GENDER EQUALITY PLAN (GEP) OF KLAIPĖDA UNIVERSITY

2024-2030

Introduction

The Gender Equality Plan is an institutional policy instrument aimed at ensuring gender balance by implementing cultural, systemic institutional, and structural changes within the organization. The aim is to increase cohesion between the opportunities of men and women by ensuring equal access to career advancement, equal pay, and equal distribution of benefits.

Equality – where every member of the University community enjoys all human rights and freedoms without distinction of any kind – on the basis of gender, race, nationality, citizenship, language, origin, social status, creed, beliefs or opinions, age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin, religion, marital status, or the intent to have a child (children).

The Gender Equality Plan of KU is based on international instruments and regulatory acts of the Republic of Lithuania.

International instruments:

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of the United Nations (1948).

UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001).

A practical guide for the preparation of the Gender Equality in Academia and Research (GEAR tool) of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE).

Regulatory acts of the Republic of Lithuania:

The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania (1992), Article 29 of which provides that "a person may not have his or her rights restricted in any way, or be granted any privileges, on the basis of his or her gender, race, nationality, language, origin, social status, religion, convictions, or opinions" and Article 48 of which provides that "every person may freely choose an occupation or business, and shall have the right to adequate, safe, and healthy working conditions, adequate compensation for work, and social security in the event of unemployment".

The Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1998, current version in force since July 01, 2017), which aims to ensure "the implementation of equal rights for women and men enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, and to prohibit any type of discrimination on grounds of gender, in particular by reference to marital or family status". Article 2 of this Law defines that "equal opportunities for women and men means the implementation of human rights guaranteed in international instruments on human and civil rights and in the legislation of the Republic of Lithuania" (Article 2(2)), and that "violation of equal rights for women and men means discrimination on grounds of gender. A person's rejection of, or submission to conduct, which violates equal rights for women and men, may not be used as a basis for a decision affecting that person" (Article 2(3)).

The Law on Equal Treatment of the Republic of Lithuania (2003, current version in force since January 01, 2024), which aims to ensure the implementation of the provisions of Article 29 of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania. This law establishes that equal treatment means "the implementation of human rights enshrined in international instruments on human and civil rights as well as laws of the Republic of Lithuania irrespective of gender, race, nationality,

citizenship, language, origin, social status, beliefs, convictions or views, age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnic origin, or religion" (Article 2(4)).

The Labor Code of the Republic of Lithuania (2016, current version in force since August 31, 2023), which regulates individual employment relationships and Article 26 of which regulates gender equality between employees and non-discrimination on other grounds. Paragraph 6 of this Article establishes a mandatory provision for employers, who have an average number of employees of more than 50 to "adopt and publish, in the ways that are accustomed at the workplace, the measures for implementation of the principles for the supervision of the implementation and enforcement of the equal opportunities policies".

The National Progress Plan of the Republic of Lithuania (2020, current version in force since October 09, 2021). This national strategic planning document sets out three horizontal principles – (1) sustainable development, (2) innovation (creativity), and (3) equal opportunities for all. These principles aim to "consistently shape the values that are important for the progress of society and to promote desired changes in attitudes and behavior". The National Progress Plan of the Republic of Lithuania defines that "the application of the horizontal principle of "equal opportunities for all" ensures that all persons, regardless of their gender, nationality, racial or ethnic origin, nationality, language, religion, creed, beliefs or opinions, disability, health or social status, age, sexual orientation, or other identities are ensured equal rights and opportunities to use services, infrastructure, transport, and other means, to participate in public life". The document also points out that Lithuania's gender equality index is below the EU average, measures are, therefore, aimed at addressing gender equality issues and enabling Lithuania to achieve a higher position in the EU gender equality index by 2030.

The principles of gender equality are implemented in a way that is complementary to the University's documents:

The Statute of KU (2012), which grants academic freedom to members of the academic community, including the promotion of equal opportunities.

