Gender Equality Plan (GEP) 2025

Gender Equality Plan enacted by:

Business Accelerator UKIM

1. Introduction

Founded in 2018, the Business Accelerator UKIM (hereinafter referred to as: BAU) is North Macedonia's first accelerator. It was established through a collaboration between the academic and private sectors, including Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (UKIM), Audit company RSM Macedonia, the Crimson Development Foundation, and the Prof. Dr. Dimitar Stamboliev Foundation. BAU is committed to nurturing the growth of innovative technological solutions by offering financing and personalised business support programs.

The company has a core team consisting of the Chief Executive Officer, Portfolio and Project Managers, Corporate Innovation and PR and Communication Officers. The company also collaborates with a network of experts around the world, who are professionals in their field and participate in European funded projects when their expertise is needed.

This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) was created for BAU by its management. At present, BAU has already committed to following the five main thematic areas covered by GEPs and has practices in place which are aligned with North Macedonian Legislation. The extent of these practices will be discussed throughout this document.

2. Thematic Areas

The principles covering the recommended five areas of the GEP, as highlighted in the *Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans* document, can be found below.

2.1 Work-life balance and organisational culture

The provision of good working conditions for all staff, which allow both men and women to have the flexibility for a healthy work-life balance to reach optimal performance levels. BAU offers the following to all employees:

- Flexible remote work arrangement;
- Annual leave;
- Sick leave;
- Workload management, including how different tasks are allocated and distributed;
- Advice and support on work-life balance

In addition to the above, BAU follows all regulations and is complied with the Law on labour relations (Official Gazette of RM 62/2005 ... 74/2025) and all its by-laws, as well all subsidiary legislation, including, but not limited to the Law on employment and insurance in case of unemployment (Official Gazette of RM 37/1997 ... 274/2022), Law on peaceful resolution of employment disputes (Official Gazette of RM 87/2007 ... 86/2025), Law on safety and health at work (Official Gazette of RM 92/1997 ... 74/2025) and their by-laws.

2.2 Gender balance in leadership and decision making

Women and men are given equal opportunity in the decision-making process, as participation and tasks are solely based on the individual's role within the context of the project and their relevant qualifications. BAU has achieved an almost gender balance, with 67% female employees making up the core team and 50/50 on a Governance level.

2.3 Gender equality in recruitment and career progression

Gender balance in recruitment and career progression ensures equal opportunities at the stage of recruitment and subsequent career progression for any staff.

- BAU's main recruitment strategy includes posted job offers and calls on social media, along with word of mouth and internal recommendations.
- The selection process is based on the relevance of qualifications to the role, and whether the potential employee is happy to accept the terms of the role.
- BAU also prefers to receive a standardised curriculum vitae in Europass format.

All new employees are given the same terms, introduction and relevant training when joining the company. In terms of career progression, any employee is judged based on their performance in their current role, their understanding of the company and the way they conduct themselves with all colleagues.

BAU follows the principles that are highlighted in the Law on labour relations (Official Gazette of RM 62/2005 ... 74/2025) and all its by-laws regarding the recruitment process and career progression

2.4 Integration of gender dimension into research and teaching content

BAU is committed to ensuring that all its processes and communication are gender neutral in both intention and the language used, in addition to presenting wider examples of successful man and women. The purpose of gender-neutral language and presenting balanced woman and man success stories is to encourage employees to give due consideration to the issue of gender sensitivity in language whenever writing or speaking to better train BAU participants.

2.5 Measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment

BAU believes in non-discriminatory treatment based on the grounds of religion or religious belief, disability, age, skin colour, sex, sexual orientation, political orientation, health situation, membership in unions, national or social heritage/origin, family status, and racial or ethnic origin.

BAU follows the principles that are highlighted in the Law on labour relations (Official Gazette of RM 62/2005 ... 74/2025) and the Law on protection from harassment at the workplace (Official Gazette of RM 79/2013...103/2021) and all its by-laws regarding discrimination and gender – based violence including sexual harassment.

3. Challenges and Objectives

The challenges related to gender equality and diversity were identified and discussed by BAU's Chief Executive Officer and Portfolio and Project Managers. The company was founded in 2018, and since then, management has been directly involved in all aspects of the company, including marketing, HR and recruitment, making it possible for them to pinpoint the challenges and objectives found below.

3.1 Challenge 1: Encouraging employees to use all their annual leave to have a better work-life balance

Thematic Area	Goal	Challenge	Target Date	Person Responsible
Work-life balance & organisational culture	Encouraging employees to use all their annual leave	To push employees to book leave is challenging due to everyone working remotely	End of 2026	Project Manager

Action Plan: To regularly remind employees to make use of their annual leave to ensure a proper work-life balance.

3.2 Challenge 2: Using gender neutral language across all communication

Thematic Area	Goal	Challenge	Target Date	Person Responsible
Integration of gender dimensions	Using gender neutral language across all communication	Ensuring all employees implement gender neutral language across all communication	End of 2026	All staff

Action Plan: Circulating this gender equality plan amongst all employees and sharing the document *Gender-Neutral Language in the European Parliament*, whilst encouraging all employees to read and implement the contents. This is to ensure that all internal and external communication (emails, calls, recruitment efforts, website content, social media content etc) are gender neutral in both their intention and the language used.

4. Data Collection

4.1 Challenge 1: Encouraging employees to use all their annual leave to have a better work-life balance

Use an integrated system to track the leave taken.

4.2 Challenge 2: Using gender neutral language across all communication

Take random samples of different external communication channels (newsletters, social media, vacancy posts, brochures, etc) and check them for the use of gender-neutral language.

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Друштво за финансиско-услужни дејности ДЕЛОВНО-ТЕХНОЛОШКИ АКЦЕЛЕРАТОР УКИМ ДООЕЛ Скопје

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