



REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SPORT
NATIONAL AGENCY OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Strategic Gender Equality Plan

For the National Agency of Scientific Research and
Innovation for 2023-2025

"This Gender Equality Plan reflects the views of the authors only, and the European Commission or other granting authority cannot be held responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein. The authors have made every attempt to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information provided in this publication.

The development of the Gender Equality Plan was supported by the European Commission through the Horizon Europe project "R&I policy making, implementation and support in the Western Balkans", grant agreement 10105887. More information on the POLICY ANSWERS project can be found at www.westernbalkans-infohub.eu.

The authors also acknowledge the support of the project LeTSGEPs "Leading Towards Sustainable Gender Equality Plans in research performing organizations" which received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation programme under the grant agreement 873072. More information on the LeTSGEPs project can be found at <https://letsgeps.eu>."

Foreword

Women are equal in law, but are they equal in actual fact? This question is also valid for the National Agency of Scientific Research and Innovation, which is an organisation that has in its vision the promotion of the values of equality, ethics, integrity, openness, inclusion and equal rights in the field of science and research.

The Gender Equality Plan (GEP) of the National Agency of Scientific Research and Innovation seeks to integrate gender mainstreaming into all the functions of the organisation, its structure, practices, human resources management, research, participation in governing bodies, by putting the plan at the forefront of our commitments and actions to promote greater gender equity.

On the one hand “The plan” meets the requirements of the European Commission and on the other, is designed to meet the particular needs of NASRI. It also contributes to the construction and development of a specific policy which promotes gender equity in financing of R&D activities within Higher Education Institutions in Albania.

Equality between men and women in all areas of social life is a matter of great importance for our country and for our economy. Based on this, gender equality is sanctioned in the Constitution of Republic of Albania but also in the “Law on gender equality in Albania”. In the same way, the Strategy of Science Technology and Innovation 2030 sets a clear objective through which Albania within 2030 should have a national action plan for the promotion of women in science, technology and innovation.

Mirela Muça

NASRI General Director

Our commitment

Our Gender Equality Plan (GEP) for 2023-2025 is a set of commitments that aim to promote gender equality both in our institution and in our projects through institutional and cultural change. The National Agency for Scientific Research, Technology and Innovation (NASRI) is committed to offering equal opportunity for everyone working in the institution or involved in NASRI's projects where there is no gender discrimination based in offering opportunities and in the allocation of resources and benefits.

In defining measures and actions in the first GEP 2023-2025, NASRI has built on the European Commission's five priority areas of intervention such as:

- ✓ gender balance in leadership and decision-making
- ✓ gender equality in recruitment and career progression
- ✓ work-life balance and organisational culture
- ✓ integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content
- ✓ measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment.

Introduction

From 2022, the European Commission introduced gender equality plans (GEPs) as an additional eligibility criteria for public bodies, research organisations and higher education establishments when applying for funding to the Horizon Europe framework programme for research and innovation 2021 to 2027. A GEP must be a set of commitments and actions that aim to promote gender equality in the organisation.

Based on the findings of the European Commission's She Figures 2021 report, women are still under-represented in research and innovation careers, representing only around one-third of researchers (33%). Gender equality is a core value of the European Union. Due to the specific requirements of the scientific research sector, a specific interaction is needed to overcome the gender gap that still exists in this field, as a result of numerous structural obstacles related to gender equality in research and innovation.

The main funding instrument Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe - the new Framework Program for Research and Innovation (2021-2027) is one of the ways through which the European Commission addresses these obstacles. As an active participant in international programs managed by NASRI, Albania has satisfactory indicators in gender representation, with 63% of women beneficiaries in the MSCA (Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions) H2020 program or 61% of women participants in the COST program. Also, women make up 27% of participation in national research and development projects financed by NASRI.

NASRI, as the key point for Framework Programs in Albania, has since the late 2020 promote the GEP in HEI (public and private) and Research Centres. The GEP for NASRI was designed based on a gender context analysis that identified where NASRI stood in terms of gender equality. Based on a thorough gender context analysis, no substantial gender inequalities were identified as regards recruitment procedures, gender pay gaps, or

participation in projects and events, however, it was noted that some policies and procedures could be introduced to further raise awareness and support gender equality both within NASRI and in all research projects funded by NASRI and in which NASRI participates.

The gender context analysis was based on the analysis of several interviews carried out with the staff between November 2022 and March 2023. The questions aimed to understand the NASRI's staff level of awareness of existing NASRI policies and practices, to collect their level of satisfaction with work-life balance, and to get their impressions and perceptions on how effective NASRI is at promoting and ensuring gender balance and equality in the organisation, but also into the programs that it supports. The main outcomes of the survey were that the staff was generally satisfied with the existing levels of gender balance within NASRI, but that the organisation should strive for a more formal approach in how it approaches gender equality requirements for organisations that apply at NASRI for research funds, or are collaborating with NASRI for different projects and programs.

