



REPUBLIKA E SHQIPËRISË

“ISMAIL QEMALI” UNIVERSITY OF VLORA
ACADEMIC SENAT



GENDER EQUALITY STRATEGY

2022-2030

AT

“ISMAIL QEMALI” UNIVERSITY VLORE

Approved by the Academic Senate of the University “Ismail Qemali” Vlorë
Decision No. 07, dated 21.02.2022



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GENDER EQUALITY IN THE “I. QEMALI” UNIVERSITY OF VLORA

The University, as an organization that aims to create and transmit knowledge and democratic and equal values, is a fundamental reference of scientific knowledge and innovation in our society. Moreover, it has a great capacity to influence and transform society, in academic activities and the design of cooperation activities with other institutions. The gender perspective must be included in this activity.

This strategic document, ambitious but realistic, reflects the real commitment of the “Ismail Qemali” University of Vlora for effective equality between women and men and will enable the introduction of the gender perspective in all university activities, and its transfer to the entire society, through its implementation in the entirety of institutional, business and social relations. It is essential to emphasize several key elements that portray the starting point for the development of the drafting of the Gender Equality Plan: the regulatory framework, the diagnosis of the situation and the strategic framework.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

In this regard, the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination has taken decisions, which can be considered as good practices for protection against direct and indirect discrimination related to gender, pregnancy and family responsibilities. Albania does not have a specific law for the promotion of balance between family life and work, but there are a number of provisions in domestic legislation that reflect this balance. These provisions are found in laws and by-laws that regulate employment, financial assistance and social security.

The regulatory framework, in particular the Albanian Law on Gender Equality, is based on LAW No. 9970, dated 24.7.2008 ON GENDER EQUALITY IN SOCIETY, which regulates the fundamental issues of gender equality in public life, of the protection and equal treatment of women and men, of equal opportunities and chances for the exercise of rights, as well as of their participation and contribution to the development of all areas of social life.



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Its main purpose is to ensure effective protection against discrimination based on gender and against any form of conduct that promotes discrimination based on gender; to determine measures to guarantee equal opportunities between women and men, to eliminate discrimination based on gender, in whatever form it appears. At the same time, it seeks to determine the responsibilities of state, central and local authorities, to draft and implement normative acts, as well as policies that support the development and promotion of gender equality in society.

This law is based on the principle of equality and non-discrimination and other principles, sanctioned by the Constitution of the Republic of Albania, the National Strategy for Gender Equality, 2021 - 2030, approved by Council of Ministers No. 400, dated 30.06.2021, from the Convention “On the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women”, as well as from all other international acts, ratified by the Republic of Albania.

Other legal initiatives such as:

- a) Law No. 15/2019 “On the Promotion of Employment”, which aims to increase the employability of the workforce, through the provision of public services and programs for employment, self-employment and professional qualification.
- b) Amendments to the Labor Code, which are in line with European Union legislation, to support gender equality in the labor market, mainly related to raising awareness and supporting the economic empowerment of women in the labor market.
- c) Law No. 110/2018 “On Notaries”, is an achievement in matters of regulating gender equality in terms of protecting the assets of women and girls. Its implementation significantly reduces obstacles to women's access to finance and guarantees the ownership rights of spouses for assets acquired during marriage, when spouses are in the marital property regime in the community.
- d) Law No. 111/2018, “On the Cadastre”, regulates gender equality issues, related to the registration of property of the legal community.
- e) Law No. 65/2016, “On Social Enterprises in the Republic of Albania”, regulates the activity of social enterprises, with the aim of protecting and social inclusion of vulnerable groups, marking a fundamental step towards gender equality, as these services facilitate women's participation in the labor market.



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The new Business Development and Investment Strategy 2021-2027 provides greater support for improving the business climate in general and supporting women entrepreneurs in particular. The disbursement of the Gender Equality in Access to Economic Opportunities Support Loan in Albania is in progress thanks to the agreement with the World Bank and the French Development Agency (AFD). The disbursement of the loan aims to improve women's access to assets, increase labor market opportunities for women, and strengthen institutional measures for the creation of gender-informed policies.

Beyond the constant engagement in policymaking within the country, Albania is represented by a member in the World Bank's Advisory Committee on Gender and Development, since June 2020, with a 2-year mandate. In this capacity, the members of this council help the World Bank assess measures to accelerate the narrowing of the gap between men and women in economic opportunities and empowerment, and provide recommendations and suggestions to strengthen the effectiveness of gender equality policies.

