

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF GABROVO

GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

2026–2030

Gabrovo, Bulgaria

I. INTRODUCTION

The Technical University of Gabrovo (TU-Gabrovo) is committed to creating and maintaining an academic and working environment based on equality, equal opportunities, respect, dignity, inclusion and non-discrimination.

The University recognises gender equality as an essential element of a modern European higher education and research institution and as an important condition for excellence in education, scientific research, innovation and institutional development.

This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) establishes the University's strategic objectives, measures, responsibilities and indicators for promoting gender equality among academic staff, researchers, administrative staff, students and doctoral students.

The Plan is developed in accordance with:

- the principles and requirements of the European Union;
- the Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation 2021–2027;
- the European Commission requirements concerning Gender Equality Plans;
- the applicable Bulgarian legislation concerning equality and non-discrimination;
- the institutional policies and regulations of the Technical University of Gabrovo;
- the University's previous **Action Plan on Gender Equality 2022–2025**.

The GEP is intended to support institutional and cultural change rather than merely constitute a formal compliance document.

II. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The main purpose of the Gender Equality Plan is to establish a systematic institutional framework for:

1. ensuring equal opportunities for women and men;
2. preventing discrimination based on sex or gender;
3. improving gender balance in academic and administrative positions;
4. supporting equal access to recruitment, career development and leadership;
5. promoting work-life balance;

6. integrating the gender dimension, where relevant, into research and teaching;
7. preventing and addressing gender-based violence and sexual harassment;
8. developing gender equality competences among staff and decision-makers;
9. establishing a reliable system for monitoring gender equality through quantitative and qualitative indicators.

The Plan applies to:

- academic staff;
 - researchers;
 - administrative and technical staff;
 - doctoral students;
 - students;
 - management and decision-making bodies;
 - applicants for academic and administrative positions;
 - participants in research and educational activities.
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III. INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

The Technical University of Gabrovo shall promote an organisational culture in which women and men have equal opportunities to:

- study and undertake research;
- develop their professional careers;
- participate in decision-making;
- apply for academic and managerial positions;
- access to professional development and training;
- participate in international mobility;
- combine professional, academic and family responsibilities;
- contribute to the University's scientific, educational and organisational development.

Gender equality shall be considered a shared institutional responsibility.

The Rector and the University's governing bodies shall provide leadership, organisational support and appropriate resources for the implementation of this Plan.

The implementation of the GEP shall be coordinated with the University's existing policies and institutional structures, including its academic governance, human resources functions, research management, international cooperation and ethical framework.

IV. HORIZON EUROPE COMPLIANCE

This GEP incorporates the four mandatory process-related elements established for Horizon Europe Gender Equality Plans.

1. Public document and institutional endorsement

The GEP shall:

- be formally approved by the competent governing body of TU-Gabrovo;
- be signed/adopted by the Rector;
- be published on the University's public website;
- be communicated to academic, administrative and student communities;
- be reviewed periodically.

2. Dedicated resources

The University shall provide appropriate organisational resources for implementation of the Plan.

These may include:

- designation of a Gender Equality Officer or responsible institutional coordinator;
- establishment of a Gender Equality Working Group;
- allocation of working time for implementation and monitoring;
- provision of training and awareness-raising resources;
- use of existing institutional resources and structures where appropriate.

3. Data collection and monitoring

The University shall establish a systematic mechanism for collecting and analysing sex-disaggregated data concerning, as appropriate:

- academic staff;
- researchers;
- administrative staff;
- students;
- doctoral students;
- recruitment and appointments;
- promotions and academic career development;
- management and decision-making positions;
- participation in research projects;
- international mobility;
- training and professional development;
- remuneration, where legally and practically appropriate;
- complaints concerning discrimination, harassment and gender-based violence.

The data shall be processed in accordance with applicable data-protection legislation.

Annual internal monitoring shall be conducted, with periodic institutional reporting on progress against the GEP indicators.

4. Training and awareness raising

TU-Gabrovo shall implement regular awareness-raising and training activities on:

- gender equality;
- equal opportunities;
- prevention of discrimination;
- unconscious gender bias;
- inclusive recruitment;
- prevention of sexual harassment;
- respectful workplace and academic culture;
- gender-sensitive research and teaching.

Training shall target management, decision-makers, academic and administrative staff and, where appropriate, students and doctoral students.

