Review of gender equality efforts at KTU

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This deliverable, prepared within the SmartWins project, reviews gender equality efforts at Kaunas University of Technology (KTU), with a focus on the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture (FCEA). It assesses institutional progress, alignment with European requirements, and the outcomes of faculty-level initiatives.

At the European level, the Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, the 2025 Roadmap for Women's Rights, and the Gendered Innovations framework establish both compliance obligations and pathways for enhancing research excellence. For KTU, these frameworks form the reference point for its Gender Equality Plan (2022–2025), participation in the national "Equal Opportunities Ruler" survey, and broader integration of equality into research, teaching, and governance.

The review shows that KTU has made significant progress: the Gender Equality Plan is formally adopted, resourced, and monitored; governance structures are in place; and external evaluations confirm institutional commitment. However, challenges remain, including underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions, limited participation in gender equality training, and the persistent impact of caregiving responsibilities on career advancement.

Survey results conducted at the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture, KTU, in 2025 highlight these mixed experiences: while most respondents rated gender equality positively, nearly 60% agreed that caregiving hinders career progression, and none had participated in equality training. These findings underscore the need for stronger awareness-raising, training, and structural support.

The SmartWins seminar *"Gender Equality in Science, Technology and Academia"* further contributed to institutional capacity building, offering national and international perspectives on inclusive research and university practices. It reinforced the message that gender equality is both an ethical imperative and a strategic asset for innovation in engineering, digitalisation, and sustainability.

The deliverable concludes that KTU has established a solid foundation for gender equality in line with Horizon Europe requirements. Continued effort is needed to translate policy into lived institutional culture. By expanding training, addressing work–life balance, and increasing female representation in leadership, KTU and Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture can strengthen its role as a national leader and European model for embedding equality in research and education.

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List of Abbreviations

CERTH – Centre for Research and Technology Hellas (Greece)

CUG – Comitato Unico di Garanzia / Guarantee Committee for Equal Opportunities, Employee Wellbeing, and Non-Discrimination at Work (Italy)

EDI – Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

EIGE – European Institute for Gender Equality

EU – European Union

FCEA – Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture (KTU)

GEP – Gender Equality Plan

HR – Human Resources

HRS4R – Human Resources Strategy for Researchers

KTU – Kaunas University of Technology

MOOC – Massive Open Online Course

REA – European Research Executive Agency

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

SpLDs – Specific Learning Disorders

STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

TUM – Technical University of Munich (Germany)

TU Berlin – Technische Universität Berlin (Germany)

TU Delft – Technische Universiteit Delft (Netherlands)

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UCPH – University of Copenhagen (Denmark)

WP – Work Package

1. Introduction

1.1. Scope and Objectives of the Deliverable

The purpose of this deliverable is to review gender equality efforts at KTU, in the context of the SmartWins project, with particular attention to the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture (FCEA). It focuses on verifying and enhancing KTU's institutional gender policy, especially the monitoring and implementation of the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) 2022–2025.

The objectives are to:

- Assess the current state of gender equality measures at FCEA.
- Evaluate the implementation of the GEP, highlighting best practices and areas for improvement.
- Analyse results from the national "Equal Opportunities Ruler" survey and faculty-level questionnaire.
- Document awareness-raising and training activities, including the SmartWins seminar on gender equality.

Provide recommendations to further strengthen equality policies and practices at FCEA in line with European requirements.

This deliverable contributes to the systematic integration of gender equality within SmartWins, ensuring compliance with Horizon Europe while supporting institutional excellence and inclusiveness.

1.2. Structure of the Deliverable

The structure of Deliverable D6.2 is as follows:

i) A review of European Union reports and strategies related to gender equality, including the Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, the Roadmap for Women's Rights 2025, and the Gendered Innovations framework;

ii) An analysis of structural barriers and institutional strategies for gender equality in STEM, with comparative insights from leading European universities;

iii) An overview and assessment of KTU's Gender Equality Plan (2022–2025), its implementation outcomes, and national benchmarking results from the "Equal Opportunities Ruler" survey;

iv) Results of the 2025 questionnaire survey conducted at FCEA, providing insights into perceptions, challenges, and areas for improvement;

v) Documentation of the SmartWins seminar *"Gender Equality in Science, Technology and Academia"*, including presentations, discussions, and key outcomes;

vi) Recommendations tailored to FCEA at KTU;

vii) Conclusions summarising the main findings and the contribution of this deliverable to the wider objectives of SmartWins.

1.3. Relation to Other Tasks and Deliverables

This deliverable is closely connected to several SmartWins project tasks and outputs:

- **Task 2.2** links through the planned special showcase of female researchers' work.
- **Task 5.2 and Task 5.3** are related through the promotion and dissemination of female contributors' achievements.
- **Other WP6 activities** complement the broader monitoring and evaluation framework of SmartWins, ensuring that gender equality is systematically integrated into the project.

The deliverable provides essential evidence for the project's commitment to inclusiveness and diversity, supporting the European Commission's policy priorities in gender equality and serving as an input to the overall reporting on SmartWins impact.

2. Methodology

For the review of gender equality efforts at FCEA, the following methods were applied:

Desk research was carried out to analyse European Union frameworks, including the Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, the Roadmap for Women's Rights 2025, and the Gendered Innovations report. Additional desk research examined national policy instruments and benchmarking practices relevant to higher education institutions.

Institutional review of KTU's Gender Equality Plan (2022–2025) was conducted, focusing on its objectives, governance model, monitoring system, and compliance with Horizon Europe requirements. The analysis also incorporated results from the national *"Equal Opportunities Ruler"* survey coordinated by the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson of the Republic of Lithuania.

Field research in the form of a questionnaire survey was implemented at FCEA in 2025. The survey was distributed to academic staff and researchers, collecting quantitative and qualitative data on perceptions of gender equality, experiences of discrimination, opportunities for career advancement, and work–life balance.

Event-based research was included through the SmartWins seminar *"Gender Equality in Science, Technology and Academia"*, which gathered national and international experts. Presentations and discussions were used as an additional source of insights on embedding equality in research, teaching, and institutional policies.

Together, these methods ensured that the deliverable combines policy analysis, institutional self-assessment, and stakeholder perspectives, offering a comprehensive and evidence-based evaluation of gender equality practices at KTU.

3. Analysis of EU Reports Related to Gender Equality

European-level frameworks on gender equality provide the essential foundation for institutional change in higher education and research. For the SmartWins project, and KTU more specifically, alignment with these frameworks is not only a matter of compliance but also a pathway toward research excellence, innovation, and sustainability.
This chapter reviews three central policy sources presented in Gender equality strategy - European Commission: *the European Commission Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025* (COM(2020) 152), the *2025 Roadmap for Women's Rights* (COM(2025) 97 and its Annex), and the *Commission's policy report Gendered Innovations 2* (2020). Together, these documents set the vision, requirements, and methodological guidance for integrating gender equality in research and innovation, and they inform the expectations for projects like SmartWins operating under Horizon Europe.

3.1. Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025

The Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 marked a turning point by speaking of gender equality as both a **fundamental EU value and a driver of economic growth and innovation**. It introduced a dual approach: targeted actions to eliminate gender inequalities, combined with gender mainstreaming across all EU policies and programmes (European Commission, 2020a). The strategy also placed **intersectionality** at its core, acknowledging that gender intersects with other characteristics such as age, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation, thereby creating complex forms of disadvantage.

The Strategy identified three priority areas that are highly relevant to universities and research projects. First, **ending gender-based violence and stereotypes** was framed as a prerequisite for equal participation in education, research, and public life.

Second, **ensuring a gender-equal economy** was tied to measures such as the Work-Life Balance Directive, pay transparency, and the promotion of women in digital and STEM fields.
Third, **achieving gender balance in leadership and decision-making** was linked to the 2012 proposal for a directive on corporate boards and to strengthened efforts within EU institutions themselves.

For the research community, the Strategy was particularly significant in its recognition that Horizon Europe would require gender equality plans (GEPs) as an eligibility criterion and would promote the integration of the gender dimension into research content. This established a direct compliance obligation for universities, while also encouraging them to embed equality in the substance of their research (European Commission, 2020a).

3.2. Roadmap for Women's Rights 2025

Five years later, the Commission presented the *Roadmap for Women's Rights* (COM(2025) 97), which extends the vision of the 2020–2025 Strategy into the next policy cycle. While continuity

with earlier objectives is clear, the Roadmap reframes gender equality as not only a rights-based imperative but also as a **pillar of competitiveness, democracy, and resilience** (European Commission, 2025a). It stresses that gender equality must be understood as a structural requirement for the EU's social and economic sustainability, particularly in light of digitalisation, climate change, and demographic shifts.

The Roadmap is accompanied by an Annex which outlines **eight guiding principles** for the forthcoming Gender Equality Strategy. These principles cover: freedom from gender-based violence, gender-sensitive health and well-being, equal pay and economic empowerment, work–life balance and care, equal employment and career development, inclusive and quality education, equal participation in decision-making, and institutional accountability (European Commission, 2025b). The Annex thus translates broad political goals into actionable domains that universities and research organisations can adopt as benchmarks.

For projects like SmartWins, this Roadmap reinforces the expectation that gender equality must be integrated across governance, recruitment, career progression, and research content. It also highlights the importance of systematic data collection, monitoring, and transparent reporting, which remain uneven across many institutions.

3.3. Gendered Innovations

While the strategies and roadmaps establish political priorities, the *Gendered Innovations 2* report (European Commission, 2020b) provides the **methodological support** for operationalising gender equality in research. The report demonstrates that integrating sex, gender, and intersectional analysis into research leads to **better science, more inclusive technologies, and more robust innovation outcomes**.

The report offers detailed case studies, such as the development of AI systems, urban planning, climate adaptation, health technologies, and energy infrastructure, showing how the absence of gender-sensitive analysis results in bias and inefficiencies. By contrast, research that accounts for gendered dimensions leads to what the report terms "gendered innovations": novel solutions that would not have emerged without inclusive analysis. For example, car safety testing using only male crash-test dummies failed to protect female passengers adequately, whereas integrating female body data improved safety for all users.
For Horizon Europe, Gendered Innovations 2 underpins the requirement that applicants must demonstrate how sex and gender are integrated into research content. This directly affects SmartWins, where technologies such as digital twins, BIM, and IoT can perpetuate bias if not designed inclusively. Embedding gender-sensitive analysis ensures that digital monitoring tools, energy models, and smart building solutions address diverse user needs and avoid reproducing inequalities.

3.4. Implications for SmartWins and KTU

Taken together, these reports highlight the **shift from voluntary initiatives toward structural obligations**. KTU and FCEA, like all Horizon Europe participants, must maintain a fully implemented and monitored Gender Equality Plan to remain eligible for funding. Beyond compliance, SmartWins has the opportunity to align with EU expectations by:

- Integrating **gender analysis into the project's digital and sustainability research**, ensuring that smart building technologies are inclusive.
- Promoting **gender balance in project teams and governance**, reflecting the EU's emphasis on leadership diversity.
- Establishing **monitoring and evaluation mechanisms** to track progress, in line with the Roadmap's principles of accountability.
- Disseminating results in ways that highlight gender equality as a driver of innovation, in line with the "gendered innovations" approach.

The EU reports reviewed here provide a comprehensive policy and methodological framework for advancing gender equality in research and higher education. The *Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025* established the structural conditions and compliance requirements. The *Roadmap for Women's Rights 2025* reinforced these commitments while outlining forward-looking principles that will guide the post-2025 agenda. *Gendered Innovations 2* translated these priorities into practical research methodologies that directly enhance excellence and innovation.

For KTU, FCEA and SmartWins, alignment with these frameworks is not only a matter of eligibility but also of leadership. By embedding the EU's vision and tools for gender equality, the project can serve as a model for how digitalisation and sustainability research can also drive inclusivity and social transformation.

4. Structural Barriers and Institutional Strategies for Gender Equality in STEM

The underrepresentation of women in STEM is a persistent global issue. While women are well represented in the social and life sciences, they remain significantly underrepresented in technical fields [1]. Despite decades of effort, progress has been limited. Gender inequalities persist throughout academic career trajectories, with women overrepresented in lower-status roles, earning less than men in comparable positions, and remaining underrepresented in leadership. These disparities are even more pronounced for individuals facing intersectional disadvantages, including race, ethnicity, sexuality, and disability [2].

These patterns are influenced by both educational and broader socio-economic systems, which shape individual choices and opportunities. Stoet et al. (2018) highlight the *"educational-gender-equality paradox"*: countries with higher gender equality often exhibit larger gender gaps in STEM participation [1]. For example, in Finland, known for gender equality and high science achievement among girls, women are still significantly underrepresented in STEM degrees. Drawing on expectancy-value theory, the authors argue that students make career decisions based on their relative academic strengths (subjective knowledge of what subjects they are best at). While girls and boys perform similarly in science overall, boys are more likely to identify science or math as their strongest subjects, influencing their educational choices. Conversely, in countries with lower gender equality, STEM may be perceived as offering better economic security, leading to higher female participation despite less equitable conditions.

Within academia, structural and cultural barriers continue to reinforce gender disparities. Casad et al. (2020) identify three primary contributors: (a) the numeric underrepresentation of women, especially women of color; (b) limited access to social capital—networks and mentorships that support career advancement; and (c) unwelcoming academic climates [3]. These challenges are rooted in persistent gender stereotypes. STEM fields often value traits associated with masculinity, such as competitiveness and independence, making men more likely to be perceived as suitable for leadership. Tannenbaum et al. (2019) provide striking examples of algorithmic bias, such as AI defaulting to male pronouns for STEM roles or offering men significantly more ads for high-paying jobs [4].

Efforts to support gender equality in STEM often fall into two categories: (a) initiatives to increase women's motivation and ambition to enter male-dominated fields; and (b) programs aimed at developing traits like confidence, assertiveness, and leadership skills [2]. However, these interventions often conform to masculine workplace norms that define the "ideal worker" as someone who prioritizes work above all else. Women who adopt these behaviors may face penalties for violating gender expectations, despite doing what is expected for success. These approaches are often based on the assumption that women lack ambition or are less career-driven, beliefs that are reinforced by societal narratives around work-life balance.

A hostile academic climate further compounds these issues through *stereotype threat*, the anxiety of confirming negative stereotypes about one's gender or race [3]. This can lead to reduced confidence, lower leadership aspirations, mental fatigue, and burnout. Women in STEM report experiencing stereotype threat more frequently than men, which contributes to a diminished sense of belonging and pessimism about career advancement [3].

Overall, these findings suggest that women's ambitions and career choices are not solely a matter of personal motivation but are shaped by institutional cultures and environments. Interventions that focus only on empowering individual women, without addressing structural inequalities, often fall short and may unintentionally reinforce the status quo. To create meaningful change, more comprehensive strategies are needed. Tannenbaum et al. (2019) stress the importance of integrating sex and gender analysis into the design of research and academic environment [4]. Doing so helps reduce bias, foster equity in scientific outcomes, and unlock new opportunities for discovery and innovation.

4.1. European universities' approaches to gender equality

To contextualize KTU's efforts within the SmartWins project, it is valuable to review how other leading European universities and research institutions approach gender equality. Comparative analysis shows that institutions across Europe adopt a wide range of governance models, strategies, and concrete activities to embed equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in their structures.

The examples in Table 1 demonstrate different approaches to governance (such as Gender Equality Officers, Diversity Committees, or Vice Rectors for EDI), strategic frameworks (including Gender Equality Plans, Diversity Strategies, or Action Plans aligned with EU and

national policies), and implemented activities (ranging from mentoring, outreach programs, and inclusive recruitment to gender-based violence prevention and support services).

This comparative overview highlights common trends such as the use of gender equality plans aligned with EU frameworks, systematic monitoring and reporting, and targeted support for women in STEM as well as innovative practices like gender audits, inclusive pedagogy, or specialized helpdesks for gender-based violence. These practices offer useful benchmarks for KTU as it strengthens its own Gender Equality Plan and monitoring processes.