INTERNATIONAL TREATIES, ACTS AND CONVENTIONS ON GENDER RESPONSIVE POLICIES ON THE FAMILY

- ❑ The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development officially entered into force on January 1, 2016. This document is based on 17 main goals, including a specific goal for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (SDG 5) and also contains gender-sensitive targets and indicators in ten other goals. All Member States of the United Nations have adopted the 2030 Agenda, which applies to all by 2030. In this context, the Albanian Parliament adopted Resolution No. 2, dated 14.12.2017 "On the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda of the Member States of the United Nations". In this resolution, the Government of Albania is fully committed to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Paragraph no. two of the resolution in question sets out the Government's commitment to improving the legal framework for gender equality. Meanwhile, the Government of Albania has also prepared a Voluntary National Report for the Review of the Sustainable Development Goals, a report that describes Albania's progress in achieving the 2030 Agenda and the fulfillment of the relevant targets. One of the objectives that shows the Government's progress towards achieving SDG No. 5 is to ensure the full and



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effective participation of women and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

- ☐ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: On 18 December 1979, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Convention entered into force as an international treaty on 3 September 1981, after its ratification by 20 member states. The Convention establishes an international law of women's rights and a plan of action by member states to guarantee these rights. Article 11 of the Convention specifically states that member states shall take appropriate measures to prevent discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity and to ensure their right to employment. Furthermore, member states shall encourage the provision of necessary social services to support parents in order to enable them to reconcile family and professional responsibilities and their participation in public life, in particular by promoting the establishment of a network of childcare facilities. The implementation of the Convention is monitored by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. At least every four years, member states are expected to submit a national report to the Committee, indicating the measures they have adopted in relation to the implementation of the provisions of the Convention.

- ☐ Istanbul Convention: The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women (Istanbul Convention) recognizes violence against women as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination. This means that states have responsibilities if they do not respond adequately to this violence. The Convention is the first international treaty to contain a definition of gender. Albania signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence on 19 December 2011. The Albanian Parliament ratified it with Law No. 104 / 8.11.2012 “On Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence”. Albania prepared and submitted its first report on the Implementation of the Istanbul Convention in 2016 and the GREVIO mission also assessed the situation in the country. The GREVIO mission baseline report for Albania was published on 2 November 2017, while Albania is expected to report to GREVIO 19 on urgent recommendations in 2021 (it was planned for 30 January 2021, but will be postponed by the Committee of the Parties due to the COVID-19 pandemic). The Universal Periodic Review is a



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process that involves a periodic review of human rights records for all 193 United Nations Member States. The Universal Periodic Review provides an opportunity for all States to state what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situation in their countries and to overcome challenges to the guarantee of these rights. The Periodic Review process began with the establishment of the Human Rights Council on 15 March 2006 by the United Nations General Assembly with Resolution 60/251.

- ☐ **Convention on the Rights of the Child:** This convention was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly by Resolution 44/25, on 20 November 1989, and entered into force on 2 September 1990. The Republic of Albania ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child by Law No. 7531, dated 11 December 1991. According to Article 44 of the Convention, Albania has submitted its second, third and fourth periodic reports on the convention. Civil society organizations that exercise their activities in the field of children's rights may be engaged for alternative reports. In accordance with this convention, the State Agency for the Protection of Children's Rights was established in 2006 to implement the law that protects children's rights. This agency coordinates state authorities responsible for children's rights and provides technical assistance to local and central institutions working on children's rights.
- ☐ **International Labor Standards:** These are legal instruments drawn up by governments, employers and workers of the International Labor Organization and which define basic principles and rights at work. They are in the form of Conventions (or Protocols), which are legally binding international treaties that can be ratified by member countries, or recommendations, which serve as non-binding guidelines.

EUROPEAN UNION DIRECTIVES

- ☐ **Work-Life Balance Directive:** The Work-Life Balance Directive introduces a set of legislative actions designed to modernise existing EU legal and policy frameworks, with the aims of better supporting a work-life balance for parents and their careers, encouraging an equal sharing of parental leave between men and women and addressing the underrepresentation of women in the labour market. The Directive, which was adopted by the European Parliament in April 2019,



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entered into force on 1 August 2019. The Directive repealed EU Directive 2010/18/EU "Work-Life Balance", and Member States will have three years to align their national policies with the provisions of this Directive. The main purpose of this Directive is to ensure the implementation of the principle of gender equality in terms of labour market opportunities and treatment at work. Furthermore, this Directive aims to improve access to leave and flexible working arrangements, as well as to increase men's participation in family-related leave and flexible working arrangements.

