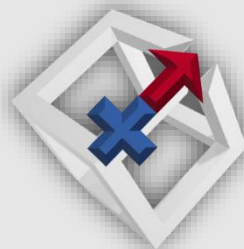



# GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

## 2021-2023



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# **ATHENA RESEARCH AND INNOVATION CENTRE GENDER EQUALITY (GE) PLAN**

## **1. Introduction**

This action plan sets out ATHENA RC's priorities for addressing gender equality, identifies activities and monitoring plans. Equality of opportunity is core to our organisational mission and gender balance is a critical component to ensure fair access and equity for our research, managerial, technical, administrative and support staff. ATHENA RC following international, community and internal standards, commits to the promotion of equality of opportunities between women and men in its principles and priorities.

## **2. Regulatory framework**

This GE Plan legitimates and protects every strategy aiming to achieve gender equality at ATHENA RC. The GE Plan is devised according to national and European laws and aligns with national initiatives and actions focusing on equality of women and men, rights, discrimination banning, equality treatment, harassment in workplace, social responsibility of organisations etc. Specific articles, policies and directives can be found below.

### **2.1. Greek Law**

Over the past few years, Greek policy documents related to research, innovation, technology, and higher education, including the latest National Strategy for the European Research Area (2016-2020), have incorporated EU principles on gender equality instructing public research bodies "to establish Gender Equality Plans and to include relevant provisions in their internal regulations and strategic plans".

Law 4386/2016 entitled, "Regulations on research and other provisions" recognises that research institutes need to achieve greater gender balance in the composition of scientific councils, committees and advisory bodies indicating that at least one third of the members to be from one sex, "as long as the candidates have the necessary qualifications as required by each position" (Art. 25).

In addition, the Greek Constitution guarantees equality between the sexes (Art. 2, §4) and the right to equal pay for work of equal value regardless of gender or other differences (Art. 22, §1). At the same time, Greece's constitution recognizes substantive equality between the sexes. In the constitutional revision process in 2001, is foreseen that "positive measures for promoting equality between men and women do not constitute discrimination on grounds of sex" and that "the state shall take measures to eliminate inequalities to the detriment of women that exist in practice" (Art. 116(2)). This amendment paved the way for positive measures in different domains, such as for example, the adoption of gender quotas for local, national and

European Parliament elections, and the aforementioned gender provision for advisory bodies and scientific councils. As a result, a number of new laws and provisions were devised for research and private organisations. Law 4604/2019 on “Promoting substantive equality between the sexes and combatting gender-based violence” encourages and research content universities and research organizations to integrate gender in their study programs (Art. 17) on “Promoting substantive equality between the sexes and combatting gender-based violence”, Government Gazette, No. 50/1, March 2019). Private and commercial enterprises are also encouraged to adopt equal opportunity policies, also through the development of GE Plans. For those companies, an official distinction namely the “Equality Badge” (Sima Isotitas) is foreseen (Art. 21). At the same time, Law 4589/19, Art. 33 on the restructuring of universities, includes a provision on the establishment of Committees for Gender Equality (CGE) in all Greek universities that will act as consultative bodies to assist the university administration to promote gender equality.

## **2.2. European Law**

Equality between women and men and non-discrimination are common values on which the EU is founded and are firmly embedded in the Treaties of the European Union, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and secondary legislation. In the development of the GE Plan ATHENA RC considers the a) “Recast” Directive (2006/54/EC) on equal opportunities and equal treatment of women and men in employment and occupation which requires the implementation of the prohibition of direct and indirect sex discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment in pay and access to employment b) the Directive 2010/41/EU on the prohibition of direct and indirect (sex) discrimination to self-employment, c) the discrimination prohibition Directive on Pregnancy (92/85/EEC), d) the Parental Leave Directive (2010/18/EU) and e) the Part-time Work Directive (97/81/EC). ATHENA RC considers also the e) Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC) that prohibits discrimination on the ground of racial or ethnic origin in employment, the f) Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC), covering the grounds of religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation.

## **2.3. Initiatives**

ATHENA RC is a founding member of the Greek Innovation Lab for Women (The Innovation Centre for Women) #GIL4W, and a key contributor in Women in AI Labs (the research initiative of Women in AI) #WAI and the Greek chapter of ACM Women in Computing. It is a member of Eurogender and IEEE Women in Engineering. ATHENA RC participates also in the COST Networking action VOICES ‘Making Early Career Investigators’ Voices Heard for Gender Equality (CA20137) in the Management committee.