Table 1. Comparative analysis of gender equality approaches

Institution	Governance	Strategy	Implemented Activities
CERTH (Greece) [6,7]	- Gender Equality strategy developed by the Extroversion Dept., Admin Dept., Institute reps, Employee & Researcher Associations - Approved by the Board of Directors - Implementation monitored by the Gender Equality Board	- GEP (2021), aligned with EU and national frameworks - 8 GEP objectives; 6 EIGE key areas: governance, recruitment, work-life balance, research, visibility, culture	- Career development, leadership training for women - Equitable pay, flexible work, reintegration after career breaks - 40/60 gender target - Gender-awareness events, childcare rooms, anti-harassment policies
Politecnico di Milano (Italy) [8-10]	- Rector's Delegate for Diversity & Inclusion - EO Unit coordinates DEI efforts - Guarantee Act Committee (CUG) - Gender Certification Working Group (Board + Executive Committee) - Community-based Sustainability Roundtables	- GEP (2024–2026), aligned with the University's Strategic and Sustainability Plans - Annual evaluation through the Gender Budget - 5 strategic areas: work-life balance, leadership, recruitment, research integration, GBV prevention	- Targeted STEM outreach (TechCamp, Girls@Polimi) - Empowerment programs (Empowering Women@Polimi, Empowering PhDs@Polimi) - Psychological support, family care - MOOC on GBV, diversity education, DEI partnerships

TU Berlin (Germany) [11 -14]	- Coordinating Office for Gender Equality - Main & Part-Time Gender Officers elected across units - Diversity Working Group - Center for Junior Scholars	- Diversity Strategy (2020–2022), focused on gender diversity & first-generation students - Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) for policy review - Prioritizes an inclusive environment, dismantling barriers	- proMotion (doctoral coaching for women) - ProFiL (postdoc mentoring and training) - Family Services Office
University of Bologna (Italy) [15-18]	- Vice Rectors, Delegates for EDI, CUG Committee, Ombudsman - Confidential Counsellor, Departmental EDI Representatives across all faculties	- GEP (2025–2027), aligned with Annual Gender Equality Report & Positive Action Plan - 5 key areas: work-life balance, leadership, recruitment, intersectionality, GBV prevention - Code of Conduct for the Prevention of Sexual and Moral Harassment (2020)	- Helpdesk against gender-based violence - Alias Career (chosen name use for gender-diverse individuals)
Technical University of Munich (Germany) [19-22]	- Gender Equality Officer - Staff Unit for D&I - Equal Opportunity Officer - Senior Vice President for Talent Management and Diversity	- Diversity & Gender Equality Plan (2023) - 8 key areas: governance, data, training, work-life balance, leadership, recruitment, research, GBV - Aligned with EC frameworks	- Gender Decoder for recruitment bias - Female Founders program - TUM4Kids and TUM Family Service - Respect Guide, collaboration with GBV helplines - Women of TUM network, coaching for women in academia
University of Copenhagen (Denmark) [23-25]	- Steering Committee chaired by Rector - Programme Owner: Deputy Director of Shared HR - Reference group with student, staff, and academic representatives	- Gender Equality and Diversity Action Plan (2022–2023) - 6 goals: organizational engagement, data, bias awareness, culture, recruitment, integration in research - Linked to Danish gender equality legislation and the University's Strategy 2030	- Inclusion Survey (2024) among staff and students - Diversity training, inclusive recruitment tools - LGBTQIA+ events, Faculty-level initiatives

Aalto University (Finland) [26]	- EDI Officer, EDI Committee, Accessibility Group - Governance bodies: Foundation Board, Management Team, School Deans	- EDI Plan (2025–2028) across 4 key areas: 1) Diverse Community 2) Aaltogether Culture 3) Inclusive and Accessible Education 4) Integrated Approach	- Shaking Up Tech (STEM for girls) - Anonymous hiring, inclusive job ads - EDI e-learning and campaigns - Inclusive pedagogy and accessible teaching environments - Wellbeing Desk, integration support for international staff and families
TU Delft (Netherlands) [27-31]	- Central D&I Office - Faculty D&I Officers - D&I Board - Supported by staff and student networks - Integrity Office, Ombuds Officer, confidential counsellors network	- GEP (2021), aligned with Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, Code for Good Governance in Dutch Universities, Code of Conduct for International Students in Dutch Higher Education - 7 strategic themes: gender equality, gendered research, study success and representation, wellbeing, recruitment, religion, disability - TU Delft Code of Conduct (2020), TU Delft Integrity Statement - The university's six core values: Diversity, Integrity, Respect, Engagement, Courage, and Trust (DIRECT)	- Delft Tech Fellowship for female researchers - Inclusive recruitment training, D&I online courses - Accessibility efforts (spaces, signage, hybrid learning) - Networks: TrueU (LGBTQIA+), DiversAbility, Studable Delft

An extensive review of gender equality measures adopted by EU institutions can be found in ***Appendix 1***.

5. Analysis of Gender Policy at KTU

KTU has taken significant steps to institutionalise gender equality within its governance, organizational culture, and academic practices. In line with European and national requirements, the university has adopted a comprehensive **Gender Equality Plan (GEP) for**

2022–2025, which provides a strategic framework for promoting diversity, ensuring equal opportunities, and addressing structural barriers to equality in research, teaching, and administration.

KTU, like other Lithuanian universities, participated in the national survey "Equal Opportunities Ruler" (in Lithuanian "Lygių galimybių liniuotė") conducted by the Office of the Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Lithuania. The university received a detailed result report along with recommendations for further improvement. It is important to note that KTU was highly evaluated at the national level, which reflects the institution's strong commitment to promoting equality and diversity.

This chapter critically analyses KTU's gender equality policy framework, its implementation measures, and monitoring outcomes, situating them in relation to the requirements of the European Commission's Horizon Europe programme, as well as broader EU-level strategies such as the Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 and the Roadmap for Women's Rights 2025.

5.1. Overview of KTU's Gender Equality Plan 2022–2025

The KTU GEP was introduced to ensure systematic compliance with EU and Lithuanian legal frameworks on equal opportunities, as well as with Horizon Europe eligibility criteria. It builds on the university's earlier commitments, including the 2018 Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy and the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R), for which KTU received the HR Excellence in Research award in 2020.
The plan emphasises four main areas of action:

1. **Organizational development** – embedding gender equality action plans across all faculties and research institutes, annual reporting, and visibility through updated web and intranet platforms.
2. **Organizational culture** – awareness-raising through internal and external communication, universal design for accessibility, and enhanced inclusivity in campus services.
3. **Leadership and career progression** – encouraging women's representation in senior decision-making roles, revising training programmes (e.g., Leader Lab), and developing guidelines for recruitment, promotion, and appointment processes.
4. **Work–life balance** – promoting family-friendly working conditions, introducing flexible work arrangements, creating family-oriented spaces, and supporting childcare initiatives during school holidays.

The GEP is supported by resource allocation (budget lines for training, HR department time, and Equal Opportunities Commission oversight) and a strong monitoring framework based on annual data collection and reporting.

KTU's Gender Equality Plan 2022–2025 reaches its conclusion this year, marking the end of its initial implementation cycle. Currently, two key documents are in progress: an overview report assessing the outcomes of the existing plan and the preparation of a new Gender Equality Plan to guide the university's future actions.

5.2. Monitoring and Implementation Outcomes

The "Equal Opportunities Ruler" survey, conducted by the Office of the Equal Opportunities of the Republic of Lithuania, provides an external benchmark for assessing institutional progress on gender equality. The results of the 2025 assessment offer clear evidence of how KTU has translated policy commitments into practice. They demonstrate the university's systematic use of quantitative indicators to track gender representation across staff categories, academic positions, and student enrolment.
Beyond numerical data, the survey also evaluates progress in several key areas, such as:

- **Recruitment and promotion** – ensuring transparent and fair selection processes, supported by guidelines and national recommendations on discrimination prevention.
- **Training and awareness** – development of gender equality and diversity training modules, though participation levels remain modest and require further institutionalisation.
- **Cultural change** – efforts to embed gender equality in communication strategies, public reporting, and engagement with external stakeholders.
- **Accountability** – annual reporting obligations and participation in national benchmarking frameworks, linking KTU's performance to EU-level standards.

Overall, the 2025 "Equal Opportunities Ruler" results confirm that KTU has established a strong foundation for mainstreaming gender equality, while also pointing to areas—such as the underrepresentation of women in senior academic positions and the need for more systematic training—where further progress is still required.

5.3. Strengths and Challenges in Relation to EU Requirements

KTU's gender equality policy framework demonstrates several important strengths. The university's Gender Equality Plan (GEP) 2022–2025 is formally adopted, adequately resourced, and fully aligned with Horizon Europe eligibility criteria, thereby meeting the European Commission's five mandatory requirements: public availability, dedicated resources, systematic data collection and monitoring, training and capacity-building, and commitment to work–life balance.

Clear governance structures, notably the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Human Resources Department, provide accountability and oversight, while annual gender-disaggregated reporting enhances transparency.

Furthermore, KTU actively engages in external benchmarking initiatives, demonstrating a willingness to evaluate its performance against national and international standards. Communication and visibility efforts, such as updating online platforms and participating in external networks, have strengthened institutional credibility and broadened the reach of equality initiatives.

Despite these achievements, several challenges remain. The persistent underrepresentation of women in professorial and senior decision-making roles suggests that structural barriers are yet to be fully addressed. Training and awareness activities are still underdeveloped, as confirmed by survey findings that indicate a lack of systematic participation in gender equality workshops, creating a gap with Horizon Europe standards. Similarly, while family-friendly

measures such as flexible working arrangements and childcare initiatives are planned, they require broader implementation to ensure real accessibility for staff with caregiving responsibilities.

Finally, although KTU has established robust quantitative monitoring systems, qualitative aspects such as perceptions of inclusivity, everyday cultural practices, and lived experiences of staff and students are less systematically captured.

Taken together, these strengths and weaknesses position KTU's gender equality framework as a structured and credible response to both national and EU requirements.

The 2022–2025 GEP provides a solid institutional foundation by embedding equality principles across governance, organizational culture, career progression, and work–life balance, while ensuring compliance with Horizon Europe obligations. At the same time, the rough pace of implementation reveals that deeper cultural and structural transformation is still in progress. This mirrors broader European trends, where policy commitments often outpace actual change at leadership and institutional culture levels.

For the SmartWins project, KTU's experience is particularly relevant: it illustrates how gender equality can be integrated as a cross-cutting dimension in research, teaching, and governance, contributing both to institutional compliance and to research excellence. Yet the persisting gaps underline the need for continuous monitoring, expanded training, and more ambitious actions to ensure that gender equality moves beyond formal frameworks toward a lived and inclusive institutional reality.

6. Questionnaire Survey

To capture perceptions and lived experiences of gender equality within FCEA at KTU, a questionnaire survey was carried out in 2025. The online survey link was distributed to all academic staff and researchers at the faculty, ensuring broad outreach across career stages. In total, 15 respondents completed the survey, providing both quantitative and qualitative input.

The survey explored key themes aligned with Horizon Europe's Gender Equality Plan (GEP) requirements, including:

- perceptions of gender equality within the faculty,
- faculty efforts in promoting diversity,
- experiences of discrimination,
- opportunities for career advancement and decision-making,
- work–life balance and caregiving responsibilities, and
- open suggestions for improvement.

This chapter presents the findings, offers insights into the institutional culture, and concludes with recommendations for strengthening gender equality practices.

6.1. Results of the Survey

Respondents were asked to evaluate the level of gender equality within FCEA (Figure 1). The majority rated the situation positively, with Good being the most common choice, followed by a notable share selecting Very Good. A smaller but visible portion rated gender equality as Poor, indicating that while overall perceptions lean toward satisfaction, there remain concerns among some respondents.

These findings suggest that gender equality is generally recognized and valued, yet perceptions are not entirely uniform. The presence of both positive and critical views highlights that progress has been made, but also points to persistent gaps in experience or awareness. This ambivalence may reflect differences between groups (e.g., staff, researchers, or students) or varying exposure to institutional practices. Importantly, the results indicate that while a foundation of trust exists, there is still space for strengthening faculty-wide initiatives to ensure consistent experiences of equality across all roles and contexts.

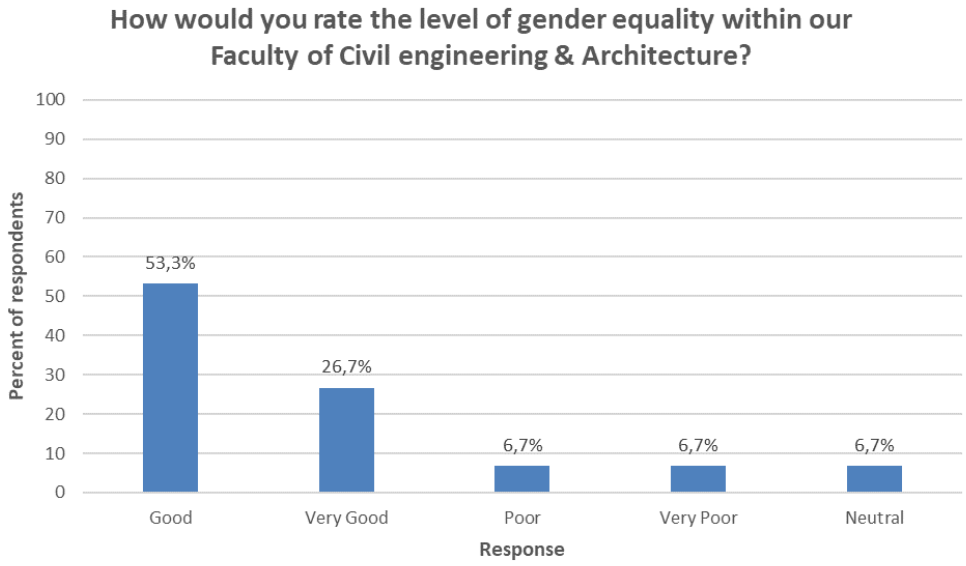

Figure 1. How would you rate the level of gender equality within our Faculty of Civil engineering & Architecture?

Responses strongly support the link between gender diversity and innovation (Figure 2). The majority of participants **Agreed** or **Strongly Agreed** that diversity contributes to creativity and advancement in the field. A smaller portion remained **Neutral**, while only a negligible share disagreed.

These results underline a widely shared recognition that inclusivity is not only a social value but also an asset for professional and academic excellence. The presence of some neutral responses may indicate uncertainty or lack of exposure to evidence demonstrating this link. Overall, the findings reflect a forward-looking perspective within the faculty, where diversity is seen as a driver of innovation and competitiveness.

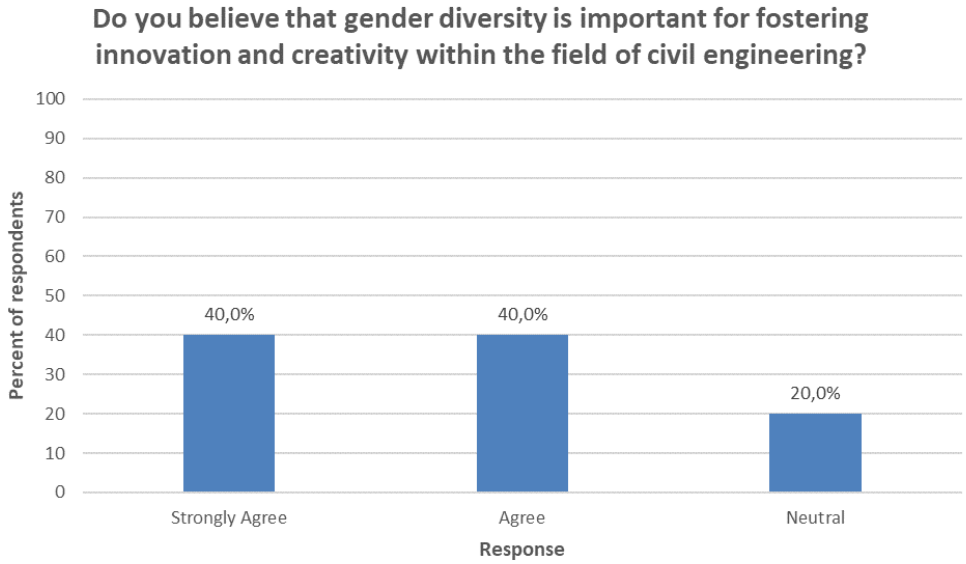

Figure 2. Do you believe that gender diversity is important for fostering innovation and creativity within the field of civil engineering?

The majority of respondents reported **No, never**, though a notable minority indicated experiencing or witnessing discrimination **occasionally** or even **frequently** (Figure 3). While the dominant perception is one of a discrimination-free environment, the existence of recurring negative experiences among some respondents cannot be overlooked.

This pattern suggests that while gender equality may be institutionally supported, it is not universally experienced across the faculty. Even occasional incidents undermine trust and inclusivity, particularly in environments striving for academic excellence and fairness. These findings highlight the importance of continued monitoring, clear reporting mechanisms, and proactive interventions to ensure that isolated experiences do not escalate into systemic barriers.

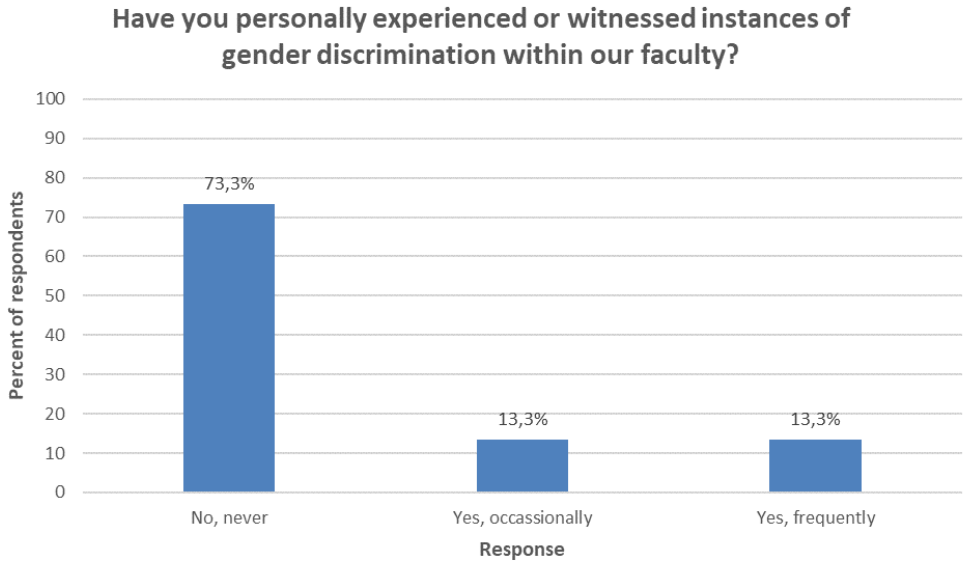

Figure 3. Have you personally experienced or witnessed instances of gender discrimination within our faculty?

