



Sustainable
Development
Studies Network

Gender Equality Plan

Equality and Diversity Policy

Version 1.1

December 2022

Sustainable Development Studies Network
SDSN

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1. Introduction

The SDSN Executive Board members and its shareholders want to start a conversation on social responsibility, with a focus on promoting workplace equality for all workers, intensity prevention, and dealing with all types of violence and harassment. The social responsibility policy of SDSN satisfies the demand for cohesion and efficient management of human resources at all levels. SDSN considers the promotion of equal opportunities, equitable treatment, and diversity of employees to be vital.

The SDSN organisation reaffirms its dedication to overarching ideals like long-term equality of opportunity and abhorrence of all forms of violence. In this context, SDSN commits to promoting and launching initiatives that support diversity at various levels, the professional advancement of its employees, and the abolition of all forms of workplace violence and harassment, all of which serve as signs that SDSN is closely collaborating with society.

The following are factors that SDSN considers:

- The European Union and Belgium throughout the world both acknowledge gender equality as a fundamental human right.
- One of the five guiding principles of the European Union and other countries is gender equality, which must be incorporated into all of its endeavours.
- The Declaration of Human Rights, which upholds equality and outlaws all forms of sexual discrimination.

SDSN acknowledges that the commitment made by the institutions, organisations, and trade unions at all levels to establishing equality between women and men have both contributed to increasing the number of women in the labour market, in order to guarantee better quality. These rights, which forbid sexual discrimination and encourage equal treatment in employment, including equal wages for women and men for equivalent work or work of equivalent value, are recognized by SDSN.

We acknowledge, however, that the gender pay gap exists in a number of economic sectors, and that in the EU and other countries' labour market, women are occasionally overrepresented in lower-paying fields and underrepresented in positions of authority. We also gained additional knowledge and a broader understanding of the employment and professional opportunities in EU and other nations thanks to SDSN's extensive experience managing and taking part in employment promotion, adult education, the eradication of social inequality, refugee integration, and other projects.

SDSN management believes it is vital to take more action in order to promote gender equality, as indicated in the plan, particularly with regard to equal pay and women's access to positions of decision-making, as well as to combat gender-based violence. The three main tenets of SDSN's workplace equality policy are as follows:

- Preventing prejudice and promoting equality of opportunity and treatment
- Fostering diversity as a source of prosperity for the business
- Reducing and eliminating instances of sexual harassment and violence against women

The current policy was created based on the aforementioned pillars and expresses the prevailing viewpoint of SDSN's administration department, which is that workplace equality not only improves cohesion and changes attitudes in society as a whole, but also contributes to the economic and social performance of the SDSN.

2. Equality Policy

SDSN acknowledges that inclusion and diversity are crucial elements of a successful organisation since they foster creativity and innovation. SDSN Executive Board members are committed to encouraging diversity and inclusion and ensuring that there is no discrimination in our association.

We want our staff and our partners to truly represent the diversity of society. We want to be an organisation in which every employee feels respected and able to perform to their highest potential. As a result, this policy sets up a foundation of fairness and equality for everyone participating in our activities and working at SDSN. It demonstrates our commitment to preventing discrimination based on age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marital status, race, ethnic origin, skin colour, nationality, religion or belief, and sexual orientation.

Furthermore, the scope of this equality policy is extended to include people with limited opportunities, socially excluded people and people with special needs who are under-represented in the modern working environment. The employee's gender serving as the core element of reference is a crucial component of the equality policy. This policy applies to all members working internally and externally with SDSN.

The aim of this policy to set out the conditions required to reduce and unjustified disputes that may appear and therefore achieve the following;

- Equal opportunities for women and men, include decision making process, leadership roles, access to training and networking, career progression.
- Equal wage for male and female employees, taking into account all aspects of working conditions,
- A better work-life balance for both male and female employees
- Increasing the efficacy of constructive communication and behaviour
- Encourage and increase women's participation in Research and Innovation

SDSN Executive Board members are dedicated to ensuring a consistent and fair attitude and behaviour on matters pertaining to equality and diversity as a consequence. SDSN clearly encourages all departments and employees to ensure SDSN Executive Board Members to express the variety existing in society in order to achieve greater diversity.

Obviously, this phase covers women, who, despite their expanding participation in the professional sector, are typically underrepresented in managerial positions in both our country and the EU. In our 7 years of existence, we have succeeded in maintaining employee and staff ratios and indicators in various areas that differentiate us positively from the average in the service sector.