- ❑ **Pregnant Workers Directive:** Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 introduces measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers, workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding (10th individual Directive within the meaning of Article 16(1) of Directive 89/391/EEC). The objective of this Directive is to protect the health and safety of women at work, during pregnancy or after giving birth, and of women who are breastfeeding. Under the Directive, a series of guidelines detail the assessment of chemical, physical and biological agents and industrial processes considered to be hazardous to the health and safety of pregnant women or women who have recently given birth and are breastfeeding. The Directive also includes provisions on physical movements and postures, mental and physical fatigue and other types of physical and psychological stress. Pregnant workers and workers who are breastfeeding may under no circumstances be required to perform tasks for which it is assessed that there is a risk of exposure to agents which could endanger their life and health or the health of the fetus.
- ❑ **Directive on equal treatment in self-employment:** Directive 2010/41/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2010 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in activities in a self-employed capacity. This directive repealed the previous Council Directive 86/613/EEC and now introduces a framework of legal provisions for the implementation of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in self-employment. The directive provides that self-employed women and female spouses are to be granted adequate assistance enabling them to interrupt their working activity due to pregnancy or maternity for at least 14 weeks. In this regard, Member States may adopt positive plans, such as: promoting business initiatives among women to ensure full equality in practice between men and women at work. • **Directive on equal treatment and equal opportunities**



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in employment and occupation: Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 aims to implement the principle of equal treatment and equal opportunities in employment and occupation between men and women. In addition to the aim of equal treatment and equal opportunities for men and women, this directive contains provisions on equal pay, equal treatment in the social security scheme, and in working conditions. The directive also contains rules and legal remedies for the implementation and promotion of equal treatment through dialogue. This directive prohibits discrimination between men and women as regards conditions of recruitment and access to employment, dismissal, vocational training and promotion, and membership of workers' organizations. In addition, women and men are treated equally in social security schemes at work, in particular as regards the field of activity and conditions of access, contributions and calculation of social security benefits. This directive ensures that workers have the right to return to their jobs or equivalent positions under no less favorable conditions at the end of maternity, paternity or adoption leave.



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DIAGNOSIS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION IN ALBANIA

Inequality between women and men in Albania remains one of the most serious problems and the most serious violations of human rights in the country. Despite the fact that over the years of democracy, Albania has made strides to protect and guarantee the rights of women and girls, the country is still very far from achieving true gender equality.

Sexual violence and harassment in the workplace, public insecurity and lack of respect for the bodily integrity of every girl and woman, domestic violence, unemployment, school dropout, social prejudices, wrong gender models, discrimination, lack of equality in political participation and representation, are some of the major problems that every girl and woman faces in her life.

According to the latest data published by INSTAT (July 2021) on the role of women and men in the economy, decision-making and business, it results that:

- The percentage of women owners or administrators in active enterprises is 25.5%, up from 25.4% in 2019, despite the pandemic situation;
- Enterprises with women owners or administrators are concentrated in the Tirana district with 32.8%, followed by the Lezha district with 28.5%;
- 43.2% of borrowers and 43.5% of depositors in commercial banks were women.

The role of women in society was significantly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, which contributed to the increase in unemployment and unpaid work within the family. Although the latest data show an improvement in many of the gender equality indicators, the Ministry of Finance and Economy remains committed to further strengthening the role of women and closing gender gaps through its policies. Currently, women make up 50.2% of the total population, with a median age of 38.6 years. According to the data, in the 2019-2020 academic year, out of approximately 33 thousand students graduating from higher education, girls accounted for 65.3%. Female students mainly prefer the following branches: business, administration and law (28.4%), health and welfare (16.3%) and arts and humanities (13.0%).

While referring to data from the labor market and social protection (age group 15-64 years) we can highlight that the participation of women in the labor force is calculated at 61.2% and the employment rate is 61.2%, about 16 percentage points lower compared to men;

- 43.3% of women are employed with a salary, while 22.8% of them work unpaid in the family business;
- The predominant employment is in the agricultural sector, with 41.4% of women employed;
- The gender gap in wages is 6.6%, a decrease of 3.5 percentage points compared to 2019;



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- Of the beneficiaries of urban pensions, 47.4% are women and the average retirement age is 61.1 years, compared to 65.1 years for men.

Referring to gender equality in governance, Albania ranks among the 5 most balanced countries in the world in terms of the composition of the government cabinet, with 53.3% women in ministerial positions and 29.0% women members of Parliament.

