

Bulgarian Defence Institute “Prof. Tsvetan Lazarov”

Gender Equality Plan 2023-2025

I. Introduction

Gender equality is a fundamental value of the European Union.

Following the Guidance on Gender Equality Plans issued by the EC, gender equality:

- Helps to improve the quality and impact of research and innovation by helping to ensure it is reflective of and relevant to the whole of society;
- Creates better working environments that enable good quality research and learning and help maximise the potential and talents of all staff;
- Helps to attract and retain talent by ensuring that all staff can be confident that their abilities will be valued and recognised fairly and appropriately.

A Gender Equality Plan (GEP) is adopted by organizations or institutions in order to assess their procedures and practices, identify gender bias and implement measures to correct any bias, set targets and monitor progress in gender equality via indicators.

The Bulgarian Defence Institute “Prof. Tsvetan Lazarov” (BDI) is a public body established on 04.06.2009 by Decree № 140 of the Council of Ministers of Republic of Bulgaria, as a legal entity to the Minister of Defence. On 21.01.2014, with Decree № 5 of the Council of Ministers, the Defence Institute was named as "Professor Tsvetan Lazarov". BDI is a scientific, consulting and research organization overseen by the Minister of defence of the Republic of Bulgaria with principal purpose to conduct scientific and scientific-applied research, and scientific-technical activities in the interest of the defence of the country and a structure of direct subordination to the Minister of Defence (art. 2, para. 1, Regulations for the device and activities of Defence Institute "Professor Tsvetan Lazarov",).

The BDI acknowledges that gender equality benefits research and innovation (R&I) and establishes as priorities to address the gender equality, to set guidelines for future activities in order to enhance gender equality and to monitor application of the Gender Equality Plan (GEP). With this document BDI aims to identify and tackle gender inequalities, detect their causes and define desired outcomes, including targets, establish measures to achieve the aims, and set indicators to monitor progress.

In addition, BDI aims to engage its personnel in the implementation of this plan, having conscious that a GEP is an ongoing process that encourages self-reflection and review of processes and practices. This GEP is signed by the Director of BDI after approval by the Scientific Council, and it

is published on the organization's website (di.mod.bg) and communicated within the organization.

BDI's GEP focuses on the five-recommended by the European Commission thematic areas, adding one more (initial) step, which is essential for the implementation of an effective and substantial GEP:

- Assessment of the current situation in the Institute;
- Work-life balance and organisational culture;
- Gender balance in the leadership and decision-making process;
- Gender equality in personnel selection and career progression;
- Integration of the gender dimension into research and education of PhD students;
- Approval of measures against gender-based violence including sexual harassment.

II. Regulatory Framework

BDI's GEP legitimates and protects every strategy aiming to achieve gender equality within the Institute. The GEP is in accordance with the European and the Bulgarian laws and aligns with national initiatives and actions towards equality of women and men, rights, discrimination banning, equality treatment, harassment in workplace, social responsibility of organisations etc. The legislation, policies and directives can be found in detail in the following sections.

1. European Legislation

Equality between people and non-discrimination are the founding cornerstones of the EU and are being embedded in the Treaties of the European Union, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and secondary legislation. In the development of the GEP, BDI considers the:

1. "Recast" Directive (2006/54/EC) on equal opportunities and equal treatment of women and men in employment and occupation which requires the implementation of the prohibition of direct and indirect sex discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment in pay and access to employment,
2. Directive 2010/41/EU on the prohibition of direct and indirect (sex) discrimination to self-employment, discrimination prohibition Directive on Pregnancy (92/85/EEC),
3. Parental Leave Directive (2010/18/EU),
4. Part-time Work Directive (97/81/EC),
5. Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC) that prohibits discrimination on the ground of racial or ethnic origin in employment as well as
6. Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC), covering the grounds of religion or belief, disability, age, and sexual orientation.
7. Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans

