



Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

Table of contents

- INTRODUCTION: GENDER EQUALITY PRODIGEST2
 - 1.1 Striving for gender equality2
 - 1.2 Gender, diversity, equity and inclusion2
- 2. CURRENT SITUATION3
 - 2.1 Women in managerial and support positions4
 - 2.2 Working climate4
 - 2.2.1 Internal evaluations4
 - 2.3 Reward4
- 3. Existing and planned actions to promote gender equality4
 - 3.1 Area 1: Organizational culture and work-life balance5
 - 3.1.1 Existing actions5
 - 3.1.2 Future interventions and actions5
 - 3.2 AREA 2: Social security7
 - 3.2.1 Existing actions7
 - 3.2.2 Future interventions and actions7
 - 3.3 AREA 3: Leadership and management9
 - 3.3.1 Existing actions9
 - 3.3.2 Future interventions and actions9
 - 3.4 AREA 4: Recruitment, Selection and career development 10
 - 3.4.1 Existing actions 10
 - 3.4.2 Future interventions and actions 10
 - 3.5 AREA 5: Gender dimension 11
 - 3.5.1 Existing actions 11
 - 3.5.2 Future interventions and actions 11
- 4. ORGANISATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE 12
 - 4.1 Relevant stakeholders 12
 - 4.2 Financial resources 12

Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

1. INTRODUCTION: GENDER EQUALITY PRODIGEST

ProDigest has a proud history of gender equality and diversity.

ProDigest acknowledges that significant efforts have been made at various levels, but also recognizes that more is needed and possible. Therefore, the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) contains an overview of existing and planned interventions.

It was created in collaboration with management and is partly based on the input of various stakeholders throughout the company. The GEP, endorsed by the Board, consists of a living document, which receives feedback from all layers and components of ProDigest (including relevant stakeholders as identified in Chapter 4) through a consultation process and periodic progress reports in 2022-2025.

1.1 Striving for gender equality

In line with its strategy, ProDigest wants to contribute to a free and healthy world with equal opportunities for everyone in order to play a significant role at both regional and international level. ProDigest is committed to promoting diversity, equity and inclusion and to finding ways to address the unjust treatment experienced by marginalized groups, including those discriminated against on the basis of their sex or gender. A commendable amount of effort has been made to improve the representation of women within ProDigest, for example the number of women in senior and managerial positions. At the moment, the percentage of female Manager 40%

ProDigest has set the target for female managers at 50% and wants to keep or increase the number of female employees at least the same by means of a series of different interventions.

Our statement: selections in recruitment or promotions will not be based on gender but on knowledge, experience and competencies.

If there are two final candidates of the same level, it can be decided to give preference for a particular sex in order to achieve the objective of gender equality.

The objective in itself cannot constitute a selection criterion.

1.2 Gender, diversity, equity and inclusion

ProDigest's gender equality plan indicates the current state of affairs and which interventions have been used to increase and support gender equality.

ProDigest uses the following definitions of the concepts of gender, diversity,

Equity and inclusion:

GENDER usually refers to the socially determined characteristics, opportunities and relationships

Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

which are associated with being male or female. This system functions in a social context to classify people, sometimes in discriminatory ways, and often on the basis of the gender assigned to them. In many contexts, this is a binary classification, either 'male' or 'female'. In other contexts, this includes a broader spectrum.

DIVERSITY is the range of characteristics that together determine our identity and includes aspects such as nationality, religion, language, sex.

EQUITY refers to equitable outcomes for all based on the differential allocation of resources, rights/privileges, and accommodations to meet the complex and diverse needs of individuals or groups.

The concept differs from equality in that it recognizes unequal starting positions and values differences; Equality is only about equal opportunities.

INCLUSION means that everyone is involved and empowered as a valued autonomous participant with a voice in the decision-making process.

Gender is often related to other social categories, such as ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation and social class. An intersectional approach recognizes these connections and the diversity within the concept of gender, for example non-binary, cisgender and transgender. Such an intersectional approach determines the way in which gender equality is implemented, influenced and promoted. That's why ProDigest strives for a gender approach that recognizes intersectionality.

The ultimate goal of ProDigest is to jointly promote a safe, inclusive and equitable work environment where diversity and the values of equity and inclusion is embraced and embodied by all, and positive change is supported, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. ProDigest's mission is to lead, facilitate, mentor, stimulate and support all levels of the organization in achieving and securing diversity, equity and inclusion in ProDigest's organizational culture through collaboration and insightful programs.

