

National Skills Council

GENDER EQUALITY PLAN 2024-2027



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GENDER EQUALITY PLAN WORKING GROUP

Persons responsible for implementing and updating:

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DEFINITIONS

Gender refers to ‘social attributes and opportunities associated with being female and male and to the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as to the relations between women and those between men’¹.

Sex refers to the ‘biological attribute that distinguishes male, female and intersex’².

Gender Identity refers to ‘each person’s deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function, by medical, surgical, or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech, and mannerisms’³.

While the data collection for the National Skills Council only considers sex-disaggregated data for men and women, it will be important to also consider non-binary gender for data collection in future publications, where possible. Non-binary is an umbrella term for gender identities that fall outside the gender binary of men or women. This includes individuals whose gender identity is neither exclusively man nor woman, a combination of man and woman or between or beyond genders.

1 https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1046?language_content_entity=en

2 https://rea.ec.europa.eu/gender-eu-research-and-innovation_en

3 [https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1049?language_content_entity=en#:~:text=Each%20person's%20deeply%20felt%20internal,means\)%20and%20other%20expressions%20of](https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1049?language_content_entity=en#:~:text=Each%20person's%20deeply%20felt%20internal,means)%20and%20other%20expressions%20of)

INTRODUCTION

The National Skills Council (NSC) is a public entity, re-established with executive powers in March 2023, under the aegis of the Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (MEYR). Its mandate is to bridge education with the world of work, by empowering the workforce through continuous learning and skills development, driving innovation and economic growth. The NSC is a policymaker; it collaborates with educational institutions, industry stakeholders, and other policymakers to implement training programs in line with current and future skill-needs and promote lifelong learning. Its principles include:

- Evidence-based decision-making through analytical approaches.
- Strengthening industry-education links with ethical principles.
- Embracing inclusivity and diversity.
- Shared responsibility for skills development among government, employers, and workers.

Gender equality is fundamental to NSC's mission, enhancing creativity and performance. This Gender Equality Plan (GEP) for 2024-2027 outlines actions to ensure equal opportunities for all employees, integrating gender considerations in policies and outputs, and promoting work-life balance. NSC commits to regular training, data collection, and monitoring to create a sustainable framework for gender equality, aiming to be a leading example in the education and skills sector.

In developing this plan, an internal analysis reviewed NSC's policies and practices, benchmarked against best practices, and discussed outcomes with all staff.

LEGISLATION

The plan is developed in alignment with national and European guidelines on gender equality. NSC is keeping abreast with Legislation promoting equality as follows:

- (i) Chapter 4 Article 45 of the Constitution of Malta, 'Protection from discrimination on the grounds of race, etc.' (last update Act No X of 2014) passed by the House of Representatives at Sitting No 141 of the 14th of April 2014⁴;
- (ii) Article 2 (3) of CAP 456 of the Laws of Malta 'Equality for Men and Women Act'⁵;
- (iii) The Public Administration Act (CAP 595 of the Laws of Malta)⁶;
- (iv) Equality Policy for the Public Service of Malta issued by the Office of the Principal Permanent Secretary, within the Office of the Prime Minister Gender Equality Plan for 2022 – 2025⁷;
- (v) CAP 413 of the Laws of Malta – Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disability) Act⁸.

