



**European Startup  
Network ivzw**

# **GENDER EQUALITY PLAN**



**Version 2022**

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# INTRODUCTION

Gender equality generally refers to “the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men”<sup>1</sup>. This concept admits that each person’s needs, rights, and interests should be noticed and considered both in their professional and private life regardless of their gender.

For ESN, gender equality is of great importance, as it ensures the equality of rights, freedoms, opportunities and recognition between genders. It is also enabling the enhancement of skills and knowledge through the inclusion of all, promoting a better and more motivating work environment and, consequently, greater levels of productivity and retention of talent.

It is necessary to consider the fact that ESN is a small-sized organization with a limited number of employees. Given this context, some gender equality practices have to be adapted to this situation. However, it has always been a key principle for the company to create a safe and inclusive environment for people of all genders, where all employees have equal opportunities and a motivating working environment.

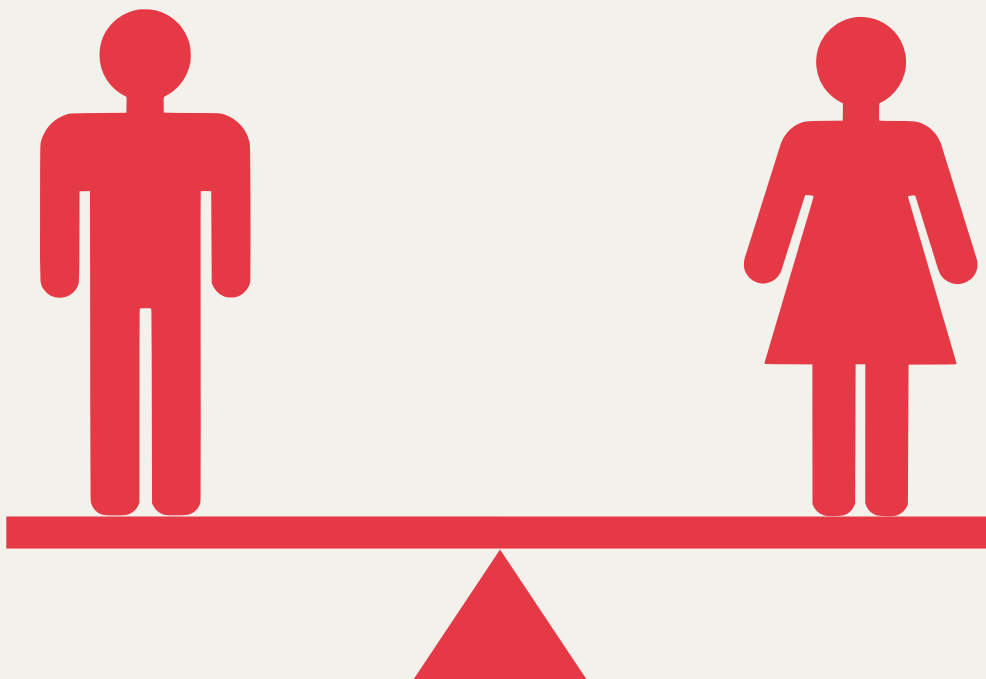
<sup>1</sup> UN – Concepts and Definitions.

<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm> (Access date: 26.08.22)

# INTRODUCTION

ESN strives for gender equality, diversity, and inclusion, as well as avoids any kind of discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. On that account, we strongly believe all employees must be given the same opportunities to develop both personally and professionally.

Therefore, ESN and its Board of Directors recognize the importance of a gender policy, endorse this Gender Equality Plan and subscribe to the objectives, targets and measures further elaborated in this report.



# ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS

This chapter reports on different aspects related to gender equality in the European Startup Network. Data presented is referred to August 2022.

## Gender distribution and contractual relations among administrative employees

As of August 2022, there are four full-time employees working at ESN, among which 50% are women, and 50% are men. Half of the employees have a permanent contract and the other half have a freelance contract.

*Table 1: Gender distribution and contractual relations among administrative employees.*

Type of contract (excluding interns)	Men (%)*	Women (%)*
Permanent ("onbepaalde duur")	50%	50%
Freelance	50%	50%

\* Percentages are referred to the respected number of women and men at ESN.

## Gender distribution in decision-making positions

The Board of Directors counts only one woman within its seven members.