### 3. The Digital Gender Divide

The above regulatory framework serves the pressing national and European need for a digital future that will be based on the equal involvement of both men and women. Women's participation is crucial for the development of a sustainable, fair and equitable digital economy and society. Unfortunately, in the European digital economy women are underrepresented and as statistics reveal, only 1 in 6 ICT specialists is a woman, while only 1 in 5 becomes an ICT entrepreneur. Overall, the increasing demand of Europe in men and women digital experts is over 1 million with more than 53% of European companies reporting difficulties in finding such experts.

In Greece the Ministry of Digital Governance has designed the Digital Transformation Strategy for 2020-2025 as an attempt to address such inequalities. The Strategy was devised in close cooperation with stakeholders from the public and private sector, the academic community and civil society, sets priorities for the digital transformation of the country, and goals for the development of the digital skills of the Greek society regardless gender, at all levels and ages. ATHENA RC's vision is in line with the objectives of this strategy and aims through its research and training activities to contribute to national and European needs in ICT reskilling and upskilling.

As ATHENA RC is the only research and technology organisation in the country dedicated solely to digital technologies, its mandate is to provide an enabling environment to both male and female researchers to excel in cutting edge research fields such as Data Science, AI, IoT, Robotics, Interaction Technologies, Cyber-physical systems. Capacities and services offered within its premises, allow researchers to innovate and commercialise their research for addressing societal and industrial challenges, meeting the demands and policies set at national and European levels. Through this Plan, ATHENA RC establishes concrete gender-oriented measures and interventions that contribute to the reduction of the Digital Gender Divide observed by empowering female researchers and providing them with the necessary resources to advance their careers.

#### ATHENA RC:

- Offers a welcoming work environment providing pay equity, flexibility, parental policies, and inclusion.
- Provides women with career advancement pipelines, continued professional development and leadership training.
- Makes women more active in decision making by including them into boards and processes thus changing power dynamics.
- Develops schemes for mentorship for female researchers and female students wishing to undertake courses (MSc, PhD) in ATHENA RC premises.
- Assists researchers affected by career breaks and leaves in regaining research momentum as quickly as possible on return.
- Protects them through anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies.

ATHENA RC recognises that its community may include people who do not identify with the binary construct of being either male or female, and who may be gender diverse, including those who affirm their gender as being different to the sex assigned at birth; who were born intersex or whose sex is indeterminate; or who identify as transgender or no gender.

## 4. Operational regime

The GE Plan applies to all Institutes and Units of ATHENA RC, namely the:

- Institute for Language and Speech Processing (ILSP)
- Industrial Systems Institute (ISI)
- Institute for the Management of Information Systems (IMIS)
- Technology Clusters Initiative Unit (Corallia)
- Space Programmes Unit (SPU)
- Robot Perception and Interaction Unit (RPI)
- Pharma-Informatics (PHARMAINF)
- Environmental and Networking Technologies and Applications Unit (ENTA)
- Sustainable Development Unit (SDU)

The Plan is monitored by the Gender Equality Board (GEB) with support by a) the Board of Directors b) the ATHENA RC's administration services. The GE Plan was approved on the 11-11-2021 during the 311<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Board of Directors of the Centre. The work suggested under the GE Plan complements and operates in parallel with a number of ATHENA RC policies and plans: Quality Assurance Plan, Ethics Diversity Plan, and Recruitment Strategy.

## 5. Objectives

The ATHENA RC GE Plan has eight tangible objectives, towards:

1. Embedding a **gender aware culture** in the Centre by shifting traditional perceptions
2. Improving the **research quality** of the Centre by ensuring the formation of heterogeneous research groups
3. Practicing **excellence at all levels** through female career development and training of researchers, managers and support staff
4. Achieving inclusivity in **decision-making** by inviting women in the process thus ensuring diversification of views
5. Strengthening **links with industry** by encouraging females to collaborate with private entities and **innovating** by translating their research into tangible products
6. Becoming an attractive Research Centre for female experts and talents from Greece and abroad, also assisting in **brain-gain**

## 7. Contributing to the national and European needs for female experts in digital sciences

To achieve those objectives ATHENA RC focuses on six key areas, following the guidelines of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) aiming to “identify and implement innovative strategies to promote cultural change and equal opportunities in Universities and Research Centers” (EIGE, <http://eige.europa.eu>). Through these Key Areas ATHENA RC contributes to reducing the Digital Gender Divide also at an institutional level:

