

STANDO Ltd. Gender Equality Plan

(2025–2027)



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1. Introduction

Gender equality is a fundamental value of the European Union (EU) and a recognised human right. While progress has been made—particularly in closing the gender gap in education—persistent disparities remain in key areas such as pay, leadership, care responsibilities, and representation. Gender-based violence, harassment, and stereotyping continue to affect many individuals across Europe.

To address these challenges, the European Commission adopted the Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025¹, which sets out policy objectives and key actions to accelerate progress across all EU policies, including research and innovation. This strategy is further supported by the Horizon Europe Gender Equality Plan Guidelines², which detail the specific requirements organisations must meet to be eligible for EU funding in the research and innovation sector.

In this context, STANDO LTD's Gender Equality Plan (GEP) is drawn up to articulate the organisation's values, mission, and commitment to upholding gender equality in all areas of activity. As a research and educational centre with significant experience in the implementation of European programmes in Cyprus, STANDO LTD aligns its actions in compliance with national law as well as European Union policies regarding gender equality.

This GEP reflects the three core requirements under Horizon Europe:

- a) the requirement of a formal Gender Equality Plan as part of the selection criterion for legal persons involved in EU-funded schemes;
- b) the mandatory mainstreaming of the gender element into research and innovation content, evaluated under the excellence criterion;
- c) the goal of enhancing board, evaluation committee, and research team gender diversity where gender is one of the criteria for ranking tied proposals.

¹ European Commission. *A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025*. Brussels, 2020. Available at: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en

² European Commission. *Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans (GEPs)*. Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2021. DOI: 10.2777/876509

Moreover, STANDO LTD recognizes that gender inequality often crosses over with other forms of discrimination such as age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. This intersectional strategy is enshrined across the GEP so that all activity is reflective of the diversity of needs and experiences in the organisation. It supports our commitment to establish an environment that is not only gender-balanced but fair and inclusive at every level within the organisation.

In this framework, STANDO LTD's GEP outlines a defined pattern of objectives, actions, and commitments that enable the development of a gender-sensitive and inclusive organisational culture. The commitments are embedded within the organisation's research, training, management practices, and internal policies in order to promote sustainability and effectiveness. Through ongoing monitoring, raising awareness, and change at an institutional level, this GEP acts as a strategic tool for advancing equality and diversity within STANDO LTD and beyond.

2. STANDO LTD's Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

STANDO LTD's Gender Equality Plan (GEP), presented below, is a formal and strategic document approved by the company's Director's Team and disseminated throughout the organisation. It reflects STANDO's firm commitment to fostering gender equality and inclusivity across its operations, outlining clear objectives, actions, and mechanisms for implementation and evaluation.

In alignment with the **Horizon Europe Gender Equality Plan (GEP) Eligibility Criterion**, the GEP of STANDO LTD meets the four mandatory process-related requirements:

- **Public document:** The GEP is published on STANDO LTD's official website and is accessible to all team members.
- **Dedicated resources:** The Director's Team and designated members of the Management are responsible for leading, coordinating, and supporting the implementation of the GEP.
- **Data collection and monitoring:** The Management team oversees the monitoring of GEP implementation. Relevant gender-disaggregated data will

be collected through periodic consultations, discussions, and surveys, ensuring compliance with data minimisation and privacy standards.

- **Awareness and familiarisation:** STANDO LTD commits to regularly organising awareness-raising activities and training sessions on gender equality, inclusion, and unconscious bias for all staff and collaborators, with particular focus on those in decision-making roles.

Based on these foundations, the GEP sets the following primary objectives:

1. **Raise awareness** of gender equality issues among all team members;
2. **Promote a culture of gender equality and diversity**, and implement clear measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment;
3. **Encourage the participation of women in leadership roles**, and ensure balanced representation in decision-making structures and project coordination.

This GEP is a dynamic and evolving document, subject to regular updates based on feedback, evolving needs, and relevant national and EU policy developments.