*Table 2: Gender distribution in decision-making positions.*

Decision-making Team	Men (%)*	Women (%)*
Board of Directors	86%	14%

\* Percentages are referred to the respected number of women and men at ESN's Board of Directors.

## Numbers of female and male candidates applying for an internship

Between December 2021–May 2022, 68% of the candidates who applied for an internship were women.

*Table 3: Numbers of female and male candidates applying for an internship*

Position	Men (%)*	Women (%)*
Intern	32%	68%

\* Percentages are referred to the respected number of women and men at ESN's Board of Directors.

## Salary

All employees with the same qualification receive equal pay for equal working time and work. European Startup Network is committed to avoid a gender pay gap.

## Parentthood

Maternity and paternity leaves are guaranteed according to Belgian law. After the completion of parental leave, employees are provided with the same responsibilities and working time as before the leave. Working time is flexible in order to enable reconciliation of work and family life. Additionally, ESN always aims to approve of requests for extra time off (“Ouderschapsverlof”), where possible.

## Conclusion about the current situation

No specific gender biases could be detected from the previous analysis of the existing state of affairs. However, it should be noted that the number of men in the board of directors is currently higher than women (86% vs. 14%) and that a larger share of women applies for an internship at ESN.

<sup>2</sup> Belgium - Maternity and paternity. <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1102&langId=en&intPagId=4415#:~:text=the%20maternity%20leave.,Paternity%20or%20birth%20leave,at%20once%20or%20spread%20them.> (Access date: 29.08.2022)

## Conclusion about the current situation

European Startup Network values the competence of employees, provided that women and men have the same opportunities to achieve the same competences through their study and professional life.

As unfortunately a number of biases that prevent all people to have the same opportunities regardless of the gender are still present in our society, ESN commits to a number of targets to strengthen and maintain the already positive aspects, improve the weak ones in the company, and contribute to gender equality in society development in general.

## Four key areas can be identified to propose targets and actions for ESN:

- 01** Work-life balance and organizational culture
- 02** Gender-balance in leadership and decision-making
- 03** Gender equality in recruitment and career progression
- 04** Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment.



# WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

According to the above data, there are no critical problems with respect to the work-life balance and organizational culture within ESN.

All employees have access to remote working opportunities, comfortable parenthood while working, as well as employees regardless of their gender receive equal pay for equal working time and work. Nevertheless, ESN endeavors to strengthen and maintain the already implemented measures.

For that, the following objectives and targets were arranged.

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY	TARGET	INDICATOR	CURRENT STATUS	RESPONSIBLE
<p><b>Ensuring flexible working arrangements</b></p>	<p>Introducing home office opportunities and flexible working hours for men and women administrative employees.</p> <p>Introduction of an individual work schedule, task-based working time, and other flexible forms that facilitate combining work and family life.</p>	<p>100% of employees have flexible hours and home office opportunities.</p>	<p>Percentage of employees who have flexible hours and home office opportunities.</p>	<p>By 31 December 2022.</p>	<p>CEO</p>

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY	TARGET	INDICATOR	CURRENT STATUS	RESPONSIBLE
<p><b>Supporting employees with children</b></p>	<p>Providing employees with flexible hours to fully care for their children during school holidays as long as it does not affect their performance at work.</p>	<p>100% of ESN employees have flexible working arrangements to support their children.</p>	<p>Percentage of employees with children who have flexible working arrangements.</p>	<p>By 31 December 2022.</p>	<p>CEO</p>

# GENDER BALANCE IN LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING

It was observed that there is a gender imbalance at the strategic level, as there is only one female member of the Board of Directors. With the purpose of encouraging more women to reach a managerial position, the following measures will be implemented.

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY	TARGET	INDICATOR	CURRENT STATUS	RESPONSIBLE
<p><b>Decrease the gender inequality at the strategic level</b></p>	<p>Increasing the number of women in the Board of Directors by personally proactively contacting female members of the organization.</p>	<p>50% women in the Board of Directors.</p>	<p>Percentage of women in the Board of Directors.</p>	<p>By 31 December 2023.</p>	<p>President of the Board of Directors</p>

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY	TARGET	INDICATOR	CURRENT STATUS	RESPONSIBLE
<p><b>Providing support to employees who are disproportionately burdened to achieve leadership and decision-making goals</b></p>	<p>Taking into account the family situation of staff members, with regard to working hours, meetings or appointments during school holidays.</p>	<p>No management team meetings outside fixed working hours (as described in the agreement framework for hybrid work).</p>	<p>Amount of management team meetings outside fixed working hours (as described in the agreement framework for hybrid work).</p>	<p>By 31 December 2022.</p>	<p>CEO</p>

# GENDER EQUALITY IN RECRUITEMENT AND CAREER PROGRESSION

Taking into account the monitored data, it was highlighted that ESN has a good balance of female and male employees. However, most of the candidates applying for an internship are female.