2. National Legislation

In order to develop GEP, BDI considers the following Bulgarian legislation documents:

1. Bulgarian Law on Equality Between Women and Men (in Bulgarian)
(https://www.mod.bg/bg/doc/ravnopostavenost/20180110_Zakon_ravnopostavenost.pdf)
2. National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, 2020 – 2025 (in Bulgarian)
(https://www.mod.bg/bg/doc/ravnopostavenost/20210408_NAP_WPS_BG.pdf)
3. Bulgarian National Strategy for Equality Between Women and Men 2021-2030 (in Bulgarian)
(https://www.mod.bg/bg/doc/ravnopostavenost/20210119_National_strategy_2021-2030.pdf)
4. LAW on Protection against Discrimination (in Bulgarian)
(https://www.mod.bg/bg/doc/ravnopostavenost/20180110_Zakon_zashtita_diskriminacia.pdf)
5. ACT to protect against domestic violence (in Bulgarian)
(https://www.mod.bg/bg/doc/ravnopostavenost/20180110_Zakon_domasno_nasilie.pdf)
6. Ombudsman Law (in Bulgarian)
(https://www.mod.bg/bg/doc/ravnopostavenost/20180110_Zakon_za_ombudsmana.pdf)
7. Family codex (in Bulgarian) <https://lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2135637484>
8. The Labour Codex (in Bulgarian) <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/1594373121>
9. Civil servant law (in Bulgarian)
<https://www.gli.government.bg/sites/default/files/upload/documents/2021-01/zakon-za-drzhavniya-sluzhitel.pdf>
10. Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria (in Bulgarian)
<https://www.parliament.bg/bg/const>

III. METHODOLOGY

For the implementation of this plan, the BDI shall set up a Gender Equality Committee (GEC) formed by persons, with expertise in human rights or active involvement in gender matters, responsible to implement the organization's GEP, proposing the necessary changes for promoting equal treatment of men and women within the entity and to coordinate and design the assessment and evaluation of the equality between men and women.

The Committee shall review the relevant legislation and policies applicable in Bulgaria, regarding gender equality and non-discrimination, as well as those that are specific to the fields of research and innovation (R&I). It shall also proceed with a very first assessment of the current situation in the organization as analysed hereunder.

Moreover, the Gender Equality Committee shall:

1. Prepare action plans to promote and ensure substantial equality in the entity's research and administrative procedures and prepares the annual reports to be submitted to the Scientific Committee;
2. Recommend to the competent internal bodies measures to promote equality and combat sexism;
3. Provide information and training within the organization on issues related to gender and equality;
4. Provide contact points in cases of complaints of discriminatory treatment or harassing behaviour;
5. Promote the preparation of studies and research on issues related to its field of competence;
6. Provide assistance to victims of discrimination when they report discriminatory treatment.

This Action Plan sets as an initial goal to proceed with systematically recording the distribution of genders in the institution, in respect with research and administrative personnel.

The analysis is made according to biological sex at birth, in a binary fashion (female, male).

For each priority area, the present action plan addresses the following chapters:

- Objectives;
- Actions/measures;
- Indicators;
- Plan timeline;
- Responsible persons.

1. PRIORITY AREAS

Six thematic priority areas have been identified: those set by the EC as a prerequisite for the submission of research proposals and one additional, the systematic record of the current situation, on which rely the indicators for the future assessment.

Area 1: Analysing and assessing the state-of-play in the institution. The assessment of the state-of-play of the institution will provide insight on which measures need to be implemented.

