

SmartUp Gender Equality Plan (2025–2028)

Document Control – Gender Equality Plan (2025–2028)

- Drafted by: SmartUp Executive Board & Admin Manager
- First draft completed: July 2025; Reviewed by staff: July 2025
- Approved by Executive Board: August 2025
- Effective period: August 2025 – December 2028
- November 2025:
 - Added explicit reference to the Risk Management Framework and the "Zero Tolerance" risk appetite regarding discrimination and PSEA.
 - Added a mandatory requirement for external experts and vendors to sign Code of Conduct (including PSEA) declarations.
 - Changed the "Establish reporting" action to "Maintain", explicitly citing board@innovationlab.mk.

1. Introduction & Commitment

SmartUp – Social Innovation Lab was founded with the mission to catalyze social innovation and build a socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable society. We believe that innovation thrives in diverse and inclusive environments, where people from all backgrounds and genders can contribute equally. Ensuring gender equality is therefore not only a matter of rights and fairness but also a prerequisite for creativity, resilience, and impact in our work.

This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) builds on SmartUp's core governance and operational documents – the Personnel & Operations Manual, Employee Handbook, Financial Manual, Children's Safeguarding Policy, and the Risk Management Framework. Together, they provide the foundations for transparent recruitment, fair treatment of employees, safeguarding of vulnerable groups, and sound financial accountability.

The GEP covers the period **2025–2028** and sets out SmartUp's priorities and actions in line with EU standards, particularly the requirements for organizations engaged in Horizon Europe and other international programs. It reflects our commitment to:

- Mainstream gender equality across all organizational levels and activities.
- Guarantee equal opportunities in employment, career development, and leadership.
- Foster a work culture that values diversity, flexibility, and balance between professional and personal life.
- Prevent and address gender-based discrimination, harassment, and violence.
- Integrate gender perspectives into the design, implementation, and evaluation of projects and policies.

The plan is intended as a living document, reviewed annually by the Executive Board to ensure that policies evolve with organizational growth, staff needs, and external standards. It has been endorsed by the **Executive Board of SmartUp** and is mandatory for all staff and collaborators.

2. Work-Life Balance & Organizational Culture

Action	Responsible	Timeline	Resources	Indicators
Maintain flexible work arrangements for all staff, regardless of gender	Executive Board, Administration and Finance Officer	Ongoing (2025–2028)	No extra cost (policy-based)	% of staff using flexible/remote work, disaggregated by gender
Conduct annual staff well-being survey (work-life balance, satisfaction)	Administration and Finance Officer	Annually (Q4)	Survey tools, staff time	Survey response rate; satisfaction score
Include work-life balance as part of performance review discussions	Project Managers	Annual reviews	No extra cost	Number of reviews where work-life balance documented

3. Gender Balance in Leadership & Decision-Making

Action	Responsible	Timeline	Resources	Indicators
Ensure balanced gender representation in leadership bodies, striving for at least one-third representation of each gender	Executive Board	By Dec 2026	N/A	Gender composition of Board and project steering committees
Develop annual gender-disaggregated staff data	Administration and Finance Officer	Annually	Staff time	Report delivered to the Executive board
Include gender parity clause in committee ToRs	Executive Board	2026	N/A	Number of ToRs updated

4. Gender Equality in Recruitment & Career Progression

Action	Responsible	Timeline	Resources	Indicators
Revise job descriptions to ensure gender-neutral language	Admin & Finance Officer	2026	Admin time	% of job ads reviewed with gender-neutral wording
Ensure recruitment panels are gender-balanced	Admin & Finance Officer, Project Leads	Immediate & ongoing	N/A	Gender composition of panels
Collect and analyze gender-disaggregated data on recruitment, promotions, and retention	Admin & Finance Officer	Bi-annually	Admin system	Annual report delivered to Executive board and managers
Annual training for managers on unconscious bias in recruitment & evaluation	Admin & Finance Officer	1x per year	Training budget	Number of managers trained

			(~€1,000/year)	
Ensure external experts and vendors sign Code of Conduct (including PSEA) declarations prior to engagement.	Admin & Finance Officer	Per Contract from 2026	Contract Templates	# of contracts with signed ethical annexes

5. Integration of Gender Dimension in Projects & Research

Action	Responsible	Timeline	Resources	Indicators
Include gender analysis in project design templates	Program Managers	2025 - 2026	Staff time	% of project proposals with gender section
Disaggregate project participation data by gender	M&E Officer	All projects, starting 2026	Monitoring tools	Gender balance in project beneficiaries
Integrate gender-disaggregated indicators into the organizational M&E Guidelines	M&E Officer	2026	Staff time	Number of projects with gender indicators

6. Measures Against Gender-Based Violence & Safeguarding

Action	Responsible	Timeline	Resources	Indicators
Extend safeguarding policy to cover all staff, contractors, beneficiaries	Executive Board, Safeguarding Officer	Mid-2026	Policy update, training	Updated safeguarding policy adopted
Maintain confidential reporting mechanism (board@innovationlab.mk)	Executive Board	Ongoing	IT support, Admin time	# of reports received & processed
Annual training on GBV, harassment prevention	Safeguarding Officer	Annually	Training budget	% of staff trained
Appoint Gender Equality & Safeguarding Focal Point	Executive Board	2025	Role assignment	Position formally appointed

7. Training, Awareness & Capacity Building

Action	Responsible	Timeline	Resources	Indicators
Conduct annual mandatory refresher training on Gender Equality and PSEA	Administration and Finance Officer	1x per year	€1,000/year	% of staff completing training

Specialized training for managers on inclusive leadership	Administration and Finance Officer	Starting 2025	€1,500/year	Number of managers trained
Fund staff participation in external gender events/workshops	Program Managers	Ongoing (2025–2028)	€500/year	Number of staff supported

8. Resources & Budget

Action	Responsible	Timeline	Resources	Indicators
Create budget line for GEP activities (trainings, awareness, focal point)	Administration and Finance Officer	2025 budget onwards	€3,500/year	Budget line established
Allocate staff time for Gender Focal Point	Administration and Finance Officer	2025 onwards	% FTE	Inclusion in HR records

9. Monitoring & Reporting

Action	Responsible	Timeline	Resources	Indicators
Develop GEP Monitoring Framework with indicators	Administration and Finance Officer, M&E Officer	2025	Staff time	Framework approved
Produce annual Gender Equality Report	Administration and Finance Officer	Annually (Q1)	Admin & M&E resources	Report delivered to the Executive board
Review GEP every 2 years	Executive Board	2026	N/A	Revised GEP adopted

10. Accountability & Governance

Action	Responsible	Timeline	Resources	Indicators
Oversight of GEP by Executive Board	Executive Board	Ongoing	Board time	Annual review documented in minutes
Gender Focal Point reports directly to Board	Gender Focal Point	Quarterly	Admin time	Reports submitted
Incorporate gender KPIs into performance review of managers	Administration and Finance Officer	2026	Admin system	% of managers assessed on gender KPIs