



Gender Equality Plan

2026 - 2030

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INTRODUCTION

In an era of deepening globalization, economic, social, and cultural processes are increasingly shaped by supranational factors, requiring higher education institutions to demonstrate adaptability, resilience, and inclusiveness. Universities play a pivotal role not only as generators of knowledge and innovation but also as drivers of social change, promoting equality, diversity, and intercultural dialogue. In this context, gender equality is recognized as a fundamental principle for sustainable development and for enhancing the quality of education and research.

The higher education system in the Republic of Bulgaria faces a number of challenges, including demographic decline, intensified international competition, and the need to strengthen institutional attractiveness and social responsibility. These factors highlight the importance of consistent policies aimed at ensuring equal access, preventing discrimination, and fostering an inclusive academic environment in which all members of the university community can fully realize their potential.

Established in 1920, the University of National and World Economy (UNWE) is the largest and oldest higher education institution in the field of economics in South-Eastern Europe. With its long-standing academic tradition, high quality of education, and excellent graduate employability - [over 98% of graduates successfully enter the labor market after completing their higher education, according to the Bulgarian University Ranking System](#) - UNWE holds a leading position both nationally and internationally. The University continuously develops a modern, dynamic, and effective system of higher education and research, aligned with European and global standards, while fulfilling its social mission to promote equal access to knowledge and skills.

This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) for the period 2026-2030 outlines the key priorities, objectives, and measures of UNWE in promoting gender equality, non-discrimination, and respect for diversity across all areas of university life. The primary objective of the Plan is to ensure that UNWE remains a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment for learning, teaching, research, and professional development, free from all forms of discrimination, including those based on gender and sexual orientation.

The document builds upon the achievements of the previous Gender Equality Plan (2021–2025) and reflects the University’s strategic vision to develop as an innovative, socially responsible, and internationally oriented institution. Furthermore, the GEP incorporates the principles of the Code of Ethics of the University, its membership in the European University alliance [ENGAGE.EU](#), as well as the best practices in the field of gender equality already implemented by the alliance partner universities. It also reflects UNWE’s role as the national coordinating body in Bulgaria for the [United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network \(UN SDSN\)](#), further strengthening the

University's commitment to advancing sustainable development and promoting gender equality at both national and global levels. The Plan is aligned with relevant national and European policy frameworks, including the European Union's gender equality priorities, such as the [Gender Equality Strategy 2026–2030](#) and the [Declaration of Principles for a Gender-Equal Society](#), as well as the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals \(UN SDGs\)](#), contributing to the advancement of the European Education Area and the European Research Area.

Through the implementation of targeted measures, the strengthening of institutional culture, and the promotion of good practices, UNWE aims to further develop effective mechanisms for achieving gender equality. The Plan not only addresses current challenges but also positions the University as a model of a socially responsible academic institution, actively contributing to the development of a fair, inclusive, and knowledge-based society.

MISSION, VISION, AND OBJECTIVES

The **mission** of the GEP (2026–2030) of UNWE is fully aligned with the University's overall mission to educate highly qualified individuals who contribute to a more advanced, humane, and sustainable society. In this context, the Plan supports the development of an inclusive academic environment that values equality, diversity, and respect, and ensures that all members of the university community have equal access to opportunities for education, research, and professional development. By promoting gender equality, the Plan contributes to strengthening the intellectual potential and social responsibility of the academic community.

The **vision** of the Plan is consistent with UNWE's institutional vision to establish and maintain its position as a respected and valuable part of the national and European educational and research area. The GEP envisions a modern, inclusive, and socially responsible university where gender equality is embedded in all policies, practices, and institutional structures. It supports the University's commitment to maintaining a highly qualified and internationally recognized academic staff by fostering a fair and supportive environment in which all individuals can develop and excel.

The **general objective** of this Plan is to establish and sustain an inclusive, equitable, and gender-sensitive institutional environment at UNWE by integrating gender equality principles into all policies, processes, and areas of university life. To achieve this aim, UNWE has defined the following specific objectives:

- ensure equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for all staff and students, based on merit, qualifications, and achievements.
- implement transparent, fair, and gender-sensitive procedures in recruitment, career development, evaluation, and decision-making processes.