All across the Institute and in the cooperative and partnership schemes in which we take part in the implementation projects, our main strategy is continuous improvement through the implementation of action plans, as outlined in this policy, to combat stereotypes and promote equality between all men and women and people belonging to special groups.

All partners, volunteers and employees, whether part-time, full-time or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect at SDSN. The recruitment choice, level of education, skills and qualifications of each candidate. Access to promotion opportunities, training or any other benefit will also be based on the individual's competences and skills. To maximise innovation and the success of the company, all employees will be given the opportunity to develop their potential and skills, and workforce resources will be utilised to the highest possible extent.

We, as SDSN Executive Board Members,

- We actively aim to increase the number of individuals we deal with from groups or communities that are underrepresented in entrepreneurship, education, or certain career sectors in our field. Emphasis is placed on seeking and recruiting staff, with preference given to underrepresented groups, often women and/or individuals with disabilities.
- We ensure wage and benefit structures, with policies aimed at achieving gender equality that incorporate all issues related to anti-discrimination. Along with wage equality, we also assure that women are able to advance in their careers at the same rate as men, entirely on the basis of their professional abilities, eradicating the "glass ceiling" phenomena.
- In order to identify the best team without hostility or discrimination, we assess and review all official and informal employment/recruitment methods and procedures.
- We recognize and embrace opportunities to broaden the range of people who contribute to management and operational decision-making equally.
- We make reasonable adjustments to the workplace and work organisation to enable people with special skills and or special needs to work in our association.
- We strive hard to broaden the diversity of our networks and candidate pools.
- We uphold working conditions and a culture where individual differences and the contributions of all our employees as well as outside partners are acknowledged and recognized. Based on the requirements of our personnel, we periodically assess how the work is organised and flexible.
- We ensure that every employee and external partner is able to work in an environment that promotes dignity and respect for all. Any sort of harassment, intimidation, or bullying will not be tolerated.
- We make sure that every employee has the chance for training, advancement, and growth. Emphasis will be placed on promoting and developing the careers of under-represented groups in our industry, usually women. We keep making investments in the administration of policies for professional and personal growth (including skills assessment and mentoring).
- We create and execute a variety of family-friendly solutions in order to improve work-life balance for employees and better reconcile work and family life. These may include provisions on parental, maternity, childcare and other types of family leave, specific working time arrangements (organisation of part-time work, job sharing, etc.) and childcare arrangements.

3. Policy Against Employees' Violence and Harassment

The Employee Welfare Act of 4 August 1996 prohibits violence, bullying and sexual harassment in the workplace. With this article, women are protected from all kinds of harassment, torture or malicious behavior.

The Social Penal Code punishes anyone who commits acts of violence, bullying and sexual harassment in the workplace. The Social Penal Code is dedicated to criminal actions in the framework of an employment relationship. There is also a General Penal Code for all other criminal actions. Criminal sanctions are applicable in case of workplace violence, bullying or sexual harassment.

In the implementation of this Law;

- Violence in the workplace means any factual situation in which a worker is threatened mentally or physically in performing their work. (The definition of violence is wide enough to include a threat - there is no need for physical violence.)
- Bullying in the workplace can involve several similar or different instances of behaviour within the workplace or out of working hours with the aim or result of (i) harming the character, dignity or physical or mental integrity of a worker in the performance of their work or (ii) threatening their job or (iii) creating an intimidating and hostile environment.
- Sexual harassment means any form of verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct with a sexual connotation whose aim is to harm someone's dignity or to create an intimidating and hostile environment.

In Belgium, there are three laws that together constitute the anti-discrimination legislation: the Gender Act (*Genderwet*), the Anti-Racism Act (*Antiracismewet*) and the Anti-Discrimination Act (*Antidiscriminatiewet*). Together, they distinguish between 19 protected grounds of discrimination:

- Gender Act: gender (also includes pregnancy, motherhood, childbirth, breastfeeding, medically assisted reproduction, fatherhood, co-maternity, adoption, gender reassignment, gender identity, gender expression and gender characteristics),
- Anti-Racism Act: nationality, national or ethnic origin, presumed race, skin colour and ancestry (Jewish origin),
- Anti-Discrimination Act: disability, philosophical or religious beliefs, sexual orientation, age, wealth, marital status, political views, trade union membership, state of health, physical or genetic characteristics, birth, social background and language.