The Code of Academic Ethics of KU (2015, new wording since October 03, 2019), Section 2.4 of which defines the fundamental values of academic ethics of the academic community of KU as "academic integrity, responsibility, equality, non-discrimination, accountability, transparency, sustainable use of resources, academic freedom, impartiality in the evaluation of research and study papers, trust, respect".

The Development Strategy of KU for 2021-2030 prioritizes equal opportunities for community well-being. KU aims to contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations (The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN). The Operational Plan of KU for 2023-2024 (KU Council Resolution No. 9N-112 of March 21, 2023) provides for the integration of the UN Sustainable Development Goals into KU's education and research activities. In 2023, the Gender Equality Committee was formed by the Rector's Order No. 1-163.

In order to implement the regulatory acts of the Republic of Lithuania, KU have prepared, approved, and implement the following documents:

In accordance with the regulations on the implementation of the principles of equal opportunities policy established in Article 26(6) of the Labor Code of the Republic of Lithuania,

in 2017 the University prepared and approved by the Rector's Order (No. 1-027) the "KU Equal Opportunities Policy and its Implementation Procedure".

In 2022, the University developed and approved by the Rector's Order (No. 1-054) the "Description of Violence and Harassment Prevention Policy, Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Violence and Harassment" in accordance with the requirements of Article 30 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Lithuania. The Guidelines for Preventing and Responding to Sexual Harassment prepared by the Lithuanian University Rectors' Conference in 2020 are also taken into account. The Guidelines define sexual harassment as a violation of academic ethics, outline its specific characteristics, prevention measures, as well as procedures for responding to violation and decision-making within the academic community.

Klaipėda University's good practice

On September 01, 2016, eight higher education institutions and research organisations in five countries around the Baltic Sea started the Baltic Gender project (https://www.baltic-gender.eu) funded by HORIZON 2020 program under the call for promoting "Gender Equality in Research and Innovation" and the topic of "Support to Research Organisations to Implement Gender Equality Plans" (GERI-4-2015). The outcome of this project – Gender Equality Plans set up in the partner institutions aimed to reduce gender inequalities in Marine Science and Technology. In the frame of the Baltic Gender project, a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) for the period 2018-2023 for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) units of Klaipėda University, namely, Marine Research Institute and Faculty of Marine Technology and Natural Sciences, was developed, 2023-2024 – KU GEP.

The final report of the project submitted in 2020 states that "at Klaipėda University, all the actions made by the Baltic Gender have made an impact on the high-level management raising their gender awareness and the motivation to implement the actions towards gender equality on the institutional level"[1]. The knowhow and competences created by the Baltic Gender project during the project implementation period (2016–2020) has affected several important areas of the University's activities:

- The University became an expert on gender equality in new projects and newly formed consortiums in Europe, e.g., KU was responsible for the development of GEP for EU-CONEXUS and achieved that some outcomes of the Baltic Gender project would be adapted in the Horizon 2020 project EU-CONEXUS RESEARCH FOR SOCIETY (IBA-SwafS-Support-1-2020).
- At the institutional level, the first GEP was developed for STEM units. Also, the Baltic Gender recommendations have catalysed changes for the whole University. The institutional progress can already be seen: (i) an action on implementation a policy of equal opportunities and diversity at the institutional level has been included into the Action Plan

---

[1] Technical Report. Part B. Baltic Consortium on Promoting Gender Equality in Marine Research Organizations (Baltic Gender). Funded from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement No. 710363. Periodic report: 3rd (last), 2020

for KU Development Strategy for 2021–2030; (ii) an institutional assessment following the recommendations based on the Equal Opportunities Ruler has been conducted by the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson on August 10, 2020.

- Since 2021, coherent and continuous data relevant for gender equality policies have been systemically collected and analysed at the University level.

As a partner of EU-CONEXUS (European University for Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability (https://www.eu-conexus.eu/), funded by the Erasmus+ Program of the European Union), KU, as an expert on gender equality, was responsible for the development of GEP for EU-CONEXUS consortium. EU-CONEXUS GEP was approved in early 2022 and is available at https://www.eu-conexus.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/RFS_Policy-document_GEP.pdf.

