

Varna Free University “Chernorizets Hrabar”

GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

for the period 2025–2029

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. The present Gender Equality Plan (hereinafter referred to as “the Plan”) defines the strategic framework, objectives, principles, mechanisms, and specific measures for achieving gender equality between women and men at Varna Free University “Chernorizets Hrabar” (VFU).
2. The Plan covers all members of the academic community - students, PhD students, academic staff, administrative and technical personnel, as well as external partners who participate in university activities.
3. The Plan is adopted in accordance with:
 - 3.1. The National Strategy for the Promotion of Gender Equality for the period 2021–2030.
 - 3.2. The Gender Equality Act.
 - 3.3. The Protection Against Discrimination Act.
 - 3.4. The VFU Code of Ethics and internal regulations.
 - 3.5. The requirements of the Horizon Europe programme.
4. The Plan is mandatory for all structures and units of VFU.

II. MAIN PRINCIPLES

In the implementation of the Plan, the following principles shall be observed:

1. Equality and non-discrimination on the grounds of gender and other related characteristics.
2. Zero tolerance for discrimination, harassment, and violence.
3. Transparency and accountability.
4. An intersectional approach (interaction between gender and other factors - age, ethnicity, health status, social status, etc.).
5. Sustainability and long-term impact of the measures.
6. Decisions based on data and evidence, in strict compliance with personal data protection requirements.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

The main objectives of the Plan are:

1. Eliminating barriers to access to education, employment, and career development.
2. Promoting balanced representation of women and men at all managerial and academic levels.
3. Creating an inclusive and safe working and learning environment.
4. Increasing awareness and culture regarding gender equality.
5. Improving the balance between professional and personal life.
6. Integrating the gender perspective into research and educational programmes.

IV. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

1. The unit responsible for the implementation of the Plan is the Ethics Committee of VFU.
2. Political and strategic governance is exercised by the Rector.
3. Operational partners are:
 - 3.1. Human Resources Department.
 - 3.2. International Relations and Projects Department.
 - 3.3. Accreditation and Quality Management Secretary.
 - 3.4. Student Council.
4. The Ethics Committee:
 - 4.1. Coordinates the implementation of the Plan.
 - 4.2. Prepares annual progress reports.
 - 4.3. Proposes updates and improvements.

V. KEY AREAS OF INTERVENTION AND MEASURES

Area 1. Institutional Changes and Regulatory Framework

- 1.1. Review and update of internal regulatory documents from a gender equality perspective.
- 1.2. Introduction of an explicit gender equality clause in all recruitment and evaluation procedures.
- 1.3. Development and adoption of a Procedure for reporting and addressing cases of discrimination and harassment.

Area 2. Engagement and Support

- 2.1. Official declaration and public announcement of VFU's commitment to gender equality.
- 2.2. Organization of an annual "Equality Week" campaign.
- 2.3. Development of partnerships with other universities and non-governmental organizations.

Area 3. Capacity Building

- 3.1. Organization of regular gender equality training sessions for academic and administrative staff.
- 3.2. Development of a Handbook for the use of non-discriminatory and inclusive language.

Area 4. University Culture and Prevention of Harassment

- 4.1. Initiating "zero tolerance for harassment" campaigns.
- 4.2. Appointing a trusted person / contact point to support affected individuals.

Area 5. Work–Life Balance

- 5.1. Promoting flexible forms of work and study where applicable.
- 5.2. Improving the physical and social environment at the university.

Area 6. Gender Equality in Education and Research

- 6.1. Integrating gender equality topics into study programmes.
- 6.2. Promoting research that includes gender analysis.

VI. INDICATORS AND MONITORING

1. Key indicators:

- 1.1. Increase in the proportion of women and men in underrepresented academic positions by at least 5 percentage points.
- 1.2. Over 90% trained staff by 2028.
- 1.3. 100% of submitted reports addressed within the specified timeframe.
- 1.4. At least two thematic initiatives per year.

2. Monitoring:

- 2.1. The Ethics Committee prepares an annual report and publishes it on the university website.
- 2.2. An interim evaluation is carried out in 2027.

VII. FINANCING

Sources of financing:

1. Funds from the university budget.
2. National and international projects.
3. Partnership initiatives.

VIII. FINAL PROVISIONS

1. The present Plan is adopted by a decision of the Academic Council of VFU.
2. The Plan enters into force on the date of its adoption.
3. The Plan is subject to review and update in 2029.
4. The Plan may be amended by a decision of the Rector of VFU.

Adopted by decision of the Academic Council of VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar"
№ 2 / date: 04.12.2025