**Key Area 1: Governance and decision making**

**Key Area 2: Recruitment, Selection procedures, and Career Progression**

**Key Area 3: Flexible and Agile Working**

**Key Area 4: Gender Strategy in Research**

**Key Area 5: Gender in events, courses and activities**

**Key Area 6: Gender in Organisation Culture**

## 6. Methodology

For the development of the first edition of the GE Plan, several internal procedures and measures had to be defined and set up. The GEB based the methodology for the compilation of the Plan on the GEAR toolkit (Gender Equality in Academia and Research) designed by EIGE. The Plan is developed on three axes: **1. Understanding, 2. Implementing and 3. Monitoring.**

### 6.1. Understanding

As a first step towards this direction, ATHENA RC established the Gender Equality Board (GEB) on March 2021 consisting of 4 members (3 women and 1 man). The GE Board set up an informal focus group consisting of female researchers from ATHENA RC to advocate its establishment and objectives across its three sites in Athens, Patras, Xanthi. Furthermore, it organized an event to celebrate the International Women’s Day that kickstarted a structured discussion for gender equality, the establishment of the GE Plan, and the specific needs of the organisation.

The GE Board members decided on the types of data that need to be collected, the KPIs to be defined, the data gathering procedures, and arranged a series of online meetings with the focus group to obtain their feedback.

The GE Board has collected data and monitored Gender aspects for the years 2018, 2019, 2020. The Plan constitutes a living document that GE Board commits to update at the end of every year. The financial and administrative data were collected by the Central Administration of ATHENA RC and comprise the composition of staff, candidacies and recruitments, retention rate of staff, governance, leaves, payments, work options, grant acquisition, patents etc. Regarding research production and quality as reflected in articles, journals, conferences, books and other publications, relevant data were gathered by each one of the Institutes and Units of ATHENA RC. This process has also triggered the need for development of a central repository for this

type of research data. Additional sets of qualitative data will be collected for the next version of the Plan through questionnaires and interviews reflecting researchers' responses on their sense of belonging and safety in the workplace. With respect to the list of KPIs, the GE Board surveyed existing toolkits, methodologies and available GE Plans from several universities and institutes in Europe. Although GEB considered the available indicators, it compiled custom lists of KPIs pertaining to the peculiarities of a research institute and of certain aspects of the national law, such as the procedures related to staff recruitment and job contracts. All the information obtained, was processed by the members of the GE Board that analysed the state of play in ATHENA RC with the aim to address the observed imbalances. The data were organised and distributed across the aforementioned six Key Areas.

## **6.2. Implementing**

During the implementation of the GE Plan, ATHENA RC will try to embed and institutionalize as many actions proposed as possible in order to ensure their sustainability. The GE Board will meet regularly to plan activities in a participatory way, discuss progress, achievements and aspects that can be improved. Trainings and meetings with senior management, human resources staff, events and communications office will be also foreseen to maximise the impact of the GE Plan's actions and provide with insights about the measures implemented. Beyond those, other activities such as events, communication actions and employment of digital means will ensure constant visibility of the Plan, promote its main areas of intervention and layout the timeframe for compliance purposes.

## **6.3. Monitoring**

GEB is committed to report annually about the progress towards gender equality and share the findings with the organization. The monitoring will be based on derived qualitative and quantitative indicators and on follow-up instruments adapted to the purposes of the proposed actions. An external Advisor, will be responsible for constructively reviewing the measures proposed by the GE Board, co-designing and evaluating the monitoring instruments and channels, overlooking the implementation of the actions proposed and providing input for an effective and uniform application across all sites.

## **7. Key areas of study**

The following tables present needs-based objectives for ATHENA RC, track the development in the gender distribution of personnel at different stages of their careers within the organisation, monitor ATHENA RC's progress in relation to equal representation through KPIs and targets, create actions to remedy any shortcomings, provide the respective timeline, assign responsibility to the personnel for each action, and present their relevance to SDGs.



## Key Area 1 : Governance and Decision Making

### Objectives

- I. Proportional gender representation in key leading positions, and governance bodies
- II. Proportional gender representation in decision-making committees
- III. Gender balance in submitted candidatures for I and II.

### Who

- ATHENA R.C. GEB (GE Board)
- ATHENA R.C. Media & Communications Office
- ATHENA R.C. Researchers, Administrators and Technical Staff

### Actions

1. Encourage balanced gender representation in candidatures for governance and decision making through gender-neutral vacancy descriptions and information campaigns, as well as pro-active nominations.
2. Support balanced gender representation in candidatures through incentives that will be properly identified and communicated
3. Organize events that establish direct contact with corresponding role models
4. Monitor gender balance in key leading positions, governance bodies and decision-making committees

2021 2022 2023

	✓	✓
	✓	✓
✓	✓	✓
✓	✓	✓

### KPIs and Targets

1. At least 10% annual increase in gender representation in candidatures for leading, governance and decision-making positions towards a 50:50 male-female ratio
2. Organisation of at least 2 events per year hosting talks by corresponding role models and providing information on the profiling of such positions (e.g. requirements and gains etc.)