This distribution indicates that inclusivity in governance and leadership may be inconsistent, with some groups feeling underrepresented. The neutral responses could signal either limited involvement in decision-making processes or uncertainty about how inclusive they are in practice. Overall, the results stress the importance of ensuring transparent procedures, balanced representation in committees, and active encouragement of diverse voices in governance structures.

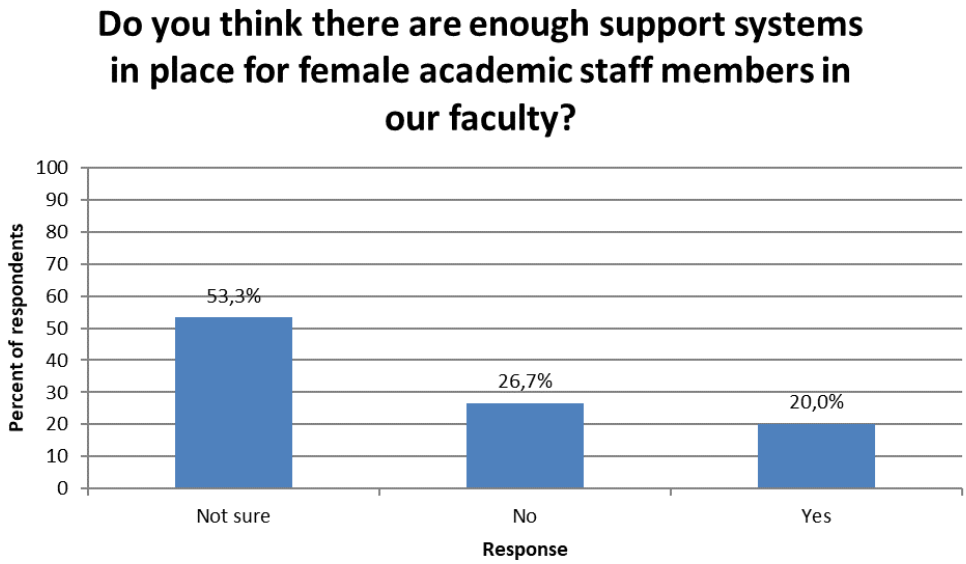

Figure 4. Do you think there are enough support systems in place for female academic staff members in our faculty?

Open question: **"In your opinion, what steps can our faculty take to improve gender equality and inclusivity?"**

A total of **five respondents** provided comments, reflecting a range of perspectives. One participant stated that they **do not see gender equality issues** within the faculty, emphasizing that principles of fairness are already well established. Another pointed to the importance of **changing attitudes of both women and men**, suggesting that cultural or behavioral shifts are necessary. One response downplayed gender issues, arguing that **qualification, rather than gender, should be the focus** in academic contexts. Another suggestion was to **attract more female students**, highlighting representation at the student level as a potential area for improvement. Finally, one response simply stated **"No comment."**

Taken together, these responses reveal **diverse and sometimes conflicting views**. While some respondents perceive gender equality as already achieved, others highlight the need for cultural change or increased female participation. This divergence indicates that faculty members and students may experience the institutional environment differently, and it underscores the importance of maintaining dialogue, raising awareness, and collecting broader input to shape meaningful and widely accepted measures for inclusivity.

Question: ***"Have you ever participated in any gender equality training or workshops provided by our faculty?"***

Responses were united: **100% of participants reported 'No'**, indicating that no one had taken part in gender equality training or workshops at the faculty.

This finding reveals a significant gap between institutional priorities and practice. While policies or intentions may exist, the absence of actual training means that awareness, capacity-building, and skill development are not being systematically addressed. Such training is a core expectation under Horizon Europe's Gender Equality Plan framework, and its absence may hinder both compliance and cultural change. The results highlight an urgent need for structured programs — such as workshops, seminars, or online modules — to embed gender awareness into everyday academic and organizational life.

The largest share of respondents reported feeling **Supported (40.0%)**, followed by **Neutral (33.3%)**. Smaller proportions indicated feeling **Very supported (20.0%)** or **Unsupported (6.7%)**.

These results suggest that most staff recognize some degree of institutional support, though few feel fully supported. The strong presence of neutral responses reflects uncertainty or mixed experiences, while the small share of negative responses indicates that dissatisfaction is not widespread but still relevant. This distribution highlights the importance of strengthening support mechanisms and ensuring consistency across departments. Clear communication of available measures, as well as targeted improvements, could help shift perceptions from moderate to strong support.

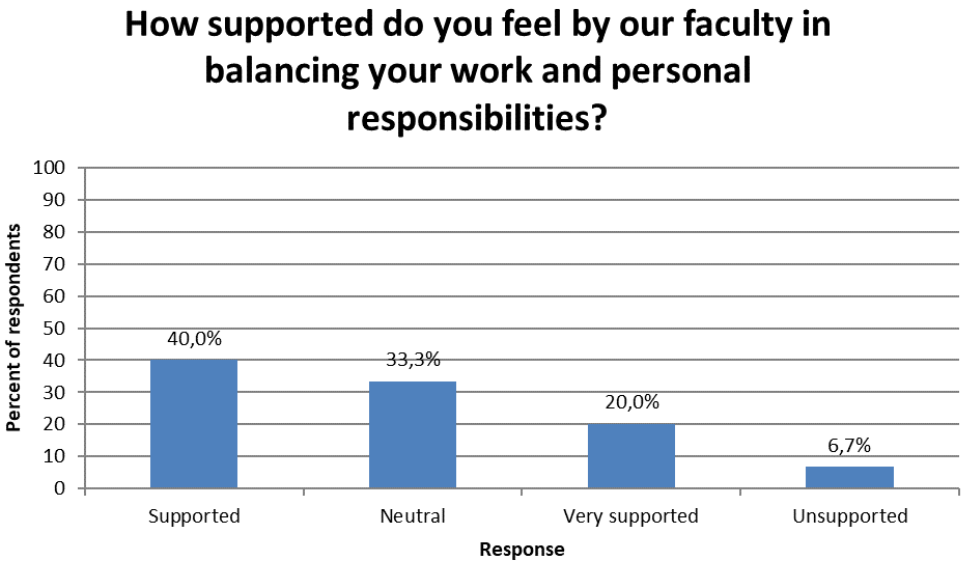

Figure 5. How supported do you feel by our faculty in balancing your work and personal responsibilities?

Question: **"Do you believe that addressing work–life balance for working parents is an important aspect of promoting gender equality within our faculty?"**

The results show a clear consensus: **73.3% of respondents answered "Yes"**, indicating strong agreement that supporting work–life balance for working parents is central to achieving gender equality. An additional **20.0% were "Unsure"**, reflecting some uncertainty about the direct connection between these issues. Only **6.7% responded "No"**, suggesting limited resistance to this perspective.

These findings highlight that most community members recognize the structural link between parental responsibilities and gender fairness. The small proportion of disagreement indicates broad support for policies and initiatives that address work–life balance. At the same time, the presence of uncertainty suggests the need for awareness-raising and communication to strengthen understanding of how caregiving responsibilities influence equal opportunities.

Responses were evenly divided: **33.3% Yes, 33.3% Unsure, and 33.3% No**.

This striking balance reveals a lack of shared perception regarding the importance of gender equality within the faculty. The absence of consensus suggests that while some community members see it as a priority, others are unconvinced or unaware of its relevance. The equal distribution across all three options signals both the presence of support and the persistence of skepticism. This highlights the need for stronger institutional leadership, clearer communication of policies, and engagement initiatives that connect gender equality with academic excellence and fairness.

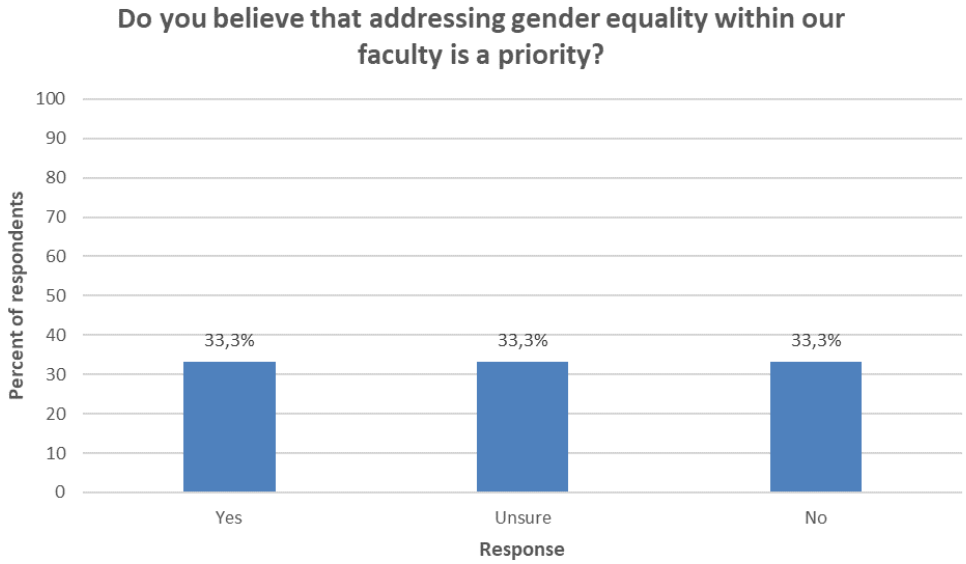

Figure 6. Do you believe that addressing gender equality within our faculty is a priority?

Open questions:

"Are there any specific challenges related to work–life balance that you believe unfairly affect working mothers within our faculty?"

Only **three responses** were provided to this question, and all were minimal: one respondent answered with a dash ("–"), another with **"No"**, and a third with **"No comment."**

This limited engagement suggests that respondents either did not perceive specific challenges, felt uncomfortable sharing details, or considered the question not directly relevant to their own experience. The lack of substantive input makes it difficult to identify clear problem areas from this survey alone. However, the absence of detailed responses should not be interpreted as evidence that challenges do not exist. Instead, it underscores the need for **further qualitative inquiry** — such as focus groups or confidential interviews — to capture more nuanced perspectives on the work–life balance issues that may disproportionately affect working mothers.

"Are there any policies or initiatives you would like to see implemented within our faculty to better support working parents in achieving work–life balance?"

A total of **three respondents** provided comments. One suggestion was the establishment of **childcare facilities within the university**, emphasizing compliance with legal requirements and the importance of practical support for parents. Another respondent indicated **"not so much,"** implying limited perceived need for additional initiatives. A third response stated **"No comment,"** offering no specific proposals.

Although the number of responses was small, the mention of childcare facilities points to a **tangible and actionable measure** that could directly enhance support for working parents. The

limited engagement with this question may also suggest either general satisfaction with current provisions or low awareness of what additional policies could be introduced. These findings highlight the value of **consulting more widely with staff and students** to identify concrete needs and priorities for improving work–life balance.

"What do you think is the biggest issue when it comes to gender equality in research in general?"

A total of **six respondents** provided open comments. The perspectives are diverse, reflecting both positive views and concerns. Some participants suggested there are **no significant issues**, describing conditions as "just fine" or stating "no issues in general." Others, however, identified specific barriers. One respondent highlighted that **women are undervalued compared to men**, particularly in engineering fields, noting that men often find it easier to progress in their careers. Another pointed to **deep-rooted cultural values** carried from families as an obstacle to gender equality, suggesting that broader societal norms influence academic environments. Additional responses included brief remarks such as "qualification," which may reflect a belief that merit rather than gender should determine opportunities.

Overall, these comments illustrate a **split perception**: while some see gender equality as non-problematic, others recognize **structural undervaluation of women and cultural barriers** as persistent challenges. This divergence emphasizes the importance of continued dialogue and evidence-based monitoring to ensure that hidden biases or cultural legacies do not undermine fairness in research careers.

More results of the questionnaire survey are presented in ***Appendix 2***.

6.2. Key Insights from the Survey

The majority of respondents rated the level of gender equality in the faculty as **Good** or **Very Good**, reflecting an overall positive environment. However, a small proportion assessed equality as **Poor**, signalling that experiences are not regularly positive. This indicates progress, but also highlights areas where perceptions diverge.

Faculty efforts in promoting equality
Respondents most often described the faculty's efforts as **Adequate**, with only a minority rating them as **Good** or **Very Good**. A smaller group considered efforts **Inadequate**. This suggests that while initiatives are recognised, they are not always seen as ambitious or sufficiently visible.

Diversity and innovation
A strong consensus emerged around the importance of gender diversity for **creativity and innovation in civil engineering**. Most participants agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, highlighting that inclusivity is widely seen as an asset for both academic excellence and competitiveness.

Discrimination and equal opportunities
Most respondents reported **never experiencing or witnessing discrimination**, yet some acknowledged encountering it **occasionally** or **frequently**. Views on equal opportunities in

career advancement and **decision-making** were mixed, with many expressing doubt or neutrality. This indicates that while overt discrimination is rare, subtle barriers and perceptions of bias remain.

Work–life balance

Respondents viewed work schedules as generally **flexible or very flexible**, though a significant share remained neutral. Importantly, nearly **60% agreed that caregiving responsibilities affect career progression**, especially for working mothers. This underscores the link between gender equality and family support mechanisms.

Training and awareness

100% of respondents reported never having participated in gender equality training or workshops. This highlights a significant gap between policy expectations and faculty-level practice, particularly as Horizon Europe requires capacity-building on gender awareness.

Open-ended responses

Open comments revealed **diverse perspectives**:

- Some respondents argued that there are **no gender equality issues** at the faculty.
- Others identified challenges such as the **undervaluation of women** in engineering and **deep-rooted cultural attitudes**.
- Suggestions included **childcare facilities** and **increasing female student representation**.

These contrasting views illustrate both confidence in existing practices and recognition of persistent structural barriers.

6.3. Recommendations

The results of the survey suggest that several areas require further attention in order to strengthen gender equality within FCEA.

First, there is a clear need to enhance the **visibility and communication of the Gender Equality Plan** (GEP). While many staff members recognize ongoing initiatives, the findings indicate that these efforts are often perceived as moderate rather than ambitious. **Clearer communication** of goals, procedures, and monitoring mechanisms for recruitment, promotion, and decision-making processes would help build trust and demonstrate institutional commitment. Establishing confidential and accessible reporting mechanisms for discrimination is also essential to ensure that all faculty members feel protected and supported.

Another important step is the **institutionalisation of training and awareness-raising activities**. The fact that none of the respondents had participated in gender equality training highlights a critical gap between policy requirements and practice. Introducing regular workshops on unconscious bias, inclusive leadership, and the integration of gender dimensions into research would align faculty practice with Horizon Europe standards. Making such training mandatory would further ensure that knowledge and awareness are embedded across all career levels.

Work–life balance emerged as another pressing theme, with many respondents recognizing that caregiving responsibilities can negatively affect career advancement. This calls for the introduction of tangible measures such as childcare facilities, flexible scheduling, and recognition of caregiving responsibilities in career evaluations. In addition, systematic monitoring of how family responsibilities influence career progression would provide valuable evidence for policy design.

Finally, the survey responses point to **the need for stronger representation and engagement**. Increasing women's participation in leadership roles and decision-making bodies, along with targeted efforts to attract more female students into engineering programs, would strengthen gender balance at both the academic and student levels. Creating safe spaces and structured forums for dialogue on gender equality would also help normalize discussions, reduce stigma, and foster a culture of openness.

The survey confirms that gender equality is **broadly recognized and valued** within FCEA, yet experiences are not uniform. While many respondents see progress, others report barriers in career advancement, decision-making, and work–life balance. The unanimous absence of gender equality training underscores a pressing need for institutional action.

These results demonstrate that the faculty has established a **solid foundation of awareness**, but moving forward, **systematic implementation, visibility, and capacity-building** will be critical. Strengthening gender equality measures will not only ensure compliance with Horizon Europe requirements but also foster a more inclusive, innovative, and resilient academic environment.

7. Gender Equality Seminar

This chapter provides information on the SmartWins seminar "Gender Equality in Science, Technology and Academia," held on 18 September 2025 at FCEA, KTU.

Through a series of presentations by national and international experts, participants engaged with policy frameworks, institutional practices, and design innovations that support inclusive and socially impactful research. The event reinforced SmartWins' commitment to aligning with European research values and enhancing institutional transformation through gender-responsive practices.

Objectives of the seminar

- Raise awareness of the role of gender equality in strengthening scientific excellence.
- Highlight EU and national strategies for gender equality in science and research.
- Explore practical tools and institutional policies for embedding gender and inclusion.
- Demonstrate how inclusive approaches enhance innovation, especially in digitalisation and sustainability fields.
- Reflect on the results of the gender equality survey conducted at FCEA at KTU.

The survey, conducted before the event, revealed both positive perceptions and persistent challenges related to equality in the faculty. For example, while a majority of respondents agreed that diversity enriches academic life, nearly 60% also noted that caregiving

responsibilities excessively hinder women's academic careers. Also, 100% of respondents mentioned that they have never participated in any event related to gender equality. These results inspired the ideas for the seminar.