SDSN compiles all measures and obligations relating to the implementation of the provisions of human rights and equality legislations in Belgium. In order to prevent and respond to all forms of violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment and sexual harassment.

On 8 March 2022, the Commission adopted a proposal for a directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence. The proposal sets out targeted rules for the protection of this group of crime victims in order to strengthen the actions taken by the

Member States. It aims to ensure a minimum level of protection across the EU against such violence, regardless of whether it takes place online or offline.

The EU also supports research on gender-based violence. For instance, in support of the proposal for a directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence, the Commission developed the comparative study of the European network of legal experts in gender equality and non-discrimination on the criminalisation of gender-based violence against women in European States. The European Institute on Gender Equality conducted a study on the costs of gender-based violence in the European Union.

4. Evaluation, Monitoring and Control

Each member of the SDSN organisation's executive board contributed to the creation of this paper. This policy is emailed to all SDSN staff members for review and comment before being ratified in its entirety by the SDSN President.

We have established programs and best practices standards for equality and the protection of diversity at SDSN in order to implement this policy in an effective manner. These programs and standards are reflected in the particular quantifiable targets/objectives that are described in this chapter. Periodically, these goals will be checked in order to assess their progress in terms of schedules and completion.

As long as there is proportional representation, i.e., two of the three members are women, and an SDSN committee made up of a member of the board of directors, an employee representative, and executive board members has been established. The committee will:

- Be in charge of this policy's implementation, effectiveness assessment, review and amendment, and action plan creation.
- Ensure that group-wide agreements on gender equality adhere to the values and commitments set forth in this Agreement.
- Indicators for the Group's gender equality policy should be monitored, and if necessary, improvement activities and training programs should be suggested.

The committee conducts at least yearly reviews of our work and holds recurrent meetings every three months, as well as when necessary (such as in response to complaints). The committee may form working groups to create action plans to assist us in putting this policy into practice and achieving the specific goals at SDSN that promote equality and diversity and stop all forms of violence and harassment, including sexual harassment and violence based on gender. The executive board members of SDSN are in charge of ensuring that the action plans are carried out. Mr. Ismail Hidayat has been designated by the Board of SDSN as the person in charge of handling allegations of workplace harassment.

The senior management of the organisation fully supports this strategy. Infractions of the policy might be viewed as misconduct and result in disciplinary action in accordance with the Internal Working Rules of the SDSN.

5. Action Plans and Commitments in Gender Balance and Equality

5.1. Communication and Behaviours

SDSN Executive Board Members will be responsible for successfully executing this policy, and each SDSN employee (general management, manager, assistant and representative) must first comply with their attitude, behaviours, and communication style regarding the equal role of both men and women at the workplace and in life. From this perspective, SDSN will promote and support change in all departments at all levels and in all activities at work internally and externally, including project planning and implementation in regional, national, European and global levels. This viewpoint will ensure that the objectives of gender equality are completely incorporated into collective agreements at the SDSN level as well as in all areas of operation of all partnerships, collaborations, and institutions.

SDSN supports creative measures and policies that improve the professional experiences of women and their appropriate integration into the workforce through learning and teaching programs at all levels. SDSN Executive Board Members examine any disparities between men and women based on factors such as wage, career development, training, job satisfaction, decreased conflict, increased productivity, relationship-building, and the use of resources to support competencies. SDSN eradicates invisible barriers created by prejudices, stereotypes and the way organisations work that can prevent women and all groups of people (race, colour, national origin, sexual preferences and beliefs) without exception from advancing in their careers.

The SDSN management commits to distributing this policy to all workers, managers, project partners, and institution representatives in order to raise awareness of gender equality and prevent gender-based violence and harassment. Once fit for use and evaluation, this policy is available on the official website of SDSN (<https://sdsnetwork.org>).

5.2. Leadership and Decision Making

SDSN Executive Board Members support the growth of internal and external decision-making networks of women and gradually introduce a mentoring system in order to make it easier for women to access high levels of responsibility and leadership and to shatter the "glass ceiling" of men's career advancement from one point in the hierarchy and above.

In order to accomplish this, SDSN collaborates with specialised organisations and NGOs and utilises research, training models and EU Projects developed in the implementation in which it takes part. Members of the SDSN Board of Directors, who are the trustworthy individuals for this policy, are men and women with extensive and varied experience in SDSN and related fields of work in the mentor/mentee capacity.