ProDigest will provide a better and safer work environment, follow a fair and cohesive procedure for attracting and retaining of talent, and improve the quality of career opportunities and training by including diversity in the employment regulations, in order to bring about structural change.

ProDigest has identified existing and future interventions in five areas:

Area 1: Organizational culture and work-life balance

Area 2: Social safety

Area 3: Leadership and Management

Area 4: Recruitment, selection and career development

Area 5: Gender dimension

Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

2. CURRENT SITUATION

This chapter provides an overview of figures relating to gender equality within ProDigest, including figures on the gender composition of the workforce, the working climate and remuneration.

Since 2020, ProDigest has commissioned internal research into possible gender differences in pay.

[2.1 Women in managerial and support positions](#)

In 2022, ProDigest had 46 employees (FTEs), 52% of whom were women. The management staff included the support staff, 57%.

ProDigest has set a target for female executives for 2023 – 2024 and 2025 on 50 % (stated).

[2.2 Working climate](#)

The working climate is an important part of both internal and external evaluations on ProDigest.

[2.2.1 Internal evaluations](#)

ProDigest's staff survey includes questions about work-life balance, working conditions, feelings of loneliness, well-being, social support and social safety in the working environment. The 2022 survey found that ProDigest's staff were generally very satisfied with their work environment, with an average score of 92%. It also turned out that 8% of the staff experienced a high workload. ProDigest then implemented an action plan to reduce the workload.

[2.3 Reward](#)

ProDigest has launched an internal investigation into the possible differences in pay between male and female employees. The results showed that female employees earned equal to their male colleagues. Management also stressed that in all decisions regarding remuneration (entry and promotion), the guidelines on the criteria for remuneration must be closely followed and consultation must take place with HR Director. Decisions on pay and promotion must be transparent and fair.

The existing and planned actions to contribute to increasing gender equality on different areas are described for each intervention area in the next chapter.

3 Existing and planned actions to promote gender equality

The GEP focuses on five areas where intervention is needed, as well as priority areas should get. In this way, ProDigest wants to promote gender equality in the organizational structure and culture, the composition of the workforce and in the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge. Each area shall include a summary of already existing actions and indicate the future interventions planned for 2023-2025. The planned interventions shall include clear indicators for coherent monitoring, changes and updates, if necessary, in consultation with a wider group of stakeholders. A report on the progress of

Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

the implementation of the GEP is published annually and discussed at the Management and Staff meetings.

Area 1: Organizational culture and work-life balance

Area 2: Social safety

Area 3: Leadership and Management

Area 4: Recruitment, selection and career development

Area 5: Gender dimension in research and education

[Area 1: Organizational culture and work-life balance](#)

[3.1.1 Existing actions](#)

ProDigest has regulations in the field of work-life balance with provisions for: flexible working....

For employees from abroad, Remote offers an Information Desk, which functions as a meeting place and as a first point of contact. Here the employees can go for questions about working at ProDigest and about living in Belgium. In addition, ProDigest assists them in arranging the move, housing, childcare and schools, etc.

In 2021 - 2022, HR ran a campaign aimed at reducing the workload and promoting well-being. In addition, there is a Funteam that organizes team activities to encourage employees to contact each other during and outside the corona pandemic to combat loneliness, depression and promote the feeling of connection. Management is aware of the importance of self-care and taking enough time to relieve work-related stress. The main purpose of this was to encourage people to put their mental health first.

Various departments pay attention to gender-inclusive communication, for example in registration forms on which people must indicate their gender or in vacancy texts. For example, HR has expanded gender registration options to include additional categories, including non-binary options and the ability to fill in nothing at this point.

[3.1.2 Future interventions and actions](#)

The main objective of planned actions in the first area is to further improve the organizational culture and work-life balance. The actions are aimed at raising awareness on gender justice and promoting an inclusive and healthy work environment where attention and respect is for the well-being of both employees and students and where active work is done on the work-life balance.

The planned interventions include:

- 1) Collecting and monitoring data on gender and work culture within the organization,
- 2) Increasing knowledge and awareness about gender, diversity and a positive work culture,
- 3) Modify HR documents with a gender-based approach to work-life balance, and
- 4) Develop additional initiatives in the field of work-life balance in the workplace.

Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

All these actions together will contribute to an accessible, inclusive, safe, sustainable and vibrant working environment.

1) **Collecting and monitoring data on gender and work culture within the organization.** ProDigest continues to collect data on gender to assess the current situation and monitor annual progress:

- The (gender) composition of the staff population (support staff and managerial staff)

The (gender) composition of the student population

- Remuneration (gender pay gap, both quantitative and qualitative)

2) **Increasing knowledge and awareness about gender, diversity and a positive work culture**

a. A series of workshops and guided training courses: offline and online training modules on the promoting gender equality, on gender inclusive language and behavior, on work-life balance and on combating gender stereotyping, for:

HR and executives, to increase their knowledge and enable them to adopt inclusive recruitment procedures [2 workshops in 2023];

(HR) policy advisors for gender equality, to increase their knowledge and enable them to incorporate this knowledge into relevant policy documents [1 workshop in 2023].

b. All staff on gender equality, inclusive work environments (including work-life balance) [2 workshops in 2023];

c. Share best practices with staff to provide a platform where people can make their voices heard, by: facilitate staff in setting up networks (e.g. staff and/or students with an international background, disability or mental health problems) in order to create safe environments for sharing stories and experiences [on an ongoing basis].

Update best practice websites on the ProDigest intranet, where internal, national and international best practices on promoting gender equality can be shared and applied by stakeholders within ProDigest [ongoing];

provide tools and resources for creating more awareness, through the networks in which ProDigest participates (e.g. access to network members, webinars, lectures and knowledge of other organizations) [ongoing];

e. Organizing events on (inter)national women's day, Coming Out Day, Week against Racism etc.

f. Work with department heads on gender-related issues and support them in their efforts and interventions to promote gender justice, with the departments themselves indicating their specific questions and needs [ongoing].

h. Promote the use of inclusive language in internal and external communications and ProDigest reports through workshops and guidelines for communication professionals [2023-2024].

3) **Changing HR documents with a gender-based approach to work-life balance**

Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

- a. Develop evaluation tools that guide policy; Every policy officer must be able to take gender-related issues into account when formulating policy [2023].
- b. Make recommendations for adapting existing policy documents on work private arrangements, to ensure that they are consistent with appropriate gender-related guidelines, language and terminology [2023].
- c. Support inclusive facilities based on consultation on the obstacles to equity and inclusion, e.g. gender-neutral toilets and symbols [2023].

4) Develop work-life balance initiatives in the workplace.

- a. Regularly campaign to improve existing facilities, policies and processes for draw attention to work-life balance, for example via social media, newsletters. [Continuous]
- b. Develop new wellness programs aimed at promoting mental health resilience of the workforce. [2023-2024]
- c. Give positive visibility to staff members and their work-life balance and stereotyping for example, men taking parental leave. [ongoing]

3.2 AREA 2: SOCIAL SECURITY

3.2.1 Existing actions

In addition to being an attractive employer based on all kinds of organizational arrangements, ProDigest also strives for a safe environment for all people within the company.

In addition to an external confidential advisor, ProDigest has also provided an internal confidential advisor [2023].

The employment regulations stating that ProDigest considers any form of undesirable behavior, such as sexual or other forms of harassment, aggression, bullying or discrimination, unacceptable. This message is spread at all levels.

3.2.1 Future interventions and actions

ProDigest strives for a safe, inclusive and healthy working environment where everyone can develop well. The main objectives of the planned actions in this second area are therefore continuous improvement of social security and combating harassment, discrimination and gender-based violence.

With the following targeted actions, ProDigest wants to realize an attractive and physically, psychologically and socially safe, lively working environment:

- 1) Facilitating safe and inclusive environments in the workplace
- 2) Make recommendations for new policies on discrimination, social security and gender-based violence,

Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

- 3) Maintaining an efficient complaints procedure and supporting confidential advisers, and
- 4) Raise awareness through training on social and psychological safety and gender-based discrimination and incidents of violence.

To draw attention to the existence of confidential advisers, posters will be hung in the common areas of the offices with links to more information about confidential advisers. ProDigest will also start a process for stimulating cultural change, which will contribute to the creation of a new code of conduct for entire companies (under development). In the context Of these, training modules will be introduced and events will be organized.