Organisation of the event

The seminar took place in a hybrid format at KTU's FCEA. It gathered researchers, doctoral students, and administrative personnel. The event featured five presentations and a closing moderated discussion. The event hosted 16 participants on-site and 7 online participants. The program is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The program of the seminar "Gender Equality in Science, Technology and Academia"

Time	Presenter	Topic
13.40 – 14.00	Registration and welcome coffee	
14.00 – 14.10	Dr. Paris A. Fokaides Chief Researcher Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania	SmartWins overview. Why gender equality matters?
14.10 – 14.40	Dr. Aurelija Novelskaitė Professor and Dr. Raminta Pučėtaitė Assoc.professor Vilnius University Kaunas Faculty, Lithuania	Embedding Open Science and Gender Equality Through Research(er) Evaluation
14.40 – 15.10	Dr. Londa Schiebinger Professor Stanford University, Stanford, CA, USA	Gendered Innovations: Enhancing Excellence in Science & Technology
15.10 – 15.25	Dr. Paris A. Fokaides Chief Researcher Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania	Cyprus National Action Plan: Gender in Energy Policy - approach & lessons
15.25 – 15.45	Dr. Jurgita Giniūnienė Head of Human Resources Management Office Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania	Towards an inclusive university: challenges and achievements in implementing equality and diversity policy at KTU
15.45 – 16.10	Discussion, final remarks	

Speakers and contributors

1. SmartWins Overview and Why Gender Equality Matters
Chief Researcher Dr.-Ing. Paris A. Fokaides (KTU)

This opening session introduced the SmartWins project, its funding context under Horizon Europe, and its mission to support smart, sustainable, and resilient built environments. Prof. Fokaides emphasised that gender equality is a key enabler of scientific innovation, particularly

in fields such as digitalisation, engineering, and energy systems. He highlighted how inclusive research environments foster creativity and ensure that technological advancements meet diverse societal needs. Gender-sensitive approaches were framed not only as ethical imperatives but also as strategic assets aligned with the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025.

2. Embedding Open Science and Gender Equality Through Research(er) Evaluation

Prof. Dr. Aurelija Novelskaite & Assoc. Prof. Dr. Raminta Pučetaitė (Vilnius University)

This presentation addressed how Open Science principles and Gender Equality can be co-embedded in reforming academic assessment. Drawing on findings from the OPUS project, the speakers critiqued traditional evaluation systems based on narrow metrics (e.g., impact factors) and called for qualitative, inclusive, and context-sensitive research evaluation. They proposed a policy roadmap where institutional cultures embrace teamwork, equity, and diversity. Key frameworks such as the Leiden Manifesto, COARA, and the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science were discussed. Concrete proposals included the collection of sex-disaggregated data, gender indicators in evaluation protocols, and targeted leadership development for underrepresented groups.

3. Gendered Innovations: Enhancing Excellence in Science and Technology
Prof. Dr. Londa Schiebinger (Stanford University)

Prof. Schiebinger delivered a presentation on the Gendered Innovations approach, which applies gender and intersectional analysis to improve research quality and technology design. She presented compelling examples from medicine, artificial intelligence, and building technologies, illustrating how gender bias leads to unsafe or ineffective outcomes. Cases included gender-insensitive CPR mannequins, racially biased facial recognition systems, and energy devices that exclude women's ergonomic needs. She encouraged embedding gender analysis from the earliest stages of research and policy development. Her talk demonstrated that inclusive innovation is not only socially responsible but also improves scientific rigour and technological performance.

4. Cyprus National Action Plan: Gender in Energy Policy – Approach and Lessons
Chief Researcher Dr.-Ing. Paris A. Fokaides (KTU)

Prof. Fokaides presented results from a study commissioned by the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality in Cyprus. The study analysed how gender considerations are (and are not) integrated into the country's energy policies. He noted challenges such as underrepresentation of women in energy governance, gendered energy poverty, and the absence of disaggregated indicators in national strategies. The presentation offered actionable recommendations including: scholarship and mentorship programs for women in STEM-energy fields, subsidies for women-headed households in rural areas, and the formation of gender advisory groups. This case study illustrated how academic research can directly inform inclusive national policy.

5. Towards an Inclusive University: Challenges and Achievements in Implementing Equality and Diversity Policy at KTU
Dr. Jurgita Giniūnienė (KTU)

In the final presentation, Dr. Giniūnienė reflected on KTU's progress toward institutional equality. She traced the evolution of policies such as the Equality and Diversity Policy (2018), the HR Excellence in Research award (2020), and the 2022–2025 Gender Equality Plan. The presentation highlighted initiatives around inclusive hiring, work-life balance, leadership representation, and gender-sensitive communication. Quantitative progress was shown through staff statistics: e.g., female professors rising from 27.8% in 2022 to a targeted 30.3% in 2025. Dr. Giniūnienė also shared lessons learned about fostering institutional culture, the importance of monitoring, and the strategic integration of equality into all aspects of university life.

Contribution to SmartWins project implementation

The seminar contributed directly to several SmartWins goals:

- **Institutional capacity building.** Provided a platform for staff and researchers to engage with strategic gender equality frameworks aligned with Horizon Europe.
- **Policy alignment.** Reinforced SmartWins' compliance with EU research values and gender mainstreaming objectives.
- **Innovation through inclusion:** Demonstrated how inclusive research design leads to higher quality outputs in digital and sustainability-oriented fields.
- **Stakeholder engagement.** Strengthened KTU's partnerships with national and international actors advancing gender equality in academia.


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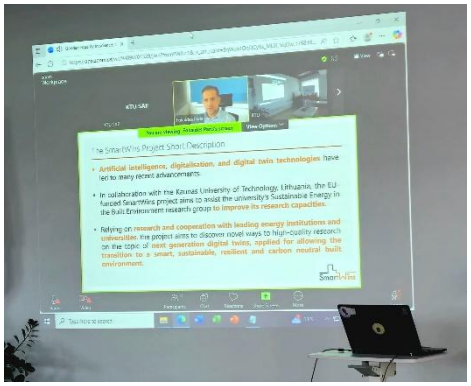
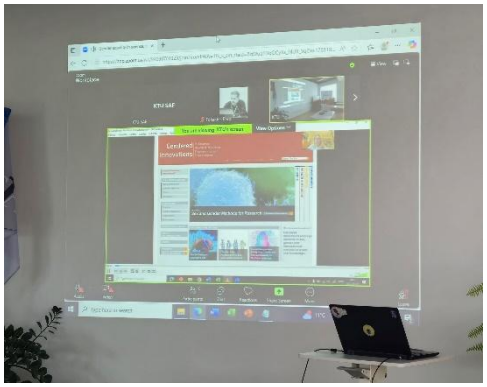
SmartWins
GENDER EQUALITY
IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY,
AND ACADEMIA
18 September, 2025
13.10 – 16.10
Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture
402 space
Studentu st. 48, Kaunas




SmartWins




SmartWins


Partners:

8. Recommendations for the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture, KTU

To strengthen inclusivity and ensure long-term institutional excellence, FCEA should adopt a comprehensive and phased equality strategy. This strategy should be guided by the European Commission's *Roadmap for Women's Rights (2025)*, the EU *Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025*, and the *Gendered Innovations* framework, while also responding to the faculty-level survey findings and institutional benchmarks discussed earlier in this deliverable. Importantly, the recommendations expand the scope of action: moving from **gender equality alone to wider equality**, encompassing race, disability, special needs, socio-economic status, and other forms of diversity.

To strengthen inclusivity and ensure long-term institutional excellence, FCEA should adopt a comprehensive and phased equality strategy. This strategy should be guided by the European Commission's *Roadmap for Women's Rights (2025)*, the *EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025*, and the *Gendered Innovations* framework, while also responding to faculty-level survey findings and institutional benchmarks discussed earlier in this deliverable. Importantly, the recommendations extend beyond gender equality alone, advancing toward **wider equality** that encompasses race, disability, special needs, socio-economic background, and other forms of diversity.

At the university level, a number of governance tools are already in place to ensure academic integrity and inclusivity. The **Board of Academic Ethics** plays a central role in fostering and safeguarding academic culture as a core institutional priority. Any member of the university community may submit a notification of potential ethical violations, which triggers an independent investigation conducted by the Board of Academic Ethics (KTU Academic Ethics Board).

KTU's overarching strategy reflects its responsibility to society by consolidating teaching, research, and engagement activities that improve human life and strengthen the development of the state. This strategy is rooted in the philosophy of **sustainable development**, which emphasises responsible action toward both the environment and society (KTU Sustainability).

Within this framework, equality and diversity are core values. To fully implement the principles of the *European Charter for Researchers* and the *Magna Charta Universitatum*, KTU has committed to creating an open environment in which the individual differences, characteristics, potential, and contributions of all staff and students are recognised and respected.

To operationalise this vision, KTU adopted the **Equality and Diversity Policy** and established the **Equality and Violence Prevention Committee**. This independent body ensures the protection of fundamental human rights as enshrined in the *Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania* and the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*. Its main tasks include:

Examining reports and complaints from members of the university community concerning violations of equal opportunities or cases of violence;

Consulting community members on equal opportunities and violence-prevention issues;

Cooperating with the Human Resources Management Office and the Department of Student Affairs to implement the University's Equality and Diversity Policy, ensuring prevention of discrimination, harassment, or violence.

The Committee operates independently, impartially, and objectively, without prejudice regarding alleged cases of discrimination, harassment, or violations of equal opportunities.

Building on the existing institutional framework, the following recommendations are structured along a short-term (2025–2026), medium-term (2027–2028), and long-term (2029 and beyond) timeline, ensuring progressive but sustainable change for FCEA.

8.1 Short-term Recommendations (2025–2026)

Awareness, visibility, and safe environment

Survey results showed that staff perceive equality efforts as "adequate" rather than ambitious (Section 6.2). Actions should therefore focus on visibility and safe spaces:

- Create tools for faculty responses to gender-based and digital harassment by creating **accessible and anonymous reporting systems**, inspired by Bologna's Helpdesk Against Gender-Based Violence or Aalto's anonymous channels.
- Promote a faculty-wide dialogue on equality not limited to gender but also including race, LGBTQIA+, disability, and socio-economic diversity.

Mandatory training and awareness-raising

The absence of any training participation among survey respondents (100%) indicates a critical gap. Training modules should be introduced in 2026, covering unconscious bias, inclusive leadership, and integration of gender and diversity into research. Following Aalto University's model of anonymous hiring and TU Delft's mandatory D&I training, training should gradually extend from gender equality to broader diversity issues.

Health and well-being

Short-term action should also focus on accessible mental health and well-being services, stress management workshops, and improvements in physical and digital accessibility of faculty spaces. Models include Aalto's AllWell? survey and TU Delft's quiet reflection spaces.

8.2 Medium-term Recommendations (2027–2028)

Work–life balance and care

Nearly 60% of survey respondents highlighted caregiving responsibilities as a barrier to career progression (Section 6.2). By 2027, FCEA should implement:

- Pilot projects for on-site or partnered childcare services, drawing on TU Berlin's Family Services Office and TUM's TUM4Kids initiative.
- Expanded recognition of caregiving in career evaluations to mitigate structural disadvantages.

Leadership, career development, and representation

The persistent underrepresentation of women in senior positions calls for targeted support:

- Establish mentorship programmes for women and underrepresented groups, modelled on TU Berlin's ProFiL programme or TUM's coaching for female scientists.
- Introduce gender and diversity balance targets in decision-making bodies.
- Offer mini-grants and support networks for student-led innovation and inclusivity initiatives.
- **Revise the composition of doctoral committees to ensure gender balance and diversity.** At present, only one woman serves on the Doctoral Committee of Civil Engineering, despite the availability of qualified female scientists at KTU and internationally. The Faculty should actively include more women and external experts in these bodies, while also introducing **regular rotation of committee members** to ensure diversity of perspectives and prevent institutional stagnation. https://en.ktu.edu/research/phd/committees/#civil-engineering

Inclusive and quality education

By 2028, inclusivity should be systematically embedded into teaching curricula. This includes:

- Early outreach to female students and other underrepresented groups through initiatives similar to Politecnico di Milano's Girls@Polimi or Aalto's Shaking Up Tech.
- Diversifying curricula to reflect equality perspectives in digitalisation, urban sustainability, and civil engineering.
- Explicitly addressing intersectionality (LGBTQIA+, disability, ethnicity) in teaching and research environments, following Copenhagen's diversity networks or Bologna's Alias Career initiative.

8.3 Long-term Recommendations (2029 and beyond)

Cultural change and structural embedding

By 2029, equality must be mainstreamed across all aspects of faculty life. This includes:

- Conducting regular gender and diversity-sensitive audits, similar to CERTH's gender audits or TU Delft's faculty-level Gender Equality Plans.
- Expanding equality dashboards to include not only gender but also indicators on disability, socio-economic diversity, and nationality.

Entrepreneurship and leadership

To foster innovation and long-term impact:

- Establish incubators, funding programmes, and mentorship for women-led and minority-led start-ups, following TUM's Female Founders programme and Aalto's NOW! Equal Career Paths for Women.
- Encourage male allyship and ensure gender/diversity quotas in governance structures.

Institutional accountability and partnerships

FCEA should strengthen accountability by:

- Nominating Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) representatives at the faculty level.
- Recognising EDI contributions in career evaluations, ensuring that equality work is valued as academic achievement.
- Building partnerships with European universities (e.g., TU Delft, Aalto, Bologna) to benchmark progress and co-develop innovative equality initiatives.

With these measures, FCEA will transition from a strong foundation in **gender equality** toward becoming a leader in **comprehensive equality and inclusivity**. This evolution will not only meet Horizon Europe requirements but will also position KTU as a model for integrating diversity into engineering education, research, and governance.

9. Conclusions

This deliverable has reviewed equality efforts at KTU, with a focus on FCEA, in the context of the SmartWins project. It has analysed European policy frameworks, national benchmarks, institutional strategies, survey results, and the outcomes of a dedicated seminar on equality in academia.

The findings confirm that KTU has established a strong institutional foundation. The Gender Equality Plan (2022–2025) is formally adopted, resourced, and monitored, aligning fully with Horizon Europe eligibility requirements. Participation in the national "Equal Opportunities Ruler" survey further validates KTU's progress at the national level. Within FCEA, awareness of equality is high, and respondents recognise diversity as a driver of innovation. At the same time, persistent challenges remain, including the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, the impact of caregiving responsibilities on career progression, and the absence of systematic training.

The faculty-level questionnaire survey provided valuable insights. While most respondents rated gender equality positively, nearly 60% acknowledged that caregiving responsibilities hinder career advancement, and all respondents confirmed that they had never participated in equality training. Open-ended responses revealed contrary perspectives: some perceived no gender issues, while others highlighted undervaluation of women and cultural barriers. These findings underline that progress in formal frameworks coexists with persistent cultural and structural barriers.

The SmartWins seminar "Gender Equality in Science, Technology and Academia" demonstrated the value of external expertise and international exchange. Presentations from leading scholars reinforced the link between inclusivity and scientific excellence. Discussions underscored that equality is not only a compliance requirement but also a strategic enabler of innovation, particularly in fields such as digitalisation, smart technologies, and sustainability.

Taken together, the evidence presented in this deliverable leads to three main conclusions:

From gender equality to wider equality

While this deliverable has primarily focused on gender, the lessons learned highlight the importance of extending equality measures to include other dimensions such as race, disability, socio-economic status, and special needs. Moving forward, FCEA must broaden its vision to create an academic culture where inclusivity is understood in a holistic way.

Bridging the implementation gap

Survey findings reveal a gap between policy commitments and everyday practices, particularly in the areas of training, awareness, and work–life balance. Addressing this gap requires systematic action, including mandatory equality training and tangible support for staff with diverse caregiving or accessibility needs.

Equality as a driver of excellence

Whether in the narrower field of gender equality or in the broader domain of inclusivity, equality should be understood as both an ethical imperative and a strategic asset. By embedding inclusive approaches into research, teaching, and governance, the Faculty can enhance innovation, competitiveness, and societal relevance. This aligns with EU frameworks such as the Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, the 2025 Roadmap for Women's Rights, and the growing emphasis on intersectionality within European policy.

Looking ahead, FCEA has the opportunity to strengthen its role as a national and European model for equality in higher education. The recommendations outlined in Chapter 8 provide a roadmap: immediate steps to enhance communication and training, medium-term measures to support work–life balance and inclusive leadership, and long-term strategies to embed equality across all dimensions of diversity.

By pursuing this roadmap, FCEA will not only ensure compliance with Horizon Europe but also demonstrate how equality, digitalisation, and sustainability can converge to produce transformative academic environments. In doing so, KTU and FCEA confirm its commitment to excellence, inclusivity, and leadership in shaping the future of engineering education and research, a future where equality is understood in its fullest sense, extending well beyond gender.

