treatment, and respect for diversity are systematically promoted and monitored.

Vision

To contribute to a fair, inclusive, and gender-responsive society in which all individuals particularly young people, women, and underrepresented groups have equal access to opportunities for personal and professional development. CREATE envisions strengthening its role as a multidisciplinary actor supporting social inclusion, circular economy innovation, and evidence-based policy development, in line with EU priorities for sustainable and equitable growth.

Mission

CREATE NGO aims to advance equality, inclusion, and sustainable development through non-formal education, applied research, community engagement, and strategic cooperation at national, regional, and European levels. In implementing its mission, CREATE integrates gender equality as a cross-cutting priority, ensuring that all activities whether in capacity-building, policy advocacy, or project implementation promote equal participation, responsible governance, and gender-balanced outcomes. The organization is committed to adopting EU-compliant practices, enhancing institutional capacity, and contributing to long-term social impact through inclusive and gender-sensitive programming.

2. Objectives

CREATE NGO aims to advance gender equality, innovation, and entrepreneurship across all levels of its organizational structure, operations, and strategic activities. The organization is committed to establishing fair, transparent, and merit-based recruitment procedures that ensure gender-balanced shortlisting and selection processes, while also encouraging the participation of women and underrepresented groups in innovation- and entrepreneurship-related roles. Equal opportunities for



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professional development, training, and career progression are guaranteed through clear, inclusive, and non-discriminatory institutional policies, with specific attention to capacity-building in innovation management, entrepreneurial skills, and leadership. CREATE also strives to secure balanced gender representation in managerial, decision-making, and governance roles, particularly in units and initiatives related to innovation, startup development, and social entrepreneurship. Furthermore, CREATE is dedicated to fostering an inclusive, supportive, and safe working environment in which discrimination, harassment, and gender-based inequalities are systematically prevented, addressed, and sanctioned. The organization adopts zero-tolerance policies toward all forms of gender-based misconduct and reinforces a culture of respect, professional integrity, creativity, and well-being. CREATE integrates a gender perspective into its research agenda, innovation and entrepreneurship activities, and full project implementation cycle—covering design, methodology, data collection, impact assessment, and dissemination. Gender analysis, gender-responsive indicators, and inclusive stakeholder engagement constitute mandatory components of all projects and collaborations, ensuring that gender considerations are embedded both in internal practices and in external partnerships with national, regional, and European actors, including those focused on startup ecosystems, green entrepreneurship, and circular economy innovation. In alignment with EU recommendations on work–life balance, the organization promotes flexible and family-friendly practices that enhance staff autonomy, productivity, and participation. These measures support equal involvement of all employees in professional, entrepreneurial, and personal responsibilities, contributing to a more equitable, healthy, and sustainable working culture. Through these objectives, CREATE NGO strengthens its institutional capacity to operate as an EU-compliant, gender-responsive, innovation-driven, and entrepreneurship-oriented organization committed to long-term impact and inclusive development.

3. Governance and Implementation

The implementation of the Gender Equality Plan ensures full alignment with EU standards and provides a structured framework for integrating gender-sensitive practices across all CREATE operations. The CREATE Board oversees the strategic direction of the GEP, reviews annual progress, advises on necessary adjustments, and ensures organizational-wide commitment. To foster a strong institutional culture of awareness and inclusion, CREATE will deliver regular training and capacity-building sessions for staff, project partners, and stakeholders. These activities will include workshops on gender sensitivity, inclusive leadership, gender-responsive communication, and the prevention of gender-based discrimination and harassment. Progress will be monitored through annual GEP implementation reports, which will document achievements, assess challenges, and propose follow-up actions. These reports will serve as the basis for continuous improvement and long-term institutional learning. All new organizational policies, programs, and project initiatives will undergo a gender impact assessment prior to approval. This requirement ensures that gender considerations are systematically integrated and potential inequalities are identified and mitigated at an early stage.



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Work–Life Balance and Organizational Culture

CREATE NGO promotes a supportive, inclusive, and equitable working environment that enables employees to balance their professional duties with personal and family responsibilities. The organization encourages flexible working arrangements such as remote work, adapted working hours, and part-time options for staff with caregiving responsibilities or other personal needs. To strengthen an inclusive and respectful organizational culture, CREATE regularly organizes diversity-focused events, dialogue sessions, awareness campaigns, and internal communication initiatives that promote mutual respect, cultural understanding, and gender equality within the workplace.

Gender Balance in Leadership and Decision-Making

CREATE NGO is committed to achieving gender-balanced participation in leadership structures, recruitment panels, expert committees, and all decision-making bodies. The organization aims to maintain at least 40% representation of women and other underrepresented genders in key governance roles, in line with EU recommendations. Targeted measures including mentorship schemes, leadership training, and structured professional development programs will support the advancement of individuals from underrepresented groups. Clear targets and regular reporting will ensure transparency and continuous progress in achieving gender balance.

Strategies:

- Ensure balanced gender representation in leadership and decision-making bodies.
- Apply inclusive recruitment, promotion, and talent-development practices.
- Provide mentorship and professional-development programs for underrepresented groups.

Integrating Gender into Research and Innovation

CREATE NGO systematically integrates gender perspectives into research activities, innovation processes, project proposals, and methodological frameworks. The organization promotes gender-sensitive data collection, monitoring, and reporting, using disaggregated indicators and inclusive methodologies across all project cycles. Balanced representation in research teams will be pursued through minimum participation targets for underrepresented genders. Ethical guidelines will be implemented to prevent gender bias in research design, data interpretation, and dissemination. These measures strengthen the scientific quality, credibility, and societal impact of CREATE's research and innovation outputs.

Measures Against Gender-Based Discrimination

CREATE NGO maintains a strict zero-tolerance policy toward all forms of gender-based violence, discrimination, harassment, and sexist behavior. The organization applies clear procedures for handling complaints and provides confidential reporting mechanisms, including secure anonymous channels, to ensure that all individuals feel safe to report concerns. CREATE offers support services for affected individuals, which may include counselling, legal guidance, and referral to external support



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institutions. The organization's response mechanisms are designed to ensure confidentiality, procedural fairness, and timely resolution in all cases.

4. Accountability and Review

The Gender Equality Plan is formally approved by the CREATE NGO Board and is overseen by the General Secretary, who holds primary responsibility for its coordination and implementation. The General Secretary ensures that GEP objectives are operationalized across all organizational units and leads the monitoring process to assess progress and identify areas requiring further action. A yearly GEP Progress Report will be prepared and submitted to the Board and senior management. This report will summarize achievements, challenges, compliance gaps, and proposed corrective measures. Findings will be communicated to staff to ensure transparency, institutional learning, and continuous improvement. All staff members, regardless of role or seniority, are expected to contribute to the implementation of the GEP by adhering to gender equality policies, participating in training activities, and fostering an inclusive and respectful working environment. Responsibility for gender equality is shared across the organization, reflecting CREATE's commitment to mainstreaming equality as a core institutional value.

5. Conclusion

CREATE NGO views gender equality as both a core value and a strategic imperative. Through the implementation of this Gender Equality Plan, the organization strives to cultivate a fair, diverse, and inclusive workplace that enables every individual to thrive. By regularly reviewing and enhancing its policies and practices, CREATE ensures that gender equality remains central to its operations and long-term vision, strengthening a culture of respect, inclusiveness, and equal opportunity for all members and stakeholders.

Legal representative of CREATE NGO

Llambi PRENDI