DIAGNOSIS OF THE SITUATION AT THE “I.QEMALI” UNIVERSITY OF VLORA

The Diagnostic Report on Gender Equality at the University of Vlora, which enables the recognition of the specific situation of gender equality at the University, gives us the key to defining the strategic focuses and goals of this plan. The expansion and depth of this diagnosis makes it possible that a large part of the actions related to the current situation, currently included in many equality plans of other universities, have already been managed and developed in this first diagnosis.

The commitment to gender equality is not established in the statute of the University of Vlora but is mentioned in the Strategic Plan. In particular, social equality in scientific research is highlighted. The University of Vlora is a public, autonomous institution, open to its environment and with an international vocation, and must be committed to equality, economic progress and the well-being of the region, through high-quality education and research to contribute to the creation and transfer of knowledge, the integral education of people, scientific and technological development, innovation, intellectual growth of a multicultural and multilingual society in which it is embedded.

In addition, at this point, the “I. Qemali” University of Vlora does not have a specific structure and a professional body that is directly responsible for gender equality policies.

Considering the statistics for the academic year 2020-2021 at the “I. Qemali” University of Vlora, women prevail in terms of the number of students, scholarship holders and administrative and academic staff as evidenced in the table below.

	Female	Male	Total
Students	2574	1392	3966
students with scholarships	265	88	353
Workers	246	81	327



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STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The strategic plan of the University of Vlora should also make the commitment to gender equality clearer in defining strategic objectives such as, for example, “a university dedicated to equality, a meeting point of organizational culture, with flexible and efficient management systems” where there should also be a specific strategic line “Development of gender equality policy”, with defined goals:

- ☐ Annual diagnosis of the situation of women and men at the University of Vlora;
- ☐ Formation of a Gender Equality Commission;
- ☐ Creation and approval of an effective plan for gender equality between women and men at the University of Vlora by involving the university community in the drafting and achievement of the goals of this plan;
- ☐ Discovery and resolution of needs of any other kind;
- ☐ Establishment of a non-discriminatory language;
- ☐ Promotion of equality as an indicator of value and quality.

The University of Vlora, following international, community and internal principles and standards, must be committed to promoting equality of opportunity between women and men in its rules. It must also undertake the commitment to discover, diagnose and contribute to the solution of existing problems in contemporary societies and to promote active gender policies and social promotion.

The areas to be addressed are:

- A. access to equal conditions in university teaching and scientific research;
- B. access, under equal conditions, to employment and professional development within the university;
- C. organization of working conditions with a gender perspective approach, taking into account the harmonization between professional and personal life;
- D. promotion of a gender perspective in studies and research;
- E. promotion of balanced participation in various decision-making bodies and levels within the University.



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SWOT ANALYSIS

Strong points	Weak Points
▪ salaries are the same for women and men at the University because it is determined by the Council of Ministers; ▪ the Strategic Plan mentions gender equality in scientific research, ▪ a large number of women in leadership and decision-making positions; ▪ the number of employed women, students and scholarship holders is higher compared to that of men.	▪ gender equality is not mentioned in the UV statute; ▪ there is no specific structure or professional body directly responsible for gender equality; ▪ lack of a gender expert to lead the process of implementing activities and policies on gender equality; ▪ no annual diagnosis/report of the situation on gender equality is made; ▪ lack of qualified personnel in gender equality issues.
Opportunities	Threats
▪ promoting gender equality as an indicator of value and quality in society; ▪ a firm and clear expression of commitment to gender equality in the Strategic Plan, where a structure of objectives, goals and specific actions is established, offering the possibility of setting priorities in relation to existing needs and resources; ▪ participation in international projects focusing on gender equality; ▪ the EU promotes gender equality and gender mainstreaming and supports all policies in this area; ▪ gender equality inspires innovation and encourages development.	▪ weak promotion of the social campaign in audiovisual media; ▪ a patriarchal and traditional mentality and culture within Albanian society and reluctance to change; ▪ low level of awareness of gender policies in public administration and in the media.



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MEASURES TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY IN UNIVERSITIES

☐ RAISING STUDENT AWARENESS

1. Training student associations and promoting equality at the governance level. The Student Charter/Student Code should refer to the principles of gender equality;
2. Regular awareness-raising activities on everyday sexism: free expression spaces, theatrical performances on the theme of gender equality/sexism, a forum with psychologists on sexual harassment, etc. to combat sexual violence in higher education;
3. At the beginning of the academic year, recommendations on gender equality should be sent to all faculties.

