

THE GENDER EQUALITY PLAN OF CONNECT INTERNATIONAL

CONNECT International A.I.S.B.L actively implements The Gender Equality Plan in its work, which aims to ensure that employees, members and volunteers act in accordance with the highest standards of collegial and constructive behavior. The provisions of this document are binding to all member organizations of the network. The implementation and compliance with this act are guaranteed by the Board of Directors and the President of the network.

Gender Equality Plan consists of standardization on People involved in our work, Procedures how gender equality is provided and Accountability measures, how we review the existing policy and its effects.

Gender Equality Policy Statement:

We are committed to fostering an environment of equality, where individuals of all genders have equal opportunities to contribute and thrive. This includes ensuring gender balance, preventing gender-based discrimination, and actively promoting gender-sensitive practices.

CONNECT INTERNATIONAL WORK TOWARD GENDER EQUALITY

The Gender Equality Plan incorporates existing EU standards, and its key element is the Gender Equality Index, developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). This comprehensive tool provides a robust framework to measure gender equality, covering domains such as work, power, knowledge, time, health, and violence. It offers us a nuanced and detailed understanding of gender equality, tailored to the European context.

By adopting the Gender Equality Index, we can benchmark our organization's performance against a well-established standard. It's like having a detailed map while navigating a complex terrain; it helps us identify areas where we excel and aspects where we need to focus more. This benchmarking is not merely a compliance exercise; it's a reflective process that helps us understand the depths of gender equality within our organization.

The Gender Equality Plan outlines the standards and guidelines for promoting gender equality within our organization. By implementing these standards, we aim to create an inclusive and equitable work environment that values diversity and ensures equal opportunities for all employees, regardless of gender. Our organization is committed to fostering a culture of gender equality, where all members/employees have equal opportunities, rights, and recognition. This Gender Equality Plan serves as a roadmap for

our ongoing efforts to create a diverse, inclusive, and equitable workplace for everyone. This Plan also leans on the guidance given by the youth sector of Council of Europe concerning gender equality.

Gender Equality principles, values and organizational practices:

- 1. Inclusivity:** Our organization is committed to creating an inclusive environment that values and respects the contributions of all individuals, regardless of their gender identity or expression. We believe in providing equal opportunities and eliminating any form of discrimination or bias based on gender.
- 2. Equal Representation in leadership and decision making:** We strive for equal representation of all genders at all levels of our organization. We recognize the importance of diverse perspectives and experiences in decision-making processes and aim to ensure fair and balanced representation in leadership positions and across all departments.
- 3. Pay Equity:** Our organization is dedicated to achieving and maintaining pay equity among employees, irrespective of their gender. We believe in providing equal compensation for equal work and regularly reviewing our salary structures to identify and address any gender-based pay gaps.
- 4. Work-Life Balance:** We promote a healthy work-life balance for all staff, recognizing that gender equality extends beyond the workplace. We support flexible work arrangements, parental leave policies, and other initiatives that enable individuals to balance their personal and professional responsibilities.
- 5. Gender-Neutral Policies:** Our organization implements gender-neutral policies and practices to ensure fairness and equality for all staff, members and volunteers. This includes policies related to recruitment, promotion, performance evaluation, and training opportunities, which are designed to be free from any gender bias or discrimination.
- 6. Training and Awareness:** We are committed to providing training and awareness programs that promote gender equality and address unconscious biases. These initiatives aim to educate staff, members and volunteers about the importance of gender equality, foster a culture of respect and inclusivity, and empower individuals to challenge gender stereotypes and biases. All curricula & other teaching content and research developed by the network are including gender perspective, made either for internal or external use.
- 7. Safe and Harassment-Free Environment:** Our organization maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards any form of discrimination or gender-based violence including sexual harassment. We are dedicated to creating a safe and supportive work environment where all staff, members and volunteers feel respected, valued, and protected.
- 8. Collaboration and Partnerships:** We actively collaborate with external organizations, networks, and communities that share our commitment to gender equality. By partnering with like-minded entities, we aim to leverage collective efforts and resources to drive positive change and advance gender equality both within our organization and in society.
- 9. Gender equality in project management:** Our organization plans and implements projects taking into consideration gender-sensitive approach to all managerial aspects.

We ensure gender balanced structure of the project management teams, apply gender sensitive language in all internal and external communications, taking care of gender balanced representation of the participants, and when possible address importance of gender equality through topics of activities.

10. Data Collection and Analysis:

- a. Gender-Disaggregated Data: Collect and analyze data on gender representation, pay gaps, and career progression to identify areas for improvement and track progress towards gender equality goals.
- b. Regular Reporting: Publish annual reports on gender equality initiatives, progress, and outcomes to foster transparency and accountability.