SDG



## Key Area 2 : Recruitment, Selection procedures, and Career Progression

### Objectives

- I. Balanced gender representation across staff categories
- II. Gender balance in job applications
- III. Equality in staff retention and career progression
- IV. Equality in payment rate

### Who

- GEB
- Human Resources Management Office
- Media and Communications Office
- Staff selection and evaluation committees

### Actions

1. Encourage balanced gender representation in job applications through gender-neutral vacancy descriptions and presentation of the DEI (diversity, equality, inclusion) supporting profile of ATHENA
2. Support balanced gender representation in job applications through the design of attractive employment packages (with emphasis on flexibility at the workplace and benefits beyond financial compensation)
3. Organize events that present the humane profile of ATHENA, including key-personnel employment stories, social life at ATHENA, and others
4. In depth study of gender-related parameters affecting staff retention and career progression and design of corrective measures
5. Design and use of a detailed payment rate methodology for fixed-term contract staff
6. Monitor gender balance across staff categories, as well as retention rate, career progression and remuneration

2021 2022 2023

	✓	✓
	✓	✓
✓	✓	✓
	✓	✓
	✓	✓
✓	✓	✓

### KPIs

1. At least 10% annual increase in gender representation in job applications (targeting a minimum of 60:40 male-female ratio)
2. Organisation of at least 2 events per year presenting the humane profile of ATHENA
3. Annual updates/additions of benefits to employment packages
4. Annual update of the staff retention and progression study; Corrective measurements document by the end of 2022
5. Adoption of a detailed payment methodology for fixed-term contract staff by the end of 2021

SDG



## Key Area 3 : Flexible and Agile Working

### Objectives

- I. Raised awareness of rights, opportunities and practices for flexible and agile working
- II. Enhancement of flexible and agile working practices and infrastructure
- III. Facilitation of achieving work-life balance

### Who

- GEB
- HR
- Computer Support Office
- Media and Communications Office

### Actions

1. Organize events for raising awareness of leaves entitled according to national law, available flexible working models (part time/teleworking etc), agile working infrastructure and suggested best practices
2. Design guidelines for achieving work-life balance incorporating international best practices (a) tuned to the Greek reality & the idiosyncrasies of working in a research center and (b) enhanced with staff input
3. Upgrade /update digital tools for remote working and staff member connectivity and provide training and support in their use
4. Monitor the uptake of the above

2021 2022 2023

	✓	✓
		✓
	✓	✓
	✓	✓

### KPIs and Targets

1. Increase in the diversity of type of leaves per gender
2. Organisation of at least 2 events per year for raising awareness on work-life balance issues and for providing related training
3. Work-life balance guidelines by the end of 2022 and annual update afterwards
4. Annual qualitative survey for capturing staff perceptions and feedback on the implementation of flexible and agile working practices in ATHENA R.C.

SDG



## Key Area 4 : Gender Strategy in Research and Innovation

### Objectives

- I. Facilitation of balanced gender representation in research productivity (publishing, acquiring grants, teaching, supervision, patenting, technology transfer activities)
- II. Balanced gender representation in research and development activities
- III. Balanced gender representation in entrepreneurship

### Who

- GEB
- Research Grants Support Office
- Technology Transfer Office
- Media and Communication Office
- ATHENA R.C. Staff representatives

### Actions

1. Undertake a large-scale qualitative study of the reasons affecting research productivity of ATHENA R.C. staff and design measures for support
2. Communicate and implement the supporting mechanisms indicated in the study
3. Organise events for raising awareness of the benefits of balanced gender representation in research and development, tuned to the needs of the research topics/disciplines served in ATHENA R.C.
4. Establish a mentoring scheme for formal personal development planning
5. Encourage the creation of peer groups and get-together events for informal consultation on research productivity and work-life balance issues
6. Promote gender representation in entrepreneurship through dedicated (and even proactive) consultation and support
7. Monitor gender representation in research and innovation