- promote balanced representation of genders across all staff categories, academic ranks, and leadership positions.
- provide equal access to education, research opportunities, funding, and institutional resources.
- encourage active participation of all members of the university community in shaping institutional policies and practices.
- prevent and address all forms of discrimination, bias, and harassment through effective policies, awareness-raising, and support mechanisms.
- identify and eliminate structural and cultural barriers that may lead to inequality, and to promote a culture of inclusion, respect, and accountability.

The general and specific objectives of this Plan are directly aligned with the UNSDG, in particular SDG 5 Gender Equality, SDG 4 Quality Education, especially Target 4.5 (elimination of gender disparities in education and insurance of equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations), SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth, and more precisely Target 8.5, which aims to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value, and SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities, specifically Target 10.2 and Target 10.3, contributing to the promotion of inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development. Through the achievement of these objectives, UNWE aims to strengthen its institutional capacity to advance gender equality and to serve as a model for inclusive and equitable higher education in Bulgaria and beyond.

GENDER EQUALITY AT UNWE IN NUMBERS

UNWE has established a solid foundation in ensuring equality in employment conditions, including equal remuneration for men and women across all academic, research, and administrative positions. Salary structures, student fees, and scholarship schemes are fully aligned with the principles of gender equality, reflecting the University's institutional commitment to fairness and non-discrimination.

In order to provide a comprehensive and structured analysis of gender equality at UNWE, a top-down approach is applied, starting with the highest level of governance and decision-making. This approach allows for the identification of potential imbalances in leadership positions, which play a key role in shaping institutional policies, priorities, and organizational culture. The gender composition of the Rector's governing body is presented in Figure 1.

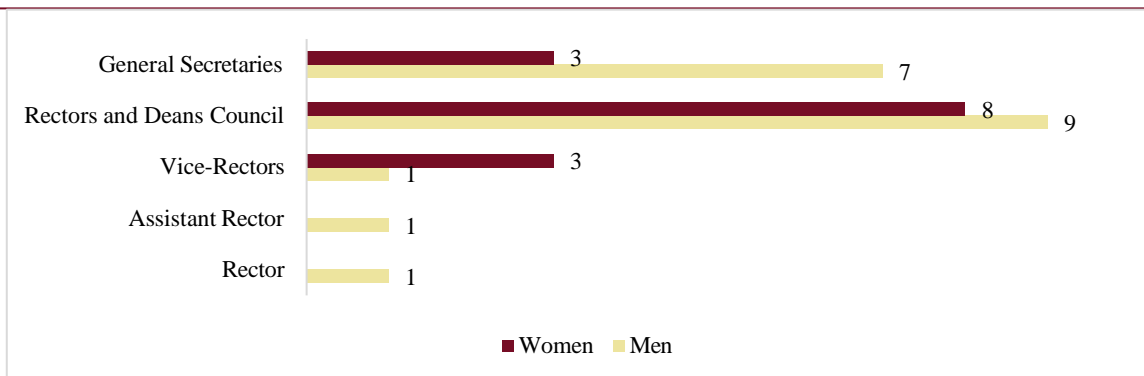


Figure 1. Gender structure of the the Rector’s governing body as of January 2026

Source: Human Resources Directorate, UNWE

The data on the gender composition of the Rector’s governing body indicate a relatively balanced overall representation, with a slight predominance of men in senior leadership positions. While women are well represented among Vice-Rectors (3 out of 4) and are nearly equally represented in the Rector’s and Deans Council, the highest executive positions - Rector and Assistant Rector - are held exclusively by men. Additionally, men are more strongly represented among General Secretaries.

These findings suggest that, although progress has been made towards gender balance in collective decision-making bodies, vertical segregation persists at the highest levels of leadership. This highlights the need for targeted measures to further promote equal access to top management positions and ensure balanced gender representation across all levels of university governance.

Following the analysis of gender representation at the highest level of university governance, the focus shifts to the distribution of academic staff across all UNWE departments in order to examine gender balance at the faculty level.