4 <https://legislation.mt/eli/const/eng>

5 <https://legislation.mt/eli/cap/456/eng>

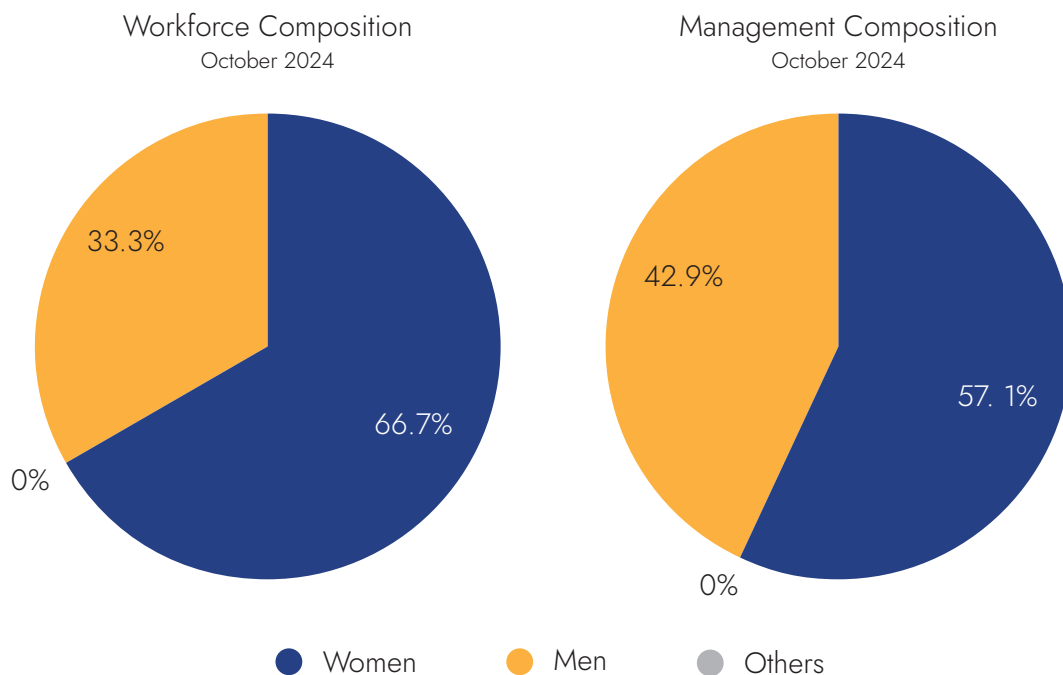
6 <https://legislation.mt/eli/cap/595/eng>

7 <https://edukazzjoni.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Gender-Equality-Plan.pdf>

8 <https://legislation.mt/eli/cap/413/eng/pdf>

GENDER EQUALITY – 2024 BASELINE

- **Workforce Composition:** The chart below shows the distribution of employees, with 5 men (33.3%), 10 women (66.7%), and 0 others (0%).
- **Management Composition:** The chart below shows the distribution of management members, with 3 men (42.9%), 4 women (57.1%), and 0 others (0%).
- **Policies:** NSC has policies on non-discrimination, harassment, and equal opportunity as outlined in the Terms of Employment Handbook.



KEY OBJECTIVES

1. Ensure Equal Opportunities in Recruitment and Career Progression.
2. Promote Work-Life Balance and Family-Friendly Policies.
3. Prevent and Address Harassment and Discrimination.
4. Support Career Development and Training for All Employees.
5. Foster inclusivity through all Products and Outputs.

KEY OBJECTIVE 1

ENSURE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN RECRUITMENT AND CAREER PROGRESSION

Current State: Recruitment policies promote non-discrimination but lack specific measures for gender balance. All recruitment methods, documentation, and publicity are non-discriminatory.

Actions	Responsible Unit	Timeline	Indicators
Review and update recruitment policies to ensure gender-neutral language. Selection criteria and job requirements should not directly or indirectly discriminate, as defined by law.	Strategy, People & Culture Unit	Ongoing with annual reviews	Number of job advertisements reviewed and updated for gender-neutral language.
Set up internal checks for ensuring gender-balanced recruitment panels. The selection panel should be given a copy of the company's equality policy and, when possible, should also be gender-balanced.	Strategy, People & Culture Unit	Ongoing with annual reviews	Number of recruitment panels that are gender balanced.
Track the number of applicants, shortlists, and hires by gender.	Strategy, People & Culture Unit	Ongoing with annual reviews	Gender composition of applicants, shortlists, and hires.

KEY OBJECTIVE 2

PROMOTE WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY POLICIES

Current state: Flexible work policies exist. To date NSC employees can benefit from teleworking and remote working, and flexi-time.

Actions	Responsible Unit	Timeline	Indicators
Promote awareness and usage of flexible working arrangements. Equal terms and conditions will be offered to people in the same grade and in the same type of employment.	Strategy, People & Culture Unit	Ongoing with annual reviews	Number of sessions and percentage of employees' use of flexible working arrangements.
Introduce parental leave policies that encourage equal sharing of caregiving responsibilities. Regularly review and update parental leave policies to ensure equal access for all genders.	Strategy, People & Culture Unit	Ongoing with annual reviews	Number of parental leave policies reviewed and updated; gender distribution of employees taking parental leave.
Provide support for employees returning from extended leave by having a dedicated meeting upon return to work, to identify needs and support necessary.	Strategy, People & Culture Unit	Ongoing with annual reviews	Number of employees participating in the return-to-work support program.

KEY OBJECTIVE 3

PREVENT AND ADDRESS HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

Current State: Policies in place but need stronger enforcement and awareness. NSC acknowledges that discrimination based on gender is unlawful as per relevant laws and commits to upholding these standards in all operations. Breaches of this policy will result in disciplinary action, which may include termination of employment or other legal consequences.

