

FRAUNHOFER ITALIA – INNOVATION ENGINEERING CENTER IEC

GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

Public Document

Fraunhofer Italia Research – Innovation Engineering Center
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Gender Equality Plan

Open appreciation, recognition and utilizing the diversity and uniqueness of all employees in a productive way are some of the guiding principles of our activities. Nevertheless, we think that equal opportunities should be *embedded institutionally* and further developed as an essential principle at Fraunhofer Italia. Similar initiatives have been presented on a European level by public bodies, research organizations or higher education institutions. Therefore, we believe it is very important for our institute to address gender equality in a more direct and effective way. One of the first objectives of this initiative is setting up a *gender equality plan (GEP)*.

In the specific context of research organizations and higher education institutions, the European Commission considers a gender equality plan as being a set of actions aimed at:

- Conducting impact assessments/audits of procedures and practices to *identify gender bias*.
- Identifying and implementing innovative strategies to *correct any bias*.
- Setting targets and *monitoring progress* through indicators.

In line with the recommendations for putting into place structural change in an organization, the process of implementing gender equality should be based on “knowledge of the institution”. The assessment of employees’ knowledge of gender issues is a means of assessing the understanding, awareness, and skills that a given organization as a whole and the individuals within it have on gender equality. When assessing the capacity of individuals, attention is paid to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that each person has on gender equality and the integration of this knowledge into daily work.

“In all its activities, the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality, between men and women.”

Art. 8, Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

Gender equality is a core value of the European Union, a fundamental right¹ and key principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The promotion of equality between women and men is a task of the EU in the pursuit of all its activities, and as such it is explicitly required within the treaties. In addition, it is also an essential condition for an innovative, competitive, and thriving European economy² that considers social sustainability as one of its fundamental values. Therefore, the potential of gender equality and non-discrimination must be realized alongside transitions towards economic, environmental, and digital sustainability.

The European Union has adopted several strategies and action plans to promote gender equality. The "Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025" by the European Commission aims to make significant progress by 2025 toward a gender-equal Europe.

The main objectives include:

- Ending gender-based violence.
- Combating gender stereotypes.
- Closing the gender gap in the labor market.
- Achieving gender balance across economic sectors.
- Addressing the gender pay and pension gaps.
- Attaining gender equality in decision-making and politics.

To monitor progress toward these goals, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) developed the Gender Equality Index, which evaluates disparities between women and men in various domains, including work, money, knowledge, time, power, and health.

According to the latest EIGE report, published on October 24, 2023, the EU achieved an average score of 70.2 out of 100, highlighting the best overall progress in gender equality in the last decade. (italy.representation.ec.europa.eu) However, significant disparities persist between Member States. For instance, while the percentage of women on corporate boards has risen to 33%, and a

¹ Articles 2 and 3(3) TEU, Articles 8, 10, 19 and 157 TFEU, Articles 21 and 23 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

² A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. COM(2020) 152 final

similar percentage is seen in national parliaments, some countries report slower progress or even regressions in specific areas.

However, the research carried out showed that some of the main factors influencing gender inequality are actually to be found at societal, rather than at company level, and therefore cannot be addressed by a single entity, which lacks the means and tools to do so. For that reason, at company level, a special focus was placed on measures to encourage and facilitate parenting and childcare, concentrating on how Fraunhofer Italia can help families and parents, whether men or women, to pursue their careers without neglecting their family duties (and wishes).

Fraunhofer Italia Mission and Values

You can only show on the outside what you live on the inside. Fraunhofer Italia is therefore guided by a mission statement of professionalism, partnership, and efficiency. We have not imposed these central values on ourselves from above - because they come as a genuine self-image from the center of our institute and have been actively experienced by all employees since the beginning. For us, applied research means the combination of research excellence and industrial excellence.

Fraunhofer Italia provides research and consulting services of the highest quality based on scientifically recognized procedures, using state-of-the-art technical equipment. The aim of Fraunhofer Italia is to support society and the economy in a direct way, with concrete solutions. Fraunhofer Italia's performance is largely determined by the professional and social skills of its employees. With a strong commitment to the institute, the employees are therefore the main pillar of Fraunhofer Italia's performance. Consequently, it is fundamental that collaboration at Fraunhofer Italia is characterized by respectful interaction with each other, which is based on transparency, openness, collegiality, understanding and trust. This claim provides a framework in the cooperation with our partners.