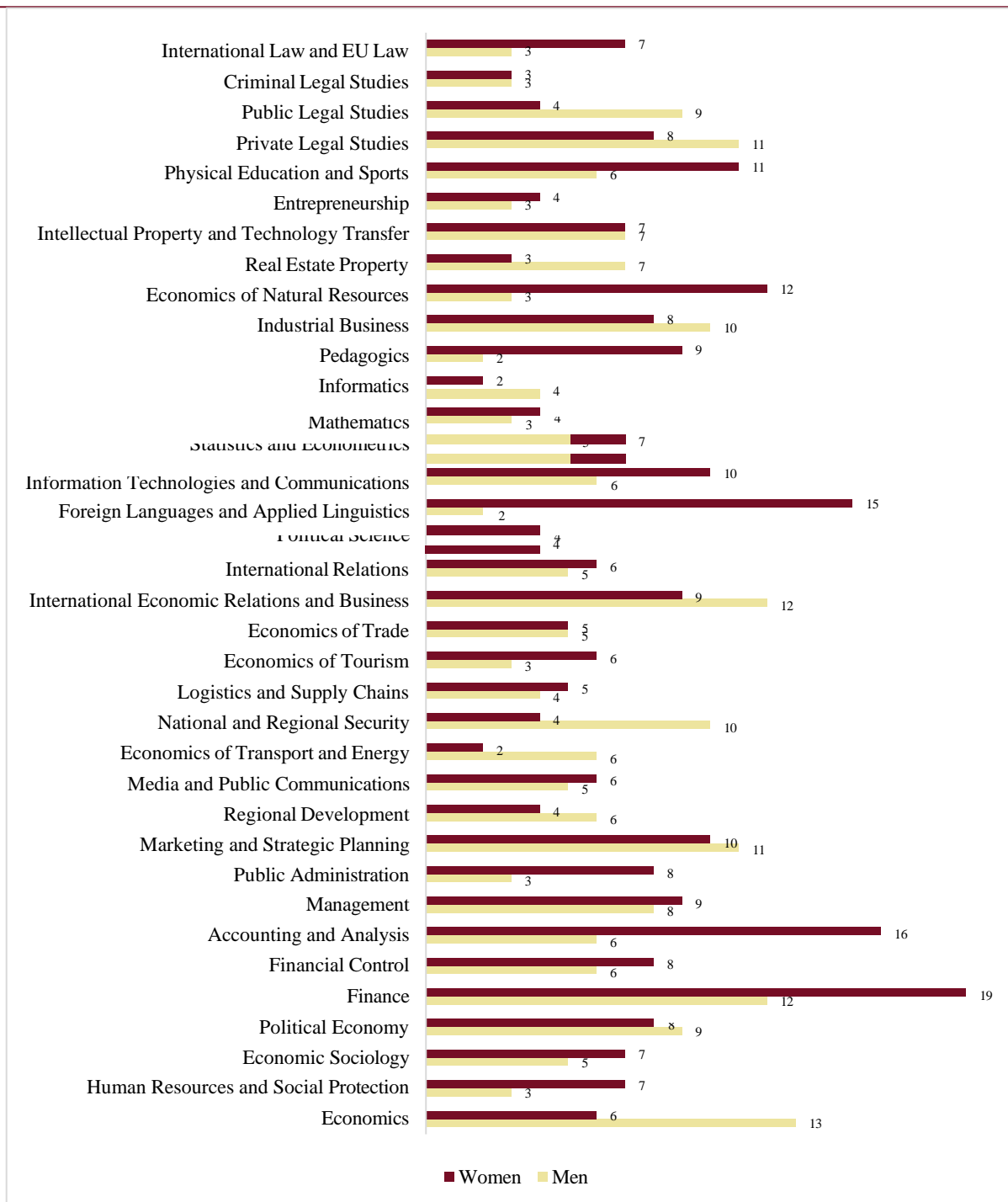


Figure 2. Gender structure of UNWE faculty members as of January 2026

Source: Human Resources Directorate, UNWE

The analysis of gender distribution across UNWE academic departments reveals a generally balanced overall structure, but with clear patterns of horizontal segregation by field of study. For instance, women are more strongly represented in a number of departments traditionally associated with social, administrative, and service-oriented disciplines. This is particularly evident in areas such as Accounting and Analysis, Finance, Public Administration, Pedagogics, Foreign Languages and

Applied Linguistics, and Economics of Natural Resources, where women significantly outnumber men. A similar trend is observed in departments such as Human Resources and Social Protection and Economics of Tourism.