The duty of the SDSN Board Members is to transfer the work experience and skills of the mentored employee and the effective behaviours they have acquired in business life to others, to guide, help and motivate them to share them in equal roles. To promote gender equality in the workplace for both men and women, SDSN will make an effort to embrace the following steps in leadership and decision-making:

- Develop a policy to recognize the benefits of gender balance and increase the number of women at all levels of management and decision-making.
- Set attainable goals and monitor progress for equal representation in leadership positions.
- Take an effort to achieve gender balance on all SDSN members and decision-making departments.
- Organise gender bias, gender equality and leadership training for the entire SDSN Association.

5.3. Recruitment and Career Progression

At SDSN, a gender balance has already been established in terms of the number of administrative staff. SDSN values gender equality among all members as an important principle in recruitment processes, a conscious gender equality perspective and gets rid of unconscious gender bias in recruitment and selection processes, and ensures equal participation of its employees in decision-making processes.

Our association brings the distribution of current female and male employees closer to each other in the recruitment and selection processes for both administrative and research positions, and prioritises gender equality. SDSN, in particular, supports the advancement of female employees by standing by them in all settings where they encounter bias.

SDSN Executive Board Members are committed to following principles;

- Particular attention should be paid to the titles of job offers (always emphasising that a role is open to both women and men). SDSN Executive Board Members will try to ensure that the way in which the related department of SDSN does not perpetuate stereotypes of occupations or their supposed characteristics (availability, mobility).
- SDSN verifies the impartiality of recruitment through standardised procedures and takes corrective action, when necessary. Therefore, SDSN Executive Board Members reiterate that recruitment criteria should be based on qualifications, skills, level of education and professional experience. Therefore, a person cannot be discharged or treated differently based on their gender, social or cultural background, name, city of birth, age, disability, political or religious beliefs, sexual preference, or involvement in a union.
- A woman's pregnancy (actual, probable or future) cannot be a factor in discriminating against refusal to recruit.

SDSN is committed to providing better support for women's career progression, promoting their access to all levels of corporate responsibility, and achieving the objective of gender parity. The SDSN Executive Board is dedicated to:

- Encouraging voluntary internal mobility to improve employment diversity and facilitate enterprise activities. When reorganisations take place, whether they occur internally or lead to outsourcing of company activities. SDSN is committed to ensuring non-discriminatory treatment of employees.
- Methodically encouraging women's access to senior management positions, decision-making bodies such as the board of directors and managerial positions in general.

- Systematic monitoring and career assessment, during and after maternity leave for women, and before leaving on maternity or paternity leave for both men and women in the case of adoption leave, the responsible manager The head of the department should prepare the departure and temporary relocation of employees. Upon returning, the manager will meet again with the employee to provide a summary of key events that occurred during the absence and to discuss their return to work. Depending on the length of absence, a job evaluation may be done if necessary. In addition, the training given during the maternity or maternity leave required for the continuation are given again on the employee's return to work in order to maintain his competence and effectiveness. These principles also apply in cases of parental leave.

5.4. Access to Training and Network Development

SDSN is devoted to educating its employees about the importance of professional growth and equal opportunity. The SDSN Executive Board Members agree to devote special attention to the professional development of women and all other underrepresented groups in the workforce, with a focus on ensuring that they have access to top management positions. Furthermore, steps are being taken to systematically improve the requirements for executives' equitable access to conferences, professional workshops, seminars, and programs for professional skills certification. SDSN Executive Board members continually invest in developing policies for the non-discriminatory personal and professional growth of all of its staff.

SDSN upholds the ideals of gender equality in all of its endeavours without making concessions in any circumstance. It believes that mentoring and support are achievable only if the world's whole talent pool and diaspora could be utilised without discrimination. SDSN commits itself in all its works, projects, training and scholarship programmes to provide equal opportunities for all its employees irrespective of gender, nationality, and age while ensuring social solidarity and mobility.

SDSN Executive Board Members will take the following steps to provide broad access to training and network growth for both women and men, and will strive to maximise social benefit, innovation for gender equality among its applicants and employees:

- To promote gender equality and the inclusion of the gender dimension in networking, organise training for SDSN staff equally.
- Promote women researchers and employees in professional skills-based training and network with special calls.
- Develop guidelines and training for both female and male employees about possible unconscious bias and the importance of considering the aspects of gender.
- Disregard the duration of career breaks (such as maternity or paternity leave, long-term illness of the applicant or a close family member, or national service) in the access to training and network development.