➤ Objectives:

- Collect data broken down by sex about personnel to detect gender differences and to identify the most pressing areas requiring intervention;
- Carry out a gender analysis based on the collected data. Once gathered, the data should be analysed to establish an understanding of the key differences and the gap between women and men within the organisation and their activities. This analysis will help to find the key priorities for the GEP and to adjust these priorities as the situation evolves over time. The team(s) or individual(s) responsible for the analysis of collected data should be

clearly established; where possible, the team analysing the data should include expertise on gender equality within the organisation;

- Identify the existing measures promoting gender equality and assess if and how they are implemented;
- Measure gender distribution at different career stages;
- Measure gender distribution in the research and administrative personnel;
- Capture the gender distribution in positions of responsibility;
- Publication of data gathered on gender equality on BDI’s website, either as a standalone document or webpage, or within the GEP;
- Monitor the data on an annual basis: monitoring and reporting of the data collected will be carried out on an annual basis to enable the organisation to understand progress, identify where activities are having an impact, and where obstacles persist throughout the life of the GEP.

➤ Actions:

- Identify the categories of personnel (researchers, administrative staff, permanent employees, posted employees, on contract employees).
- Prepare statistics on total gender distribution.
- Prepare statistics on gender distribution by category of personnel.
- Prepare statistics on gender distribution in positions of responsibility.
- Prepare statistics on gender distribution in positions with decisive authority.

➤ Groups the action is addressed to:

- All personnel.
- Administration including Director and Deputy director of BDI, Directors of directorates;
- Representative of the Trade union.

➤ Indicator:

- Three-year map of gender distribution of the institution

➤ Plan Timeline:

Main actions to be undertaken/years of implementation	2023	2024	2025
Identification of the categories of collaborators (researchers, administrative staff, permanent employees, on contract employees, etc.)	√		
Statistics on total gender distribution	√	√	
Statistics on gender distribution by category of collaborators	√	√	√
Statistics on gender distribution in positions of responsibility	√		√

Statistics on gender distribution in positions with decisive authority.	√		√
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➤ Responsible persons:

- Gender Equality Committee;
- Heads of Directorates of BDI;
- Human resources management officer.

Area 2: Work-life balance and organizational culture

The BDI considers important to include in the present GEP policies and measures related to: (a) the transformation of organizational culture to ensure gender equality and (b) work-life balance such as parental leave policies, flexible working time arrangements and support for caring responsibilities.

➤ Objectives:

Sub-area 1: Organizational culture

- Use actively and encourage the use of neutral language in the communication within the institution;
- Use of neutral language on the institution's texts.

Sub-area 2: Work-life balance policies and measures:

- Support for caring responsibilities, including childcare and care for other dependents (e.g. people with disabilities, elderly relatives);
- Ensure reintegration after career breaks;
- Offer advice and support on work-life balance.

➤ Actions:

Sub-area 1:

1. Introduce gender equality support structures and creation of contact point.
2. Create of a Guide for the use of neutral, non-sexist speech.
3. Train for the use of the Non-Sexist Speech Guide.
4. Enforce the use of neutral, non-sexist language in all administrative documents and all forms of communication of the institution, including websites.
5. Rename of the institution's commissions that exclusively use the male gender, if any.
6. Collect quantitative and qualitative data based on gender by academic and administrative unit, analysis and evaluation on an annual basis.
7. Provide training on issues of gender equality and non-discrimination [seminars, printed/digital and audio-visual materials].

Sub-area 2:

1. Set measures leading to renegotiation of workload if needed.
2. Examine the possibility to collaborate with the Municipality of Athens for the reception and accommodation of children of BDI's staff, within the day care that operates at the Ministry of Defence premises.
3. Examine the possibility to collaborate with the Military Medical Academy and the neighbouring hospitals for the immediate provision of first aid to the children of BDI's personnel, when deemed necessary.

➤ Groups the action is addressed to:

- All Personnel;
- Director and Deputy Director;
- Directors of directorates.

➤ Indicators:

- Three-year map of gender distribution of the institution;
- Use of neutral, non-sexist language;
- Raising awareness and training activities.