Conversely, men are more prevalent in departments related to security, technical, and certain economic fields, including National and Regional Security, Economics of Transport and Energy, Informatics, and Real Estate Property. A moderate male predominance is also observed in departments such as Economics and International Economic Relations and Business

At the same time, a number of departments demonstrate a relatively balanced gender distribution, including Political Economy, Management, Marketing and Strategic Planning, Logistics and Supply Chains, Political Science, and Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer. These findings indicate that, while overall gender balance among academic staff is largely achieved (45,5% of men to 54,5% of women) at the institutional level, gender-specific patterns in disciplinary choices persist. This reflects broader societal and educational trends, where women are more represented in fields related to social sciences and services, and men in technical and security-oriented disciplines. Addressing these imbalances remains important for promoting diversity of perspectives, enhancing academic excellence, and ensuring equal opportunities across all fields of study.

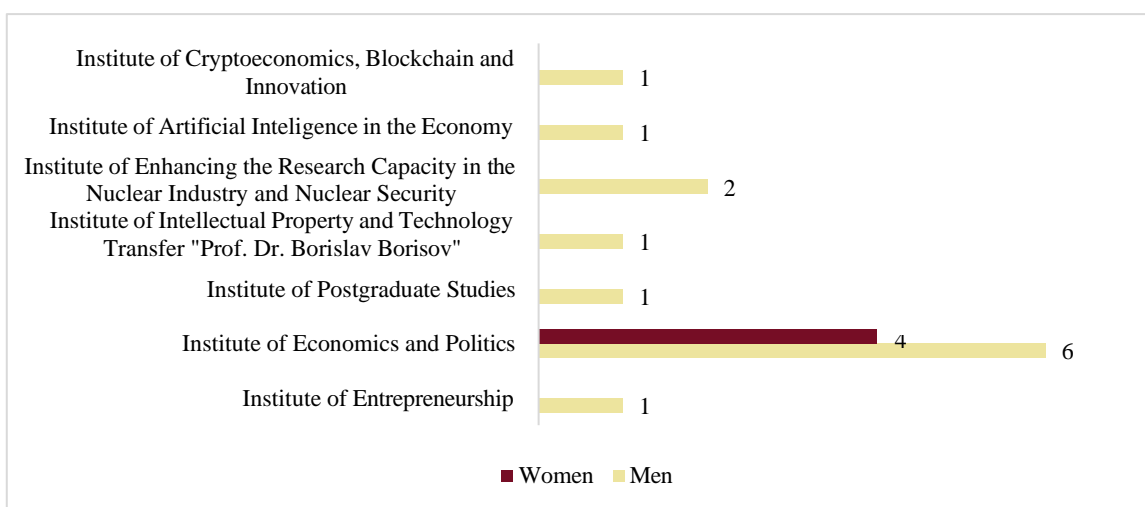


Figure 3. Gender structure of researchers at UNWE institutes as of January 2026

Source: Human Resources Directorate, UNWE

The gender structure of researchers across the institutes of UNWE shows a markedly different pattern compared to the more balanced distribution observed at faculty level, with a strong overall male dominance and limited female participation.

In total, the institutes employ 17 researchers, of whom 13 are men (approximately 76%) and 4 are women (approximately 24%). However, this aggregate balance conceals a highly uneven distribution across individual institutes.

Only one institute demonstrates gender diversity: the Institute of Economics and Politics, where women (4) represent a substantial share of the research staff alongside 6 men. In contrast, all other institutes are exclusively male-staffed, including the Institute of Entrepreneurship, Institute of Postgraduate Studies, Institute of Intellectual Property and Technology Transfer, Institute of Enhancing the Research Capacity in the Nuclear Industry and Nuclear Security, Institute of Artificial Intelligence in the Economy, and Institute of Cryptoeconomics, Blockchain and Innovation.

This pattern indicates a pronounced horizontal gender segregation at the level of research institutes, with women largely concentrated in a single, social-science-related institute, while technical, innovation-oriented, and specialized economic research areas remain entirely male-dominated. Compared to the faculty structure, this suggests that gender imbalance becomes more pronounced in specialized research environments, potentially reflecting differences in access, career progression, or field-specific pipelines into research roles.

