

Gender Equality Plan

A Riinvest Institute Strategy Towards
Gender Equality and Wellbeing

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Abbreviations

Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

Public Relations (PR)

Management (MGT)

Human Resources (HR)

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1. Preamble

The Riinvest Institute acknowledges that employees are the most valuable resource and is committed to creating an attractive and inspiring working environment. We aim to improve employees' wellbeing and facilitate their professional development.

The Riinvest Institute fosters an organisational culture that prioritises openness, embraces diversity, and values individual assessments to foster dynamic interactions among various fields and diverse perspectives in problem-solving. Our institution actively encourages constructive interaction and collaboration among employees while minimising hierarchical barriers, creating a conducive and harmonious work environment.

Our organisation recognises the gender inequality within our country's academic structures that hinder equal professional growth for female researchers. We are committed to addressing this challenge through our Gender Equality Plan (GEP). The GEP targets three key areas: (i) Addressing deep-seated unconscious gender bias within the academic sphere; (ii) Promoting the visibility of female researchers in public discourse and encouraging their involvement within our institute; (iii) Facilitating work-life balance and opportunities to mitigate professional disadvantages associated with family responsibilities. We aim to create a more equitable environment for all researchers.

As per its strategy, the Riinvest Institute is committed to be a gender-just employer. Our GEP, stemming from our strategic orientations, is also aligned with the specific requirements of EU framework programmes, such as Horizon Europe. As such, it goes beyond the legal requirements of the current legislation in Kosovo.

2. Objectives

The Riinvest Institute's GEP has the following objectives:

- Ensure gender equality in recruitment, personal, and professional development opportunities.
- Address professional disadvantages stemming from caregiving responsibilities.
- Boost the representation of women among researchers, project leaders, and institute management.
- Enhance the visibility of female researchers in public and high-profile activities.
- Raise awareness among staff and management regarding gender issues and biases.
- Contribute to improving the work-life balance for all employees.

We acknowledge that achieving gender equality is a long-term, evolving process that requires sustained efforts, increased awareness, and organisational change. Consequently, the strategy's objectives and outcomes will adapt and evolve.

3. Strategy

Riinvest Institute's Gender Equality Plan (GEP) is informed by best practices from universities and European research centres, aligning with guidelines set forth by the Horizon Europe Program.¹ The GEP integrates existing employee welfare and gender equality measures to make them integral to Riinvest Institute's practices. It addresses senior management, human resources, and organisational culture, and spans all levels within the Institute.

3.1. Gender Equality in Recruitment and Career Progression

Women face many challenges during the career path in research and innovation derived from "face systemic discrimination and structural barriers"². GEP aims to address "unconscious gender bias" which has been researched³, and it aims to eliminate the "motherhood penalty"⁴ which refers to "mothers who are researchers are socially undervalued and seen as less competent and dedicated to their work than fathers".

Riinvest Institute has reviewed current recruitment, selection, and career progression. As a result, nine measures derived from it aiming to ensure that women have equal opportunities and build and develop better careers. Furthermore, the reviewing process is based on the best practices in research and academic institutions across Europe. The following are nine measures:

Measure 1: Appointing two designated persons (One Senior Associate and Researcher) on gender equality. This measure aims to ensure that job requirements and opportunities are the same for male and female, supporting the management on gender equality, and the development, implementation, and monitoring of GEP.

Measure 2: Improving and advancing **recruitment standards** on job promotion and requirements⁵. This measure also aims to encourage the application of female candidates in job vacancies at Riinvest, definition of principles on transparency and avoiding unconscious bias.

Measure 3: Increasing the number of **interns and research assistants** to relieve researchers from the workload and tasks they are overqualified for.

¹ Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans, European Commission, DG Research and Innovation, September 2021

² Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans, European Commission, DG Research and Innovation, September 2021, p. 38

³ Tackling gender bias in research evaluation: Recommendations for action for EU Member States by Standing Working Group on Gender in Research and Innovation, European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC), March 2019

⁴ Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans, European Commission, DG Research and Innovation, September 2021

⁵ Note: Riinvest already has well-defined regulations governing codes of conduct. These regulations are outlined in the internal policy and procedure guidelines, as well as in the systematization regulations for workplaces, both of which explicitly prohibit discriminatory elements.

Measure 4: Through organised public events such as workshops and PR activities increasing **the visibility of female researchers and economists**. Riinvest aims to increase the visibility of female researchers and economics focusing on young female researchers, through media appearances (approximately six in one year) and discussing topics with special emphasises on women empowerment and entrepreneurship.

