



right to education

GENDER EQUALITY PLAN (GEP)
WORLD UNIVERSITY SERVICE (WUS) AUSTRIA

VISION AND MISSION

World University Service (WUS) Austria is a politically independent, non-governmental organization dedicated to advancing the human right to education. In an era where education plays an increasingly pivotal role in comprehending intricate social, political, cultural, and global issues, as well as in addressing the conflicts of the 21st century, WUS Austria places the **pursuit of quality education for all** at the forefront of its mission. Our projects are fundamentally rooted in a **human rights-based approach**, aiming to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary for active engagement in addressing global challenges and fostering proactive efforts towards a more just world.

WUS Austria strives to enhance the quality of education in alignment with international standards through project development, project management, networking, and consulting services. Guided by principles such as local capacity building, sustainability, local ownership, global citizenship education, and empowerment, we collaborate with a diverse array of partners, including higher education institutions, schools, public bodies (such as ministries and accreditation agencies), NGOs, and companies at national, regional, European, and international levels. Our commitment to quality assurance and the enduring impact of project results remains a focal point of our efforts.

WUS Austria recognizes that **gender equality is fundamental** to sustainable development, social justice, and institutional excellence. As part of its commitment to gender equality, the organization works to ensure equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of gender, across its internal operations and project activities. Education plays a key role in addressing **complex global challenges** and fostering equity. By integrating **gender-sensitive policies** and promoting gender-balanced participation, WUS Austria aims to **empower individuals**, strengthen institutional capacity, and contribute to inclusive societies. This Gender Equality Policy aligns with **international frameworks**, including the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**, the **EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025**, and the **Horizon Europe gender equality requirements**.

SCOPE OF THE GENDER EQUALITY PLAN

This Gender Equality Policy applies to:

- **WUS Austria's management team and all employees.**
- **All people and organizations** that collaborate with WUS Austria on a temporary basis, including interns, volunteers, consultants, and external service providers.
- **All project partners and institutions** WUS Austria works with, ensuring gender equality principles are upheld across all joint initiatives.
- **All activities and projects** implemented by WUS Austria, ensuring gender-sensitive approaches are applied at every stage of the project cycle.

INTRODUCTION

This document outlines WUS Austria's **commitment to gender equality** and establishes principles, policies, and reporting procedures that contribute to an inclusive and fair workplace and project environment. The policy is aligned with international, national and European **gender equality standards**, including:

- **The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).**
- **The EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025.**
- **Horizon Europe's Gender Equality Plan (GEP) Requirements.**
- **The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union**, which enshrines the right to equality and non-discrimination as a core value.
- **The Austrian Federal Equal Treatment Act (Gleichbehandlungsgesetz, GIBG).**
- **Kosovo Gender Equality Law.**

The Gender Equality Policy ensures that **gender equality is mainstreamed** across WUS Austria's institutional operations and project implementation, promoting a workplace free from discrimination, gender-based violence, and bias.

PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

WUS Austria upholds the following principles:

- **Non-Discrimination:** Every individual is entitled to equal treatment, regardless of gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation.
- **Gender Mainstreaming:** Gender equality is systematically integrated across all policies, projects, and institutional practices.
- **Empowerment:** Women, men, and gender-diverse individuals are provided equal access to decision-making opportunities and leadership roles.
- **Work-Life Balance:** WUS Austria fosters an inclusive work culture with flexible arrangements to support diverse needs.
- **Zero-Tolerance Policy:** Gender-based violence, harassment, and discrimination are strictly prohibited.
- **Institutional Accountability:** The organization regularly assesses gender equality progress and implements measures for continuous improvement.
- **Intersectionality:** Gender equality efforts consider additional barriers related to ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic status, and other intersecting factors.
- **Capacity Building:** Ensuring all staff members, partners, and beneficiaries receive gender training to promote a more inclusive work environment.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

WUS Austria is committed to fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment that allows employees to balance professional responsibilities with personal and family commitments. Key measures include:

- **Flexible working arrangements**, including remote work and adaptable schedules where feasible.
- **Parental leave policies**, ensuring equal access to maternity, paternity, and shared parental leave.
- **Support for caregiving responsibilities**, recognizing the diverse needs of employees with dependents.
- Promotion of a workplace culture that values **well-being, inclusivity, and equal opportunities** for career progression.

GENDER-BALANCED RECRUITMENT AND DECISION-MAKING

WUS Austria is dedicated to ensuring **fairness, diversity, and equal opportunity in hiring and leadership structures**. Recruitment, promotion, and leadership appointments follow these principles:

- **Gender-balanced hiring panels**, ensuring diversity in selection committees.
- **Inclusive job postings**, using neutral language to encourage applications from underrepresented groups.
- **Career progression monitoring**, tracking gender representation in leadership roles and decision-making positions.
- **Equal access to training and leadership programs**, supporting professional development for all staff.
- **Transparent and merit-based promotion policies**, preventing unconscious biases in career advancement.

PREVENTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

WUS Austria upholds a **zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment** in the workplace and project environments. Sexual harassment includes any unwanted verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

Measures to prevent and address sexual harassment include:

- **Confidential reporting mechanisms** to ensure that victims feel safe reporting incidents.

- **Clear disciplinary actions** for those found responsible for sexual harassment.