Along with the examination of faculty and management body members, the next chart represents the gender structure among UNWE administrative staff:

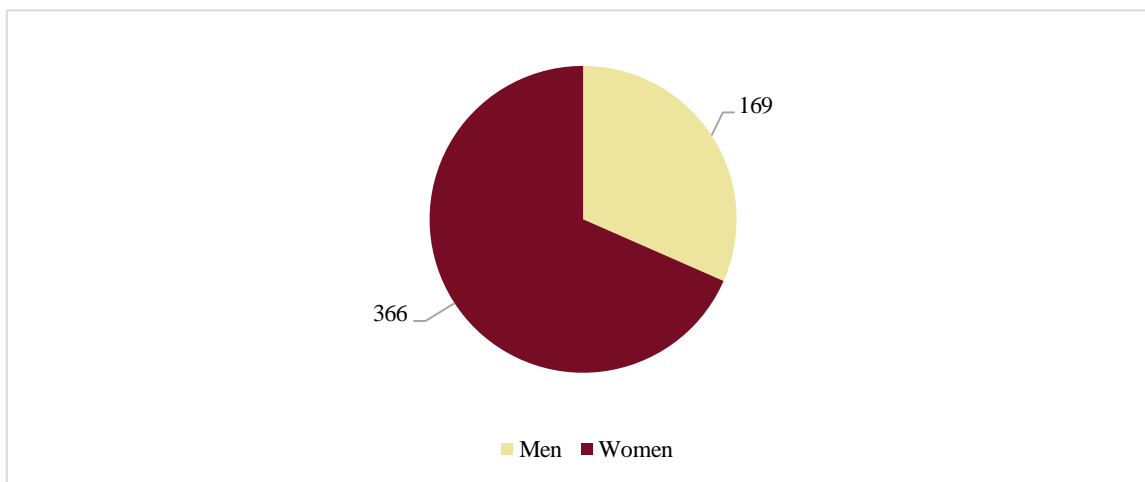


Figure 4. Gender structure of UNWE administrative staff as of January 2026

Source: Human Resources Directorate, UNWE

A significantly higher representation of women is observed among the administrative staff. Of the 535 employees in this category, 366 are women and 169 are men, meaning that women account for 68.4% of administrative personnel, compared to 31.6% men. A similar pattern is evident within the university’s organisational divisions, where out of 99 employees, 67 are women and 32 are men,

representing 67.7% and 32.3%, respectively. These figures clearly indicate the presence of horizontal gender segregation, with women being substantially more concentrated in administrative and support roles, while men are comparatively less represented in these areas.

Extending the analysis to the student population, the next chart examines the gender structure of students at the university level.

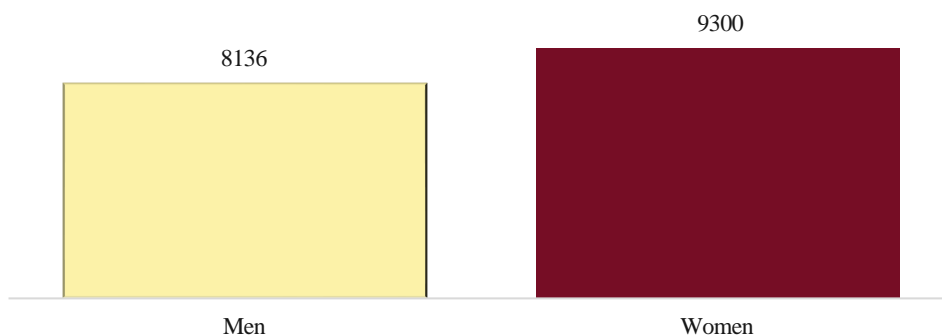


Figure 5. Gender structure of students at UNWE as of January 2026

Source: Information Technologies Directorate, UNWE

The gender structure of students (bachelors, masters, and doctorate) at UNWE shows a relatively balanced distribution with a slight female majority. Out of a total of 17,436 students, 9,300 are women (about 53%) and 8,136 are men (about 47%). This indicates that women are modestly more represented in the student population overall, suggesting near gender parity with a small shift in favor of female students.

In conclusion, the analysis of gender equality trends at UNWE reveals a broadly positive picture of institutional commitment to equality, reflected in equal pay policies, balanced access to education, and generally fair representation across many organizational levels. At the student level, women are slightly more represented, indicating strong and sustained female participation in higher education. At the faculty level, overall balance is largely achieved, although horizontal segregation persists across disciplines, with women and men concentrated in different academic fields. However, this balance weakens in research institutes, where male dominance is more pronounced and female representation is limited to a single institute. Similarly, at the highest governance levels, while progress is evident in collective bodies, vertical segregation remains in top executive positions. Overall, UNWE demonstrates significant advancement toward gender equality, but continued efforts are needed to address persistent imbalances in leadership, research specialization, and field-based representation.