3. Action plan

3.1. Priority 1: Raising Awareness on Gender Equality Issues

Action	Target	Responsible	Timeline
Circulate the Gender Equality Plan to all team members.	Ensure 100% of employees are aware of the GEP and understand its purpose.	Director + Management Team	Q3 2025 (Initial); Re-circulate annually or after updates
Organise training seminars and/or courses on gender equality for staff empowerment.	Build foundational knowledge of gender equality principles among all staff.	Training team	Q4 2025 (First session); Annually thereafter
Hold seminars on discrimination and prevention of sexual harassment with reference to national guidelines.	Ensure all staff understand legal obligations, reporting mechanisms, and preventive behaviours.	Training team	Q4 2025; Refresh every 2 years or upon legal updates
Share relevant online resources (e.g., videos, papers, research, conference materials).	Maintain ongoing engagement and self-directed learning on gender equality issues.	Gender Equality Committee	Quarterly starting Q3 2025
Communicate a zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment across the organisation.	Establish a safe, respectful working environment and eliminate tolerance of any form of harassment.	Director + Gender Equality Committee	Q3 2025 (Policy communication); Continuous reinforcement

3.2. Priority 2: Developing a Culture of Gender Equality and Respect for Diversity

Action	Target	Responsible	Timeline
Conduct regular staff consultations to identify gender issues challenges.	Identify and address emerging gender equality challenges across the organisation.	Gender Equality Committee	Biannually starting Q1 2026
Provide a safe space for staff to share experiences and concerns on gender issues.	Encourage open dialogue and strengthen mutual respect among staff.	Director + Gender Equality Committee	Ongoing from Q1 2026
Ensure proper handling of gender-based inequality and harassment cases according to national guidelines.	Ensure legal compliance and build trust in institutional processes.	Director + Gender Equality Committee	Ongoing; with formal review every 2 years
Organize events and activities that promote diversity and inclusion.	Foster a culture of inclusion and active participation.	All team members	Twice a year starting Q2 2026
Implement a gender-sensitive language policy in all communication.	Promote inclusive and non-discriminatory communication.	Gender Equality Committee	Policy launched Q3 2025; Applied continuously

Share and promote best practices on gender equality internally and externally.	Establish STANDO LTD as a model for gender equality practices.	Gender Equality Committee	Ongoing starting Q3 2025
Support staff with care responsibilities (e.g., children, elderly).	Enable employees to balance work and caregiving responsibilities effectively.	Director	Support initiatives in place by Q1 2026
Provide flexible work arrangements such as remote and hybrid where possible.	Improve employee satisfaction and retention through flexible arrangements.	Director	Options implemented from Q1 2026

3.3. Priority 3: Encouraging Women's Participation in Leadership Positions

Action	Target	Responsible	Timeline
Promote the inclusion of the gender dimension in strategic decision-making roles.	Ensure gender perspectives are considered in all organisational strategies and leadership decisions.	Director + Management Team + Gender Equality Committee	Incorporation by Q4 2025; reviewed annually
Set internal gender-balanced leadership team targets.	Achieve balanced gender representation in leadership structures by 2027.	Director + Gender Equality Committee	Targets set by Q4 2025; progress reviewed annually

3.4. Priority 4: Work-Life Balance and Organisational Culture

Action	Target	Responsible	Timeline
Examine and maximize incentives to facilitate work-life balance.	Enhance employee satisfaction and reduce stress through tailored incentives.	Gender Equality Committee	Assessment completed by Q1 2026; updated annually
Conduct annual wellbeing surveys	Monitor and respond to staff wellbeing concerns effectively.	Gender Equality Committee	Annually starting Q4 2025
Time meetings to accommodate diverse needs.	Ensure inclusivity and participation by aligning meetings with diverse needs.	Management Team	Guidelines implemented by Q1 2026
Limit work communication outside regular office hours.	Promote healthier work-life boundaries and reduce burnout.	Management Team	Policy adopted Q4 2025; monitored continuously