These principles and values form the foundation of our Gender Equality Plan, guiding our actions and decisions as we work towards creating a more equitable and inclusive organization for all.

PILLARS OF THE GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

There are three pillars that are included in the Gender Equality Plan as its integral part: Cultural Sensitivity, Legal Compliance, and an Inclusive Approach.

Cultural Sensitivity

Europe is a gathering place for diverse cultures, each thread representing a unique set of traditions, values, and social norms. In our Gender Equality Plan we are approaching each region with a deep respect and understanding of its distinct cultural identity. Our initiatives are adaptable and sensitive to the local context. For instance, when addressing gender balance in leadership in a country where women are underrepresented in these roles, our approach might involve more grassroots empowerment initiatives, mentorship programs, and community engagement. In contrast, in regions where there's already a significant presence of women in leadership, the focus might shift towards sustaining and building upon this progress.

Legal Compliance

The European Union sets a broad stage with directives and policies promoting gender equality. However, each member state interprets and applies these directives within their own legal systems. CI complies with the legal requirements of each country. This meticulous legal compliance doesn't just safeguard us against legal repercussions; it's also about respecting the sovereignty and legal integrity of each nation where we operate.

Inclusive Approach

Inclusiveness is an important part of our Gender Equality Plan. Gender equality isn't just

about balancing the scales between men and women; it's a broader conversation that includes all genders and gender identities. It's about creating a workplace culture where diversity is not just accepted but celebrated.

GENDER EQUALITY OFFICER

Connect International appoints a Gender Equality Officer for tracking the implementation of the Gender Equality Plan, as *decided by the Board*. He/she will have the following responsibilities:

- **Implementing the Gender Equality Plan:** The Gender Equality Officer is tasked with ensuring that the Gender Equality Plan, a set of guidelines and objectives formulated by the organization to promote gender equality, is actively being implemented. This involves monitoring ongoing practices, reviewing processes, and ensuring that the plan is not just theoretical but is effectively integrated into the day-to-day operations of the organization.
- **First Point of Contact for Gender Equality Issues:** This responsibility positions the Officer as a go-to person for any concerns, queries, or discussions related to gender equality. It's crucial that this individual is approachable, knowledgeable, and capable of handling sensitive issues with discretion and professionalism. Gender Equality Officer is obliged to apply defined measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment.
- **Record-Keeping of Gender Equality Concerns:** The Officer must maintain a detailed and confidential record of any concerns or issues raised regarding gender equality. This systematic documentation is essential for tracking progress, identifying patterns, and formulating responses to these concerns.
- **Communication with the Board and Local Authority:** The Officer is responsible for bringing any significant gender equality concerns to the attention of CI's Board. This ensures that top-level management is aware of and can respond to these issues. Additionally, contacting the Local Authority might be necessary in cases where external intervention or collaboration is required.
- **Supervision and Education of Staff, Members, and Volunteers:** Ensuring that everyone associated with CI receives appropriate supervision and education on gender equality matters is a key responsibility. This might involve organizing training sessions, workshops, or discussions to foster a more inclusive and aware organizational culture.
- **Awareness of the Officer's Identity:** It's important that everyone involved with CI knows who the Gender Equality Officer is. This visibility is crucial for the role to be effective, as it allows individuals to know who they can turn to with their concerns or questions about gender equality.

The Gender Equality Plan will be reviewed by the General Assembly of the network on an annual basis to ensure that it is meeting its aims.

GENDER EQUILAITY PLAN REVIEW

Regular Reporting and Monitoring: Every year during regular General Assembly meetings of the network, Gender Equality Officer oversees presenting the report of its work to the members, while they are in charge approving it. The review of its mandate and GEO work are covered with this report, and the GA oversees confirming the changes made in the plan. The Executive Board of the network oversees monitoring the Gender Equality Plan implementation and Gender Equality Officer reports to this body.

Performance Evaluations: CI includes gender equality objectives in the performance evaluations of members at all levels. This ensures that members are held accountable for contributing to these goals.

Training and Capacity Building: CI provides regular training and capacity-building programs for its staff, members and volunteers to understand and effectively implement the gender equality plan.

Stakeholder Engagement: CI involves various stakeholders, including members, partners, and beneficiaries, in the implementation and monitoring of the plan implementation.

Feedback Mechanisms: CI has established mechanisms for members and stakeholders to provide feedback on the implementation of the plan and uses this feedback to make improvements.

Integration with Overall Organizational Strategy: Gender equality is not a standalone policy, but it is integrated into the overall strategic goals and operations of the Connect International.

This plan was adopted by the Board of Connect International and approved by the General Assembly of the network on 11/11/2023 and is published on the website of our organization.

Signed on behalf of the Board by:



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alkistis Giogiou'.

ALKISTIS GIOGIU,
President