

Plan of Activities to Ensure Gender Equality at the Association CoE UNITE 2025-2030

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Introduction

UNITE is the first Center of Excellence (CoE) in Bulgaria for Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). The vision of the CoE UNITE is to become a leading Bulgarian organisation in ICT research, attractive for excellent researchers and young talents, well integrated in the ERA, and widely recognised for high quality scientific results, and impact on national and regional economy and society. The Association CoE UNITE is established by 5 university partners: Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" (SU), Technical University of Sofia (TU), Burgas State University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov", Ruse University "Angel Kanchev" (RU), Shumen University "Konstantin Preslavsky" (ShU) as independent legal entity with the aim to ensure the sustainability of the CoE UNITE. It is a non-governmental research organisation following the common rules adopted by all partners.

The CoE UNITE operates in an international research and learning environment based on the values of democracy, openness and equal opportunities. The CoE UNITE is an inclusive workplace that wants to attract the most talented researchers, regardless of their personal background. The Association strives to create a tolerant culture where everyone is treated equally and where diversity is a strength, not a challenge.

Gender equality in research is seen as a priority of the European Research Area and the Framework Programmes. The human resources (HR) policy of CoE UNITE is aligned with the European framework for research careers, in particular, the European Charter for Researchers. SU and TU obtained from the European Commission the HR excellence award acknowledging their attractive environment. The CoE UNITE leadership and academic community is working on the creation and implementation of a Gender Equality Action Plan as one of the most important steps to include diversity in research and in the dissemination of new knowledge.

The principle of gender equality is an integral part of national legislation and of the rules of operation and management of the CoE UNITE:

- National legal framework:
 - Law on Protection against Discrimination
 - Law on Higher Education
 - Labour Code
 - Employment Promotion Act
- Development and sustainability Programme with a business plan of CoE UNITE

With the development, adoption and implementation of the Gender Equality Action Plan, the Association CoE UNITE puts emphasis on equality and diversity, which is also part of international research programmes, including the Horizon Europe programme.

The Association CoE UNITE is committed to equal opportunities for all researchers and staff. Our goal is to promote a sustainable research organization with culture that is sensitive to gender and diversity issues. Equal opportunities for all is a key goal of the Association CoE UNITE. The current plan includes actions to ensure gender equality, diversity management and balancing work and family commitments.

1. Systematic data collection, objective analysis based on gender equality data and action in the areas addressed - equality in recruitment and career development, balance in management and decision-making, work-life balance

	Planned actions	Target group	Addressed area of impact	Indicator	Term / periodicity	Responsible persons
1.	Systematic data collection and monitoring of the percentage of <i>women:men</i>				annually	
1.2.	Retrieval of researchers ratio data from the staff management systems	researchers	gender equality in career development	Target value 50:50	October 2027	Executive director
1.3.	Retrieval of management ratio data from the staff management system	Management staff	gender balance in management and decision-making	Target value 50:50	October 2027	Executive director
1.4.	Data aggregation on the percentage of winning candidates of each gender compared to winning competitions	researchers	gender equality in recruitment of candidates and career development	Target value 50:50	October 2027	Executive director
1.5.	Data collection on the percentage of submitted to granted applications for parental leave	researchers	work-life balance and organisational culture	Target value 100%	October 2027	Executive director
2.	Inclusion in the annual reports an analysis of the data collected and monitored as a proportion and the setting of new targets and indicators	researchers	All of the above	Information published in the reports	November 2027	Executive director

	Planned actions	Target group	Addressed area of impact	Indicator	Term / periodicity	Responsible persons
3.	Data collection on complaints received on cases dealt with in the last 3 years on gender-based violence, including sexual harassment	researchers	measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment	Target value no more than 3	October 2028	Executive director

2. Integrating the topic into training

	Planned actions	Target group	Addressed area of impact	Indicator	Term / periodicity	Responsible persons
4.	Development of training materials concerning gender equality	researchers	integrating gender equality issues into teaching content	Target value for 2027 2 learning materials	May 2027	Experts

3. Enhancing the organisational culture

	Planned actions	Target group	Addressed area of impact	Indicator	Term / periodicity	Responsible persons
5.	Conducting seminars on gender equality issues	researchers and managerial staff	Raising awareness and engagement	3 seminars	February 2026 April 2027 July 2028	Experts

4. Ensuring work-life balance

	Planned actions	Target group	Addressed area of impact	Indicator	Term / periodicity	Responsible persons
6.	Conducting an internal survey	researchers and managers	work-life balance and organisational culture	Target value covered by the survey	March 2022	Executive director

Conclusion

With the identified activities, the Association CoE UNITE will offer all its members even better opportunities for personal and career development and will provide support in career planning. It will actively welcome new members by providing support with orientation and being represented by their alumni in countries around the world.

The Association CoE UNITE will continue to provide focused support for projects on gender in research. Recommendations for promoting a gender and diversity sensitive teaching and learning culture will be offered as part of annual training and will provide guidance on how equality of opportunities can be implemented in teaching.

The person at the Association CoE UNITE who coordinates the implementation of the plan is the Executive Director.