3.5. Priority 5: Recruitment and Career Progression

Action	Target	Responsible	Timeline
Ensure job advertisements are gender-inclusive.	Attract a diverse and inclusive pool of applicants.	Director + Gender Equality Committee	Implemented from Q4 2025
Use gender-balanced selection panels where feasible.	Ensure fairness and gender representation in hiring processes.	Management Team + Gender Equality Committee	Applied to all selection panels from Q1 2026

Use transparent recruitment and evaluation procedures.	Establish equity and transparency in recruitment decisions.	Director + Management Team	Ongoing; reviewed annually
Provide bias-awareness training for those involved in hiring and promotion.	Prevent unconscious bias from influencing recruitment and promotion outcomes.	Training team	First training in Q1 2026; repeated annually
Monitor gender bias in promotions and career development.	Ensure equal opportunities and identify patterns of inequality.	Director + Gender Equality Committee	Monitoring system operational by Q3 2026

3.6. Priority 6: Gender in Research and Teaching

Action	Target	Responsible	Timeline
Train staff on integrating gender perspectives into research and teaching.	Ensure research and training content addresses gender-specific issues and impacts.	Director + Project Coordinators	Training implemented by Q4 2025; repeated annually
Make sure course materials are reviewed for gender bias.	Promote inclusive and representative educational materials.	Project Coordinators + Gender Equality Committee	Review completed by Q2 2026; updated annually

Review funded projects for gender inclusiveness.	Align project design and execution with EU gender equality standards.	Project Coordinators + Gender Equality Committee	Integrated into project evaluation from Q3 2025
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3.7. Priority 7: Prevention of Gender-Based Violence and Harassment

Action	Target	Responsible	Timeline
Implement clear follow-up and reporting mechanisms.	Ensure transparency and accountability in handling incidents of gender-based violence.	Director + Gender Equality Committee	System established by Q1 2026; reviewed annually
Train management and staff on intervention and prevention.	Build internal capacity to prevent, identify, and respond to harassment and violence.	Training team	First training by Q4 2025; repeated annually
Include anti-harassment clauses in all partnership and collaboration contracts.	Establish a shared commitment to zero tolerance across all collaborative engagements.	Director + Gender Equality Committee	Clauses added to all contracts from Q3 2025

3.8. Priority 8: Gender in Media and Publications

Action	Target	Responsible	Timeline
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Attain gender parity in media representation and authorship credit.	Ensure equal visibility and credit for all genders in external communication and publication.	Communications Lead + Project Coordinators	Monitoring system active by Q2 2026; assessed annually
Train researchers and spokespeople on representative media inclusivity.	Promote inclusive representation practices in all public and media engagements.	Training team	First training by Q4 2025; repeated annually

4. Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

In order to ensure the effectiveness, accountability, and continued improvement of the Gender Equality Plan (GEP), STANDO LTD establishes an official Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework. This enables evidence-based decision-making and enables timely adjustments based on implementation outcomes and evolving organisational needs.

4.1. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The implementation of the GEP will be tracked against the below KPIs, associated with each priority area:

Priority Area	Sample KPI
Awareness and Training	100% of staff attending gender equality and bias-awareness training
Organisational Culture and Work-Life Balance	Staff satisfaction scores on inclusivity and balance (survey-based)
Leadership and Decision-Making	% representation of women in leadership roles
Recruitment and Career Progression	% gender-balanced hiring panels and gender-neutral job postings
Research and Teaching	% of projects integrating gender perspectives
Harassment Prevention	# of reported incidents addressed through formal procedures
Media and Representation	Gender ratio in public appearances and authored outputs

4.2. Review and Reporting Schedule

Annual Internal Review: The Management Team shall carry out a formal annual review of the implementation of GEP.

Subject Reports: A concise progress summary will be included in the annual organisational report and internally communicated.

Mid-Term Adjustment: A comprehensive mid-term review will be carried out in Q2 2026 to review performance and adjust actions as required.

4.3. Tools and Methods

Surveys and Questionnaires: Staff surveys will be conducted yearly to quantify awareness, culture, and satisfaction.