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Appendix 1. Review of Gender Equality Practices

1.1. Partner Institutions

1.1.1. The Centre for Research and Technology Hellas (CERTH), Thessaloniki, Greece

1.1.1.1. Gender representation at the institution

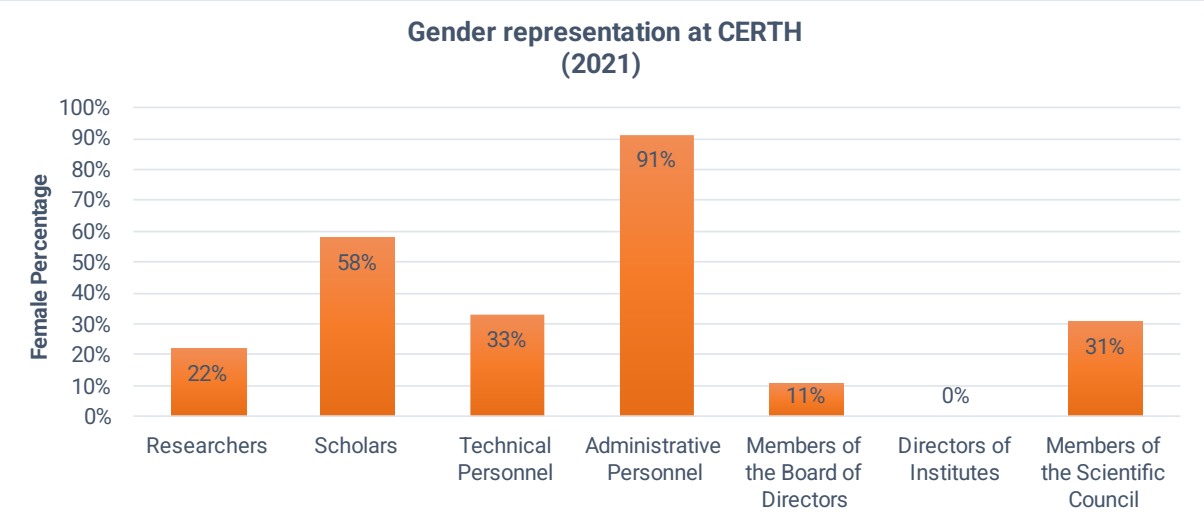

Figure 1. Gender representation at CERTH [6]

1.1.1.2. Governance model for institutionalizing gender equality

The institution's gender equality strategy is developed by the Extroversion Department, with support from the Administration Department, representatives of CERTH's five institutes, the Association of CERTH Employees, and the Association of CERTH Researchers. The strategy is approved by the Board of Directors. Its implementation is monitored by the Gender Equality Board, in collaboration with the Administration Department, the Extroversion Department, the Scientific Council, the Directors of the Institutes, and the Board of Directors [6].

1.1.1.3. Strategic vision on gender and inclusion

Equality of opportunity is core to CERTH's mission, and gender balance is a critical component for the Centre to ensure fair access and equality for its research, technical, administrative and support personnel. Since its establishment, CERTH incorporates these principles in its priorities and everyday operations. In response to the following acts drawn up both at national level (Action for Gender Equality 2021-2025) and at European level (Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025, Gender equality in the European Research Area), CERTH commits to systematizing its practices through the delivery of a *Gender Equality Plan (2021)* [6]. The aims of the Gender Equality Plan are:

- The recording of the current situation as formed by the procedures and practices applied in CERTH, to identify possible gaps or weaknesses in the equal treatment of genders.
- The identification and application of corrective practices.
- The setting of targets and their monitoring through specific indicators.

The Gender Equality Plan (GEP) is structured to address key objectives and goals aimed at promoting gender equality within the organization. CERTH's GEP has eight objectives:

- Embedding a gender-aware culture in the Centre by shifting traditional perceptions.
- Improving the research quality of the Centre by having heterogeneous research groups.
- Practicing excellence through female personnel career development and training.
- Promoting more inclusive decision-making by increasing the participation of women.
- Strengthening links with industry by encouraging women to translate their research into tangible products.
- Becoming an attractive Research Centre for female experts and talents in science and engineering from Greece and abroad.
- Contributing to the national and European needs for female STEM experts.
- Contributing to reversing brain drain by attracting highly skilled women from abroad.

To achieve these objectives, CERTH focuses on six key areas, following the guidelines of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), aiming to "identify and implement innovative strategies to promote cultural challenges and equal opportunities in Universities and Research Centres" [7]. These areas are:

- Key Area 1: Governance and decision making
- Key Area 2: Recruitment, selection procedures, and career progression
- Key Area 3: Flexible and agile working
- Key Area 4: Gender strategy in research
- Key Area 5: Gender in events and research activities visibility
- Key Area 6: Gender in organisational culture

The selected key areas encompass specific objectives, measures, targets, and KPIs that are explored and tracked regarding gender dimensions. Each area includes a defined timeline, assigns responsibility to relevant personnel, and assesses the relevance of these key areas to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with particular emphasis on SDG 5.

1.1.1.4. Implemented gender equality initiatives

CERTH employs a multifaceted approach to promote the advancement of women and foster inclusiveness within the organization. This includes offering career development pathways, ongoing professional training, and leadership programs specifically designed for women. The organization also cultivates an inclusive work environment through equitable pay structures, and flexible policies that accommodate diverse life circumstances (including parental responsibilities). Additionally, CERTH provides support for researchers returning from career

breaks, ensuring a smooth reintegration. To protect the well-being and professional integrity of all staff, the organization upholds strict anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies.

The *implementation* of the Gender Equality Plan supports balanced gender representation across all institutional levels, including leadership, with the aim of achieving a 40/60 gender ratio. Key initiatives include hosting events on diversity and gender to raise awareness; offering support services for the prevention, identification, and reporting of discrimination, harassment, or violence; and providing designated spaces for women and childcare (one in each building) [6].

The *effectiveness* of CERTH's GEP is measured through various quantitative and qualitative indicators. These include the representation of women in leadership positions, retention rates of female personnel, employee satisfaction surveys, and implementation of interventions promoting gender equality.

While CERTH does not face significant *challenges* in this regard, it acknowledges the potential for obstacles to arise during the implementation of gender policies. The institution remains aware and prepared to address any challenges that may emerge. By being proactive and committed to continuous improvement, CERTH aims to ensure that its gender equality initiatives remain effective and impactful.

1.1.2. Politecnico di Milano (PoliMi), Milan, Italy

1.1.2.1. Gender representation at the institution

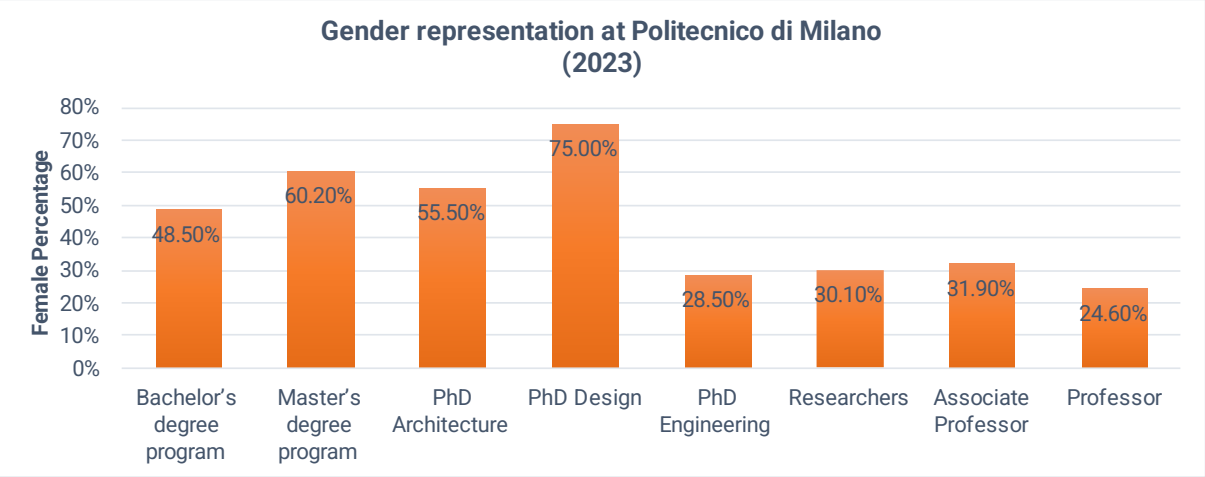

Figure 2. Gender representation at Politecnico di Milano [8]

1.1.2.2. Governance model for institutionalizing gender equality

Rector's Delegate for Diversity and Inclusion holds strategic and political responsibility for all initiatives related to diversity and inclusion. Key focus areas include gender equality, equal opportunities, LGBTQI+ issues, and psychological support services. The *Equal Opportunities (EO) Unit* coordinates and plans Politecnico di Milano's services, initiatives, and training

programs dedicated to equal opportunities, diversity, and inclusion. It also oversees psychological support services for students and PhD candidates, as well as assistance for students with disabilities and Specific Learning Disorders. The *Guarantee Act Committee (CUG)* promotes equal opportunities and the well-being of staff and students. It addresses issues related to sex and sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, personal and political beliefs, disability, and age within the workplace and academic environment. *Sustainability Roundtables* are participatory working groups that engage the PoliMi community in generating ideas and fostering innovation on sustainability topics. The "Gender Policies and Inclusion" Roundtable specifically focuses on promoting gender equality and inclusion within the university. The *Gender Equality Certification Working Group,* operating under the Human Resources Division, comprises a Board and an Executive Committee. It is responsible for obtaining and annually monitoring the university's gender equality certification [9].

PoliMi's Gender Equality Plan (GEP) was developed by a dedicated working group comprising the Rector's Delegate for Diversity and Inclusion, the Head of the Equal Opportunities Unit, and representatives from the Guarantee Act Committee. Data collection and organization were supported by the Career Service. Additionally, a specific GEP working group was established within the framework of the Sustainability Roundtables [9].

1.1.2.3.Strategic vision on gender and inclusion

Politecnico di Milano's *Gender Equality Plan (2024–2026)* outlines the initiatives and actions aimed at advancing gender equality within the university [9]. The GEP is closely aligned with the University Strategic Plan and the Strategic Sustainability Plan. Its implementation is monitored annually through the *Gender Budget*, which serves as a key evaluation and accountability tool. The *University Strategic Plan* specifically addresses the persistent gender gap in STEM fields, with a focus on increasing the representation of women among faculty (particularly in early career stages) and among students. Two key performance indicators (KPIs) are established: 1) female representation in researcher recruitment (40% by the end of 2025); 2) gender-balanced study programs (female/male ratio between 40% and 60%) [9]. The GEP is structured around five main areas and the following objectives [9]:

- Work-life balance and organizational culture: renewal of post-parental leave budget; renewal of on-demand babysitting services; strengthened support for working students and students with children; continued support for faculty, staff, and students undergoing gender transition.
- Gender balance in leadership and decision-making: renewal of gender-inclusive language initiatives; new training programs on unconscious bias and the value of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in institutions; introduction of the "No Women, No Panel" protocol to ensure fair representation.
- Gender equality in recruitment and career progression: renewal of gender mainstreaming and budgeting practices; new initiatives to empower early-career female researchers; continued efforts to attract female students to STEM fields; introduction of new study programs with gender-balanced enrollment.

- Integration of the gender dimension into research, teaching, and technology transfer: new actions to expand gender and diversity content in academic courses and research; renewal of the commitment to ethical and gender-aware research practices; continued support for research in gender-aware technologies; renewal of efforts to include gender considerations in technology transfer activities.
- Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment: establishment of a new gender-based violence support center; launch of an online awareness course on gender-based violence; implementation of a "Zero Tolerance" policy to address gender-based violence in academia.

1.1.2.4. Implemented gender equality initiatives

Politecnico di Milano has implemented a broad set of initiatives to promote gender equality, support women in STEM, foster inclusion and diversity, and protect against discrimination [10].

1. Gender Equality

- Promotion of STEM to female students: outreach initiatives (*TechCamp@Polimi*, *Coding Girls*, *EnginHERing Polimi*, *STEM in the City*, and *Il Politecnico delle Donne*) to encourage high school girls to pursue STEM disciplines; the *Girls@Polimi* scholarships to support female students enrolling in engineering programs.
- Diversity and inclusion education: MOOCs *"Embracing Diversity"*, *"FOSTWOM"* (Fostering Women to STEM), and annual diversity and inclusion training for staff.
- Empowerment and mentoring programs: *Empowering Women@Polimi* and *Empowering PhDs@Polimi* focus on leadership and self-development for female students and PhD candidates; the *Women Mentoring for PhD Candidates* program to connect female doctoral students with mentors from academia and industry.
- Partnerships and networks: the *Women's Forum for the Economy & Society*, *Valore D*, *CRUI – Commission on Gender Issues*, *The Italian Universities' National Equality Conference*, *UN.I.RE – Universities Network Against Gender-Based Violence*, *SheTech*, and the *ENHANCE Alliance*.

2. Family Services

- Support for students with families: tax exemption for students with dependent children under six; financial assistance for associate professors and researchers returning from maternity leave; free crèche services for female students, PhD candidates, and research fellows.
- Nurseries and childcare support: access to on-campus nurseries; discounted rates through agreements with kindergartens across the region.
- Summer camps and schools: Easter and summer camps are available for children aged 4 to 13, offering recreational and educational activities; *TechCamp@POLIMI* is a summer school for high school students focusing on STEM topics, taught in English.
- Educational fee discounts: children of university staff enrolled in Bachelor's or Master's degree programs receive tuition discounts.

3. Psychological Wellbeing

- Educational psychological counselling service: support for students facing academic challenges.
- Psychological and psychotherapeutic support: the 10-session *CER Course "Self-Knowledge: Emotions and Relationships"* and an 8-session psychotherapy cycle.
- Awareness and support initiatives: *PoliPsi Experiential Labs*, a dedicated help desk for stalking victims, and participation in the national *PRISMA Project*.

4. Personal Care and Assistance

- Health and safety at work: the *Prevention and Protection Service (SPP)*.
- Polimi People Care Initiative: health and social assistance program that provides access to medical consultations, diagnostics, maternity packages, and preventive healthcare services.
- Psychological support for staff: the *Listening Desk* for workplace-related concerns, the *Talete Project* for pre-retirement counseling, the *People Care* program.
- Financial support and insurance: staff may apply for financial aid in the event of serious personal or family circumstances; permanent staff are covered by a university-funded life insurance.
- Support for students with disabilities and SpLDs: psycho-pedagogical mentoring, IT and assistive technology support, administrative assistance, and dedicated career placement services.

5. Protection Against Discrimination

- Institutional support bodies: Single Guarantee Committee (CUG), Listening and Work-Related Distress Counselling Desk, Confidential Counsellor, Student Ombuds, Stalking Help Desk, External and Emergency Support.
- Education and awareness on gender-based violence: MOOC "Gender-Based Violence: How to Become an Active Bystander", the Respect event for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and dedicated training courses.

1.2. Review of Gender Equality Practices in Other Universities

1.2.1. Technische Universität Berlin (TU Berlin), Berlin, Germany

1.2.1.1. Gender representation at the university

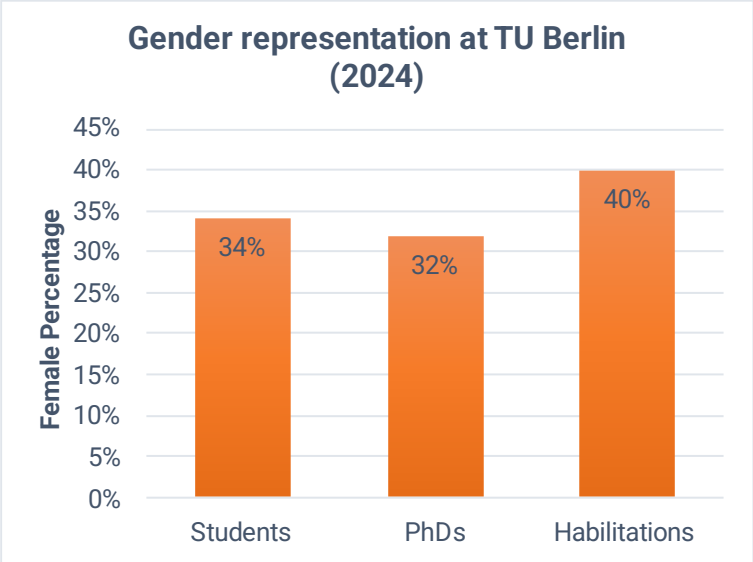

Figure 3. Gender representation at TU Berlin [11]

1.2.1.2. Governance model for institutionalizing gender equality

The Coordinating Office for Women's Advancement and Gender Equality serves as the main hub for information, education, and advisory services related to equal opportunities and is available to all members of the university community. The office is led by the Main Women and Gender Equality Officer, who advises the executive board and other university stakeholders on gender equality issues. In addition, the Part-time Women and Gender Equality Officers are elected within faculties and other university units. They serve as local points of contact for matters related to gender equality and gender-based discrimination. Together with the Main Officer and her deputies, the Part-time Officers form the Plenum of Women and Gender Equality Officers [12].

The Diversity Working Group is responsible for the development of the University's Diversity Strategy and meets regularly every 2-3 months. Its members include: Vice President for Strategic Development, Main Women and Gender Equality Officers, Anti-Discrimination Officer, Members of the Diversity Team, representatives from the Staff Council, Student Union and Junior Scholars, Office for Staff with Disabilities, Students with Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses, Academic Advising Service, Family Services Office, Center for Interdisciplinary Women's and Gender Studies, Center for Research on Antisemitism [13]. In addition, the Center for Junior Scholars supports the university's gender equality efforts specifically for early-career researchers, including doctoral candidates and postdocs. The Center offers guidance and advisory services on gender equality-related topics, helping to promote an inclusive environment for young researchers [14].

1.2.1.3. Strategic vision on gender and inclusion

Diversity Strategy: Equal Opportunities at TU Berlin (2020-2022) [13] includes the following goals: 1) promoting respectful and inclusive interactions among all university members; 2)

dismantling barriers and fostering equal opportunities; 3) supporting individuals in fully developing their potential; 4) enabling all members of the university to contribute to and participate in shaping the institution across all areas of activity and responsibility. A key tool for implementing and refining this strategy is the Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA). The DIA helps evaluate how decisions, processes, or services affect equal opportunities for diverse target groups. Currently, the Diversity Strategy focuses primarily on two key areas: gender diversity and first-generation students (social background).

