



Gender Equality Plan

2026–2029

A framework for structural change, inclusive research and organisational accountability

Document control	Details
Organisation	International Ecovillage Research Institute (IERI)
Legal jurisdiction	Ireland
Plan period	From date of adoption to 31 December 2029
Approval body	IERI Board of Directors
Plan owner	Board-designated Gender Equality Plan Lead
Review cycle	Annual, with full review before 31 December 2029
Status	For Board approval, signature and publication

Management commitment

The International Ecovillage Research Institute (IERI) is committed to creating a research culture in which people of all genders can participate, contribute, lead and flourish with dignity, safety and equal opportunity. Gender equality is integral to research quality, organisational integrity and IERI's mission to connect academic research, Indigenous knowledge and community-led practice.

The Board adopts this Gender Equality Plan (GEP) as an institutional plan for structural and cultural change. IERI will publish the signed plan on its website, communicate it to everyone working on its behalf, allocate proportionate resources to its implementation, monitor progress annually and revise its actions in response to evidence and learning.

The Board recognises that gender can intersect with race and ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion or belief, socioeconomic background, nationality, migration status, caring responsibilities and other circumstances. Where data and organisational capacity allow, implementation will take these intersecting inequalities into account while protecting privacy.

Approval and signature

For IERI	Approval
Name	Julie Ellison
Role	Chair / authorised member of the Board of Directors
Signature	
Date of adoption	20/07/2026
Next annual progress report due	June 2027

Following signature, this document must be published on IERI's public website and actively communicated internally before it is relied upon for Horizon Europe eligibility.

1. Purpose, scope and principles

This plan sets out IERI's commitments, responsibilities, actions, indicators and review arrangements for advancing gender equality between 2026 and 2029. It is designed to meet the Gender Equality Plan eligibility criterion applying to research organisations under Horizon Europe and to support effective, lasting practice beyond minimum compliance.

Scope

The plan applies to IERI's directors, employees, workers, consultants, volunteers, fellows, interns, visiting researchers, advisory bodies, selection panels and others acting on IERI's behalf. Relevant expectations will also be communicated to project partners, contractors and event participants. It covers governance,

employment and contracting, research and knowledge production, events, fieldwork, travel, communications and online spaces.

Guiding principles

- Equality, dignity and non-discrimination for women, men, trans and non-binary people.
- Intersectionality: barriers are shaped by overlapping identities and circumstances.
- Meaningful participation: those affected should have appropriate opportunities to shape actions and review progress.
- Transparency and accountability, balanced with confidentiality and data protection.
- Proportionality: actions will be credible and measurable for a small, developing research organisation.
- No retaliation against anyone who raises a concern, supports a complainant or participates in an investigation in good faith.

2. Governance and dedicated resources

The Board retains overall accountability for this plan. It will appoint a GEP Lead with sufficient authority, access to decision-makers and protected time to coordinate implementation. The role may be held by a director, staff member or suitably qualified external adviser, provided conflicts of interest are managed.

Role	Responsibility
Board of Directors	Approve and publish the plan; review the annual report; ensure resources; challenge inadequate progress; approve revisions.
GEP Lead	Coordinate actions; advise teams; arrange training; oversee data and annual reporting; maintain confidential signposting and escalation routes.
Project and research leads	Apply equality and gender-dimension checks in project design, recruitment, partnerships, fieldwork, events, dissemination and evaluation.
All personnel and representatives	Complete required training; uphold expected behaviour; identify barriers; report concerns; contribute to an inclusive culture.
Independent/external support	Provide specialist training, advice, mediation or investigation where expertise, independence or safeguarding requires it.

IERI will provide resources proportionate to its size and activities. As a minimum, these will include protected time for the GEP Lead and Board oversight, an annual implementation and training allocation agreed through budgeting, access to specialist advice when necessary, and appropriate systems for confidential data collection and reporting. Each funded project will consider equality-related time and costs at proposal and budget stage.

3. Baseline data, monitoring and annual reporting

Within six months of adoption, IERI will establish a baseline using sex-disaggregated personnel data and, where voluntarily provided and lawful, gender-identity and intersectional data. Data categories will be

clearly defined and will not assume that sex and gender identity are interchangeable. IERI will collect only data that are necessary, use them for stated equality purposes, restrict access and apply applicable data-protection requirements.

Core indicators

- Composition by sex, and where appropriate gender, across directors, staff, researchers, contractors/consultants and advisory or decision-making bodies.
- Applicants, shortlisted candidates, appointments and departures by sex, where numbers and privacy protections permit.
- Leadership, chairing, speaking, authorship, project-lead and panel roles by sex/gender, as appropriate.
- Contract type, working pattern, remuneration or fee level and access to development opportunities, where relevant.
- Completion of gender-equality and unconscious-bias training.
- Use of flexible-working and family-friendly arrangements, reported only in aggregated form.
- Number and type of reported gender-based violence, discrimination or harassment concerns; response times and outcomes, reported in a way that prevents identification.
- Application of a documented sex/gender-dimension assessment in research projects.