➤ Plan Timeline:

	2023	2024	2025
Gender equality support structure and establishing of a contact point for BDI	√		
Creation of a Guide for the use of neutral, non-sexist language	√	√	
Training of personnel for the use of the Non-Sexist Speech Guide			√
Enforcement of the use of non-sexist language in all administrative documents and all forms of communication of the Institute, including websites	√		
Renaming the institution's boards and commissions that exclusively use the male gender, if any	√		
Raising awareness activities and training on issues of gender equality and non-discrimination	√	√	√
Initiation of discussions with Municipality and Hospitals to examine the possibility of collaboration for a) reception and accommodation of children of BDI's personnel, within the day care that operates at the Ministry's premises and b) immediate provision of first aid to the children of BDI's personnel		√	√

Renegotiation of workload accordingly	√	√	√
Modification Institution's regulations and policies to include GE principles	√	√	

➤ Responsible persons:

- Gender Equality Committee;
- BDI's Director;
- BDI's Deputy Director;
- Directors of directorates.

Area 3: Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

This part of the GEP sets specific voluntary targets to ensure a proportional gender representation in key leading positions and in decision making committees as these are appointed by the administration of the institution.

➤ Objectives:

- Ensure proportional number and share of women in leadership and decision-making positions to ensure gender balance;
- Examine the existence of potential barriers to ensure that women are represented in decision-making and leadership positions, including structural, institutional and individual barriers;
- Adapt processes for selection and appointment of collaborators on committees;
- Ensure gender balance in submitted candidatures for leadership and decision-making positions;
- Support from management/leadership is highly important for success of the objective.

➤ Actions:

1. Identify the different locations for formal and informal decision-making.
2. Measurement through collection of quantitative and qualitative data in positions of responsibility.
3. Examine processes and procedures for the selection and appointment on committees and other bodies - ensure decisions consider gender issues and women are empowered to take an equal role.
4. Adapt processes and procedures for the selection and appointment on committees and other bodies if needed.
5. Encourage equal gender candidatures in positions of responsibility and decision-making positions, through gender-neutral vacancy descriptions.
6. Strengthen equal participation of genders in positions in leadership and decision-making positions.

7. Create a process to monitor gender balance and ensure the participation of women in committees, positions of responsibility and decision-making bodies.
8. Present women of the institution with important scientific and administrative work.
9. If considered necessary, introduce gender quotas to ensure gender balance.

➤ Groups the action is addressed to:

- BDI's Personnel;
- Candidates.

➤ Indicators:

- Annual reporting;
- Monitoring percentages of women participating in leadership and decision-making positions;
- Monitoring percentages of women presenting candidature for leadership and decision-making positions.

➤ Plan Timeline:

	2023	2024	2025
Identify the different locations for formal and informal decision-making	√		
Measurement through collection of quantitative and qualitative data in positions of responsibility	√		
Examination of processes and procedures for the selection and appointment on committees and other bodies - ensure decisions consider gender issues and women are empowered to take an equal role.	√	√	
Adaptation of processes and procedures for the selection and appointment on committees and other bodies if needed		√	√
Encourage equal gender candidatures in positions of responsibility and decision-making positions, through gender-neutral vacancy descriptions	√	√	√
Strengthening equal participation of genders in positions in leadership and decision-making positions	√	√	√
Create a process to monitor gender balance and ensure the participation of women in committees, positions of responsibility and decision-making bodies.		√	√
Presentation of women of the institution with important scientific and administrative work.	√	√	√

➤ Responsible persons:

- Gender Equality Committee;
- BDI's Director;
- BDI's Deputy Director;
- Directors of directorates.

Area 4: Gender equality in selection and career progression

Although BDI is military organisation, the last several years BDI has shown particular interest in occupying women. The institution aims to continue this approach and build more in women's carrier progression. In this sense, it is necessary to review selection procedures and remedy any biases to ensure that women and men get equal chances to develop and advance their careers.

➤ Objectives:

- Review existing selection processes and procedures at all stages and remedying any biases;
- Identify fields underrepresented by women;
- Ensure gender balance in selection of personnel;
- Ensure gender balance in career progression;
- Ensure equality in payment rate;
- Consider establishing personnel selection codes of conduct.