To further support equal opportunities, TU Berlin offers a range of measures to help reconcile academic or professional life with family responsibilities. These include: flexible working hours; childcare services; free meals for children in the university canteen; consideration of caregiving responsibilities; options for partial parental leave; sports and travel programs for families. The Family Services Office serves as the primary point of contact for information and support related to these services.

1.2.1.4. Implemented gender equality initiatives

The proMotion program, offered by the Center for Junior Scholars, is designed to support female doctoral candidates throughout the doctoral process. It provides individual coaching, advisory services, and opportunities for interdisciplinary peer networking. The program also monitors and supports the career development of first-generation female doctoral researchers. It consists of two components: *proMotion training* (a qualification program involving a fixed group of female doctoral researchers, aimed at supporting participants in their doctoral projects) and *proMotion support* (a complementary framework offering career-focused one-on-one coaching).

The ProFiL program is focused on female postdoctoral researchers, offering mentoring, training, and networking opportunities. In cooperation with the International Postdoc Initiative (IPODI), it also offers fellowships in the form of employment at TU Berlin for international women scientists who wish to conduct research at the university.

The proScience project offers guidance and additional academic courses for female students to support them during their studies.

1.2.2. Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna (The University of Bologna), Bologna, Italy

1.2.2.1. Gender representation at the university

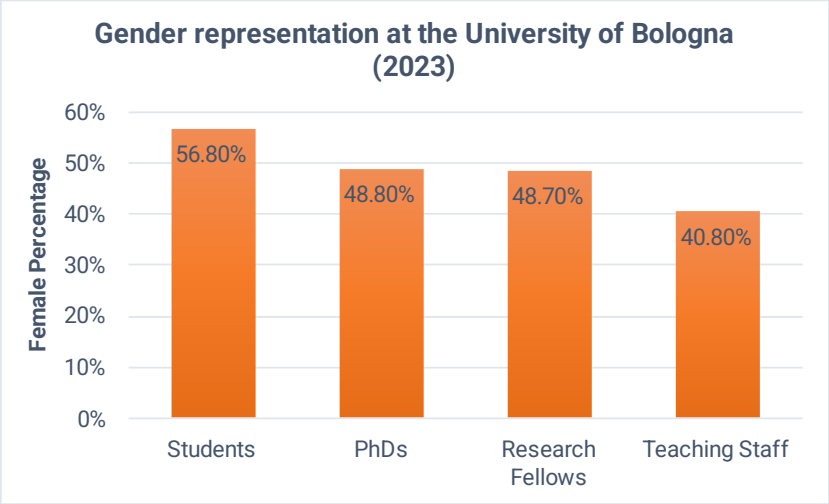

Figure 4. Gender representation at the University of Bologna [15]

1.2.2.2. Governance model for institutionalizing gender equality

Equal opportunities within the university are ensured through the coordinated work of several key roles and bodies: Vice Rector for Staff, Delegate for Students, Student Ombudsman, Delegate for Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity (responsible for combating all forms of discrimination and inequality), Guarantee Committee for Equal Opportunities, Employee Wellbeing, and Non-Discrimination at Work, Confidential Counsellor (provides support in preventing, managing, and resolving cases of discrimination, sexual or psychological harassment), Departmental Representatives for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (a designated coordinator for each department responsible for promoting and addressing issues related to equity, inclusion, and diversity at the local level) [16].

1.2.2.3. Strategic vision on gender and inclusion

The *Gender Equality Plan (2025-2027)* is a strategic planning document designed to ensure a culture of respect, combat gender-based discrimination, and promote gender equality through a set of coordinated and interrelated actions. The Gender Equality Plan is closely aligned with other institutional initiatives such as the *Annual Gender Equality Report* and the *Positive Action Plan*. The structure of the Gender Equality Plan is organized around five key priority areas [17]:

1. Work-life balance, organizational culture, and challenging stereotypes (focuses on promoting a healthy balance between work and family responsibilities).
2. Gender equality in leadership and decision-making (aims to improve gender balance in leadership roles).
3. Gender equality in recruitment and career advancement (promotes equal opportunities in hiring and professional development).

4. Mainstreaming gender and intersectionality in research, teaching, and the third mission (encourages the integration of gender and intersectional perspectives across research activities, educational programs, and community engagement initiatives).
5. Combating gender-based violence and harassment (focuses on raising awareness and implementing measures to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, including psychological and sexual harassment).

In addition to the Gender Equality Plan, the university has adopted the *Code of Conduct for the Prevention of Sexual and Moral Harassment (2020)*. This code builds on the principles outlined in the university's *Code of Ethics and Conduct*, reaffirming the institution's commitment to a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment.

1.2.2.4. Implemented gender equality initiatives

Helpdesk against gender-based violence aims to provide a safe and supportive environment for addressing various forms of gender-based discrimination, whether occurring within or outside the university [18]. The service offers the following support: individual consultations with an expert; a telephone helpline; emergency response activation; information on university structures and contacts related to gender-based violence and discrimination; basic guidance on legal aspects and how to contact the appropriate authorities; referral to specialized services and associations in complex cases requiring a multidisciplinary response; coordination with local support networks.

Alias Career initiative allows individuals undergoing gender transition or those who do not identify with the gender assigned at birth to use a chosen name within the university context. The Alias Career ensures that the chosen name is used consistently throughout the individual's academic or professional journey at the university. This measure supports self-determination, privacy, and inclusivity within the academic and workplace environment.

1.2.3. Technical University of Munich (TUM), Munich, Germany

1.2.3.1. Gender representation at the university

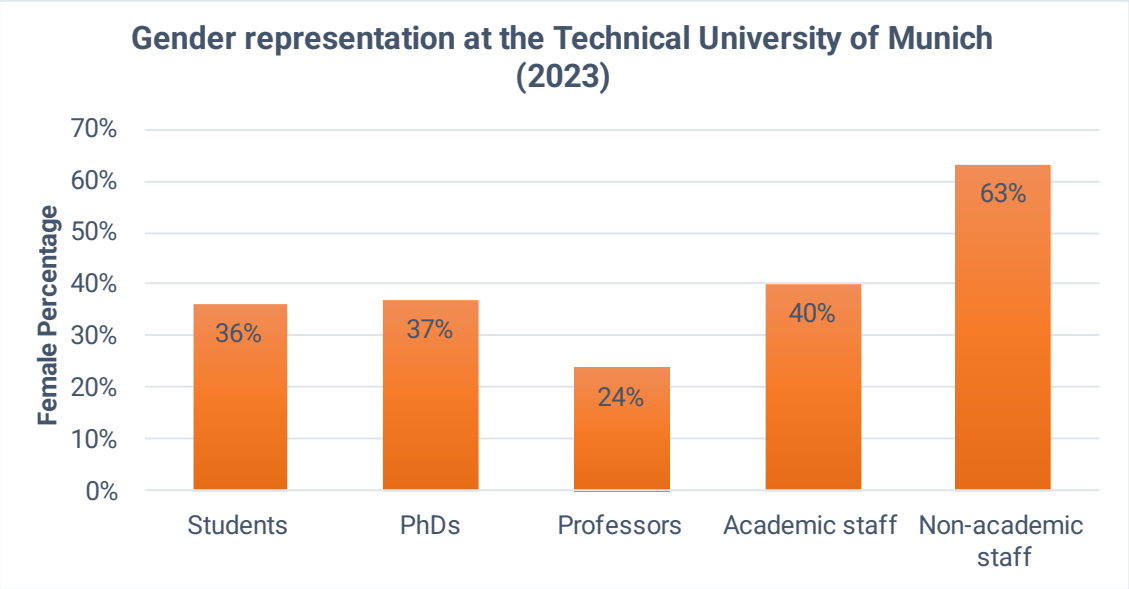

Figure 5. Gender representation at the Technical University of Munich [19]

1.2.3.2. Governance model for institutionalizing gender equality

The university's efforts to promote gender equality and diversity are supported by several key roles and organizational units [20]:

- The Gender Equality Officer (Representatives for Equal Opportunities for Women in Science and the Arts) serves as the central point of contact for female students and researchers. The primary responsibility is to ensure that women in academia are not subject to disadvantage at any stage of their professional journey.
- The Staff Unit for Diversity & Inclusion is a central office responsible for developing, shaping, and supporting the university's gender and diversity strategy.
- The Equal Opportunity Officer focuses on promoting equality among employees, involved in supporting scientific research and education, including science and research management staff.

1.2.3.3. Strategic vision on gender and inclusion

The *Diversity & Gender Equality Plan (2023)* was developed under the leadership of the Senior Vice President for Talent Management and Diversity, in collaboration with the TUM Gender Equality Officer and the TUM Equal Opportunity Officer [21]. The plan addresses the requirements set by the European Commission and is implemented through the following measures:

1. Commitment of resources and gender expertise (Gender & Diversity Incentive Fund; gender equality-based resource distribution across the university).
2. Data collection and monitoring (TUM-wide diversity monitoring; annual reporting and use of sex/gender-disaggregated data on personnel).

3. Training and awareness (online courses focused on diversity and gender equality; training for bias-free staff selection).
4. Work-life balance and organizational culture (the TUM Family Service; extension of the tenure clock for family-related time; support for part-time work in leadership roles).
5. Gender balance in leadership and decision-making (integration of gender and diversity considerations into university governance; implementation of compensation programs to support female participation in leadership).
6. Gender equality in recruitment and career advancement (use of the Gender Decoder to avoid bias in job postings; diversity-oriented talent scouting initiatives; guidelines for equitable staff selection and promotion processes).
7. Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching (establishment of professorships in Gender & Diversity in Science & Technology and the Social Psychology of Equality and Inclusion; promotion of female adjunct instructors; diversity competency training for students and teaching staff; STEM outreach programs for young women; guidelines for gender-sensitive language).
8. Measures against gender-based violence and harassment (collaboration with the Munich Women's Emergency Helpline; TUM Respect Guide).

1.2.3.4. Implemented gender equality initiatives

Advisory and support services [22]: consultation contact points for addressing sexual harassment and sexualized violence, discrimination, antisemitism, gender equality, LGBTIQIA+ inclusion, disability and chronic illness, work-life balance, and workplace health promotion.

TUM Female Founders initiative: addresses the specific challenges and opportunities encountered by women in entrepreneurship. The program provides support throughout all phases of the start-up process, including community-building and tailored resources to empower female founders.

TUM Family Service: provides a range of support, advice, and resources to assist with combining family responsibilities with work or study. Services include help with locating regular childcare options, flexible care solutions, and arrangements for dependent family members.

TUM4Kids – Babysitting and Tutoring Platform: an initiative by TUM Family Service designed to enhance the compatibility of family life with professional or academic commitments. The online platform allows TUM parents to search for babysitters or tutors, supporting childcare or academic needs during periods such as exam phases, conferences, or short-term emergencies.

Women of TUM Network: a platform for exchange, inspiration, and mutual support, promoting visibility and dialogue among women in academia.

Coaching for Female Scientists and Science Managers: professional coaching opportunities to support female researchers in navigating academic careers, leadership challenges, and professional development.

1.2.4. University of Copenhagen (UCPH), Copenhagen, Denmark

1.2.4.1. Gender representation at the university

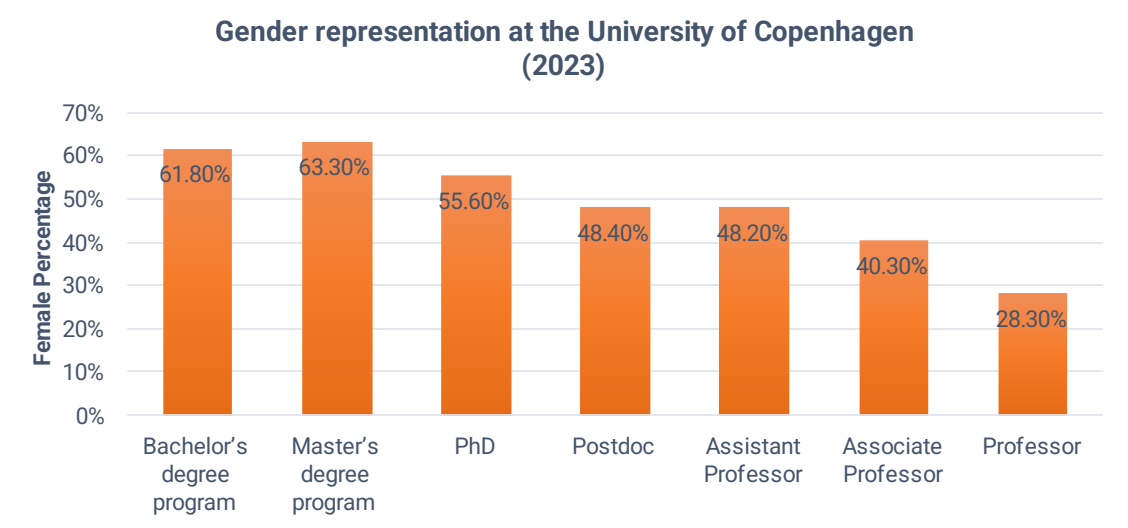

Figure 6. Gender representation at the University of Copenhagen [23]

1.2.4.2. Governance model for institutionalizing gender equality

The University's equality and diversity strategy is overseen by a Steering Committee, chaired by the Rector, with the Deputy Director of Shared HR serving as the Programme Owner. The committee is composed of representatives from: departmental leadership (Deans, Deputy Directors, and Heads of Department), student representation (Student Council), and programme management (Diversity and Inclusion Consultant). In addition, a reference group supports the strategy by providing diverse perspectives from the university community: student community (Student Council and Queer Union), academic staff (Academic Officer, PhD students, Postdoctoral researchers, Associate Professors, and Professors), administrative staff (Language Consultant, Head of Section, and Head of Administration), project managers (Senior EU Liaison Officer, Senior Consultant, Diversity and Inclusion Consultants, Programme Manager for Equality and Diversity) [24].

1.2.4.3. Strategic vision on gender and inclusion

UCPH Gender Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2022–2023 [23] provides a foundation for ongoing gender equality and diversity efforts at the university. It is structured around six key goals: 1) broad organizational engagement in gender equality and diversity efforts; 2) improved data quality and knowledge base; 3) increased awareness of gender equality and unconscious bias; 4) strengthened organizational culture and handling of offensive behavior; 5) equal opportunities in recruitment and promotion; 6) integration of gender in research and education.

Key measures implemented: 1) establishment of a whistleblower scheme for anonymous reporting of sexual harassment; 2) enhanced reviews to include gender equality and diversity; 3) training programs for staff and managers on gender equality, diversity, and bias; 4) courses and workshops on gender in research and inclusive teaching practices; 5) development of tools and guidelines for gender-equal recruitment and promotion; 6) improved data on gender in admissions, employment, and pay equality; 7) baseline set for addressing offensive behavior in student and staff interactions; 8) survey-based analysis of other diversity markers in education and employment.

The action plan supports compliance with *Danish gender equality legislation* "Diversitet i forskning og forskningsfinansiering: En kortlægning af litteraturen om diversitet ift. køn, alder, karrieretrin, nationalitet og fagområde". The university's equality and diversity strategy is also embedded in *Strategy 2030: Creating Benefit for More People* [25].

1.2.4.4. Implemented gender equality initiatives

Inclusion Survey (2024) among staff and students, initiated by the Steering Committee for Equality and Diversity, to assess experiences of inclusion and exclusion across the university, with a focus on identifying patterns of discrimination and challenges faced by minority groups.

Visibility and community engagement: public-facing events such as the "Rainbow Corner" at the KU Festival 2024, organized in collaboration with the LGBTQIA+ employee network and Queer Union KU. "Research Under the Rainbow" initiative to showcase LGBTQIA+-related research.

Local initiatives: 1) The Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences established a Diversity Sounding Board; 2) The Department of Arts and Cultural Studies launched a Diversity Group; 3) Several departments from SCIENCE and SUND joined the "Living Labs" project to enhance diversity in STEM education.

LGBTQIA+ initiatives: the UCPH LGBTQIA+ employee network (2019), Queer Union Københavns Universitet (QUKU).