V. BASELINE ASSESSMENT

The implementation of the GEP shall be evidence-based.

During the first year of implementation, TU-Gabrovo shall conduct or update an institutional gender equality audit.

The baseline assessment shall include, at minimum:

Human resources

- number and proportion of women and men among academic staff;
- number and proportion of women and men among researchers;
- number and proportion of women and men among administrative staff;
- distribution by academic position;
- distribution by age group, where appropriate.

Career development

- recruitment;
- applications and appointments;
- academic promotions;
- participation in qualification and training;
- management responsibilities;
- participation in research projects.

Leadership and decision-making

Data shall be collected concerning the representation of women and men in:

- University management;
- Academic Council;
- faculties and departments;
- committees;
- research project leadership;
- other relevant decision-making bodies.

Students and doctoral students

Where relevant, data shall include:

- enrolment;
- completion;
- retention;
- doctoral enrolment and completion;
- participation in international mobility;
- participation in research activities.

Institutional culture

The University may conduct anonymous surveys concerning:

- perceptions of equal opportunities;
- work-life balance;
- organisational culture;
- experiences of discrimination;
- experiences of harassment;
- awareness of reporting mechanisms.

The results of the baseline assessment shall be used to refine targets and actions.

VI. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

PRIORITY AREA 1

WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Objective 1.1

Promote an organisational culture supporting reconciliation of professional, academic and personal responsibilities.

Measures

1. Review institutional practices affecting work-life balance.
2. Promote flexible organisational arrangements where compatible with the nature of the work and applicable regulations.
3. Ensure that maternity, paternity, parental and other legally protected leave do not result in discrimination or unjustified career disadvantages.
4. Support reintegration following extended family-related leave.
5. Include work-life balance considerations in relevant managerial decisions.
6. Promote an organisational culture based on respect, collegiality and non-discrimination.
7. Incorporate gender equality principles into internal communication.

Indicators

- number of measures supporting work-life balance;
 - number of staff using available measures;
 - participation in reintegration activities;
 - results of staff surveys;
 - number of reported cases of gender discrimination.
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PRIORITY AREA 2

GENDER BALANCE IN LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING

Objective 2.1

Promote balanced participation of women and men in University leadership and decision-making structures.

Measures

1. Monitor the gender composition of decision-making bodies.
2. Analyse gender balance in management and committee positions.
3. Encourage balanced representation when appointing or nominating members of committees and working groups, while respecting competence and applicable legal requirements.
4. Encourage participation of women researchers and academics in leadership development activities.
5. Monitor gender representation among:
 - project coordinators;
 - heads of organisational units;
 - committee members;
 - academic management positions.

6. Organise leadership and career-development activities open equally to women and men.

Indicators

- percentage of women and men in decision-making bodies;
- percentage of women and men in managerial positions;
- percentage of women and men among research project leaders;
- participation in leadership-development activities.

Target

The University shall seek to improve gender balance in decision-making structures and avoid substantial and persistent under-representation of either sex, taking into account the specific gender distribution within the relevant academic field and staff population.

PRIORITY AREA 3

GENDER EQUALITY IN RECRUITMENT AND CAREER PROGRESSION

Objective 3.1

Ensure transparent and equal opportunities in recruitment, appointment and career development.

Measures

1. Review recruitment procedures from a gender-equality perspective.
2. Use gender-neutral and inclusive language in job advertisements.
3. Ensure that selection criteria are transparent, objective and related to professional qualifications.
4. Raise awareness among selection and appointment committees regarding unconscious gender bias.
5. Monitor recruitment outcomes by sex.
6. Monitor career progression by sex.
7. Analyse potential gender differences in access to:
 - research opportunities;
 - international mobility;
 - training;
 - academic promotion;
 - project leadership.
8. Encourage mentoring and professional-development opportunities for under-represented groups.

9. Ensure that career interruptions related to legally protected family responsibilities are treated fairly in accordance with applicable rules.

Indicators

- women/men among applicants;
 - women/men;
 - women/men appointed;
 - women/men promoted;
 - participation in training;
 - participation in international mobility;
 - participation in research projects.
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PRIORITY AREA 4

GENDER DIMENSION IN RESEARCH AND TEACHING

Objective 4.1

Promote consideration of the gender dimension in research and innovation wherever relevant to the research topic or methodology.