KU cooperates with and is one of the founders of Klaipėda Social and Psychological Support Center, which works with domestic violence support programs.

In 2022, KU and its partners (Università di Siena UNISI, OpenCom (IT) OC, Aristotle Panepistimio Thessalonikis (EL) AUTH, Uniwersytet Jagielloński (PL) JU) launched the ERASMUS project "Promoting pluralistic education in European universities to combat invisible discrimination related to LGBTQ+" (PrEcIOUS). The aim of the project is to foster a nonpartisan community of higher education institutions with a culture capable of combating prejudices and phenomena, such as homophobia or transphobia, and promoting cultural differences.

Klaipėda University's situation: gender ratio of the academic staff

The gender ratio of the academic staff in KU faculties and institutes is not even (Fig. 1 and 2). There are more women in the social sciences, humanities, except for the Institute of Baltic Region History and Archeology (BRIAI), and health sciences than in the natural and marine sciences. Therefore, an important objective is to stimulate young people's interest in the natural sciences.
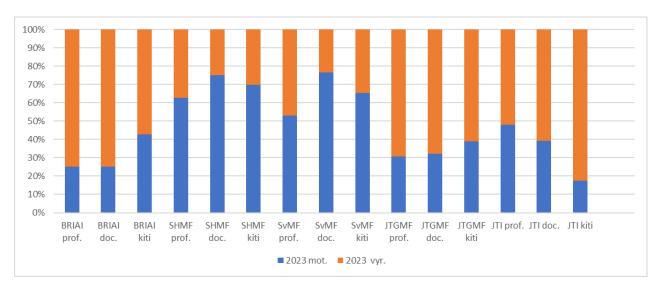

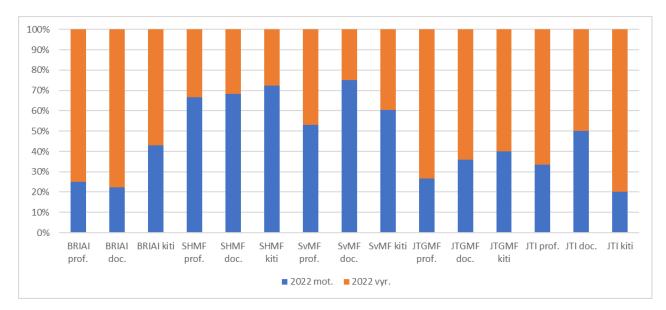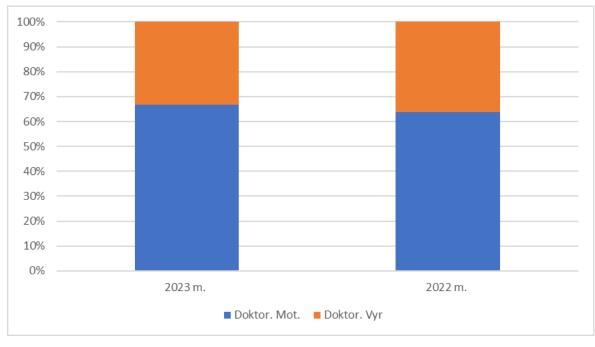Fig 1. Gender ratio of the academic staff at KU in 2023.

Fig 2. Gender ratio of the academic staff at KU in 2022.

The academic staff potential in doctoral studies is also characterized by gender imbalances (Fig. 3). The higher proportion of female doctoral students is due to the fact that the majority of doctoral students study in the social sciences and humanities.

Fig. 3. Gender ratio of the doctoral students at KU.

Gender imbalances in academic fields demonstrate the great need to encourage students to choose their studies by changing the gender stereotypes on career choices, which have led to a higher preference for natural science and engineering studies among boys, and for social sciences and humanities studies among girls. STEAM Education Centre, which started its activities in 2023, will significantly contribute to changing students' motivation to study and stereotypes.