The GEP Lead will prepare a concise annual progress report for the Board and public release. It will present the indicators that can safely be reported, progress against actions and targets, lessons, identified gaps, corrective measures and priorities for the following year. Where a category contains fewer than five people, IERI will normally suppress or combine figures to reduce identification risk. Qualitative monitoring will supplement numbers where the organisation's small size makes percentages misleading.

4. Training and awareness

Gender equality awareness will form part of induction for directors, staff, researchers and regular contractors. Refresher learning will be provided at least once during this plan period and when material changes in responsibilities or risk make it necessary.

- All personnel: gender equality, inclusive behaviour, intersectionality, bystander awareness, reporting routes and protection from retaliation.
- Directors, managers, recruiters and selection-panel members: unconscious gender bias and fair, evidence-based decision-making before participating in recruitment or selection.
- Research and project teams: assessing and integrating sex and gender dimensions in research content, methods, analysis, participation and dissemination.
- Designated contacts: trauma-informed response, confidentiality, boundaries, referral and appropriate escalation for harassment or gender-based violence concerns.

Training attendance and feedback will be recorded. The GEP Lead will review effectiveness through short evaluation questions and evidence of changed practice, not attendance alone.

5. Priority action areas

5.1 Work–life balance and organisational culture

IERI will promote a culture that values care, wellbeing and sustainable participation. Flexible and remote working will be considered fairly, subject to role and project needs. Meetings and events will, where practicable, be scheduled with notice, rotate across time zones, avoid routinely extending beyond agreed hours and offer accessible hybrid participation. Caring responsibilities, pregnancy, maternity, paternity, parental leave, adoption, fertility treatment, menopause and health needs will be treated respectfully and without career penalty.

5.2 Gender balance in leadership and decision-making

IERI will monitor the gender composition of its Board, advisory groups, recruitment and selection panels, project leadership and public-facing roles. It will seek balanced and diverse shortlists and panels without applying unlawful positive discrimination. Where imbalance persists, IERI will examine structural causes, broaden outreach and succession pipelines, and document the steps taken.

5.3 Recruitment, remuneration and career progression

Recruitment and appointment processes will use clear criteria, structured assessment and, wherever practicable, more than one assessor. Role descriptions and publicity will use inclusive language and be circulated through channels likely to reach diverse candidates. Questions about family plans, pregnancy, marital status or caring responsibilities will not form part of selection. Pay, fees, workload, authorship, development and progression opportunities will be reviewed for unjustified gender differences. Career breaks and non-linear pathways will be assessed fairly.

5.4 Gender dimension in research and knowledge activities

Every IERI research proposal will consider whether sex, gender or their intersections are relevant to the research question, concepts, sampling, methods, ethics, data analysis, impacts and communication. A conclusion that gender is not relevant must be reasoned rather than assumed. Research design will avoid treating women, men or gender-diverse people as homogeneous groups and will attend to context, power, participation and potential differential benefits or harms.

Where IERI works with Indigenous peoples and community knowledge holders, gender analysis will be contextual, relational and co-developed where appropriate. IERI will avoid imposing binary or Eurocentric categories where they misrepresent participants' identities or knowledge systems, while still meeting funder and legal reporting requirements.

5.5 Gender-based violence, sexual harassment and other misconduct

IERI has zero tolerance for gender-based violence, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation or abuse, stalking, bullying, discriminatory harassment and retaliation. This applies in person and online, including at events, during fieldwork, travel, accommodation, social activities connected to work and communications channels.

- Publish or communicate clear standards of conduct and confidential routes for advice and reporting.
- Provide at least two reporting options where practicable, including a route that does not require reporting to a person implicated in the concern.
- Respond promptly, respectfully and without victim-blaming; consider immediate safety, wellbeing, confidentiality and safeguarding needs.
- Use fair procedures, document decisions, manage conflicts of interest and obtain independent support or investigation where needed.
- Protect complainants, witnesses and supporters from retaliation and offer appropriate adjustments or signposting.
- Report to statutory or safeguarding authorities where legally required or necessary to address immediate serious risk; IERI will not promise absolute confidentiality where this would conflict with those duties.

The Board will approve a supporting complaints and anti-harassment procedure within six months of adopting this plan. That procedure will identify confidential contacts, reporting channels, response stages, possible interim measures, decision-making authority, appeal/review routes, record retention and external support. Nothing in this plan prevents a person from contacting the Gardaí, emergency services, a regulator, legal adviser, trade union or specialist support service.