Given how important it is to ensure that both women and men get equal chances to develop and advance in their career, the following objectives and procedures were identified.

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY	TARGET	INDICATOR	CURRENT STATUS	RESPONSIBLE
<p><b>Encourage more men to apply for the internship at ESN</b></p>	<p>Using gender neutral language and communication in external vacancies.</p>	<p>50% of applicants are male, and 50% are female.</p>	<p>Percentage of male and female CVs.</p>	<p>By 31 December 2022.</p>	<p>CEO</p>
	<p>Using good practices, soft instruments (incentives) in the case of the underrepresented sex:</p>				



OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY	TARGET	INDICATOR	CURRENT STATUS	RESPONSIBLE
<p><b>Encourage more men to apply for the internship at ESN</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotional campaigns, appropriate language, visualization promoting women starting careers in masculinised areas and men – in feminized areas.</li> <li>• Active search for women candidates for positions in masculinised areas and men</li> </ul>	<p>50% of applicants are male, and 50% are female.</p>	<p>Percentage of male and female CVs.</p>	<p>By 31 December 2022.</p>	<p>CEO</p>

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY	TARGET	INDICATOR	CURRENT STATUS	RESPONSIBLE
<p><b>Encourage more men to apply for the internship at ESN</b></p>	<p>candidates in feminized areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing information on the contest to the widest possible group of potential men and women candidates, accounting for gender.</li> </ul>	<p>50% of applicants are male, and 50% are female.</p>	<p>Percentage of male and female CVs.</p>	<p>By 31 December 2022.</p>	<p>CEO</p>

# MEASURES AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE INCLUDING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Based on the monitored data, it has been noticed that there are no major concerns regarding gender-related violence in the workplace.

However, ESN strives to strengthen and maintain the already implemented measures. In order to do that, the following objectives and targets were set.

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY	TARGET	INDICATOR	CURRENT STATUS	RESPONSIBLE
<p><b>Raising awareness about the importance of gender equality issues through continuous training activities</b></p>	<p>Providing all employees with training on mitigating unconscious biases.</p>	<p>100% of employees attend the training.</p>	<p>The number of people participating in the training.</p>	<p>By 31 December 2023.</p>	<p>CEO</p>

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY	TARGET	INDICATOR	CURRENT STATUS	RESPONSIBLE
<p><b>Adopting neutral language for work communication and ensuring sexist and discriminatory language are not being used at the workplace</b></p>	<p>Issuing a policy on using neutral language at work: avoiding words related to gender, sexual orientation, and other distinguishing qualities.</p>	<p>100% of work communication is done using a neutral language.</p>	<p>All work communication is done using a neutral language.</p>	<p>By 31 December 2022.</p>	<p>CEO</p>

OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITY	TARGET	INDICATOR	CURRENT STATUS	RESPONSIBLE
<b>Increase safety and security among staff</b>	Highlighting the articles in the employment regulations regarding threats, violence, unwanted sexual behavior at work or bullying.	No incidents.	Number of incidents.	By 31 December 2023.	CEO

# CONCLUSION

At the European Startup Network, we aspire to strengthen the importance of promoting a diversified work conditions and culture—we believe that a more inclusive environment fuels creativity, innovation and excellent results.

Current Gender Equality Plan and data that it is based on will be updated annually. Monitoring actions will be implemented to ensure that the foreseen targets are achieved in the short and long term.

There will be people appointed to collect employee complaints related to any discrimination and gender inequality, as well as there will be employees responsible to monitor the actions planned to achieve the targets. If one of the appointed people leaves ESN, another employee will be selected to take over this responsibility.

The objectives, targets and actions set in this document are available to all European Startup Network's employees and freelancers for commenting and making suggestions. New targets and actions can be discussed during meetings and any employee can contribute to an update of the GEP.

**Organisation name** European Startup Network ivzw

**Number of employees** 4

**Date** September 2022

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