Fraunhofer Italia's state of play

The total percentage of collaborators at Fraunhofer Italia is homogeneously distributed between males (56.1%) and females (43.9%)¹. In departments with a high percentage of collaborators with a background in engineering and computer sciences there is a predominance of male collaborators, while in other departments there is a predominance of female collaborators. On a contractual level, there are no significant differences between genders. The percentage of staff with temporary contracts is almost identical between female and male collaborators: female workers with open-ended contracts are slightly fewer than males (47% against 53%). The decision-making positions are entirely held by men. Both the team leader board and the head of departments committee are composed exclusively of men. The board of management is also made up entirely of men. In the past 3 years 21 students worked at Fraunhofer Italia, 8 female and 13 males, showing a progressive involvement of female students in more technical fields. Salaries at Fraunhofer Italia are based on a national framework agreement² and vary according to the level of competences reached by the staff. By considering the data of 2022-2024, the number of male candidatures for open job positions was about three times higher than female equivalents (653 male candidates and 231 female candidates). Since 2022, 6 women and 4 men took parental leave. The women applied for long parental leaves of several months, while the men took shorter parental leaves spread across a longer period of time. In three cases the female collaborators decided not to return after maternity leave or gave resignations immediately after the end of the maternity leave. The gender of individuals that left the organization is equally distributed (49% men and 51% women). Male and female collaborators spent on average 3 years in FHI before leaving (same average). Due to the fact that regardless of gender, every collaborator at Fraunhofer Italia attends two training courses per year, no significant difference regarding training hours is determined.

¹ Reporting date 31.12.2024

² Contratto Collettivo Nazionale di lavoro per i dipendenti da aziende del Terziario della Distribuzione e dei Servizi

Gender Equality Plan

The GEP Action Plan was carried out by first isolating the relevant areas of intervention and the existing challenges faced in these areas, based also on the above-cited statistical and questionnaire-based analysis. Relevant objectives were then identified and as a final step, actions and resulting specific measures were designed to achieve these objectives and thus resolve the aforementioned challenges.

Several distinct areas of intervention were identified. These focus areas were then revised by the GEP working group based on internal needs and were defined as follows: A. Organizational culture and work-life balance; B. Recruitment, selection, and career progression support; C. Leadership and decision-making; D. Sexual and gender-based harassment; E. Analytical measures, targets, indicators, monitoring, and evaluation; F. Gender-relative training measures.

As a result, a detailed action plan has been drawn up defining several courses of action and a list of potential measures to address the challenges, with a timeframe ranging from the beginning of 2025 to the end of 2027.

This assessment has led to the definition of a roadmap for the implementation of each action over the coming years. In addition, the corporate level responsible for managing and supervising the design and implementation of the specific measures for each action has been identified.

Overview of foreseen area interventions and planned set of measures:

<i>Areas of intervention and related set of measures</i>	<i>2025</i>	<i>2026</i>	<i>2027</i>	<i>Responsibilities</i>
A. Organizational culture and work-life balance				
Encouraging measures of adequate flexibility at work (e.g. in case of specific individual situations)	X			MGT + ADM
B. Recruitment, selection, and career progression support				
Encouraging diversity and long-term perspective in collaboration (e.g. diversity as added value at all levels of career progression)	X	X	X	HoD
C. Leadership and decision-making				
Establish specific training measures for leadership positions	X	X	X	MGT
D. Sexual and gender-based harassment				
Establish safe channels to report inappropriate behavior and establish adequate alert mechanisms	X			MGT + HoD
E. Analytical measures, targets, indicators, monitoring, and evaluation				

Develop and establish continuous monitoring mechanisms and related KPI dashboards	X	X		ADM
F. Gender-relative training measures				
Establish and encourage participation in gender-related training courses		X	X	MGT
MGT: management of the institute, ADM: administration department, HoD: head of departments committee, COM: communication department				

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