6. Action plan 2026–2029

Action	Measure	Owner	Timing	Indicator / evidence
1. Public adoption	Board approves and signs GEP; publish on website; circulate to all personnel and partners.	Board Chair / GEP Lead	At adoption	Signed public plan; communication record
2. Responsibility and resources	Appoint GEP Lead; agree protected time, annual budget and access to expertise.	Board	Within 1 month	Named lead; time and budget recorded
3. Baseline	Create lawful sex-disaggregated baseline and confidential data process.	GEP Lead	Within 6 months	Baseline completed; privacy controls documented
4. Training	Deliver organisation-wide equality awareness; unconscious-bias training for decision-makers; research gender-dimension training for project leads.	GEP Lead	Within 9 months; then induction/refresher	Completion rate; feedback; practice checks
5. Safe reporting	Adopt anti-harassment/GBV procedure and communicate at least two reporting options where practicable.	Board / GEP Lead	Within 6 months	Procedure approved; routes communicated
6. Fair recruitment	Introduce inclusive templates, structured scoring, panel bias prompt and recruitment monitoring.	Recruiting lead	Within 6 months; ongoing	Process audit; applicant-to-appointment data where safe

Action	Measure	Owner	Timing	Indicator / evidence
7. Leadership balance	Review composition and participation in governance, panels, speakers and project leadership; take corrective outreach action.	Board / Project leads	Annual	Composition and participation review; actions logged
8. Research integration	Add a sex/gender-dimension checklist and reasoned relevance statement to proposal and project review.	Research leads	Within 6 months; every project	% of projects completing assessment; examples of changes
9. Culture and care	Review meeting schedules, flexible practices, workload allocation and accessibility across time zones and caring roles.	GEP Lead / Managers	Annual	Staff feedback; changes implemented
10. Reporting and revision	Submit annual progress report to Board; publish safe summary; revise actions and targets.	GEP Lead / Board	Every 12 months	Annual report published; Board decisions recorded

7. Targets and proportionality

IERI's initial quantitative targets are designed for a small organisation and will be refined after the baseline. By the first annual review, IERI aims to achieve: 100% completion of relevant induction or refresher training by directors and active personnel; 100% of recruitment and formal selection exercises using structured criteria and a bias check; 100% of new research proposals documenting whether and how the sex/gender dimension is relevant; and completion and publication of an annual progress report.

IERI will seek meaningful gender balance in leadership, panels and public roles. It will not use small-number percentages in isolation or appoint a person primarily to meet a numerical target. Where representation is imbalanced, the annual report will describe the causes considered and proportionate action taken.

8. Complaints, accountability and review

Concerns about implementation may be raised with the GEP Lead or a Board-designated alternative contact. Concerns involving the GEP Lead must be directed to the alternative contact or Chair; concerns involving the Chair must be directed to another non-conflicted director or an independent person appointed by the Board. Contact details will be maintained in the published or internally communicated supporting procedure.

Failure to follow this plan may result in corrective action under the applicable contract, code, policy or governance arrangements. The Board will review this plan annually alongside the progress report and may amend it sooner following organisational change, legal or funder developments, a serious incident, monitoring findings or stakeholder feedback. A full replacement plan will be approved before this plan expires.

9. Communication and accessibility

The signed GEP will be publicly available on IERI's website in an accessible format. New personnel will receive it during induction. Key expectations and reporting routes will be communicated for projects, events and fieldwork. IERI will provide an alternative accessible format or reasonable communication adjustment on request.

10. Definitions

Term	Working definition for this plan
Gender	Socially constructed roles, behaviours, expressions and identities, and the relations and power structures associated with them.
Sex	Biological attributes and characteristics. Relevant categories and terminology depend on legal, ethical and research context.
Gender equality	Equal rights, responsibilities, opportunities, recognition, safety and participation for people of all genders; this may require measures that address different barriers and starting points.
Gender dimension in research	Consideration of how sex and/or gender may influence research questions, design, methods, data, analysis, findings, impacts and communication.
Gender-based violence	Harmful acts directed at a person because of gender, or acts that disproportionately affect people of a particular gender; it includes sexual harassment and may occur online or offline.
Intersectionality	An approach recognising that gender interacts with other identities and structures of inequality to produce distinct experiences and barriers.

11. Reference framework

This plan has been developed with reference to the European Commission's Horizon Europe Gender Equality Plan eligibility criterion and the European Institute for Gender Equality's Gender Equality in Academia and Research (GEAR) guidance. It should be read alongside applicable Irish and EU equality, employment, health and safety, safeguarding and data-protection requirements, and IERI's other governance and conduct procedures.

- European Commission, Gender equality in research and innovation:
https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-research-and-innovation/democracy-and-rights/gender-equality-research-and-innovation_en
- European Institute for Gender Equality, Horizon Europe GEP criterion:
<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gear/horizon-europe-gep-criterion>
- European Institute for Gender Equality, GEAR tool:
<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gear>