Achieving gender balance in decision-making processes is a very important goal. In one of the most important decision-making circuits, there has been a marked change, with a 15% increase in the number of women in 2022 (compared to 2017) and gender balance in the KU Senate (Figure 4). Labai svarbiu tikslu yra lyčių pusiausvyros siekimas sprendimų priėmimo procesuose. Vienoje iš svarbiausių sprendimo priėmimo grandyje įvyko ryškus pokytis – 2022 m. (palyginus su 2017 m.) išaugo 15 proc. moterų skaičius ir KU Senato sudėtyje yra pasiektas lyčių balansas (4 pav.).
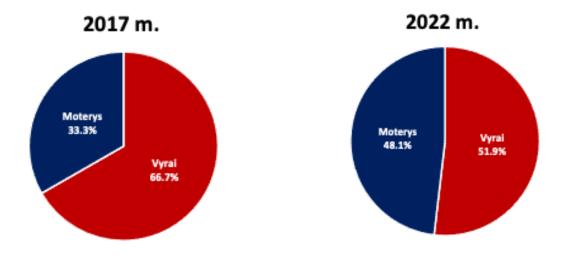

Fig. 4. Composition of the Senate of Klaipėda University by gender in 2017 and 2022.

Structure, aims, and objectives of the Plan

This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) encompasses such main aims as improving gender balance in leadership and decision making, achieving transparency in application and recruitment process, providing assistance in terms of work-family balance, enhancing organisational culture and creating favourable conditions for work and studies, raising awareness for gender balance and equal opportunities based on gender, implementing the policies of sexual and gender based harassment prevention, strengthening gender dimension in studies and research, removing the obstacles and barriers in University's community members' career paths, improving gender equality and equal opportunities, achieving gender balance by promoting women's and men's leadership in the areas with visible gender imbalance, etc. This GEP is a set of measures that will help to achieve better gender equality and guarantee equal opportunities for all University's community members. Activities directed toward gender equality foster not only positive structural, but also cultural changes in the organisation and in a broader context – in higher education and in the society in general.

The Plan includes the following aims:

- Enhancing the career advancement and leadership;
- Encouraging gender balance in decision-making processes;
- Raising community awareness on gender equality issues;
- Providing assistance in terms of work-family balance;

- Integrating gender into communication and marketing;

- Promoting the use of gender-sensitive language and teaching methods;

- Enhancing gender balance in research teams;

- Collecting and analyzing gender-disaggregated data (GDD) on a regular basis.

The Plan includes the following objectives:

- Organizing trainings to raise the awareness at all levels about gender issues;

- Increasing the number of under-represented gender in decision-making positions;

- Providing mentoring opportunities to early-career scientists;

- Improving selection and recruitment procedures;

- Creating a support system for gender-based violence and harassment at work;

- Ensuring the continuous professional development training processes and opportunities for academic staff.

Principles, measures, and indicators for the implementation of the Plan

Principles for the implementation:

- **Integrity**. The principles of equal opportunities are enshrined in all of the University's strategic, management, education and research organization documents as well as processes, which involve the entire University community.

- **Responsibility**. The entire University community is consciously committed to the prevention of discrimination and assumes both collective and individual responsibility not to contribute to the creation of a discriminatory and hostile environment for a person or a group of persons, and to prevent discrimination and the creation of such an environment, through their words or actions.

- **Inclusion**. The GEP applies to any person, who is studying, working, visiting, or is otherwise associated with the University.

- **Sustainability**. Ensuring coherent planning, implementation, and monitoring of equal opportunities-based activities as well as promoting continuity.

Measures:

- Building leadership skills through practical activities;

- Encouraging underrepresented gender to apply to open higher positions, if there are too small numbers of applications from women or men;
- Developing non-discriminatory job descriptions and selection criteria to be applied for the whole selection process;
- Providing the annual updates of career development plans in departments;
- Ensuring flexible working hours and remote office;
- Conducting interviews with parents before/after parental leave;
- Ensuring confidentiality of reports;
- Providing information to employees on prevention measures and case management for gender-based violence in the workplace, including sexual harassment;
- Organizing targeted training on ways and means to ensure equal opportunities (gender and beyond);
- Appointing to mentoring for gender equality position;
- Developing and using a tool to monitor anonymous messages on a regular basis;
- Carrying out communication campaigns on a regular basis to close the gender gap (e.g., disseminating best practices to promote women's leadership).

