



Bulgarian  
**Digital Cluster**

## Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

Bulgarian Digital Cluster

2025-2028

## 1. Introduction and Commitment

The Bulgarian Digital Cluster (BDC) is committed to advancing gender equality in line with the European Commission's Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 and the requirements of Horizon Europe. We recognize that diverse and inclusive teams foster innovation, creativity, and competitiveness in the digital economy.

## 2. Key Objectives

1. Promote balanced representation of women and men in leadership and decision-making roles.
2. Encourage equal participation in research, innovation, and entrepreneurial activities.
3. Ensure fair recruitment, retention, and career progression practices across member organizations.
4. Address gender pay gaps and foster transparent salary policies.
5. Build a safe, inclusive, and respectful working environment with zero tolerance for harassment or discrimination.
6. Integrate gender perspective in digital innovation projects, products, and services.

## 3. Governance and Responsibility

A GEP Steering Committee will oversee implementation and monitoring. A Gender Equality Officer will be appointed to coordinate actions, report progress, and provide training. Annual reports will be shared publicly with cluster members and stakeholders.

## 4. Measures and Actions

- **Work-Life Balance:** Flexible work arrangements, parental leave for both genders, awareness campaigns.
- **Leadership Balance:** 40% representation of the under-represented gender, mentorship programs.
- **Recruitment & Career:** Gender-neutral job postings, shortlisting women candidates, career development workshops.
- **Equal Pay:** Regular gender pay audits, transparent salary bands.
- **Research & Innovation:** Integrating gender dimension in projects, supporting women-led startups.

- Harassment Prevention: Code of Conduct, confidential reporting, training on diversity awareness.

## 5. Monitoring and Evaluation

KPIs include % of women in leadership roles, % of women in research/innovation projects, gender pay gap index, number of trainings and mentorship programs. Annual evaluations will be conducted with stakeholder feedback, and policies will be adjusted accordingly.

## 6. Timeline

2025: Adoption of GEP, committee setup, baseline data collection.

2026: First gender pay audit, rollout of mentorship and training programs.

2027: Mid-term review and policy adjustment.

2028: Final evaluation and new action plan (2029–2032).

## 7. Resources

Dedicated budget line for gender equality measures, collaboration with universities, NGOs, and EU-funded initiatives, and access to external expertise for training and audits.

## 8. Conclusion

The Bulgarian Digital Cluster affirms its commitment to gender equality as a driver of innovation, competitiveness, and sustainable growth. This GEP ensures compliance with EU requirements while fostering a fair, inclusive, and dynamic digital ecosystem in Bulgaria.