Measure 5: Increasing the number of part-time researchers and economics, in line with Riinvest development of framework for **project co-leadership** aiming to take project leadership role and gain experience in leadership, Riinvest will increase the number of part-time researcher and economics.

Measure 6: Organising **training opportunities** to Riinvest Institute employees and **gender-specific trainings** to female researchers and encouraging pro-active management approach to provide to employees training and opportunities through improvement of training guideline.

4. Work-Life Balance and Organizational Culture

The legal infrastructure in Kosovo is not well-regulated in terms of parental leave, despite this, Riinvest institute is committed to support female workers for independent work-life balance. Starting from the principles of equality, justice and based on the Constitution of the State of Kosovo, article 24.2 [Equality by the Law]; Article 26.1 Right to Personal Integrity; Article 37 [Marriage and Family Law]; and on the current legal framework on the law on the Protection from Discrimination⁶ and the law on Gender Equality⁷, we stand out by helping our employees make the necessary adjustments to ensure work-life balance.

Aligned with our organisational culture, we have cultivated an environment that facilitates career advancement for both women and men. In addition to these accomplishments, Riinvest also offers moral support and recognises the personal responsibilities that employees may have outside the workplace, including caregiving responsibilities. Among the work-life balance measures in our Institute, we are committed to supporting all employees as follows:

Measure 1: Maternity leave policies - to maintain the job position for one (1) year and ensuring that fixed-term contracts can be extended, and Parental leave policy depending on request of the employer 1 month.

Measure 2: Enabling employees to balance their professional and personal commitments includes two sub-measures: **flexible working time arrangements** and **flexible working time**. **Flexible working time arrangements** - designing the process, procedures within the institute that affects staff with care responsibilities or part-time workers, and remote

⁶ LAW NO. 05/L-021 ON THE PROTECTION FROM DISCRIMINATION

⁷ LAW NO. 05/L-020 ON GENDER EQUALITY

working. **Flexible working time** arrangements for caring responsibilities, including childcare, and caring for other dependents.

Measure 3: Specific arrangements for **workload management** regards to how different tasks are divided and distributed, such as teaching and administrative workloads versus research work within the Institute and teaching at Higher Education Institutions.

Measure 4: Reintegration of staff after parental leave policies, career breaks, including mentoring and active support.

Measure 5: Gender monitoring and awareness rising and organising twice a year to evaluate and assess the situation regards to female researchers and the progress achieved within the GEP and discussions regarding advice and support for work-life balance.

Measure 6: Communicate the existence, measures, and progress of the GEP and increase the awareness for equality, gender and diversity among the management and employees through internal presentations and seminars.

Measure 7: Advice and support, through advice and one to one meeting with senior managers to provide ideas especially to your women researchers.

5. Measures Against Gender-Based Violence Including Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment and gender-based violence are subject to criminal prosecution in Kosovo. The legal framework on gender-based violence and sexual harassment is well defined in legal framework⁸ in Kosovo and the draft law on prevention and protection from domestic violence, violence against women and gender-based violence is expected to be approved soon in the Assembly.

Since its establishment of Riinvest Institute, such cases have not been evidenced and known, but considering it necessary to have a policy within the reinvest institute, we condemn every psychological and physical violence that may occur within the institution. Violence on a psychological, physical, and sexual basis is punishable by law, therefore, we encourage all colleagues to report to the Ethics Committee in case they become victims of psychological, physical violence and sexual harassment. They will receive all personal, organisational, and legal support. In addition, our organisation has established a **culture of zero tolerance** toward sexual harassment and gender-based violence.

6. Outlook

This GEP represents an important initial step regarding to gender equality at Riinvest Institute, and for the next GEP cycle 2023/2024 it sets the priorities as follows:

Riinvest Institute is a small organisation with a straightforward organisational structure that includes the board, executive director, program director, finance department, and

⁸ LAW NO. 05/L-021 ON THE PROTECTION FROM DISCRIMINATION

human resources. The inclusion of females at Riinvest at all levels is as follows: one out of four members of the management team is female, four out of nine research economists are female, and two out of four staff members in the finance and administration departments are female.

6.1 Integration of the gender dimension into research

Riinvest Institute has undertaken under its agenda gender dimension. The topics covered so far are related to the labour market, women decision making, women entrepreneurship and within other research topics is has provided findings form the gender perspective. Our organisation for the next GEP cycle, aims to expand the gender research sensitive topics and through these topics aims to raise the debate regarding to gender dimension within other field through its research reports, agenda, infographics aiming to inform policy makers and stakeholders. In our research team consists of female researchers that have been actively involved in research and contributed to topics related to gender equality research and advocacy in terms of increasing the number of female researchers at Riinvest Institute and at country level, and supporting female researchers to increase their capacities in terms of conducting research and writing project proposals.