All staff, partners, and project participants are expected to adhere to these standards, ensuring a respectful and safe working environment for all.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN PROJECTS

WUS Austria ensures that gender equality is integrated at all levels of project planning, implementation, and evaluation:

- **Proposal Development:** Gender perspectives are incorporated into all project proposals, with gender-sensitive objectives, indicators, and impact assessments.
- **Research & Publications:** Gender-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive methodologies are included in all research outputs.
- **Capacity Building & Training:** Training programs ensure gender-balanced participation, address gender-specific challenges, and promote inclusive teaching methods.
- **Institutional Support:** WUS Austria assists partner institutions in developing **Gender Equality Plans (GEPs)** and promoting gender-sensitive policies.
- **Policy & Advocacy:** The organization actively engages with policymakers and stakeholders to promote **gender-responsive reforms in education and development policies**.
- **Networking & Partnerships:** Collaborations are prioritized with organizations that demonstrate a strong commitment to gender equality.

REPORTING PROCEDURES

WUS Austria maintains a **structured reporting mechanism** to ensure that gender equality principles are upheld. Any violations, discrimination, or harassment can be reported through the following procedures:

- **Designated Gender Equality Focal Point:** Employees, partners, and beneficiaries can report concerns confidentially to the Gender Equality Focal Point.
- **Investigation & Resolution:** All reports are investigated promptly, and appropriate corrective actions are taken.
- **Referral Mechanisms:** Where necessary, cases are escalated to relevant authorities or external support services.
- **Sanctions & Disciplinary Measures:** Any proven violation of gender equality policies will result in disciplinary actions, including warnings, training requirements, or termination of contracts where appropriate.

All reports are handled with **confidentiality, fairness, and a victim-centered approach** to ensure the safety and well-being of those affected.

Staff members are required to report breaches to the Gender Equality Plan through a standard internal procedure:

- 1) Completion of the Reporting Form (Annex I) by the staff member and delivery to the Gender Officer.
- 2) Reports will be treated in confidentiality by the Gender Officer at WUS Austria who will evaluate the case and report further to the Managing Director if necessary.

Gender Focal Point to this date: Dr. Louise Sperl, Louise.sperl@wus-austria.org

- 3) Any member of staff in breach of the Gender Equality Plan will be evaluated based on a case-by-case basis. Should a severe breach be found, the following external referrals should be taken into account for reporting:

Gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft, Regionalbüro Steiermark
Südtiroler Platz 16
8020 Graz
Telefon: +43 316 720 590
E-Mail: graz.gaw@bka.gv.at

ACCOUNTABILITY AND MONITORING

- **Annual Review & General Assembly Reporting:** Gender equality progress is assessed annually, with findings presented in the **General Assembly**.
- **Project Monitoring:** Gender impact assessments are conducted throughout project implementation.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Staff and beneficiaries provide input through surveys and consultation meetings.
- **Compliance Audits:** Regular evaluations ensure compliance with gender equality commitments.

ABBREVIATIONS

- **CEDAW** – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
- **GEP** – Gender Equality Plan
- **EU** – European Union
- **GDPR** – General Data Protection Regulation
- **ENQA** – European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
- **HRBA** – Human Rights-Based Approach
- **WUS** – World University Service

COMMUNICATION & TRANSPARENCY

This Gender Equality Plan is publicly available on the **WUS Austria website** and is shared with staff, partners, and donors. Gender equality is explicitly addressed in all external funding applications and partnership agreements.

13.3.2025

Date



Signature of Managing Director

ANNEX 1 - Reporting Form

Report of Inappropriate Behaviours in Accordance with WUS Austria's Gender Equality Plan

1. Information on the Reporting Person

Name: _____

Surname: _____

Position within WUS Austria: (please mark with an 'X')

- ☐ Staff
- ☐ Intern
- ☐ Associate

The identity of the reporting person will be treated confidentially and will only be used for the purpose of a possible legal or internal action.

2. Information on the Alleged Breach

Type of Alleged Breach (please mark with an 'X')

- ☐ Human Resources (e.g., recruitment, promotions, equal pay, workplace harassment)
- ☐ Internal and External Communication (e.g., discriminatory language or materials)
- ☐ Project Design and Implementation (e.g., lack of gender balance, exclusionary practices)
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Context of the Alleged Breach

Date: _____

Location: _____

Circumstance (e.g., training, event, meeting, general workplace interaction):

3. Description of the Alleged Inappropriate Behaviour

1. Have you personally observed this behaviour?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

2. Please describe the inappropriate behaviour in detail:

3. How would you judge the severity of the behaviour?

- ☐ How would you judge the severity of the behaviour?
- ☐ Low
- ☐ Medium
- ☐ High
- ☐ I don't know
- ☐

4. To your knowledge, has this behaviour occurred more than once?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

4. Information on the Alleged Perpetrator

Name: _____

Surname: _____

Position within WUS Austria: (please mark with an 'X')

- ☐ Staff
- ☐ Intern
- ☐ Volunteer
- ☐ Associate

5. Declaration

By submitting this report, I declare that:

1. I understand that, should the report give rise to legal or internal action by WUS Austria, it may be used as an official statement.
2. I am acting in good faith, and all the information provided above is correct and truthful to the best of my knowledge.
3. I am aware that making false accusations is a serious violation and may have consequences under WUS Austria's policies and Austrian law.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

For Internal Use Only:

- **Received by:** _____
- **Date of Receipt:** _____
- **Case Evaluation Completed by Gender Officer on:**

- **Further Action Taken:** (please mark with an 'X')
 - ☐ No further action required
 - ☐ Referred to Human Resources
 - ☐ Escalated to External Authorities
 - ☐ Other (please specify)