GENDER EQUALITY PLAN



Institute for Human Rights

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INTRODUCTION

The Institute for Human Rights (IHR) has worked for over 15 years to promote equality, inclusion, and respect for human rights, including gender equality in the workplace and across society. This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) is built on our long-standing commitment to the full integration of the principle of gender equality into all aspects of our work, operations, and institutional culture — supported by a strong awareness and sensitivity to gender-related issues within their broader societal context.

This GEP outlines IHR's strategic objectives for the next three years, defining how we will strengthen gender equality both within the organization and through our external actions. It is conceived as a living document, to be regularly reviewed and updated in line with evolving needs, evidence, and priorities.

STATEMENT

Promoting gender equality and equal opportunities has been a core value of the Institute for Human Rights since its establishment, ensuring gender balance within the organization and across all activities. Gender equality is central to IHR's vision of a just and inclusive society and essential to the achievement of its mission.

We view equality as an integral part of daily work — fundamental to building a fair, democratic, and sustainable society. Currently, approximately 80% of our staff, 70% of management, and 40% of our Board of Directors are women.

To advance gender equality further, we must continue to challenge stereotypes, norms, and attitudes that hinder progress. We also recognize the importance of flexibility and innovation in the workplace, and of addressing barriers faced by individuals of diverse gender identities.

This Gender Equality Plan acknowledges that gender equality is about non-discrimination and the protection of fundamental human rights. IHR recognizes that gender is non-binary**,** encompassing a diversity of gender identities, including those within the LGBTI+ community, many of whom face systemic discrimination and violence.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Institute for Human Rights is a recognized actor in promoting gender equality, non-discrimination, and inclusive participation in North Macedonia. Through its programs, policy engagement, and advocacy, IHR works to ensure the full realization of fundamental human rights for all individuals and groups.

IHR values and actively promotes diversity among its staff and collaborators — across language, culture, gender, age, religion, region, sexual orientation, ability, and socio-economic background. The organization has achieved strong gender representation, with women in leadership positions and an inclusive culture that encourages equal participation and shared decision-making.

The Institute consistently applies a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach in all its programs and activities. Key areas of work include:

- Providing primary and secondary free legal aid to vulnerable groups, particularly marginalized communities and women;
- Promoting intersectionality in addressing discrimination, ensuring that women's experiences are understood within their broader social and cultural context;
- Conducting trainings and awareness programs on gender-based violence, bullying, and cyberbullying in schools; and
- Implementing initiatives against discrimination and hate speech, particularly focusing on the rights of Roma girls and other marginalized groups.

IHR is committed to further advancing a gender-equal organizational culture, fostering an environment in which employees of all genders feel valued, respected, and supported.

Moreover, while IHR supports measurable targets and quotas where relevant, it equally emphasizes the importance of cultural and behavioral change. Quantitative targets must be accompanied by efforts to transform attitudes and practices. Accordingly, this GEP will be followed by a detailed Implementation Plan defining measurable actions, responsibilities, and timelines.

This GEP proposes specific interventions for areas requiring practical and strategic attention, aiming to empower gender-diverse individuals and contribute to a more equitable and inclusive society.

OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this Gender Equality Plan is to serve as a framework and tool for advancing gender equality within the Institute for Human Rights and in its external work.

IHR aims to:

- Fully integrate gender equality principles into all internal policies, operations, and services taking into consideration the intersectionality principle;
- Ensure that all external activities — including research, advocacy, and legal aid — are gender-responsive and inclusive;
- Promote recognition of diverse gender identities and expressions; and
- Take proactive measures to eliminate barriers and create equal opportunities for all, both within the organization and in society.

Through this Plan, IHR reaffirms its commitment to gender justice as a cornerstone of human rights and social transformation.

OUR KEY FOCUS AREAS

The Gender Equality Plan identifies four areas for focused attention that will enable strategic and sustainable change at the Institute for Human Rights. The Plan will guide us to accelerate the Institute's journey toward gender equality and inclusion, improving both institutional performance and social impact.

Our approach is grounded in intersectionality — acknowledging that gender equality cannot be achieved without considering the interconnected nature of social identities such as age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, and socio-economic background.

I. Organizational Culture and Work–Life Balance

Promotion and support of an organizational culture that is inclusive, fair, and responsive to diverse needs. The Institute will foster a flexible working environment that enables all staff to balance professional and personal responsibilities.

Strategies

- Promote the Institute's image as an inclusive and diverse organization committed to equality and intersectionality.
- Integrate gender and inclusion considerations into strategic and operational planning across all departments.
- Conduct regular reviews of work-life balance measures and flexible work policies.
- Assess and support the needs of staff returning from parental or family-related leave.
- Ensure all staff are aware of institutional policies on equality, inclusion, and anti-harassment.

Measures of Success

- Gender equality and inclusion objectives integrated in institutional planning and strategy.
- Public communication and statements affirming commitment to equality and inclusion.
- Implementation of family-friendly policies and flexible work arrangements.

II. Balanced Gender Representation in Management, Career Progression, and Activity Planning

Ensuring equal access and participation of gender-diverse individuals in decision-making structures and providing equal opportunities for professional growth. The Institute promotes gender-sensitive and inclusive approaches in all aspects of work design and implementation.

Strategies

- Keep the balanced gender representation and diversity in senior positions, boards, and leadership roles.
- Review workforce planning to include gender equality and intersectional inclusion objectives.

- Promote and support projects that explicitly address gender and intersectionality.
- Guarantee equal opportunities for professional development and progression.
- Ensure balanced gender representation at all events and activities organized by the Institute.

Measures of Success

- Balanced gender representation in project teams, research activities, and leadership structures.
- Mentorship and professional development programs that support employees' return from parental or family-related leave.
- Inclusion of gender and intersectionality awareness in all job descriptions.
- Project and activity recommendations include gender balance and inclusion measures.
- Active communication of progress and success stories through social media and other channels to foster a culture of equality.

III. Integrating Gender and Intersectionality in Research and Education

Promoting the integration of gender, diversity, and intersectional perspectives in research, education, and training content to strengthen knowledge and improve societal impact.

Strategies

- Promote inclusion of sex, gender, and intersectional dimensions in research design and content.
- Encourage diversity and inclusion in research management and authorship.
- Integrate gender and intersectionality into educational and training curricula.

Measures of Success

- Disaggregation of research data by sex, gender, and other relevant characteristics.
- Inclusive language and imagery in research materials and publications.
- Regular training courses on gender equality and intersectionality in teaching and project design.

IV. Combating Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment

Preserving and promoting the physical and emotional well-being of all employees through prevention, education, and zero-tolerance for harassment or discrimination.

Strategies

- Educate staff on recognizing and addressing sexual and gender-based harassment, bias, and stereotypes.
- Promote collective responsibility for fostering a safe and respectful workplace.
- Encourage open dialogue and peer accountability for maintaining inclusive work culture.

Measures of Success

- Training (on gender equality, intersectionality, unconscious bias, and prevention of sexual and gender-based harassment on all staff.
- Clear and confidential reporting mechanisms that allow staff to raise concerns safely and ensure timely institutional response.

President of the Institute for Human Rights

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