6.2 Diversity management

Riinvest has encouraged diversity of staff composition in terms of gender, age, professional, cultural, ethnicity and professional background. Staff heterogeneity has been always welcomed and considered as an added value and quality of Riinvest Institute.

7. Organisation

In the pursuit of building an effective organisation and being gender-just employer, Riinvest Institute has appointed two designated individuals: a Senior Associate (female) and a Senior Researcher (female). Their primary responsibility is to ensure the implementation of the GEP and enhance individual well-being and gender equality at Riinvest Institute. These designated individuals have been appointed by Riinvest Management to address the underrepresentation of females and to ensure that female job candidates have the same opportunities as males. In this context, these designated individuals report directly to the Executive Director for any matters related to gender equality and the implementation of the Gender Equality Plan. The role of senior associate as designated person for gender equality are as following:

- ✓ Support Riinvest management in ensuring gender equality and implementing the Riinvest GEP.
- ✓ Design, coordinate, implement, monitor, review, and communicate the Riinvest GEP.
- ✓ Assist in increasing the number of female project leaders at Riinvest.
- ✓ Contribute to enhancing the visibility of female Riinvest economists.

- ✓ Serve as a contact point and facilitator for female colleagues in achieving leadership and decision-making goals.
- ✓ Provide support to female colleagues who face disproportionate burdens in pursuing their professional development objectives.
- ✓ Encourage peer networking and support through open quarterly meetings for female colleagues.
- ✓ Organise gender-specific training sessions tailored to individual development needs and plans, in alignment with Riinvest Institute's staff development plans.
- ✓ Raise awareness among Riinvest management and employees about gender-related issues, imbalances, and activities.

The following role of researcher as the designated persons on gender equality are:

- ✓ Counteract female underrepresentation among economists.
- ✓ Ensure that female job candidates have equal job opportunities as male candidates.
- ✓ Participate in screening pre-selected applicants and take part in their assessment.
- ✓ Be involved in job interviews and selection decisions in an advisory role or nominate a substitute if necessary.
- ✓ Sensitise recruitment teams and management to gender equality issues.
- ✓ In cases of similar qualifications and gender imbalance, prioritise female candidates.
- ✓ Be promptly informed when candidates' pre-selection is completed.
- ✓ Circulate all job announcements internally.

Include the sentence in Riinvest Institute job vacancies that "The Riinvest Institute ensures competitive salaries and opportunities for the development and advancement of skills and career progression for talented and ambitious young individuals in the field of research. The institute is committed to gender equality within the organisation" in all job announcements. As shown above, designated person will closely cooperate with Executive director to ensure that GEP is implemented according to measures defined above. For the period 2023 to 2026, the Panel consists of

- Alban Hashani, Riinvest Executive Director
- Saxhide Mustafa, Senior Associate
- Tringë Shkodra, Researcher

Their main task is to ensure:

- ✓ Gender measures are decided upon by Riinvest management, communicated to the relevant organisational units, and implemented accordingly.
- ✓ Processes and organisational provisions are put in place to ensure the effective implementation of GEP measures.

Regular assessments are conducted to evaluate the situation of female employees and address gender imbalances with appropriate measures. In addition, the Labour Law in

Kosovo does not oblige the private sector in having formal Works Council, but employees' rights are defined based on Labour Law. Riinvest Institute does not have formal Works Council, however, through regular meetings with the senior management, employees have regular communication, share information regards to their concerns. Riinvest Institute through regular meetings with the staff aims to continue to address the following issues in the context of GEP:

- ✓ Balancing excess workload and pressure and in aligning real and contractual working times by supporting Riinvest management in implementing organisational provisions that emerges from the Riinvest workload discussion.
- ✓ Designing Riinvest's working time concept that allows for undisturbed, working, non-working and offline times that become part of the new Riinvest Works Agreement
- ✓ Provide personal, institutional, and legal support to colleagues in cases of gender-based violence and sexual harassment.