About NASRI

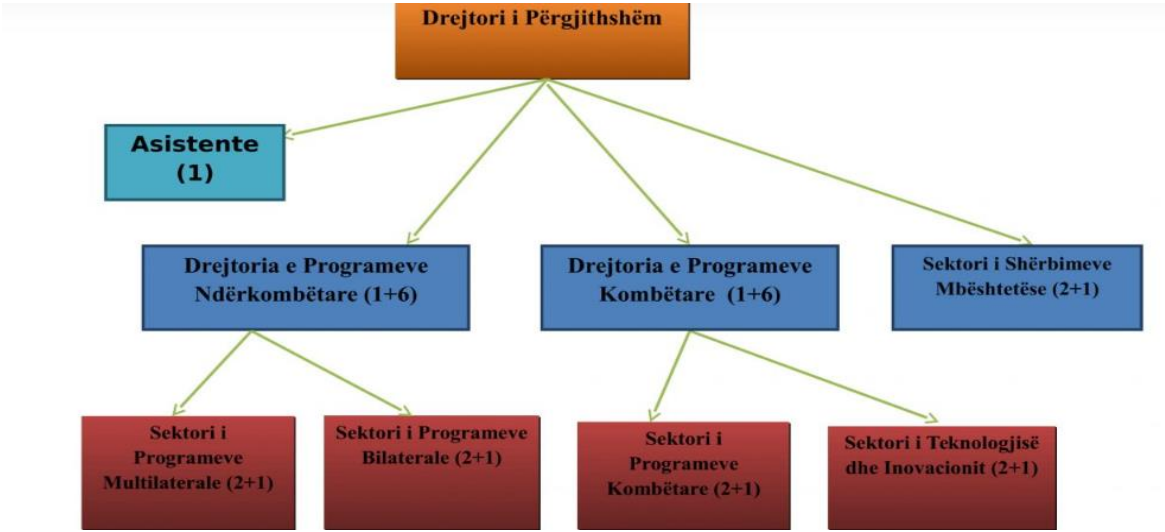
NASRI is a public legal institution under the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth created based on the Decision No. 607, dated 31.08.2016 "On the Creation, Composition, Organization and Operation of the National Agency for Scientific Research, Technology and Innovation". NASRI is a budgetary institution, being financed with funds from the state budget and funds from the programs and projects of the EU, individual states and partner organizations and other donations. NASRI is organized and functions through its governing bodies and authorities, which are the board of administration and the General Director. The administration board is a collegial decision-making body, chaired by the Minister of Education and Sports. NASRI approves, based on free competition among applicants, funding for doctoral study projects. The agency also administers other scientific research and innovation funds, within the framework of national, international and bilateral scientific research programs, which it distributes based on institutions' applications.

The creation of NASRI aims at building a modern system of science, strengthening scientific and technological research, as well as their integration into the higher education system. NASRI facilitates the exchange of knowledge, and partnerships inside and outside the country, to strengthen research in the country and region.

NASRI's vision is to develop science and technology following national priorities, cooperating with all relevant institutions and sectors. NASRI contributes to the creation of appropriate infrastructure and instruments that implement research and development policies in Albania, promoting activities and enterprises that develop science, technology and innovation and playing a leading role in creating a culture of scientific research carried out following national priorities.

One of the focus areas of the European Commission refers to gender equality in recruitment and career progression. The working relations of the employees of NASRI are regulated based on the provisions of the legislation on the civil servant, the labour relations of the

administrative employees of NASRI are regulated based on the provisions of the Labor Code and the requirement process is a centralized process organized by the Department of the Public Administration. This is the reason why this area has not been included in the following measures and actions. Furthermore, based on the Civil Servant Law (Article 5) the administration of the civil service is governed by the law and is based on the principle of equal opportunities, non-discrimination, merit, transparency, professionalism and political impartiality, as well as guarantees the sustainability of the civil servant and the continuity of the civil service. The same principles apply for the admission to the civil services. Article 20 states that admission to the civil service is based on the principles of equal opportunities, merit, professional skills and non-discrimination and is carried out through a transparent and fair selection process. NASRI has a total of 19 employees according to the approved structure.



The staff has systematic access to the organigram that reflects current reporting lines.