➤ Actions:

1. Critically review existing selection processes and procedures at all stages and remedying biases, if any.
2. Retain personnel selection principles that increase transparency and help avoid unconscious biases.
3. Consider involving gender equality expertise in personnel selection and promotion committees.
4. Consider using standardized curriculum vitae forms (CV) and undertaking blind assessment of CVs.
5. Ensure gender-neutral vacancy descriptions and presentation.
6. Consider a policy of re-advertising if there are no women in the applicant pool.
7. Providing attractive employment packages (with emphasis on flexibility at the workplace).
8. Retain a precise payment rate methodology for fixed term contract personnel.
9. Monitor gender balance in career retention and career development.

➤ Groups the action is addressed to:

- BDI's Personnel;
- Candidates.

➤ Indicators

- Annual reporting;
- Measurement of the women representation in job application;
- Gender balance in personnel selection committees;
- Measurement of the retention and progression rates per gender.

➤ Plan Timeline:

	2023	2024	2025
Critically review existing selection processes and procedures at all stages and remedying any biases	√		
Retain personnel selection principles that increase transparency and help avoid unconscious biases.	√		
Consider involving gender equality expertise in personnel selection and promotion committees.	√	√	√
Consider using standardized curriculum vitae forms (CV) and undertaking blind assessment of CVs.	√	√	√
Ensure gender-neutral descriptions and presentation	√	√	√
Consider a policy of re-advertising if there are no women in the applicant pool.	√	√	√
Providing attractive employment packages (with emphasis on flexibility at the workplace)	√	√	√
Monitor gender balance in career retention, career development and salaries	√	√	√

➤ Responsible persons:

- Gender Equality Committee;
- BDI's Director;
- BDI's Deputy Director;
- Directors of directorates.

Area 5: Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content

This part of the GEP aims to set out the Institution's commitment to incorporate sex and gender in its research priorities, ensuring that the gender dimension is considered in research and, where applicable, in teaching activities of the Institution. As explained by the European Institute for Gender Equality, considering that knowledge is the basis on which future generations will build

their societies, it is crucial that the knowledge that is created through research and transferred through education is free of gender bias.

➤ Objectives:

- Integrate gender dimension in research and gender content;
- Eliminate gender bias in knowledge that is created through research and transferred through education;
- Ensure that teaching activities consider, encourage and promote gender equality;
- Balanced gender representation in research articles published;
- Balanced gender participation in research and teaching activities.

➤ Actions:

1. Record of projects related to gender equality already incorporated in the institution’s curricula.
2. Organise raising awareness activities with other institutions explaining the importance of gender equality in teaching and research.
3. Integration of the sex/gender dimension into the monitoring of research output and programme outcomes.
4. Participate in calls that are designed to stimulate research around the gender dimension across different disciplines.

➤ Groups the action is addressed to:

- Directors of Directorates;
- Researchers;
- Administrative staff.

➤ Indicator:

- Annual reporting.

➤ Plan Timeline:

	2023	2024	2025
Record of projects related to gender equality already incorporated in the institution’s curricula.	√		
Organise raising awareness activities with other institutions explaining the importance of gender equality in teaching and research.		√	√
Integration of the sex/gender dimension into the monitoring of research output and programme outcomes.		√	√

Participate in calls that are designed to stimulate research around the gender dimension across different disciplines.	√	√	√
Ensure balanced gender representation	√	√	√

➤ Responsible persons:

- Gender Equality Committee;
- BDI's Director;
- BDI's Deputy Director;
- Directors of directorates;
- Responsible of training programmes/actions.

