

## **Gender Equality Plan (GEP) – ESTEP** **(Version 1.1 – 2022)**

The European Steel Technology Platform (ESTEP) is a non-profit international association under Belgian law with the purpose to provide information, services and guidance to its members in areas related to research, technology and innovation of steel production, products and services. ESTEP represents the common interests of its members vis-à-vis third parties (notably the institutions of the European Union and other international organisations), fosters research and development in steel technology and applications, conducts research (by its members) and also acts as an expert in its field.

As part of the European Commission [Gender Equality Strategy](#) for 2020-2025, the European Commission is committed to promoting gender equality in research and innovation. ESTEP's management adopts this Gender Equality Plan (GEP), with the purpose of taking stock of gender balance in ESTEP and providing guidance as well as practical steps on future commitments.

The ESTEP management pursues the goal of promoting diversity within the organisation. It is convinced that employees with different professional and cultural backgrounds, regardless of gender, contribute to a corporate culture that promotes cooperation and improves work results. This includes not treating employees differently because of their gender. The ESTEP ensures a respectful, open and welcoming organisational culture, while supporting a work-life balance.

This Gender Equality Plan summarizes all procedures and regulations aimed at achieving this goal. It applies together with its internal documents, annexes and is supplemented on an ongoing basis as necessary.

### **1. Legal basis and their implementation**

The management stands for compliance with all legal principles that are expressly aimed at equal treatment of the persons. Belgian law generally prohibits direct and indirect discrimination of persons, inter alia, on the grounds of sex, age, ethnic or national origin, religious or philosophical convictions, sexual orientation, disability, etc. This prohibition is laid down in the Act of 10 May 2007 aimed at combating certain discriminations, the Act of 30 July 1981 criminalizing certain acts inspired by racism and xenophobia, the Act of 10 May 2007 aimed at combating discrimination between women and men, and the Act of 22 April 2012 aimed at combating the gender pay gap between women and men. In their implementation, the following measures, amongst others, are taken:

- a. All policies, the collective bargaining agreement applied to parts of the workforce, and company agreements contain the same rights for all employees in terms of content. Differences are in no way based on gender, but rather on comprehensible objective characteristics, e.g. training, specific tasks, etc.
- b. All employment contracts shall refer to the operational agreements.
- c. In case of discrimination (with the exception of a discrimination on the grounds of gender), [Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunity \(UNIA\)](#) is the applicable body. In case of discrimination on the grounds of gender, a complaint may be lodged with [the Institute for Equality of Women and Men](#).

### **2. Specific measures**

- a. ESTEP is committed to recruit and select through valuing, in an equal manner, the skills, aspirations, needs and responsibilities of the future employee. Open positions, regardless of hierarchical level, are posted in a gender-neutral manner. This is done either by the reference w/m/x or by a gender-neutral job title or both.
  - b. When evaluating incoming applications, attention is paid to the objective facts on the basis of which a possible suitability is attributed or denied. This is to prevent unconscious biases from influencing the selection decision.
  - c. In the case of hiring or promotion in employee groups in which one gender is more frequently represented, preference shall be given to applications from the underrepresented gender, if available, provided that they meet the professional or personal requirements.
  - d. In its salary policy, ESTEP is committed to ensuring compliance with the principle of “equal pay for equal work” among employees regardless of gender and based on competence. Salaries are grouped on the basis of the respective job characteristics and on the following criteria: professional experience and special knowledge, external value of the function, need for further training.
  - e. Operational agreements exist on the following instruments for mastering family and professional tasks in the best possible way:
    - Flexible working hours
    - Time off from work for special occasions (birth of own children, wedding, deaths in the family)
    - Possibility to work two days a week on a mobile basis (to be done)
  - f. All employees can make claims under these company agreements.
  - g. Part-time options are open to persons of all genders.
  - h. The ESTEP management advises expectant parents on parental leave. It also includes the checkpoints as described in Art. 19 of the ESTEP employment regulations.
  - i. If necessary, gender-specific disaggregated data on personnel and/or on various ESTEP bodies can be generated by the Secretary General, fully respecting the EU GDPR.
3. Responsibility
- a. Management and managers are responsible for equal treatment of employees and compliance with all applicable regulations. In promotion and career advancement processes, ESTEP is committed to equal recognition of the skills of all employees (qualifications, training and professional experience), regardless of gender.
  - b. The ESTEP management implements laws and operational agreements, advises management, executives, and employees on relevant issues and regularly keeps itself informed about new relevant legislation and case law. If necessary, it trains and informs managers.

- c. Balanced gendered participation in leadership and (formal and informal) decision-making structures is ensured. ESTEP is committed to establish conditions to ensure equal, gender-neutral opportunities to take up positions in governing and/or decision-making bodies, considering the capabilities and harnessing the potential of all individuals.
- d. ESTEP is committed to develop or facilitate internal tools for skills development, to promote the participation in crosscutting projects or internal mobility, to encourage its employees equally, by investing in their personal and professional development. In order to take into account gender differences and to promote gender equality, making training actions directed to the underrepresented gender that allow recognizing, valuing and developing leadership capacities. Examples of trainings: [Gender Equality Academy](#), [Project Management](#), [Women leadership in tech](#), etc.

#### 4. Well-being of workers & occupational safety

The Act of 4 August 1996 on well-being of workers in the performance of their work and its implementing decisions apply to every employer who employs workers in Belgium. This Act transposes into Belgian law the framework Council Directive 89/391/EEC of 12 June 1989 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work.

The Belgian National Strategy on Wellbeing at Work (Occupational Safety and Health) determines the policy context of the FPS Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, from the Minister of Work and all stakeholders involved in the wellbeing at work policy (occupational health and safety policy) of the enterprises. It fixes a number of strategic and operational objectives for the coming four to five years and determines the actions to be undertaken to reach these objectives. It is the implementation in Belgium of the strategic EU-framework on occupational safety and health.

To achieve effective equality of treatment and opportunity between genders, promoting the elimination of discrimination based on gender and fostering reconciliation between personal, family and professional life, ESTEP has approved and implemented rules, policies, procedures and internal mechanisms.

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