International engagement: IARU Working Group: Women and Men in Globalizing Universities, LERU Working Group: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

1.2.5. Aalto University, Aalto, Finland

1.2.5.1. Gender representation at the university

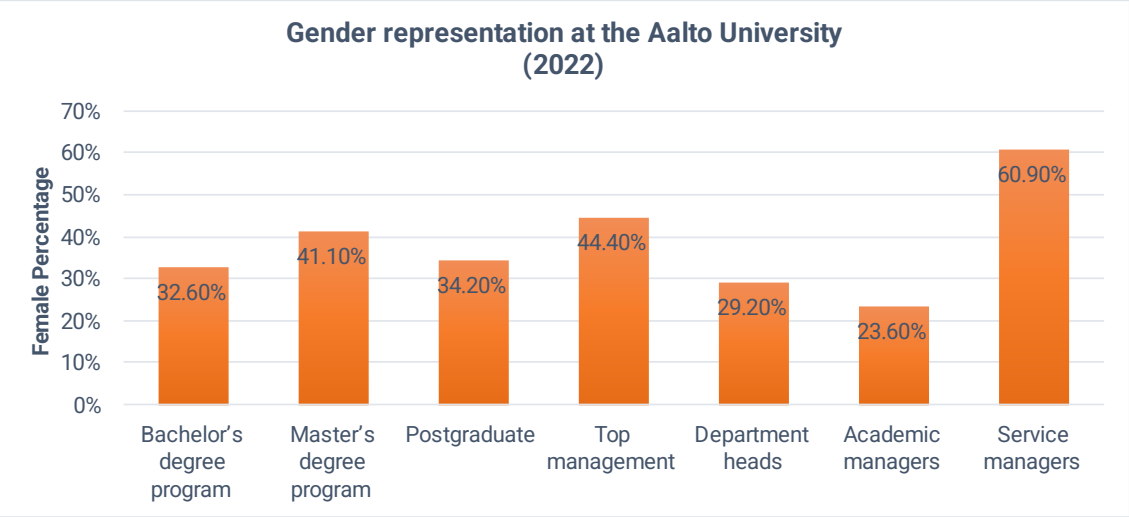

Figure 7. Gender representation at the Aalto University [26]

1.2.5.2. Governance model for institutionalizing gender equality

The university's equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) strategy was developed through consultation with key governance and management bodies, including the HR Committee of the Foundation Board, Aalto Management Team, Academic Affairs Committee, HR Management Team, Learning and Education Steering Group, and employee representatives. Final approval was granted by the University President. Overall responsibility for strategic development in this area is supported by the EDI Officer, the University EDI Committee, and the Accessibility Coordination Group. Implementation is shared across institutional levels: School Deans, school development managers, school EDI groups, and Service leaders [26].

1.2.5.3. Strategic vision on gender and inclusion

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan (2025–2028) [26] sets out the university's approach to promoting equality, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility through four priority areas: 1) Diverse Community (focuses on fostering a diverse body of faculty, staff, and students; 2) Aaltogether Culture (aims to strengthen a shared sense of community and belonging by encouraging collaboration within teams and units across the university); 3) Inclusive and Accessible Education (seeks to create a learning environment where all students can thrive, regardless of background or individual needs); 4) Integrated Approach (involves aligning and enhancing EDI within the university's quality system and planning cycle, ensuring systematic implementation and follow-up).

1.2.5.4. Implemented gender equality initiatives

Diverse Community: 1) student recruitment (Shaking Up Tech event for girls and gender minorities; University Pathway Finland to support international applicants; Finland Scholarships and Fellowship Programme for tuition waivers, and relocation support); 2) inclusive recruitment (gender-neutral job descriptions and internal sourcing; anonymous and academic leadership-based recruitment assessments); 3) career and well-being (mentoring

for women and doctoral students; Wellbeing Desk services with coaching and psychological support; Equal Career Paths for Women – NOW! Project); 4) policy development (updated family-leave policies and doctoral researcher employment terms).

Aaltogether Culture: 1) training and awareness (Code of Conduct and Unconscious Bias e-learning courses, regular EDI sessions and well-being info packages, grassroots initiatives Making Waves, Kaleidoscope Cinema, and EDI Hub); 2) international inclusion (Finland Studies and Finland Works MOOCs, language learning via the Kielibuusti platform, supporting of families/spouses through HEI LIFE and hosted integration events); 3) policy and reporting (language guidelines to foster multilingualism and inclusion, enhanced harassment reporting processes and an anonymous ethics channel, harassment prevention training).

Inclusive and Accessible Education: 1) inclusive pedagogy (updated teaching guidelines and course to address inclusion, EDI content in pedagogical courses and Teachers' Handbook, training on inclusive practices and digital accessibility); 2) student services (individual study arrangements via LES accessibility group, expanded well-being initiatives and student ambassadors, AllWell? survey to emphasize psychological safety, integrated EDI into Personal Impact education offering); 3) doctoral supervision training with EDI components.

Integrated Approach: 1) process integration (EDI reviews within university audits, aligned school and EDI annual review cycles, funded EDI roles and committees at school level); 2) digital accessibility (digital services for accessibility, integration accessibility into IT procurement and system design, updated brand visuals and templates to meet accessibility standards, accessibility trainings and hybrid teaching spaces); 3) physical accessibility (accessibility in new construction permits, improved signage, lecture halls, and teaching spaces, campus-wide accessibility audits).

1.2.6. Delft University of Technology (TU Delft), Delft, Netherlands

1.2.6.1. Gender representation at the university

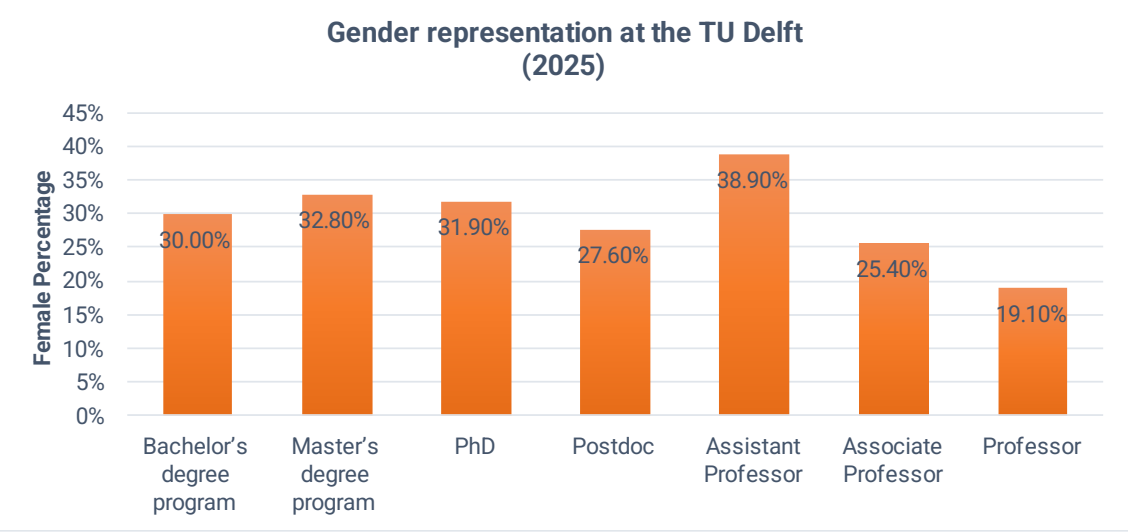

Figure 8. Gender representation at the TU Delft [27]

1.2.6.2. Governance model for institutionalizing gender equality

Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Office is responsible for fostering a respectful, inclusive, accessible, and diverse university community [28]. The team includes a Diversity & Inclusion Officer, policy and communications advisors, a student diversity outreach advisor, LDE trainee, student assistants, and administrative support. Faculty Diversity Officers appointed across faculties to advance diversity and inclusion at the local level. They collaborate with the central D&I Office and faculty members to promote an inclusive academic and workplace environment. D&I Board is chaired by the Chief Diversity Officer. The Board includes Faculty Diversity Officers and representatives from key university bodies such as the Student Council, HR, Education & Student Affairs, and the Integrity Officer. It serves as an advisory group, supporting D&I strategy development and identifying priority themes. Member networks include TrueU (LGBTQIA+), DEWIS (women scientists), and DiversAbility (employees with disabilities or neurodiversity).

1.2.6.3. Strategic vision on gender and inclusion

Gender Equality Plan (2021) is developed across seven strategic themes [29]: 1) Gender Equality (addresses systemic barriers for women in academia and promotes gender equity in STEM disciplines); 2) Gendered Research and Innovation (promotes the integration of gender analysis in research content, emphasizes interdisciplinary collaboration between STEM and social sciences); 3) Study Success and Representation (enhances outreach to underrepresented student groups and supports equity in academic success and career progression); 4) Institutional Support & Wellbeing (aims to embed mental health and wellbeing into all university functions); 5) Inclusive Recruitment (improves diversity in recruitment and career progression processes); 6) Religion and Spirituality (acknowledges the role of faith and belief systems within a multicultural academic community); 7) Disability Support (develops long-term strategies for the recruitment, support, and retention of students and staff with disabilities).

Key activities supporting the Gender Equality Plan include: 1) Data collection and monitoring (monthly updated diversity dashboards with gender-disaggregated data on staff and students); 2) Training and awareness (training on social safety, intercultural communication, inclusive education, unconscious and gender bias in selection); 3) Research and work culture (work-life balance via health coaching and childcare support, inclusive recruitment through transparent procedures following the NVP Job Application Code, Delft Technology Fellowship to attract top female researchers); 4) Combating gender-based violence (Integrity Office, Ombuds Officer, confidential counsellors network, annual risk assessments and social safety training); 5) Integrating gender in research and education (educational materials with a focus on diversity which incorporated into teacher training (UTQ) and supported by the TU Delft Teaching Lab).

In addition, *TU Delft Code of Conduct (2020)* provides a framework for ethical and value-based behavior for staff, students, and guests, especially in complex situations [30]. It promotes action aligned with the university's six core values: Diversity, Integrity, Respect, Engagement,

Courage, and Trust (DIRECT). The Code outlines: how to respond to inappropriate behavior, the TU Delft Integrity Statement, detailing expected conduct, roles and responsibilities of individuals and the institution. The TU Delft Code of Conduct complements national and sectoral codes, including: Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, Code for Good Governance in Dutch Universities, Code of Conduct for International Students in Dutch Higher Education.

1.2.6.4. Implemented gender equality initiatives

According to *TU Delft Gender Equality Plan:* 1) Gender Equality (each faculty must implement a Gender Equality Plan including gender data analysis (recruitment, retention, progression), positive action and development opportunities for women, visibility of female role models and gender champions); 2) Gendered Research and Innovation (awareness-building via training and communications, integration of GRI into curricula and course design, leadership training on applying GRI in teaching); 3) Study Success and Representation (data collection on academic performance with attention to D&I factors); 4) Institutional Support and Wellbeing (active bystander and inappropriate behavior response training, diversity lecture series to encourage dialogue); 5) Inclusive Recruitment (review of committee diversity and accessibility, open, transparent, merit-based recruitment, mandatory D&I online course for staff and students); 6) Religion and Spirituality (quiet space on campus for reflection, prayer, and peace); 7) Disability Inclusion (implementation of the Participation Law to support employment of people distanced from the labor market, equity in access and support for students with disabilities or ongoing medical/mental health needs, Horizon platform for guidance and peer support).

Additional inclusion networks and initiatives [31]: Inclusive Language Guide, Integrity Office (advises on social safety and complex integrity cases in collaboration with D&I and HR units), TrueU (LGBTQIA+ staff network), Outsite & DWH (LGBTI+ youth and student community), IEEE Women in Engineering, Librae (gender equity in STEM), DiversAbility (employee network supporting disability and neurodiversity inclusion), Studable Delft (student community for those with disabilities), EDIT (initiative addressing D&I issues and promoting belonging).

Appendix 2. Results of the questionnaire survey

Respondents were asked to evaluate the level of gender equality within the Faculty of Civil Engineering & Architecture. The majority rated the situation positively, with Good being the most common choice, followed by a notable share selecting Very Good. A smaller but visible portion rated gender equality as Poor, indicating that while overall perceptions lean toward satisfaction, there remain concerns among some respondents.

These findings suggest that gender equality is generally recognized and valued, yet perceptions are not entirely uniform. The presence of both positive and critical views highlights that progress has been made but also points to persistent gaps in experience or awareness. This ambivalence may reflect differences between groups (e.g., staff, researchers, or students) or varying exposure to institutional practices. Importantly, the results indicate that while a foundation of trust exists, there is still space for strengthening faculty-wide initiatives to ensure consistent experiences of equality across all roles and contexts.

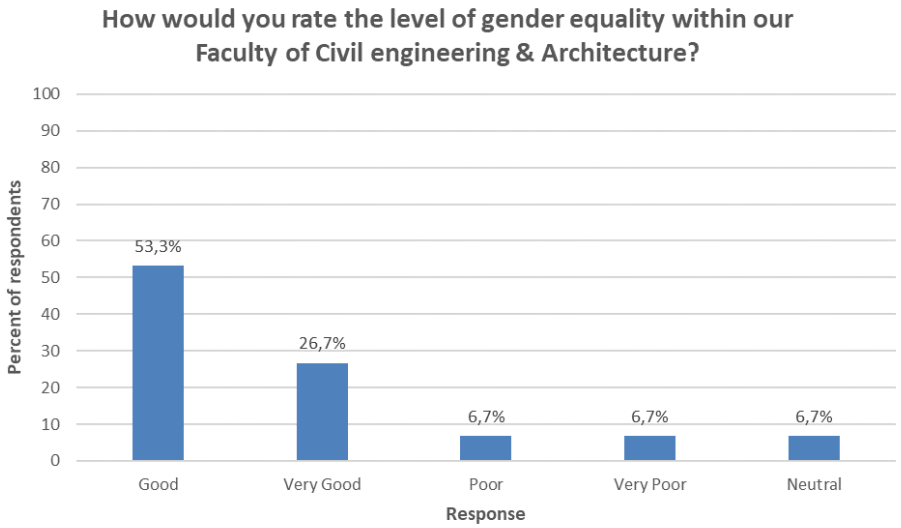

Figure 1. How would you rate the level of gender equality within our Faculty of Civil engineering & Architecture?

Respondents were asked to assess the faculty's efforts in promoting gender equality and diversity. The most frequent answer was **Adequate**, while a smaller proportion considered the efforts **Inadequate**. Only a limited number of participants rated the efforts as **Good** or **Very Good**, suggesting that although the faculty is recognized as taking steps in this area, respondents largely perceive these measures as moderate rather than exemplary.

This distribution highlights a cautious confidence: stakeholders acknowledge existing initiatives but also signal that these may not be sufficiently visible, consistent, or ambitious. The relatively low share of highly positive responses implies that current practices could be strengthened through more systematic implementation, clearer communication, and measurable outcomes. Overall, the results suggest that while gender equality and diversity are

on the institutional agenda, there remains considerable room for improvement in order to foster stronger engagement and trust among the academic community.

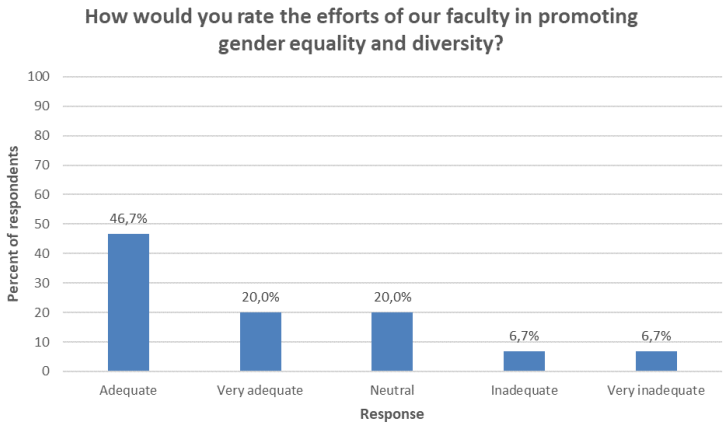

Figure 2. How would you rate the efforts of our faculty in promoting gender equality and diversity?

Responses strongly support the link between gender diversity and innovation. The majority of participants **Agreed** or **Strongly Agreed** that diversity contributes to creativity and advancement in the field. A smaller portion remained **Neutral**, while only a negligible share disagreed.

These results underline a widely shared recognition that inclusivity is not only a social value but also an asset for professional and academic excellence. The presence of some neutral responses may indicate uncertainty or lack of exposure to evidence demonstrating this link. Overall, the findings reflect a forward-looking perspective within the faculty, where diversity is seen as a driver of innovation and competitiveness.

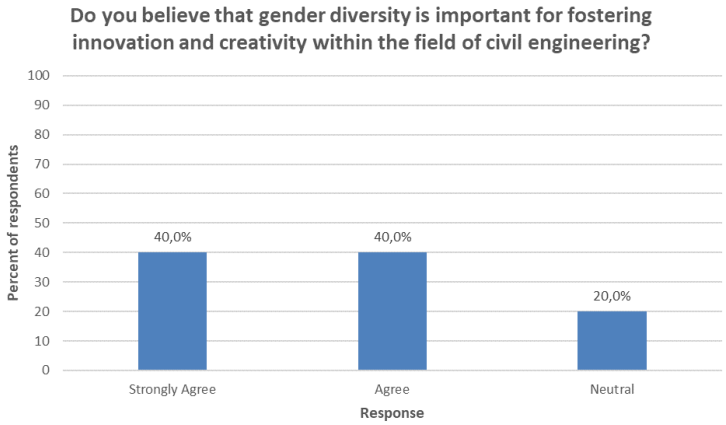

Figure 3. Do you believe that gender diversity is important for fostering innovation and creativity within the field of civil engineering?

The majority of respondents reported **No, never**, though a notable minority indicated experiencing or witnessing discrimination **occasionally** or even **frequently**. While the dominant perception is one of a discrimination-free environment, the existence of recurring negative experiences among some respondents cannot be overlooked.

This pattern suggests that while gender equality may be institutionally supported, it is not universally experienced across the faculty. Even occasional incidents undermine trust and inclusivity, particularly in environments striving for academic excellence and fairness. These findings highlight the importance of continued monitoring, clear reporting mechanisms, and proactive interventions to ensure that isolated experiences do not escalate into systemic barriers.