Gender-Disaggregated Data: Data will be collected and analyzed on staff composition, promotions, recruitment, and training.

Focus Groups: Carried out to collect qualitative data, particularly from the underrepresented or affected groups.

Policy Tracking: Documentation of policy updates, new projects, and training activities.

4.4. Responsible Unit

The Management Team and the Director's Team will share overall responsibility for implementing and monitoring the Gender Equality Plan (GEP). To support this process, a **Gender Equality Committee** will be established. This committee will include representatives from various departments and ensure diverse perspectives are integrated into the monitoring and continuous improvement of the GEP.

The Committee, in coordination with the Management Team, may assign a designated reporting focal point responsible for overseeing follow-up actions and coordinating activities across departments.

Results, key findings, and recommendations for improvement will be compiled in an annual report, ensuring transparency, shared learning, and strategic alignment with STANDO LTD's wider goals.

4.5. Role of the Gender Equality Committee

The Gender Equality Committee is a cross-functional team consisting of representatives from various departments in STANDO LTD. Its role is to ensure the

implementation, coordination, and follow-up of the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) and ensure inclusive decision-making on gender equality issues.

Key Responsibilities:

Coordination & Follow-up: Coordinate with the Director's and Management Teams to coordinate the implementation of GEP actions at departmental level.

Monitoring & Evaluation: Participate in collation and analysis of gender-disaggregated data, monitor progress against KPIs, and help generate annual GEP progress reports.

Policy & Content Review: Review new or revised policies, training materials, and project proposals to ensure gender-sensitive and inclusive language and perspectives.

Consultation & Feedback: Facilitate staff consultations, focus groups, and feedback sessions to raise gender-related issues to the surface and identify developing issues.

Training & Awareness: Assist to co-develop or critique gender equality training material and support awareness activities and initiatives.

Advisory Role: Act as an internal advisory panel to leadership on strategic choices that involve gender balance and equality.

The Committee meets at least twice a year and is allowed to have ad hoc meetings in response to new matters or strategic planning milestones. It is responsible to the Management Team and constitutes part of the GEP's yearly review and update process.

5. Glossary and Definitions

In order to enable shared understanding of key terms and concepts used throughout this Gender Equality Plan (GEP), the following definitions are provided:

****Gender Equality****

State in which individuals of any gender possess equal rights, duties, and opportunities. It is when the specific behavior, aspirations, and needs of women, men, and gender-diverse individuals are valued and considered equally.

****Gender Dimension****

A principle that requires bringing together attention to gender concerns (e.g., women-men differences in needs, behaviors, and access to resources) as a central component of the research strategy, policy, and program development and evaluation.

****Intersectionality****

A framework for understanding how aspects of a person's social and political identities (e.g., gender, race, class, disability, sexual orientation) intersect to form multiple forms of discrimination and privilege. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of systems of oppression.

****Unconscious Bias****

Instinctive and automatic mental associations on gender, race, age, or other axes that affect understanding, behavior, and decision-making. Unconscious biases may affect recruitment, promotion, evaluation, and interaction without overt intention.

****Gender-Based Violence****

Any form of action that harms a person based on their gender. It includes physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse, harassment, and coercive control.

****Diversity and Inclusion****

Diversity refers to the presence of differences in a specific context, i.e., gender, ethnicity, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Inclusion refers to the practice of creating environments where individuals feel welcome, valued, supported, and respected.

****Gender Mainstreaming****

The process of considering the implications for both genders of any policy measure, like legislation, programmes, and projects, in all sectors and at all levels. It is a way to achieve gender equality.

6. References

European Union. *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Article 23: Equality Between Women and Men*. Official Journal of the EU, 2000.

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Approval

This Gender Equality Plan (2025–2027) has been reviewed and formally approved by the Director’s Team of STANDO Ltd.

For STANDO Ltd

STANDO LTD

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Theodoros Gounaris,

Director

Date:27 May 2025.....