Actions	Responsible Unit	Timeline	Indicators
Conduct mandatory annual training on harassment prevention and reporting mechanisms.	Strategy, People & Culture Unit	Ongoing with annual reviews	Percentage of employees trained annually in harassment prevention.
Establish clear, confidential reporting channels for harassment and discrimination.	Strategy, People & Culture Unit	Ongoing with annual reviews	Number of reports filed through confidential channels and percentage resolved.
Regularly review and update harassment policies to ensure effectiveness.	Strategy, People & Culture Unit	Ongoing with annual reviews	Frequency of policy reviews and updates, and number of recommendations implemented.

KEY OBJECTIVE 4

SUPPORT CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND PROVIDE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL EMPLOYEES

Current State: Although various training opportunities on gender equality exist, none have yet been undertaken by NSC staff members. On career development, the NSC follows a Performance Appraisal system, through which training needs are identified and offered throughout the year. One of the examples is the training “Interpersonal Relations – Emotional Intelligence”, organized by the Happy Life Foundation.

Actions	Responsible Unit	Timeline	Indicators
Organize yearly training sessions on gender equality, unconscious bias, and leadership.	Strategy, People & Culture Unit	In the 3d or 4th quarter of each year	Number of employees attending external gender equality workshops.
Encourage participation in external gender equality workshops and conferences.	Strategy, People & Culture Unit	Ongoing with annual reviews	Number of participants in the mentorship program and gender breakdown.
Provide coaching programs for the NSC employees on gender related issues.	Strategy, People & Culture Unit	Ongoing with annual reviews	Number of NSC staff trained on gender related issues.

KEY OBJECTIVE 5

PROMOTE INCLUSIVITY THROUGH ALL PRODUCTS AND OUTPUTS

Current State: The NSC recognizes the importance of embedding inclusivity in all its products and outputs to reflect its commitment to gender equality. However, there is a need for a structured approach to ensure that gender perspectives are systematically integrated into all aspects of the NSC's work.

Actions	Responsible Unit	Timeline	Indicators
Review and modify existing templates for reports, presentations, and other outputs to include guidelines for ensuring gender inclusivity during the preparation stage.	Strategy, People & Culture Unit	Ongoing with annual reviews	Number of templates and reports reviewed and modified to include gender inclusivity guidelines.
Integrate gender-inclusive practices in all media campaigns, ensuring representation of diverse genders and avoiding stereotypes. Evaluate and adjust ongoing campaigns to align with these practices.	Strategy, People & Culture Unit	Ongoing with annual reviews	Number of media campaigns audited and percentage that reflect diverse gender representation.
Embed gender analysis into the development of all strategies, policies, and research outputs to ensure they reflect the needs and perspectives of all genders. Conduct regular reviews to assess and improve gender inclusivity.	All units	Ongoing with annual reviews	Number of policies and research outputs undergoing gender analysis.
Increase awareness and actively avoid perpetuating gender stereotypes in all NSC outputs and communications. Provide resources to staff to help identify and eliminate stereotype in their work.	Strategy, People & Culture Unit	Ongoing with annual reviews	Number of staff trained to avoid gender stereotypes in communications.

TRAINING, MONITORING, EVALUATION AND COMMUNICATION

Annual Data Collection: Conduct annual reviews and data collection exercises to collect gender-disaggregated data on recruitment, promotion, and training opportunities.

Biannual Training: All employees will attend training sessions yearly conducted by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality and other external stakeholders to exchange knowledge and best practices in gender equality.

Regular Assessments: Conduct periodic assessments of the work environment and employee satisfaction, and review GEP to reflect changes in legislation and organizational needs.

Awareness Campaigns: Promote awareness of gender equality through the NSC's internal and external communication channels, avoiding stereotypical language in its outputs, e.g. the National Skills Strategy.

CONCLUSION

The NSC is dedicated to fostering a diverse and inclusive work environment that promotes gender equality. By adhering to this Gender Equality Plan, it strives to create a workplace where all employees feel valued, respected, and empowered to achieve their full potential. The NSC shall regularly monitor, evaluate, and improve its practices to maintain a leadership status on gender equality within the education and skills sector.

This policy will be reviewed and updated every two years or as needed to ensure it remains in line with current legislation and organizational needs.

Consultations with staff, stakeholders, and NCPE will be conducted annually to gather feedback and ensure the policy meets the needs of all involved.

The policy will be made available on the NSC website, included in the employee handbook, and discussed during onboarding sessions for new employees.



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