MEASURES, INDICATORS, RESPONSIBILITY, AND ACHIEVMENT TIMELINE

To ensure the effective implementation and monitoring of the Gender Equality Plan, the following table outlines the link between each specific objective, the planned measures, corresponding indicators for progress, responsible bodies, and the indicative implementation timeline.

Table 1. Specific objectives, measures, indicators, responsible bodies, and timeline

Specific objective	Measure	Indicator	Responsible Body	Timeline
Equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities	Update internal regulations to ensure equality	Revised regulations adopted	Rector's Office; Legal and Regulatory Services Directorate	2027
	Standardized performance evaluation criteria	Approved evaluation framework	HR Directorate	2026–2027
	Periodic equality audits	Audit reports produced	HR Directorate; Internal Administrative Control Sector	Annual
	Equal access to training and development	Participation rates by gender	HR Directorate; Faculties	Ongoing
Transparent and gender-sensitive procedures	Public recruitment and promotion guidelines	Published procedures	HR Directorate	2027
	Gender-balanced selection committees	% balanced committees	Rector's Office	Ongoing
	Unconscious bias training	Number of trainings conducted	HR Directorate	Annual
	Monitoring gender-disaggregated data	Annual reports published	HR Directorate	Annual
Balanced gender representation	Set gender balance targets	Targets formally adopted	Rector's Office	2026
	Targeted outreach for underrepresented groups	Number of initiatives	Faculties; HR Directorate	Ongoing
	Leadership and mentoring programmes	Participation rates	HR Directorate	2026–2030
	Monitoring representation by category	Gender balance reports	HR Directorate	Annual
Equal access to opportunities and resources	Transparent funding allocation rules	Published criteria	Science Directorate	2027
	Promote participation in research/mobility	Participation rates by gender	International Affairs Directorate; Science Directorate	Annual
	Support mechanisms for underrepresented groups	Number of support initiatives	Rector's Office; Faculties	Ongoing
	Monitor access to resources	Gender-disaggregated data	Science Directorate	Annual
Participation in governance	Consultation mechanisms (surveys, forums)	Number of consultations	Rector's Office	Annual
	Gender-balanced committees	% balanced bodies	Rector's Office	Ongoing

UNIVERSITY OF NATIONAL AND WORLD ECONOMY

Specific objective	Measure	Indicator	Responsible Body	Timeline
	Feedback channels	Number of submissions	Administration	Ongoing
	Support equality-related initiatives	Number of initiatives supported	Rector's Office, Academic Ethics Commission	Annual
Prevent discrimination and harassment	Adopt clear policies and procedures	Policies in place	Legal and Regulatory Services Directorate; Rector's Office	2027
	Confidential reporting mechanisms	Functional reporting system	HR Directorate	2027
	Awareness campaigns and trainings	Number of campaigns	HR Directorate, Academic Ethics Commission	Annual
	Monitor and resolve cases	Case resolution reports	Academic Ethics Commission	Annual
Eliminate structural and cultural barriers	Gender equality assessments	Assessment reports	HR Directorate	Annual
	Integrate equality in strategies	References in policy documents	Rector's Office	Ongoing
	Promote inclusive communication	Guidelines adopted	Public Relations and Marketing Division	2027
	Share good practices	Number of initiatives shared	Rector's Office	Annual

The implementation framework translates the strategic objectives of the GEP into a coherent set of concrete, measurable, and time-bound actions. It ensures a systematic approach by clearly linking each objective with specific measures, defined indicators for monitoring progress, and designated responsible bodies. The inclusion of both short-term and ongoing actions reflects the dual focus on immediate improvements and long-term institutional change.

The framework also emphasizes accountability and transparency, as responsibilities are distributed across key university structures, including the Rector's Office, Human Resources Directorate, faculties, and specialized administrative units. Regular monitoring through annual reporting and data collection enables continuous assessment of progress and supports evidence-based decision-making.

Overall, the GEP provides a practical roadmap for the effective implementation, ensuring that gender equality is not only a strategic priority but also an operational commitment embedded in the daily functioning and governance of the University.

UNWE GEP (2026-2030) has been adopted by the Academic council No 2/30.07.2026.