Measures

1. Raise awareness of the gender dimension in research among researchers and doctoral students.
2. Include information on gender-sensitive research methodologies in relevant research training.
3. Encourage researchers preparing Horizon Europe proposals to assess whether sex and/or gender is relevant to the research content.
4. Provide access to relevant guidance and training materials.
5. Encourage gender-sensitive approaches in data collection and analysis where scientifically relevant.
6. Monitor participation of women and men in research teams and project leadership.
7. Promote dissemination of relevant research results concerning gender equality.

Objective 4.2

Promote gender-sensitive teaching and learning where relevant.

Measures

1. Encourage academic staff to consider whether gender-related aspects are relevant to course content.
2. Include relevant examples and case studies in curricula where appropriate.
3. Promote equal participation of female and male students in practical, research and innovation activities.

4. Encourage STEM outreach activities that challenge gender stereotypes and encourage broader participation.

Indicators

- number of staff participating in gender-in-research training;
 - number of research projects considering gender/sex in research content where relevant;
 - number of relevant publications or research activities;
 - participation of women and men in research teams;
 - gender distribution of students participating in selected STEM/research activities.
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PRIORITY AREA 5

PREVENTION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Objective 5.1

Maintain a safe academic and working environment free from gender-based violence, sexual harassment and discrimination.

Measures

1. Review existing University procedures concerning discrimination, harassment and inappropriate conduct.
2. Clearly communicate available reporting and support mechanisms.
3. Ensure confidentiality and protection of individuals who report concerns, within the limits of applicable law.
4. Provide training for relevant staff responsible for receiving and handling complaints.
5. Conduct awareness campaigns for students and staff.
6. Include prevention of sexual harassment in staff training.
7. Collect anonymised information on complaints and their resolution.
8. Ensure that retaliation against individuals raising concerns is not tolerated.
9. Cooperate with relevant competent authorities and professional services where required.

Indicators

- number of awareness activities;
- number of staff trained;
- number of complaints received;
- number of complaints processed;
- time taken to process complaints, where legally appropriate;
- staff/student awareness of reporting mechanisms.

The objective shall not be interpreted as requiring a reduction in the number of reported cases. Increased reporting may indicate greater awareness and confidence in institutional mechanisms.

VII. CROSS-CUTTING ACTIONS

1. Gender Equality Working Group

Technical University of Gabrovo shall establish a Gender Equality Working Group or designate an equivalent institutional body.

The Working Group should include representatives, as appropriate, from:

- University management;
- academic staff;
- research staff;
- administration;
- students;
- doctoral students.

Its responsibilities shall include:

- coordinating implementation of the GEP;
 - monitoring indicators;
 - preparing annual monitoring information;
 - proposing corrective measures;
 - supporting training and communication;
 - contributing to the review and update of the GEP.
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2. Gender Equality Coordinator

The University shall designate a person responsible for coordinating implementation of the GEP.

The Coordinator shall:

- act as a contact point for gender equality matters;
 - coordinate data collection;
 - support the Gender Equality Working Group;
 - coordinate awareness and training activities;
 - prepare monitoring reports;
 - support Horizon Europe-related compliance.
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3. Training Programme

A recurring institutional training programme shall be developed.

Indicative annual activities:

- one training session for management and decision-makers;
- one training session on unconscious gender bias;

- one awareness activity for academic and administrative staff;
- one awareness activity for students and doctoral students;
- dissemination of relevant European Commission and EIGE resources.

VIII. INDICATORS AND MONITORING FRAMEWORK

The following indicators shall be monitored:

Area	Indicator	Frequency
Staff	Women/men among academic staff	Annual
Staff	Women/men among administrative staff	Annual
Career	Women/men recruited	Annual
Career	Women/men promoted	Annual
Leadership	Women/men in management	Annual
Leadership	Women/men in decision-making bodies	Annual
Research	Women/men among project leaders	Annual
Research	Women/men in research teams	Annual
Mobility	Women/men participating in international mobility	Annual
Training	Participation in gender-equality training	Annual
Work-life balance	Use of relevant measures	Annual
Culture	Staff/student survey results	Every 2 years
Harassment	Awareness of reporting mechanisms	Every 2 years
Complaints	Gender-related complaints and outcomes	Annual, anonymised

The indicators may be supplemented by additional indicators according to the University's needs and available data.