Target	Action	Description of action
1. Gender equality in recruitment and career progression		
1.1. Enhance the career advancement and leadership	1.1.1. Organizing trainings to raise the awareness at all levels about gender issues	Trainings on university level whilst implementing the policy of Klaipėda University on gender equality aimed at: - Ensuring the continuous professional development training processes and opportunities for academic staff; - Encouraging academic staff to suggest the training ideas; - Organizing training for representatives of KU Offices (especially those responsible for recruitment and career) on unconscious gender bias and the organization of selection processes in order to enhance the proportion of underrepresented gender when applying to open positions.
	1.1.2. Promoting the underrepresented gender to leadership positions	Building leadership skills through practical activities (e.g., by assigning managing tasks (conference/meeting organization), chairing of conferences, moderating meetings/discussions; leading the project team, etc.).
1.2. Provide career development and networking opportunities	1.2.1. Building grass-root networks inside the University	The informal grass-root networks contribute to careers through organized seminars and trainings that also give possibilities for networking and mentoring.
	1.2.2. Providing mentoring opportunities to early-career scientists	Analysis of mentoring needs and development of mentoring schemes for early-career scientists with a focus on under-represented gender.
1.3. Ensure the implementation of career plans	1.3.1. Providing career development plans with annual updates	Identifying the need and preparation of information about the paths of academic career (leaflet, section in the webpage, etc.) for postgraduates, doctoral students, post-doctoral trainees, and junior researchers.
	1.3.2. Improving selection and recruitment procedures	Identifying the gaps in selection and recruitment procedures to improve selection and recruitment process. Development of non-discriminatory job descriptions and selection criteria to be applied for the whole selection process.

	1.3.3. Enabling equal possibilities	Reflecting on the influence of flexible working hours, career breaks, maternity and absence due to extended sick leave, as well as part-time employment contracts on career advancement.
		Encouraging underrepresented gender to apply to open higher positions, if there are too small numbers of applications from women or men.
2. Gender balance in leadership and decision-making		
2.1. Encourage gender balance in decision-making processes	2.1.1. Improving the involvement of underrepresented gender	Striving for gender balance in the University's management bodies and working groups.
	2.1.2. Encouraging women to apply for leadership positions	Encouraging and supporting women applying for leadership positions.
2.2. Raise the awareness and visibility of good practice examples	2.2.1. Organizing leadership training	Organizing trainings in leadership and soft skills at every stage of academic and administrative staff career.
	2.2.2 Carrying out communication campaigns	Carrying out regular communication campaigns to promote women's leadership and disseminating good practice examples.
3. Work-life balance and organizational culture		
3.1. Promote family friendly strategies	3.1.1. Ensuring flexible working hours and remote office	Informing newly employed employees about the possibilities of having flexible working hours and remote office.
	3.1.2. Conducting interviews with parents before/ after parental leave	Preparing a questionnaire and conducting interviews with parents before/after parental leave in order to find out/ to meet their expectations.
	3.1.3. Maintaining contact with individuals, who are temporarily absent for childcare or other reasons	Ensuring availability of contact information of employees, who are temporarily absent due to parental leave on the staff lists and website.
		Informing employees on parental leave about work-related events (seminars, meetings, training, etc.).
3.2. Identify the reasons why employees are leaving	3.2.1. Conducting interviews with leaving academic staff to identify the reasons for leaving	Developing a questionnaire for leaving employees to identify the reasons of leaving. Developing institutional practices in order to carry out an analysis of the reasons for changing jobs.

