

ANNEX 1

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BY DIRECTIVE

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GENDER EQUALITY PLAN 2022–2030

The Gender Equality¹ Plan of the Pärnu County Development Centre (SAPA) aims to ensure equal opportunities for all female and male employees and target groups. We apply gender equality throughout all our activities without compromise in competence and quality. We aim to ensure the best work results regardless of employees' gender (as well as sexual orientation, nationality, age and other personal characteristics).

The SAPA Gender Equality Plan has been prepared to follow the European Commission's call for organisations engaged in research and development to implement institutional changes through gender equality plans. The aim of such plans is to carry out an impact assessment of activities and practices to identify gender bias; to implement strategies to correct such bias; to set objectives and monitor progress using indicators (European Commission. Communication on 'A Reinforced European Research Area Partnership for Excellence and Growth', COM (2012) 392.).

Promoting gender equality concerns all SAPA activities. The plan is based on annual discussions between management and employees and on personnel data analysis.

– As of 01.01.2022, SAPA had 12 employees, of whom 2 (17%) were men and 10 (83%) were women.

Based on the activities and possibilities of the Pärnu County Development Centre to improve gender equality, particularly in the field of research and development, we set three main objectives for the period 2022–2030:

1. adherence to the principles of equal treatment in organisational processes;
2. increasing gender balance in working groups;
3. gender awareness in communication activities.

¹ Gender equality does not mean that women and men become the same, but that the rights, obligations and opportunities of women and men do not depend on whether they are born female or male. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into account and thus diversity is recognised. Equality between women and men is a human rights issue and a prerequisite and indicator of sustainable, people-centred development (EIGE, <https://eige.europa.eu/et/taxonomy/term/1168>).

The plan has been approved by a directive of the Director of SAPA and its implementation is reviewed annually by the management.

The plan is published on SAPA's website <https://arenduskeskus.eu/en/>

1. Adherence to the principles of equal treatment in organisational processes

SAPA supports equal treatment for all, avoiding any form of gender-based discrimination in its activities (including indirect discrimination, where apparently neutral rules provide an advantage to some employees or clients compared to others). For fair and considerate decision-making, gender awareness is very important, including awareness of possible problem areas related to unconscious bias. Greater awareness helps to avoid discrimination and ensures fairer decisions. To ensure equal treatment:

- When recruiting employees and experts, we consciously pay attention to gender. In both internal and external recruitment, we allow all candidates to apply equally regardless of gender, age, nationality, political or other preferences. In the selection process, objective criteria defined in the job advertisement are decisive – required education, experience, skills, etc., according to the requirements of the position. In the case of equally qualified candidates, we prefer a candidate from the underrepresented gender.
- When determining salaries, we exclude decisions based on gender (preventing the gender pay gap). We rely on objective criteria such as job requirements, remuneration for similar work within the organisation and in the labour market, the employee's personal contribution to the development of the field or organisation, etc.
- Each employee has the opportunity, on equal grounds, to pursue both horizontal and vertical career within the organisation if they have or develop the necessary knowledge, skills, experience and if a relevant vacancy exists.
- We support the employee's role and participation in family life and society. By enabling parental leave, childcare leave and paternity leave according to the law, we provide additional health and family days, promote flexibility in the choice of working method, time and place according to the nature of the work, and allow participation in national defence training.
- We raise employees' awareness of equal treatment. We participate in training and integrate the gender aspect into training organised by us where relevant.
- In decision-making and inclusion, we follow the principles of equal treatment. Each employee has the opportunity to contribute to shaping their field of work, organisational processes and culture and the opportunities offered to employees. Information about these

opportunities is shared through internal channels, discussed at regular meetings at different levels and in individual annual discussions, and there is always the possibility to submit proposals directly to the management.

- We collect feedback on the implementation of equal treatment principles in daily work and decision-making processes.

- To prevent sexual and gender-based harassment in the workplace, we are ready to change work culture, establish rules, inform employees and take appropriate actions.

2. Increasing gender balance in working groups

SAPA aims to achieve as high gender balance as possible among members of various (including external) working groups, advisory bodies and committees related to research and development, without compromising the competence of experts. We consider good gender balance in working groups to be at least 40% representation of the underrepresented gender. To achieve greater gender balance in working groups:

- When selecting experts, we consciously pay attention to gender. In the case of equally qualified candidates, we prefer a candidate from the underrepresented gender.

- If a working group (council, committee, etc.) is formed based on candidates from other organisations, we ask the nominating organisations, where possible, to nominate candidates taking into account gender balance and, if necessary, draw attention to significant gender imbalance.

3. Gender awareness in communication activities

In the communication activities of the Pärnu County Development Centre, we also consider the promotion of gender equality. We act in a gender-aware manner in all our communication channels, including:

- We present information in a gender-neutral and inclusive way. We monitor language use and avoid reproducing stereotypes.

- We consider the representation of women and men in illustrative materials. In preparing press releases, news, personal stories and other materials, we follow gender diversity. Where possible, we present data by gender.

- When organising public events, we aim to ensure gender balance among speakers where possible.