7.1. Riinvest Management

Riinvest Management has been and continues to be committed to supporting the achievement of gender equality and remains open to any organisational changes and developments that promote gender equality within the organisation. The measures outlined in this document are designed and proposed in alignment with Riinvest's previous practices and commitment to implementing gender equality. In line with this commitment, these measures aim to ensure ongoing monitoring and, if necessary, the addition of further measures or decisions to ensure the attainment of our gender equality goals. The Horizon Europe Program furthermore specifies its role as follows: "The senior leadership of the organisation has full responsibility for the implementation of the commitments set out in the GEP. It will be accountable for the success of the GEP within the organisation and with its key stakeholders, such as the governing body, funding bodies, trade unions and student associations."⁹

7.2. The Process

Gender equality plan is an ongoing process of organisational development. It will therefore encourage self-reflection by staff and leadership as well as an ongoing review of processes and practices. To that end, a dedicated process is being established including the following stages:

- A **review phase** at which disaggregated, gender-specific data are collected and reviewed together with established practices to identify gender inequalities and their causes.

⁹ Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans, European Commission, DG Research and Innovation, September 2021, p.18

- A **planning phase** is devoted to setting objectives for the next GEP alongside a roadmap of actions and measures. This phase also includes the allocation of resources and responsibilities for its implementation.
- During the **implementation phase**, the GEP measures are being implemented and communicated internally. This phase also includes awareness raising and training efforts.
- In the **monitoring and evaluation phase**, the progress and impacts of the GEP are being assessed. A joint review of findings and progress shall also provide room for organisational learning and enable adjustments and improvements to the various interventions.

FIGURE 1 THE ANNUAL RIINVEST GEP LIFECYCLE



7.3. Riinvest Gender Monitor

Evidence-based gender monitoring is an integrated part and common practice in European research sphere. However, in Kosovo evidence-based monitoring data is lacking and Riinvest Institute is aware of such challenge. Furthermore, this is obligatory under the Horizon Europe Program.

With this GEP, our organisation aims to expand the regular monitoring system within the organisation based on the indicators we provide such as gender pay gap (although in our organisation female and male at the same position are paid equally-have same salary), and recruitment data.

Number of projects by project leader's gender Number of project leaders by gender Economists in media coverage by gender Economists in Riinvest events by gender Economists featured at Riinvest website by gender Sickness leaves by gender Parental care leaves by gender Other care leaves (e.g., COVID) by gender Expenditures for gender equality measures

Based on assessment for year 2022 the indicators provided in box below show the gender imbalances at Riinvest.

Personnel:
The inclusion of female at Riinvest at all levels is as follows: one out of four member of management is female; four out of nine researcher's economists are women and two of four staff in finance and administration are women.
Projects
Based on statistics for 2022, only four (4) or 35 % out of 14 projects were led by a female project leader who are currently full-time engagements within Riinvest Institute.
While the share of female economists is 50%, the share of female project leaders is 25%
Economists in media coverage by gender Economists in Riinvest events by gender 11 from male and 6 females
Other indicators
Economists featured at Riinvest Institute website by gender. Sickness leaves by gender 70% by female 30% male

The number of women economists at Riinvest is satisfactory, particularly when considering the size of our organisation and the number of staff depends on the projects the Institute undertakes. Riinvest has consistently encouraged women to become part of our organisation and gain valuable research experience and expertise through their involvement in our projects. The designated researchers for gender equality will collaborate closely with employees to conduct a survey within the institute on their well-being and aggregate the results based on gender. The annual report on GEP progress will provide Riinvest management with data and information to make decisions aimed at achieving a better gender balance in all areas within our organisation.

8.Resources and Budget






This section outlines the budget for the year 2023/2024 for the Gender Equality Plan. The activities listed in the table below are planned for the year 2023, while those scheduled for 2024 can be found in the monitoring table 1. Other GEP measures will be incorporated into Riinvest's general budget.





TABLE 1 BUDGET FOR GEP CYCLE 2023/2024

GEP Measure	Description	Unit	Cost p. unit euro	No. units	Sum euro
Training on gender equality and unconscious gender biases	Training once a year	Meeting/retreat	1500	1	1500
Work life balance gender specific	Twice a year	Training	300	2	600
Career progression-gender specific	On	Lectures	150	1	150
Leadership and decision making for female within Riinvest	Once a year	Training	300	1	300
Other gender equality training	Twice a year	Lectures	150	2	150
Total in EUR					2700