5.5. Integration in the Research and Innovation

SDSN considers understanding how gender diversity plays a crucial role in research and innovation as one of the key elements on a route to success in order to satisfy the different

demands of its employees. SDSN believes that gender equality in the workplace increases the social importance of the knowledge, technology and innovations produced and contributes to the production of more goods and services.

In all of the sectors that are under the research and development umbrella, it is clear that the percentage of female staff is often relatively low. However, SDSN acknowledges that diverse research teams, both men and women, from different backgrounds are generally more open to new ideas, procedures and experiments and therefore believe they will be more innovative and creative.

SDSN Executive Board Members will take the following actions to promote gender equality and the creativity of its varied workforce, both men and women, in order to provide a more creative working environment for its employees. These efforts seek to boost research and development, promote participation on an equal level, and encourage male and female cooperation:

- Pay attention as to how men and women are represented in illustrative works and make adjustments if necessary.
- Encourage female leadership in research teams and enhance the visibility of the female project leaders.
- Highlight research areas where there is gender imbalance and represent role models from the underrepresented gender in these areas.

5.6. Work-Life Balance and Organisational Culture

SDSN seeks to create a better relationship between the private and professional lives of its employees, taking into account the complex and diverse nature of family situations in modern society. This objective requires above all a better way of planning work and innovative policy to improve the quality of life at work. Finding a work-life balance impacts all employees in an organisation, not just women. Male employees who want to be more involved in their family life may encounter pressure from their employer, whether it comes from management or from their colleagues.

SDSN will try to fit its policies to the requirements of its employees, keeping in mind that these demands change over the course of a person's life and that extended, interrupted periods of work and/or irregular hours do not promote work-life balance. Workplace policies should allow employees to appropriately carry out their tasks to their parents or children, their communities, etc. Employees should have equity in access to maternal and/or paternity leave (for both men and women) in order to create a decent work-life balance.

In this case, SDSN strictly follows Directive 92/85 in its regulations concerning maternity leaves and Directive 2019/1158 for paternity leave. However, during COVID-19 has caused a disproportionate increase in workload for women, especially around the house and at the office. This disproportionate workload for women keeps them from balancing their professional and domestic lives since there is an unbalanced division of labour in their private lives. Because of the double workload that women have to carry, they have more difficulty achieving professional and personal goals. This is not just a women's issue only, both women and men need an enabling environment to have fulfilling professional careers regardless of their gender.

SDSN Executive Board Members ensure that there are no management practices and contractual clauses that reinforce the idea that mainly women shoulder family obligations by consulting with our social partners and our partners in European initiatives. It is critical to make clear that SDSN believes that raising children is a responsibility shared equally by men and women. This policy will take the following steps to review and support the implementation of these principles and to achieve work-life balance:

- Conduct staff surveys and in-depth interviews to acquire information regarding needs and problems relating to work-life balance so that they may be identified and resolved.
- Establish rules for remote working for employees right after the maternity leave and publish guidelines.
- Create standards and guidelines for flexible work.
- Review and revise all leave policies (including those relevant to sick child care and elder care) in accordance with legislative regulations.
- Implement ICT-based systems to enhance flexibility.

5.7. Prevent and Combat Violence and Harassment in the Workplace

SDSN Executive Board Members have established strict guidelines for the prevention and eradication of violence and harassment in the workplace. Any verbal expressions and actions of sexual, as well as intimidating, hostile, insulting, threatening, or violent circumstances that humiliate, insult, or otherwise negatively affect the values of SDSN workers and partners, are absolutely forbidden at SDSN.

Members of the SDSN Board of Directors will strictly follow the steps below by taking vital measures to combat Violence Against Women, Sexual Harassment and Discrimination:

- SDSN Executive Board Members will implement viable, preventive and confidential complaint and victim support mechanisms and the mechanisms will have been communicated by each staff of SDSN throughout the organisation.
- Set up and carry out yearly SDSN staff and partner educational training and awareness-raising programs.
- SDSN has internal procedures in place to protect the employment and support of workers who are victims of domestic violence to the extent possible by any appropriate means or reasonable accommodation. In this context, the high SDSN Executive Board Members cooperates with special partners, psychologists, social workers, etc. and the competent social services of the municipality of Bursa.
- SDSN Executive Board Members will integrate gender perspective into policy and update anti-mobbing, anti-bullying and anti- harassment clauses in the regulation.
- Adopt online training for all employees and management on harassment, violence, and discrimination.