MEASURES AND ACTIONS FOR 2023-2025

Considering the specific mission of NASRI as an institution that promotes scientific research and innovation by supporting, financing, monitoring and evaluating research programs and projects, the measures and actions of the GEP for 2023-2025 will focus in two main directions:

- ✓ Ensuring gender balance within NASRI as an organization
- ✓ Promoting gender balance and diversity across NASRI operations and programs

Ensuring gender balance within NASRI as an organisation

Measure 1: Promote gender-sensitive organisational culture that disseminates the values of equality that the organisation applies in its principles.

Specific objective: Promote and disseminate an image of an agency committed to equal opportunities.

Action 1.1 Include gender equality as a commitment in NASRI's mission and vision.

The Action Plan of the National Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation 2017-20226 in Albania¹ is in harmony with the principles of the 21st UN Agenda² and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development³. As such, NASRI should also approach these principles and goals with one of them being “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. In this perspective, NASRI should incorporate gender equality as a main principle in its mission and vision and formalize its commitment to this cause.

Action 1.2 Appoint a Gender Focal Point to supervise the implementation of the first GEP for 2023-2025 and improve GEP through the years.

Measure 2: Promote gender balance in leadership and decision-making

Specific objective: Promote gender balanced teams and decision-making bodies within NASRI.

Currently, the Administrative Board of NASRI consists of 4 women and 2 men, while the project evaluation commissions consist of 14 women and 16 men. The specific objective of the following actions is to formalize formalise and professionalise NASRI's approach to leadership and decision-making. The actions aims to support further transparency and understanding within the organisation.

Action 2.1 Strive for gender balance among the decision-making bodies, aiming at a minimum participation of the underrepresented gender.

¹ <https://arsimi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Draft-Strategjia-Komb%C3%ABtare-p%C3%ABr-Shkenc%C3%ABn-Teknologjin%C3%AB-dhe-Inovacionin.pdf>

² <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/outcomedocuments/agenda21>

³ <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

Action 2.2 Achieve gender equality by promoting, strengthening and developing full equality of treatment and opportunities of carrier for women and men in this organisation.

Action 2.3 Continue taking active part in gender equality networks and workshops.

Measure 3: Promote work-life balance in a safe environment for all

Specific objective: Ensure that NASRI is a safe, welcoming and a healthy workplace for all.

Action 3.1 Clear and transparent policies will be implemented to ensure safe, welcoming and healthy working environment and to support healthy work-life balance of NASRI's staff.

This action would improve the internal framework to provide for greater quality of work-life balance arrangements (through remote working), more user-friendly and transparent procedures.

Action 3.2 Yearly gender equality training will be organised (including gender equality training materials to be developed) in support of raising awareness on gender equality related concepts and NASRI existing measures and policies.

Measure 4: Take preventive steps against gender-based violence including sexual harassment.

Specific objective: To achieve the organisation's commitment to the prevention and elimination of sexual harassment and gender-based harassment, raising awareness among all staff of the need to establish treatment based on equality.

Action 4.1 Prepare a set of guidelines and procedures regarding the definition of gender-based violence and steps to address harassment cases if such occur.

Action 4.2 Perform yearly workshops and training raising awareness among all staff of the need to establish treatment based on equality.

Promoting gender balance and diversity across NASRI operations

Specific objective: The aim of this area is that gender balance and diversity go beyond NASRI and ensures these values are reflected beyond the management practices and internal processes into its activities and projects.

Measure 5: Raise awareness about the integration of gender dimension in research

Action 5.1 The organizations that will apply for funding at NASRI will need to have an approved Gender Equality Plan for their organisation.

NASRI is taking measures to fully implement GEP requirements in its own rules and regulations. This action will take place by the beginning of 2024.

Action 5.2 All calls for projects will include a section in which applicants are required to declare any gender dimension included in their research and actions with the aim to

promote the consideration of the gender dimension in the design of research projects and project proposals.

Action 5.3 The representatives of NASRI will promote the NASRI gender policy among potential applicants for its projects and they will raise awareness about the benefits of gender balance among researchers within the researching teams.

To educate our partners and our applicants on gender equality principles, gender mainstreaming and GEP measures we will actively and regularly disseminate relevant publications and materials (starting with the publication of our GEP), including projects and training opportunities on GE related subjects. We will promote gender equality requirements in our info-days.

Action 5.4 NASRI will continue identifying and removing any potential gender bias in the NASRI evaluation procedure and will embed gender awareness within all levels of the funding processes while keeping the focus on excellence.

Action 5.5 Establish a systematic data collection system about the composition of the research teams, their research applications and the composition of speakers and panellist in events organised by NASRI or its partners.

Action 5.5 Pay attention to the gender of persons represented in our reports, social media posts, and regular newsletters. Identify “ambassadors” in various projects and research domains to encourage more applications from underrepresented groups of researchers.