IX. RESPONSIBILITIES

Rector

The Rector shall have overall responsibility for institutional commitment and implementation of the GEP.

Academic Council

The Academic Council shall:

- approve the GEP;
- review implementation reports;
- support integration of gender equality into institutional policies.

Gender Equality Coordinator / Working Group

Responsible for operational coordination, monitoring and reporting.

Human Resources / Administrative Units

Responsible for relevant personnel data and monitoring recruitment and career development.

Research and Project Management Structures

Responsible for promoting gender equality and the gender dimension in research and Horizon Europe activities.

Academic Units

Faculties, departments and other academic units shall contribute to implementation within their respective responsibilities.

Students and Doctoral Students

Students and doctoral students shall be encouraged to participate in awareness, consultation and equality-related activities.

X. RESOURCES

Implementation of the GEP shall be supported through appropriate institutional resources.

Resources may include:

- staff time;
- administrative support;
- training resources;
- communication resources;
- analytical and monitoring capacity;
- external expertise where necessary.

The University shall integrate gender equality considerations into existing institutional planning and budgeting processes.

The GEP itself shall not be treated as a substitute for compliance with applicable Bulgarian legal requirements.

XI. COMMUNICATION AND PUBLICATION

The approved GEP shall be published on the official website of the Technical University of Gabrovo.

The University shall actively communicate the Plan through:

- internal electronic communication;
- the University website;
- staff and student information channels;
- training and awareness events;
- relevant international and research activities.

The University shall also communicate progress and major results of implementation.

XII. DATA PROTECTION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All data collected for the purposes of this GEP shall be processed in accordance with applicable data protection legislation, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Published statistics shall be appropriately aggregated and anonymised.

Individual-level information concerning complaints, harassment or other sensitive matters shall not be publicly disclosed.

XIII. MONITORING, REPORTING AND REVIEW

Implementation shall be monitored continuously.

The Gender Equality Coordinator/Working Group shall prepare an annual internal monitoring report containing:

1. actions implemented;
2. indicators achieved;
3. identified gaps;
4. challenges;
5. proposed corrective actions.

A comprehensive review of the GEP shall be conducted at least every two years.

The GEP shall be updated where monitoring demonstrates that:

- targets are not being achieved;
 - new institutional needs have emerged;
 - legislation or European requirements have changed;
 - new evidence or good practices become available.
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XIV. IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE 2026–2030

2026

- formal approval and publication of the GEP;
- appointment/designation of Gender Equality Coordinator;
- establishment of Gender Equality Working Group;
- baseline gender equality assessment;
- establishment of monitoring indicators;
- initial awareness and training programme.

2027

- implementation of recruitment and career-development measures;
- leadership and decision-making monitoring;
- training on unconscious gender bias;
- gender dimension in research training;
- first annual implementation report.

2028

- comprehensive review of progress;
- institutional survey on organisational culture and work-life balance;
- review of targets;
- corrective measures where necessary;
- continued awareness and training activities.

2029

- further implementation of career, leadership and research measures;
- assessment of gender balance in research projects and decision-making;
- targeted actions where significant disparities are identified.

2030

- final evaluation of the 2026–2030 GEP;
- assessment against baseline indicators;
- consultation with the University community;

- preparation of the next Gender Equality Plan.
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XV. EXPECTED RESULTS

Implementation of the GEP is expected to contribute to:

- stronger institutional capacity for gender equality;
 - transparent and inclusive organisational practices;
 - improved work-life balance;
 - equal opportunities for professional and academic development;
 - increased awareness of unconscious gender bias;
 - improved participation of women and men in decision-making;
 - stronger integration of gender considerations into relevant research and teaching;
 - a safe and respectful academic environment;
 - stronger compliance with Horizon Europe requirements;
 - enhanced institutional capacity to participate in European research and innovation programmes.
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XVI. FINAL PROVISION

The Gender Equality Plan of the Technical University of Gabrovo 2026–2030 shall enter into force following its approval by the competent governing body of the University.

All University units shall contribute to its implementation within their respective areas of responsibility.

The Plan shall be interpreted and implemented in accordance with applicable European Union and Bulgarian legislation and the internal regulations of the Technical University of Gabrovo.

Adopted by: Academic Council of the Technical University of Gabrovo

Date: 29.09.2026

Rector:

Prof. Dr. Eng. Iliya Zhelezarov

Signature: /Π/

Date of publication: _____