3.3. Make a healthier psychological and social environment	3.3.1. Making a healthier psychological and social environment	Disseminating open resources on work-related psychological and social influence on health (time pressure, monotonous work, job control and autonomy, fairness, work demands and job security, as well as social contact with co-workers and supervisors).
3.4. Build a team and strengthen community relations	3.4.1. Organizing regular bonding events and get-together for staff	Planning and implementing annual events to strengthen bonds with the community, such as Christmas, sport events, academic events, festivals, excursions. Forum, questionnaires on wellbeing and equality at work.
3.5. Raise awareness	3.5.1. Organizing trainings on communication, change management, and stress management	Inviting keynote speakers or role models (men, women, or transgender) on campus to make conferences on raising the awareness of unconscious bias, upfront discrimination, and responsible use of digital tools.
4. Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content		
4.1. Aspire after gender equality in research teams	4.1.1. Encouraging the involvement of different genders in research teams, project applicant teams, and implementers	Collecting data in the KU project management system.
4.2. Integrate gender aspects in research content	4.2.1. Developing institutional practices to integrate gender aspects into research content	Developing institutional tools to promote gender mainstreaming in research phases: research topic/object; research methodology; research result, impact of research result.
4.3. Promote the use of gender-sensitive language and teaching methods	4.3.1. Encouraging academic staff to use gender-sensitive language and teaching methods	Developing teachers' awareness and competencies, disseminating good practice examples.
4.4. Promote gender mainstreaming in communication and dissemination	4.4.1. Applying measures to support equal visibility of male and female researchers in the media and social networks	Raising awareness and competencies of communication specialists.

4.5. Raise awareness raising	4.5.1. Organizing training for academic community	Organizing regular seminars for academic community: Diversity knowledge; Application of gender- and diversity-sensitive language; Behavior; Use of gender-sensitive methodology; Integration of the intersex topic (ethnicity, race, class, age, citizenship status, etc.); Identification and formulation of gender-sensitive research questions; Production of gender-sensitive outcomes; Identification of users/beneficiaries by gender, etc. Dissemination open resources for self-learning.
5. Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment		
5.1. Apply measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment	5.1.1. Providing information to employees on prevention measures and case management for gender-based violence in the workplace, including sexual harassment	Informing employees on what actions should be taken if a person experiences gender-based violence in the workplace, including sexual harassment (information in website). Preparing the procedures of the reporting cases of gender-based violence, including harassment, and foreseeing disciplinary actions for the perpetrators.
	5.1.2. Creating a support system for survivors of gender-based violence and harassment at work	Encouraging reporting gender-based violence and harassment; ensuring accessible and timely support; listening to victims of violence.
	5.1.3 Providing a confidential reporting channel	Establishing a transparent, visible, and robust reporting channel for victims of gender-based violence in the workplace, including sexual harassment.
5.2. Raise awareness	5.2.1. Organizing targeted trainings	Organizing training for academic staff, professionals, and students on human rights, recognition of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, and the prevention of violence. Publicizing and disseminating open resources for self-learning.
	5.2.2. Carrying out communication campaigns	Carrying out cross-media campaigns for the community on a regular basis on gender equality (topics: gender-neutral language in academic writing, harassment, etc.).
6. Horizontal measures		

6.1. Regularly collect gender-disaggregated data (GDD)	6.1.1. Collecting gender-disaggregated data on an annual basis and presenting it in the University's Annual Activity Report	Updating the list of relevant monitoring indicators (quantitative and qualitative) for each plan category; carrying out data collection, annual analysis, monitoring of institutional changes; providing recommendations related to the implementation of GEP measures, if necessary, updating/supplementing indicators.
6.2. Collect, publish, and disseminate information related to the implementation of the Gender Equality Plan	6.2.1. Collecting, publishing, and disseminating information related to the implementation of the Gender Equality Plan	Launching a website/column on the website for hosting information related to the implementation of the measures of the Gender Equality Plan and collecting community feedback.
Develop information and monitoring tools		Creating a monitoring tool on the KU intranet to collect information anonymously and analyze it periodically: a) staff awareness of the equality plan, etc. b) the status of the gender and age balance of staff in the units by function groups; b) adverse incidents where the principles of information, equality, and ethics are violated.