

2022-2027

GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

Union of Bulgarian Black Sea Local Authorities (UBBSLA)



INTRODUCTION

Our strategy on gender equality originates from our actions and works over more than 30 years on equality in the workplace and revolves around our objective:



“to promote workplace flexibility and the personal work-life balance in all ways possible, having the creation of a better world at the core of its mission”.

This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) spells out the Association’s plan to achieve this goal, its scope and the strategic objectives we want to achieve over the next five years. It is intended to be a living document that will be updated regularly to accommodate new actions and developments. Based on this our Association can work toward creating a more equitable and inclusive society where all individuals have equal opportunities and rights, regardless of their gender.

STATEMENT

“UBBSLA believes that a diverse work environment, providing all employees with equal opportunities, is essential in order to bring our vision to reality - to support the interests of all member municipalities and encouraging strong and effective local self-government and active citizen participation in the Black Sea Region.

Furthermore, UBBSLA envisions addressing some of the most important societal challenges of our time, gender inequality being one of them. Sustainability is one of the fundamental values of the Association. Our organization is convinced that a sustainable future where all genders have the same rights and opportunities will be reached only through utilization of a wide range of skills, experience and attitudes provided by a truly inclusive environment. This goes hand in hand with UBBSLA two other core values - collaboration and openness. UBBSLA

is only be built and operated in the most efficient way if we work together in an open manner and make use of the knowledge provided through our diversity. This will pave the way for creativity, trust and an open dialogue that will help UBBSLA reach scientific, technical and operational excellence.

In order for UBBSLA to reach its ambitions for gender equality we are proud to present this GEP as a conscious effort to avoid discrimination and improve equal opportunities. UBBSLA is committed to making a difference that can change the world into one that will be of great benefit to future generations.

For this GEP to truly make a difference it is crucial that it is embraced on all levels of our organization. We therefore encourage us all to work together to reach this important goal of equality”

Date of approval: 30th of September, 2022

Signature:



Strategic context

Our Commitment

Gender equality is at the heart of our Association, not only because of its managers, but also due to UBBSLA main goals: they aim for equality and fairness, fundamental human rights.

The CEO of UBBSLA is a clear representation of women's leadership, fully balanced with the male Managing Board.

UBBSLA promotes workplace flexibility and the personal work-life balance in all ways possible, having the creation of a better world at the core of its mission.

Our Focus & Vision

Workforce Participation	Policy, Programs and Services	Communication and Engagement
Be a gender-friendly company, promoter of happier workers, family balance and inclusiveness of the less favored	Foster a more inclusive, balanced society, aiming for Societal good.	Keep in mind that all we do can promote a better world and remind everyone of their Individual power.

Our Priorities

Workforce Participation

Promote work-life balance and a gender equality organizational culture.

Policy, Programs and Services

Enabling policies, laws, and regulatory frameworks that promote gender balance.

Communication and Engagement

Ensure integration of the gender dimension into research and training contents developed by the company.

OBJECTIVE

The primary objective of this GEP is to serve as a tool and framework for enhancing gender equality in the workplace and to enable the integration of gender into organisational practices.

In parallel, this GEP also aims to contribute to the achievement of gender equality in the development of the social economy through research, project design, and programmes that pay due attention to gender differences in labour market participation, and actively promote equality between gender diverse individuals.

- UBBSLA aims to proactively hold itself up as an example to promote organisational changes in other social economy enterprises, federations and support networks. The Association is a union of 21 Black Sea municipalities supporting the social and solidarity economy on national and EU level. UBBSLA takes a leading role in recognizing and valuing the diversity of its member municipalities staff based on language, cultural background, gender, age, religion, geographical region, sexual orientation, functional disability and socio-economic situation.
- This role is positively associated with the organizational situation given the age diversity of employees ranging from 30 to 60 years, variety of cultural backgrounds present, and three-quarters of its workers being women. The organisation's performance in relation to gender equality, in particular, significant achievement with women being well represented in senior leadership, in management and in certain project areas.
- This may be explained by the fact that the cooperative model offers a favourable environment for all workers, in particular women, enabling them to work and be very present at work, but also by the fact that social economy and social entrepreneurship are often promoted as models for tackling inequality and promoting social inclusion and cohesion.

Scope

This Plan applies to all work throughout the Organization. An **Equality Officer** has been appointed to oversee the implementation of the gender equality plan.

The equality officer will monitor and report on the progress of implementation to the executive team and

will provide an annual report to all UBBSLA staff. The equality officer will also set up mechanisms for building capacity among the staff, information, training, and technical support needed to assure the plan's implementation.

Effective implementation of the plan will require commitment from all staff and organizational support for activities to advance the knowledge and skills of staff to enable efficient gender mainstreaming in their areas of work.

Accountability and Responsibility

- 1. Ratification:** The GEP is ratified at the executive level (Chairperson and CEO) and the equality officer is responsible for ensuring that it is communicated to all staff members
- 2. Communication:** The equality officer has the further responsibility to ensure that employees are aware of the gender equality plan and to initiate corrective action when discrimination is observed or reported.
- 3. Monitoring:** All the while they are on duty, the equality officer has the responsibility to monitor the situation and keep the plan regularly updated to accommodate new actions and developments
- 4. Data collection:** The equality officer is expected to collect data disaggregated by sex and other relevant variables, and to review and reflect on the gender aspects of the respective areas of work. Such action will help ensure the integration of gender considerations in all of UBBSLA projects in different fields.