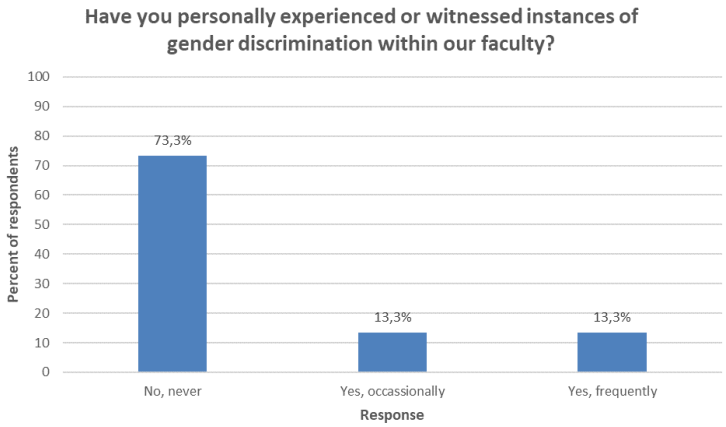

Figure 4. Have you personally experienced or witnessed instances of gender discrimination within our faculty?

Responses revealed a mixed picture. While a share of respondents agreed that opportunities are equal, a considerable proportion expressed doubt, indicating that advancement may not be perceived as fully equitable. Neutral responses further suggest uncertainty or hesitation to evaluate fairness in career progression.

These findings imply that while some individuals experience or observe equal treatment, others remain unconvinced. This contrast may reflect structural barriers, perceptions of informal bias, or lack of transparency in promotion criteria. The results highlight the need for stronger communication of fair procedures, mentorship opportunities, and data-driven monitoring to build greater confidence in equality of career advancement.

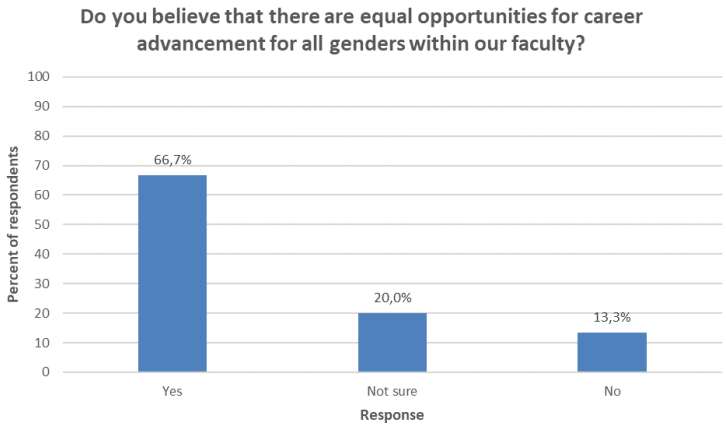

Figure 5. Do you believe that there are equal opportunities for career advancement for all genders within our faculty?

The responses suggest that equal participation in decision-making is not universally perceived. While many participants agreed that opportunities are equal, a significant portion either disagreed or remained neutral, pointing to uneven experiences across the faculty.

This distribution indicates that inclusivity in governance and leadership may be inconsistent, with some groups feeling underrepresented. The neutral responses could signal either limited involvement in decision-making processes or uncertainty about how inclusive they are in practice. Overall, the results stress the importance of ensuring transparent procedures, balanced representation in committees, and active encouragement of diverse voices in governance structures.

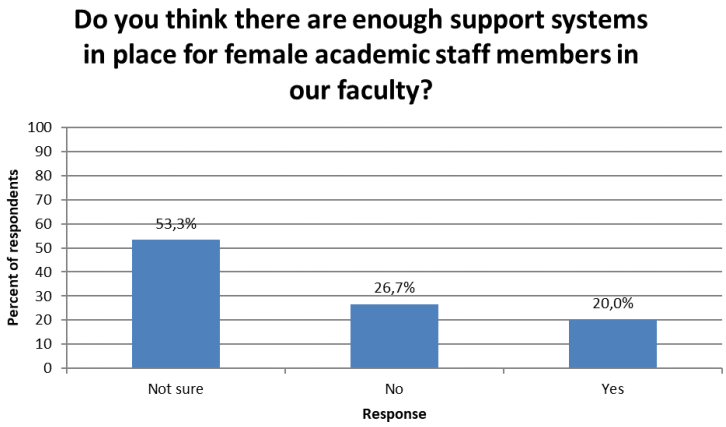

Figure 6. Do you think there are enough support systems in place for female academic staff members in our faculty?

The majority of respondents reported feeling **Somewhat comfortable** (53.3%) discussing gender equality, while a substantial share expressed **Neutrality** (40.0%). Only a small minority indicated being **Very uncomfortable** (6.7%).

This pattern suggests a moderate but cautious willingness to engage in conversations about gender equality. While discomfort is not widespread, the high proportion of neutral responses indicates a lack of strong confidence or openness. This may reflect uncertainties about how such discussions are received, potential stigma, or limited experience with structured dialogue. The results point to a faculty environment where discussion is possible but not yet fully normalized. Creating safe spaces, leadership endorsement, and more visible initiatives could encourage deeper, more confident engagement.

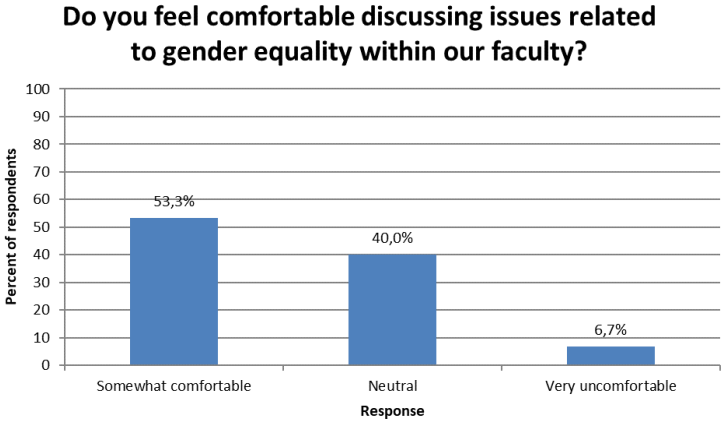

Figure 7. Do you feel comfortable discussing issues related to gender equality within our faculty?

Open question: **"In your opinion, what steps can our faculty take to improve gender equality and inclusivity?"**

A total of **five respondents** provided comments, reflecting a range of perspectives. One participant stated that they **do not see gender equality issues** within the faculty, emphasizing that principles of fairness are already well established. Another pointed to the importance of **changing attitudes of both women and men**, suggesting that cultural or behavioral shifts are necessary. One response downplayed gender issues, arguing that **qualification, rather than gender, should be the focus** in academic contexts. Another suggestion was to **attract more female students**, highlighting representation at the student level as a potential area for improvement. Finally, one response simply stated **"No comment."**

Taken together, these responses reveal **diverse and sometimes conflicting views**. While some respondents perceive gender equality as already achieved, others highlight the need for cultural change or increased female participation. This divergence indicates that faculty members and students may experience the institutional environment differently, and it underscores the importance of maintaining dialogue, raising awareness, and collecting broader input to shape meaningful and widely accepted measures for inclusivity.

Question: ***"Have you ever participated in any gender equality training or workshops provided by our faculty?"***

Responses were united: **100% of participants reported 'No'**, indicating that no one had taken part in gender equality training or workshops at the faculty.

This finding reveals a significant gap between institutional priorities and practice. While policies or intentions may exist, the absence of actual training means that awareness, capacity-building, and skill development are not being systematically addressed. Such training is a core expectation under Horizon Europe's Gender Equality Plan framework, and its absence may hinder both compliance and cultural change. The results highlight an urgent need for structured programs — such as workshops, seminars, or online modules — to embed gender awareness into everyday academic and organizational life.

Most respondents rated the work schedule as either **Flexible (40.0%)** or **Very flexible (26.7%)**, with an additional **33.3% selecting Neutral**. No participants rated the schedule as outright inflexible.

These findings suggest that the faculty provides a generally supportive environment for those with caregiving responsibilities, though the high share of neutral responses points to varying or uncertain experiences. The combination of positive and neutral evaluations implies that flexibility is available in principle but may not always be consistently applied or well-communicated. Ensuring clarity in policies and promoting awareness of existing support mechanisms could help more staff perceive the faculty as fully responsive to work–life balance needs.

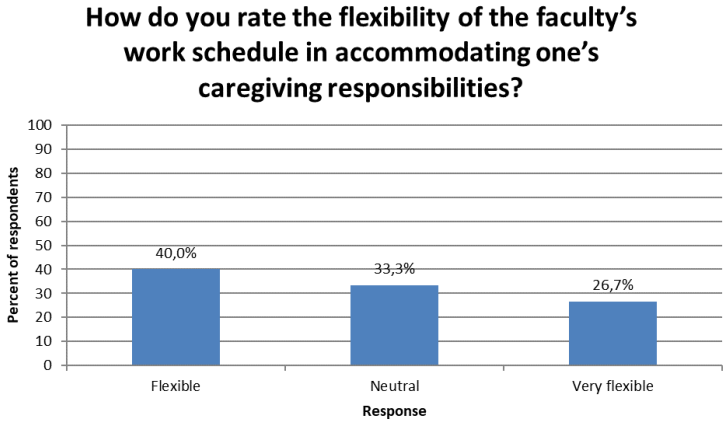

Figure 8. How do you rate the flexibility of the faculty's work schedule in accommodating one's caregiving responsibilities?

The majority acknowledged an impact: **46.7% answered 'Yes, somewhat'**, while **13.3% said 'Yes, significantly'**. In contrast, **40.0% responded 'No, not at all'**.

This distribution reveals a divide in perceptions. While many recognize that caregiving responsibilities can hinder career progression, a substantial minority believe they do not affect advancement at all. The results suggest that faculty members' experiences may vary depending on role, career stage, or available support. Importantly, the acknowledgment of significant or partial impacts underscores the need for explicit policies and safeguards to

ensure caregiving does not disadvantage academic careers. Addressing this issue directly can enhance fairness and help retain talented staff who balance professional and family responsibilities.

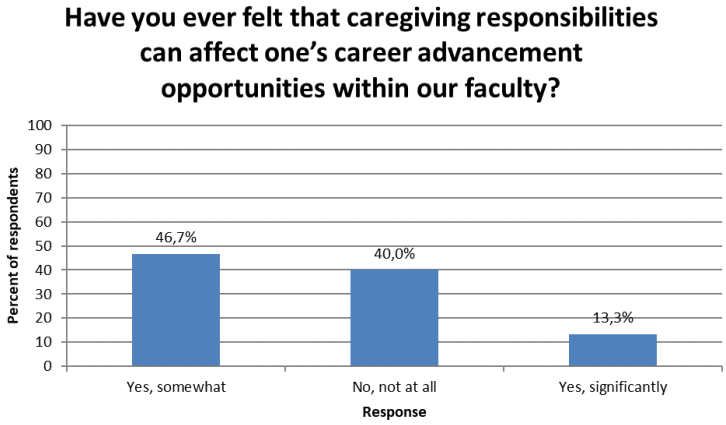

Figure 9. Have you ever felt that caregiving responsibilities can affect one's career advancement opportunities within our faculty?

The largest share of respondents reported feeling **Supported (40.0%)**, followed by **Neutral (33.3%)**. Smaller proportions indicated feeling **Very supported (20.0%)** or **Unsupported (6.7%)**.

These results suggest that most staff recognize some degree of institutional support, though few feel fully supported. The strong presence of neutral responses reflects uncertainty or mixed experiences, while the small share of negative responses indicates that dissatisfaction is not widespread but still relevant. This distribution highlights the importance of strengthening support mechanisms and ensuring consistency across departments. Clear communication of available measures, as well as targeted improvements, could help shift perceptions from moderate to strong support.

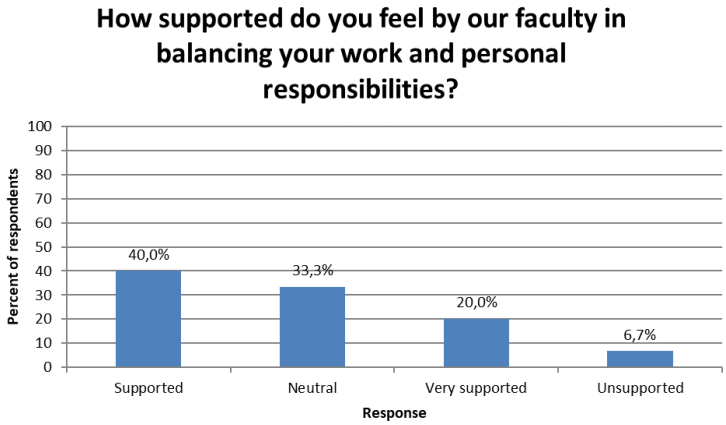

Figure 10. How supported do you feel by our faculty in balancing your work and personal responsibilities?

Question: **"Do you believe that addressing work–life balance for working parents is an important aspect of promoting gender equality within our faculty?"**

The results show a clear consensus: **73.3% of respondents answered "Yes"**, indicating strong agreement that supporting work–life balance for working parents is central to achieving gender equality. An additional **20.0% were "Unsure"**, reflecting some uncertainty about the direct connection between these issues. Only **6.7% responded "No"**, suggesting limited resistance to this perspective.

These findings highlight that most community members recognize the structural link between parental responsibilities and gender fairness. The small proportion of disagreement indicates broad support for policies and initiatives that address work–life balance. At the same time, the presence of uncertainty suggests the need for awareness-raising and communication to strengthen understanding of how caregiving responsibilities influence equal opportunities.

Responses were evenly divided: **33.3% Yes, 33.3% Unsure, and 33.3% No**.

This striking balance reveals a lack of shared perception regarding the importance of gender equality within the faculty. The absence of consensus suggests that while some community members see it as a priority, others are unconvinced or unaware of its relevance. The equal distribution across all three options signals both the presence of support and the persistence of skepticism. This highlights the need for stronger institutional leadership, clearer communication of policies, and engagement initiatives that connect gender equality with academic excellence and fairness.

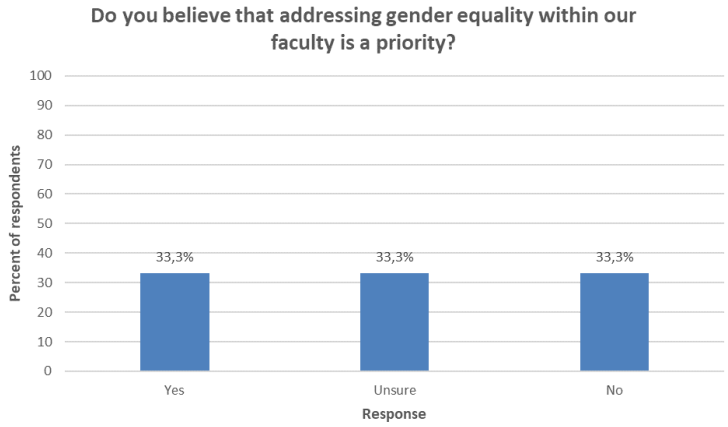

Figure 11. Do you believe that addressing gender equality within our faculty is a priority?

Open questions:

"Are there any specific challenges related to work–life balance that you believe unfairly affect working mothers within our faculty?"

Only **three responses** were provided to this question, and all were minimal: one respondent answered with a dash ("–"), another with **"No"**, and a third with **"No comment."**

This limited engagement suggests that respondents either did not perceive specific challenges, felt uncomfortable sharing details, or considered the question not directly relevant to their own experience. The lack of substantive input makes it difficult to identify clear problem areas from this survey alone. However, the absence of detailed responses should not be interpreted as evidence that challenges do not exist. Instead, it underscores the need for **further qualitative inquiry** — such as focus groups or confidential interviews — to capture more nuanced perspectives on the work–life balance issues that may disproportionately affect working mothers.

"Are there any policies or initiatives you would like to see implemented within our faculty to better support working parents in achieving work–life balance?"

A total of **three respondents** provided comments. One suggestion was the establishment of **childcare facilities within the university**, emphasizing compliance with legal requirements and the importance of practical support for parents. Another respondent indicated **"not so much,"** implying limited perceived need for additional initiatives. A third response stated **"No comment,"** offering no specific proposals.

Although the number of responses was small, the mention of childcare facilities points to a **tangible and actionable measure** that could directly enhance support for working parents. The limited engagement with this question may also suggest either general satisfaction with current provisions or low awareness of what additional policies could be introduced. These findings highlight the value of **consulting more widely with staff and students** to identify concrete needs and priorities for improving work–life balance.

"What do you think is the biggest issue when it comes to gender equality in research in general?"

A total of **six respondents** provided open comments. The perspectives are diverse, reflecting both positive views and concerns. Some participants suggested there are **no significant issues**, describing conditions as "just fine" or stating "no issues in general." Others, however, identified specific barriers. One respondent highlighted that **women are undervalued compared to men**, particularly in engineering fields, noting that men often find it easier to progress in their careers. Another pointed to **deep-rooted cultural values** carried from families as an obstacle to gender equality, suggesting that broader societal norms influence academic environments. Additional responses included brief remarks such as "qualification," which may reflect a belief that merit rather than gender should determine opportunities.

Overall, these comments illustrate a **split perception**: while some see gender equality as non-problematic, others recognize **structural undervaluation of women and cultural barriers** as persistent challenges. This divergence emphasizes the importance of continued dialogue and evidence-based monitoring to ensure that hidden biases or cultural legacies do not undermine fairness in research careers.

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