2021 2022 2023

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### KPIs and Targets

1. Qualitative study on productivity and design of corresponding measures by the end of 2022 (annual update afterwards)
2. Implementation of the supporting mechanisms from 2023 and on
3. Organisation of at least two events per year raising awareness on gender representation in R&D
4. Mentoring scheme in place from mid-2022 and on
5. Creation of at least 2 peer groups and 2 social-get-together events for supporting gender representation in research and innovation per year
6. At least 15% annual increase of the number of staff involved in Technology Transfer Officers meetings and activities

SDG



## Key Area 5 : Gender in events, courses and activities

### Objectives

- I. Balanced gender participation (of staff) in events organized by the centre
- II. Equal exposure of the research results/activities, expertise and achievements of staff

### Who

- 1. GEB
- 2. Media and Communication Office

### Actions

1. Enhance the equal promotion of research contribution/results/success stories in ATHENA's social media accounts, website, and science communication network.
2. Implement a gender balance informed strategy in recruiting staff for the ATHENA R.C. events/campaigns/information days.
3. Study the reasons affecting staff participation in ATHENA events and design support measures
4. Monitor gender active and passive participation in ATHENA events, courses, activities

2021 2022 2023

	✓	✓
	✓	✓
	✓	✓
	✓	✓

### KPIs and Targets

1. At least 15% annual increase of gender balance in the collective online presence of ATHENA material (towards the aim of a proportional to the research staff gender rate)
2. Design and adoption of a process and strategy for equality in staffing ATHENA events by end-2022
3. Conclusion of the study and design of support measures for enhancing equal staff participation in ATHENA events, by end-2022

SDG



## Key Area 6 : Gender in Organisation Culture

### Objectives

- I. Publication and Diffusion of the Gender Equality plan (GEP)
- II. Establishment of policies, activities and instruments to support and monitor the implementation of the GEP
- III. Raised awareness of staff on all Gender Equality issues
- IIII. Development of Gender Equality support services and infrastructure
- IV. Acquisition of Gender Equality know-how and best practices

### Who

- GEB
- Media and Communications Office

### Actions

1. Publish the GEP on the website and disseminate to all interested parties
2. Embed *equality, diversity and inclusion* principles into Athena RC internal regulation and policies
3. Organise events on diversity and gender for raising awareness
4. Establish a Board for Gender Equality monitoring
5. Dedicate funds for Gender Equality activities (studies and events)
6. Establish clear procedures and support services for discrimination, harassment or violence in the workplace
7. Establish dedicated spaces facilitating individual and peer group activities beyond working needs (e.g. child friendly spaces, cosy peer socializing rooms etc.)
8. Participate in EU and/or national instruments focusing on GE

2021 2022 2023

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### KPIs and Targets

1. Organisation of at least 2 events annually for raising awareness of staff on Gender Equality issues and for informing them on the ATHENA GEP-related activities and developments
2. Annual updates of the ATHENA R.C. internal regulation and policies if needed as a result of the implementation of the GEP.
3. Establishment of the GEP monitoring board from 2022 and on
4. Allocation of a minimum annual budget of 10,000 EUR to GEP activities
5. Establishment of a dedicated discrimination-harassment-violence office and related procedures and tools by the end of 2022
6. Inclusion of dedicated areas supporting the work:life balance of staff within the ongoing ATHENA re-housing plans (e.g. child friendly spaces, breastfeeding areas, socialising areas for peer group activities etc.)
7. Participate in at least two different EU or national/international partnering structures related to GE annually

SDG



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## Terminology

**Binary construct** (relating to gender) is a social construct that identifies an individual as either male/man or female/woman, and does not take account of other sex or gender identities or presentations.

**Gender** is part of a person's social and personal identity. It is typically used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological, referring to the characteristics that a culture delineates as masculine/male or feminine/female (see definition for 'gender diverse').

**Pay Gap** means individuals receiving equal pay for work of equal or comparable value and there is no gender bias at any point in the -- remuneration process (for example at commencement, base salary, out-of-cycle pay reviews, discretionary loadings and bonuses, and movement within the total remuneration range).

**Sex** means the characteristics associated with biological sex, generally assigned at birth usually described as being male or female. A person's sex and gender identity or presentation may not necessarily be the same.

**Transgender** is a general term for a person whose gender identity is different from their sex assigned at birth. A transgender person may take steps to live permanently in their nominated sex, with or without medical treatment.

**Gender diverse** is a term used to recognise people who do not fall within the gender binary construct of male and female.

Intersex refers to people who have genetic, hormonal or physical characteristics that are not exclusively 'male' or 'female'. A person who is intersex may identify as male, female, intersex or as being of indeterminate sex.