Area 6: Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

The BDI has zero tolerance towards sexual harassment and gender-based violence. Moreover, BDI considers it necessary to establish clear institutional policies on sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence. For this reason, BDI at this point addresses this issue providing information regarding sexual and gender-based harassment and offering attention and support to victims and witnesses of misconduct, with a commitment to put an end to such behaviour; it also makes it clear that it does not tolerate abuses, including behaviour that violates any individual's dignity or that creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. In the same context, it acknowledges the importance of communication activities that identify the problem, adopts measures of intervention when necessary to ensure the creation of an inclusive and safe culture for the personnel.

➤ Objectives:

- Establish clear institutional policies on sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence;
- Establish a culture of zero tolerance toward sexual harassment and violence, including behaviour that violates any individual's dignity or that creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment;
- Take measures to outline how personnel can report instances of gender-based violence;
- Introduce specific contact point for reporting the event;
- Ensure that potential victims or witnesses of harassment are not deterred from reporting incidents;
- Provide information and support to victims or witnesses;
- Communicate to the personnel the established policies.

➤ Actions:

1. Designate the representatives of the Institute as contact point and reference persons; those representatives should provide for consulting and support services.

2. Introduce a reporting policy and complaint management procedures that outlines how personnel can report incidents of sexual harassment, including when they are the victim of harassment or witness harassment, ensuring that there are no barriers to reporting and that all reports are taken seriously.
3. Communicate the reporting policy to the personnel of the institution.
4. Organise awareness-raising activities to communicate these issues and expectations to the personnel.
5. Conduct regular and systematic evaluation of the implementation and efficiency of the measures taken (monitoring).
6. Take action to protect the victim from being secondarily victimized.

➤ Groups the action is addressed to:

- All BDI's Personnel;
- Representatives of the Institute acting as the contact point.

➤ Indicators:

- Designation of representatives of the Institute as contact points to report incidents of sexual harassment;
- Introduction of reporting policy and communication thereof;
- Number of awareness raising activities;
- Annual reporting.

➤ Plan Timeline:

	2023	2024	2025
Designation of representatives of the Institution as contact point and reference persons	√		
Reporting policy and complaint management procedures/protocol		√	
Communicate the reporting policy to the personnel of the institution		√	
Awareness-raising activities to communicate these issues and expectations to the personnel.		√	√
Conduct regular and systematic evaluation of the implementation and efficiency of the measures taken		√	√

➤ Responsible persons:

- Gender Equality Committee;
- BDI's Director;
- BDI's Deputy Director;

- Directors of directorates;
- Legal Advisor.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GEP

The BDI acknowledges that the GEP is not static or immutable. Several circumstances may lead to the need to adapt this GEP, such as changes in the operation of the organization, the introduction of new legislation or policies that apply to research organizations, change of the priorities of the organization. BDI's GEP Committee shall follow such events closely and decide on the need to update this Action Plan. BDI also understands the importance of awareness-raising and capacity-building efforts, as a means for maximising chances for success of the GEP; therefore, it commits itself to organize such activities.

3. MONITORING & EVALUATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GEP

Monitoring is a continuous process, in which data is systematically collected in order to provide the Committee with regular updates on the progress and achievement of objectives. It aims to "ensure that the right thing is done". Evaluation is the assessment of an ongoing or completed action or policy based on the monitoring data, providing lessons learnt for the planning of future measures. It aims to ensure that "the right outcomes are achieved".

The indicators that have been introduced in this action plan for each measure in specific timeframe, the collection of the relevant data shall ensure that the monitoring is effective. In any case, monitoring shall take place annually to meet the Horizon Europe requirements. Same indicators will lead the assessment, evaluation of the actions or policies in the longer term.

In the monitoring sessions the organization may decide to involve, apart from the core team, i.e., the Committee, personnel of the organization. The Committee will issue and submit to the Scientific Council of BDI annual monitoring reports and a final evaluation report when the time frame elapses.

SIGNED BY:

Director:(S).....

(Col. Assoc. Prof. D.Sc. Borislav Genov)

BDI's GEP was approved by Scientific Council on May 18, 2023.