9. Measures

TABLE 2 MEASURES

Measure	Aim	Details	Responsibility Involvement	To do	Timing	Progress
I. Gender equality in recruitment and career progression						
Measure 1: Riinvest Appointing two designate persons for gender equality	Female candidates to have same job opportunities during the recruitment process. Design, implement, monitor, review and communicate GEP and progress. Supporting and being source of networking for female colleagues.	Providing opportunity and ensuring that nominated female candidates are evaluated based on their merit. Sensitise recruitment team on gender issues and participating in job interviews and during the design on job vacancy.	Designated persons for gender equality HR, recruitment team,	Communicate and Standardised	Establish in Q3/ 2023	
Measure 2: Recruitment standards	Ensuring that of recruitment standards and establishing codes of conduct are improved for promotion and requirements.	Withing this measure Riinvest aims to ensure that female candidates will be explicitly addressed from Riinvest advertisements and clearly defining principles aiming to increase transparency and avoid unconscious biases.	Designated persons for gender equality HR	Standardise	Q3/ 2023	
Measure 3: Increasing the number of interns and research assistants	Relieve senior researcher, from the workload and tasks they are overqualified for.	Support to senior researchers when required to engage interns and research assistants on interview, literature review, and other tasks	HR	Set-up pool of research assistants	Ongoing	
Measure 4: Visibility of female researchers and economist	Increase the visibility of female researchers and economist	Ensure gender equality in discussion panels, conferences, and media appearance	PR	Pursue	Ongoing	
Measure 5: Project co-leadership	Increase the number of project co-leadership	Increasing the number of part-time researchers and economics, through the development of framework for project co-leadership in taking project	Project Management, female researchers, and economist	Develop framework, communicate	Ongoing	

		leadership role and gain experience in leadership.				
Measure 6: training opportunities and gender specific trainings	Training opportunities for all employees at Riinvest and specific trainings for gender specific.	-Writing Horizon Europe project proposal Vertical skills for employees (research methods, statistics) Gender specific training (work life balance, leadership in decision making, career progression. First Cohort (February 13-22, 2023) has participated 23 candidates: Male 10 or 43.48% and Female 13 or 56.52% Second Cohort (April 24 – May 5, 2023) has participated 24 Candidates: Male 14 or 58.33 and Female 10 or 41.67	HR, Designated persons for gender equality	Communicate, pool of training planned to provide and calculate the budget	Q1-Q2/2023	
II. Work-life balance and Organisational culture						
Measure 1: Maternity leave policies and Parental leave policies	Maternity leave policy for all employees	to maintain the job position for one (1) year and ensuring that fixed-term contracts can be extended.	HR, Designated persons for gender equality	Implemented	Ongoing	
Measure 2: Flexible working time arrangements	Allowing employees to create a balance between professional and personal life	includes how departmental processes, procedures and practices affect staff with care responsibilities or part-time workers, and teleworking. This measure aims to allow employees to meet their private as well as professional commitments.	Management, HR	Implemented	Ongoing	
Measure 3: workload management	Allowing employees to help them to divide their tasks according to their workload within the institute and engagement outside institute such as teaching at universities.	Specific arrangements for workload management, including how different tasks are divided and distributed, such as teaching and administrative workloads versus research work within the Institute and teaching at Higher Education Institutions.	Management, HR	Implemented	Ongoing	

Measure 4: Reintegration of staff	Reintegration of staff after parental leave policies, career breaks, including mentoring and active support.	Reintegrating staff through well-planned activities after parental leave or career breaks	HR	Implemented	Q2/2024	
Measure 5: Gender monitoring and awareness rising	Discussions with staff with female on gender monitoring and organise training on awareness raising among staff on gender equality as well as discuss and support employees (female) on work-life balance	organising twice a year to evaluate and assess the situation regards to female researchers and the progress achieved within the GEP and discussions regarding advice and support for work-life balance.	Designated persons for gender equality	Communicate, update figures	Q4/2024	
Measure 6: Communicate measures on GEP	Through the meetings with staff and management regarding to measures on GEP	Communicate the existence, measures, and progress of the GEP and increase the awareness for equality, gender and diversity among the management and employees through internal presentations and seminars.	Designated persons for gender equality	Communicate Implement	Q4/2024	
Measure 7: Advice and support	Advising and supporting young female researchers and economists	through advice and one to one meeting with senior managers to provide ideas especially to your women researchers.	HR	Communicate, build pool of training provided	Q2 2024	
Legend progress: approved; partially implemented, fully implemented						

APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF THE RIINVEST INSTITUTE

Sejdi Osmani, chairman

Endorsement

As representative of the Riinvest Institute, I hereby express my consent with and commitment to implement the measures and organisational provisions stipulated in this document.

Alban Hashani

Riinvest Institute, Executive Director