☐ TOOLS AND GUIDELINES TO PROMOTE A CULTURE OF EQUALITY

1. Create a sexual harassment monitoring unit to raise awareness throughout the student/academic community about sexist acts and sexual violence;
2. Create a Non-Sexist Communication Charter;
3. Create a network of gender equality advisors present at the University.

☐ APPROPRIATE EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

1. Female students can participate in training seminars on essential career skills: assertiveness, salary negotiation, work-life balance and public speaking;
2. Gender balance in UV decision-making bodies;
3. Selection committees should be gender balanced;
4. Limit emails about working after hours to promote a better work-life balance and run a campaign to encourage men to take paternity leave.

In terms of actions, it is essential to be as precise as possible, specifying not only what, but also who, with whom, to whom, how, how much and with whom. This information makes it easier to implement, track and evaluate activities/strategies.

COVID 19 AND GENDER EQUALITY

The work and personal lives of women academics and researchers have been disproportionately negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. A Gender Equality Strategy (GES) should be relevant to the context of an institution, including the evolving impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on all academic life and beyond. The disruption of personal life, education, working conditions and the economy as a result of the pandemic has had implications for gender equality and the implementation of GES in higher education and research. Issues that have been noted include:



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- Gender equality objectives and actions during the disruption of educational and research activities have been de-prioritized;
- A disproportionate burden of additional care and family upbringing responsibilities falling on women, which in turn undermines their work, including research and publication;
- New ways of working, including online management and collaboration, requiring vigilance over emerging patterns of inclusion and exclusion;
- Differential impacts on staff in terms of seniority and contract type with potential consequences for women in more precarious positions;
- The need to ensure that the gender dimension is integrated into COVID-19 research in the context of a fast-paced, evolving and high-impact research environment.

SIGNING, PUBLICATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE GBS

As required by Horizon Europe, the Gender Equality Strategy (GES) will be an official document published on the website of the “Ismail Qemali” University of Vlora, after approval by the collegial bodies and signing by the Rector of UV.

By publishing the GES on the public website of UV, the commitment of the Institution to gender equality is publicly signaled and proper accountability towards the goals and objectives of the plan is enabled by staff, partners, stakeholders and the wider community. The relevant institutions such as the Ministry of Education and Sports will also be notified about the GES.

The University leaders, academic staff, administrative staff and UV students have full responsibility for the implementation of the commitments set out in the GBS and will be accountable for the success of the GES. In addition to publishing the SBG on the UV website, it also needs to be actively disseminated and communicated throughout the institution to signal the support of the governing authorities for the implementation of this strategy. It should be clear that the fulfillment of the commitments and actions set out in the SEG is the responsibility of every member of staff within the University, at all levels, and they will hold themselves accountable for the implementation of the SBG within their areas.

The implementation of the SEG and periodic progress reports with gender-disaggregated data for staff and students will be published annually in the Annual Report of the “Ismail Qemali” University of Vlora.



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STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE	STRUCTURES INVOLVED	BUDGET	TIMEFRAME
Establishment of a Gender Equality Unit to develop gender equality policies at the University	Academic Senate; Administrative Board	Internal	By the end of 2024
Awareness-raising/training on gender equality and unconscious gender bias for staff and decision-makers	Basic Units; Main Units; Administrative Board	Internal and external	Repeated every 6 months, starting from the beginning of the 2022/2023 academic year
Increase the number of women applying for membership in decision-making bodies	Basic Units; Main Units; Academic Senate	No cost	Continuous
Increase the number of women elected as members of decision-making bodies	Basic Units; Main Units; Academic Senate	No cost	Continuous
Ensure that new promotions take gender balance into consideration	Basic Units; Main Units; Academic Senate	No cost	Continuous
Inclusion and promotion of a gender perspective in the content of scientific research, innovation and teaching	Basic Units; Main Units; Academic Senate; Administrative Board	Internal and external	Continuous
Ensure that gender-related issues are more prominently addressed in existing curricula	Basic Units; Main Units; Academic Senate	No cost	Continuous
Greater support in the field of scientific research for female academic staff	Basic Units; Main Units; Academic Senate; Administrative Board	Internal	Continuous



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Increase the number of projects that incorporate a gender perspective into their outcomes	Basic Units; Main Units; Academic Senate; Administrative Board	Internal	Continuous
Improve work-life balance and organizational culture	Human Resources Department	No cost	From the 2022/2023 academic year
Increase support for early-career female researchers to fulfil their teaching and scientific research responsibilities	Basic Units; Main Units; Academic Senate; Administrative Board	Internal	Continuous