OUR KEY FOCUS AREAS

01 — Organisational culture and easier combination of work-life balance

02 — More balanced gender representation in management, recruitment, career progression and events

03 — Integrating gender in research and education content

04 — Combating sexual and gender-based harassment

- The equality plan identifies four areas for focused attention that will enable strategic and sustainable change at UBBSLA.
- The plan will help us, over the next 5 years, to navigate and accelerate the gender equality journey that UBBSLA must take in order to improve its performance.
- In order to achieve its strategic objectives, UBBSLA needs to work in several areas that serve as building blocks for the strategy.
- UBBSLA should refer to EIGE's GEAR Action toolbox for each of the defined interventions on gender equality while taking its specific organisational context and features into account.

01 — ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND EASIER COMBINATION OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Promotion and support of an organisational culture and working environment that is inclusive and fair to all genders, facilitating a flexible workplace which enables staff to balance work and life responsibilities

Strategies

- The equality officer will oversee, monitor and promote the implementation of the gender equality strategy and action plan
- Promote the organisation's image and reputation as an inclusive organisation that supports and values diversity
- Integrate gender inclusion into planning and strategy across the organisation
- Undertake a regular review of flexible work and other relevant policies
- Diagnosis of the needs of persons coming back to work after parental leave, with respect to support from the organisation
- Ensure all staff are aware of the gender equality and related equality policies

Measures of Success

- Incorporate gender equality objectives in UBBSLA planning and strategy
- External communication and statements of support for gender equality
- Annual surveys of all staff (including external consultants, experts, volunteers, etc.) with a satisfaction score of a minimum of 80% on gender experiences in the workplace: harassment, discrimination, workplace culture and management styles, the results of which are shared with the executive committee
- Carry out consultations and surveys, and publish the results as part of the activities related to the next gender equality plan for UBBSLA
- Create family-friendly policies. Provide options and implement flexible working hours and methods

02 — MORE BALANCED GENDER REPRESENTATION IN MANAGEMENT, RECRUITMENT, CAREER PROGRESSION AND EVENTS

Equal access to and balanced participation of gender diverse individuals in decision making structures (formal and informal) and ensuring equal chances to develop and advance their careers.

Strategies

- Representation of gender diverse individuals in senior positions and in leadership domains
- Review the workforce planning process to ensure gender equality objectives are included
- Promote key stakeholders', UBBSLA members' and decision-makers' engagement with gender equality
- Promote gender inclusive and biasfree recruitment, career progression, and evaluation policy
- Balanced gender representation at events arranged at and by UBBSLA

Measures of Success

- Representation of gender diverse individuals on projects and research activities implemented by UBBSLA
- Having a human resources policy to promote equal career opportunities for all genders
- Training and mentorship programmes that help employees to accommodate work demands on their return from parental, maternity, or family-related leave
- Include gender awareness in all job specifications
- Formulate recommendations with respect to increasing balanced gender representation at events
- Use social media and a range of other media outlets to create a positive image of successful practices and/or key stakeholders in the social economy

03 — INTEGRATING GENDER IN RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CONTENT

Integrating a gender dimension in ongoing research and education content, and applying it while conceiving new project proposals, initiatives and trainings.

Strategies

- Promote the inclusion of the sex and gender dimension in research content
- Promote diversity in research management
- Promoting the integration of a sex and gender perspective in training, education/ teaching curricula

Measures of Success

- Disaggregating research data (articles, reports etc.) by sex and/or gender where relevant
- Considering all genders for language and images in research material and project intellectual products
- Requiring all applicants for funding to consider sex and gender in their research and application design where relevant
- Providing staff with guides and workshops on the integration of equality and diversity in training programme design, and learning activities as a teaching and learning support
- Providing staff with specific training courses and materials on gender equality
- Communications about training must not be gender-specific “unless the training is specifically designed for a specific gender”

04 — COMBATING SEXUAL AND GENDERBASED HARASSMENT

Preserving and promoting the physical and emotional health, safety and well-being of employees

Strategies

- Educating staff about different forms of bias and strategies to combat sexual and gender-based harassment
- Working collectively to combat bias and stereotypes

Measures of Success

- Providing staff and decision-makers with specific training courses and materials on combating sexual and gender-based violence, gender equality and unconscious gender biases, i.e. 4 hrs of training per UBBSLA staff member per year
- Measuring performance by how well staff address these issues
- Create reporting mechanisms that allow staff to raise concerns, document, and act on gender balance issues they identify

Organization name: Union of Bulgarian Black Sea Local Authorities (UBBSLA)

Chief Executive Officer: Mariana Kancheva

Equality Officer: Polina Antonova

Number of staff: 10
(Employees and in-house consultants)

Authorized by: Mariana Kancheva

Date: September' 2022

Stamp and signature

