

Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

Cluster Mechatronics and Automation (CMA)

1. Purpose

Cluster Mechatronics and Automation (CMA) is a Bulgarian cluster organisation supporting innovation, technological development and cooperation among companies, research organisations, universities and other stakeholders in the fields of mechatronics, automation, robotics, industrial digitalisation, advanced manufacturing and Industry 5.0.

As a knowledge-based organisation operating in technology-intensive sectors, CMA recognises that diversity and equal opportunities contribute to stronger, more sustainable and inclusive innovation ecosystems.

CMA is committed to ensuring equal treatment and an inclusive working environment for employees, collaborators and stakeholders, regardless of gender. As an innovation cluster, CMA integrates gender equality principles into its governance, project activities and engagement with its innovation ecosystem.

2. Scope

This Plan applies to all CMA employees, management bodies, external experts, trainees and other persons engaged in CMA activities. It establishes a structured framework for integrating gender equality principles into CMA's organisational practices, project activities, communication, events and cooperation with the innovation ecosystem.

The Plan is aligned with relevant European and national legislation, strategies and policy frameworks related to equal opportunities, non-discrimination and inclusive innovation. The main reference documents include: *European Union Gender Equality Strategy*, *Horizon Europe Programme*, *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*, *Bulgarian Labour Code*, *Bulgarian legislation on protection against discrimination*.

It complements existing legal obligations by introducing organisational measures and good practices suitable for a cluster organisation operating in nation-wide and European innovation networks.

3. Governance, Publication and Resources

This Plan has been consulted with the Management Board, signed by the Executive Director and published on the CMA website. The Executive Director is responsible for its implementation with the support of all staff. Considering the organisation's size, responsibilities are integrated into existing management processes.

4. Objectives

CMA pursues the following objectives through this Gender Equality Plan:

- Promote equal opportunities and non-discrimination

- Support a respectful and inclusive organisational culture
- Ensure transparent recruitment and career development
- Encourage balanced participation in decision-making, projects and events
- Prevent discrimination, harassment and gender-based violence
- Monitor progress and periodically review the Plan

5. Measures

5.1 Work-life balance

Flexible working arrangements where operationally possible, reasonable scheduling of meetings during working hours and support for work-life balance.

5.2 Recruitment and career progression

Vacancies use gender-neutral language. Recruitment, remuneration and professional development are based on competence, qualifications and performance.

5.3 Leadership and decision-making

Where appointments are made, CMA seeks balanced participation whenever feasible while respecting competence-based selection. CMA supports equal access to professional development opportunities.

5.4 Innovation, projects and events

CMA encourages balanced participation of women and men as speakers, experts, mentors and project participants in activities related to mechatronics, automation, robotics and advanced manufacturing.

CMA supports European cooperation activities where responsible innovation and inclusive approaches are increasingly important.

5.5 Awareness and inclusive communication

Gender equality and unconscious bias will be addressed through periodic internal discussions, onboarding and participation in relevant training opportunities. Inclusive principles will be integrated into internal communication, meetings, cooperation with members and external activities.

CMA promotes inclusive communication in its website, social media, newsletters, publications and event materials. Communication activities aim to avoid stereotypes, use respectful language and represent diversity within the innovation ecosystem.

5.6 Prevention of harassment

CMA maintains zero tolerance for discrimination, harassment and gender-based inappropriate behavior. Concerns may be reported confidentially to the Executive Director and will be addressed promptly and fairly.

CMA promotes a culture based on respect, professionalism and equal opportunities.

5.7 Procurement and cooperation with external providers

CMA applies equal opportunity principles when selecting external suppliers, consultants and service providers.

5.8 Complaints and feedback procedure

CMA encourages feedback from employees, members, partners and stakeholders regarding organisational practices.

6. Data Collection and Monitoring

CMA monitors the following indicators:

- Gender distribution of employees
- Gender balance in management bodies
- Participation in trainings
- Gender balance among speakers and experts at CMA events, where applicable
- Reported discrimination or harassment cases and actions taken

Results are periodically reviewed by the management and used to update the Plan where necessary.

7. Review

The Gender Equality Plan enters into force on 05 January 2026 and remains applicable indefinitely. It will be reviewed periodically to ensure that its objectives and measures remain relevant to CMA's development, operational needs and applicable requirements. The Plan may be revised following the review process or whenever organisational changes or new legal or programme requirements arise, taking into account:

- organisational changes;
- new European requirements;
- lessons learned from implementation;
- feedback from stakeholders.

Name and position: Daniela Tchonkova, Executive Director

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