1) Facilitating safe and inclusive environments in the company.

- a. Organize a workshop on gender-related power imbalance and courageous conversations, in which participants work together to create a work environment where everyone feels at home and can participate openly, with the aim of promoting the well-being, social safety and sense of belonging of both staff and students [2024-2025].
- b. Provide input for facilities, for example on symbols for gender-neutral toilets, inclusive names for offices; meeting rooms, ethical sourcing of goods, and posters [ongoing].

2) Make recommendations for new policies on discrimination, social security and gender-based violence.

- a. Develop policies to address marginalization and discrimination, inclusive toilets, discrimination, harassment, social safety and sexual violence [2023-2024].
- b. Propose amendments to the Code of Conduct, from a gender perspective [2023].
- c. Modify forms for different purposes to make accessibility and accommodation process more efficient (e.g. navigation for visually and hearing impaired persons, transition process forms for transgender people) [2023].

3) Use an efficient complaints procedure and support confidential advisers.

- a. Train counsellor and provide tools to address issues from a gender perspective and apply a restorative justice approach to resolve conflicts; This is a process in which all parties involved participate in deciding on the outcomes of a conflict [2023].
- b. Set up a joint feedback system that provides transparency in the complaints and feedback system, so that staff feel heard and acknowledged; for example, participatory conflict resolution rounds for staff, so that they feel empowered [2023 - 2024].
- c. Support accessibility and accommodation to make the complaints system more robust

Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

by setting up a seamless accessibility program: mental health, disability, distance from the labor market [continuous].

4) Raise awareness about social and psychological safety and gender-based discrimination and incidents of violence through training.

Launch an online (and offline) training module on sexual violence, harassment and discrimination focusing on welfare training, safe conversations, trauma and resilience, etc. [2024]

All staff learn how to deal with unsafe situations and harassment within (among other things) their own department.

3.3 AREA 3: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

3.3.1 Existing actions

ProDigest has set a target for the number of female leaders (50%). In addition, ProDigest wants to strengthen leadership skills and knowledge in the field of diversity, equity and inclusion in practice by researching possible follow-up initiatives.

3.3.2 Future interventions and actions

The planned actions in the third area of intervention focus on leadership and management and include the:

- 1) Monitor and increase the number of women in leadership positions,
- 2) Provide inclusive leadership resources to leaders at all levels of the organization,
- 3) Creating and supporting role models, and
- 4) Facilitate an upgrade of diversity, equity and inclusion knowledge and skills, including gender.

1) Monitoring and increasing the number of women in leadership positions

a. Monitor and collect data annually to gain more insight and raise awareness create:

- The number of women and men in the position of Senior Scientist and above (the talent pool).
- The number of women and men in decision-making or leadership positions

b. Annual establishment and monitoring of targets for the representation of Women in each department:

- Number of female employees
- Number of women in leadership positions

2) Provide inclusive leadership resources to leaders at all levels of the organization.

a. Facilitate inclusive leadership mechanisms, such as organizing workshop(s) as an intervention tool and integrated change strategy with a strong focus on gender bias, intersectionality and social safety.

Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

Target audience: anyone who is a manager or coordinator of a team or who leads a project [October 2023].

b. Create an accessible network in which inclusive leadership is exposed to all kinds of different stakeholders (different cultures and stories from different contexts) and is also encouraged to actively engage with people from different backgrounds and with different opinions and visions [ongoing].

3) Creating and supporting role models

a. Launch ambassadors program for employees who are trained through a series of workshops on diversity, equity and inclusion themes (including gender inclusion) and who can then act as a source of knowledge within their department.

b. Share best practices, experiences, challenges, and benefits of inclusive leadership and women in leadership positions [ongoing].

4) Facilitating an upgrade of diversity knowledge and skills, equity and inclusion, including gender.

a. Conduct research on the pay gap and translate the results into appropriate policy plans and interventions [2023-2024].

b. Appoint a researcher in the HR department who will conduct (action-oriented) research into various gender equality and career related topics within ProDigest (e.g. obstacles and enablers for promotion, exit interviews, etc.) [2023].

c. Make recommendations for including questions about gender (working climate, feeling too hear etc.) in the staff survey conducted each year. Monitor results and provide feedback to faculty, and support follow-up initiatives [Q3 2023].

d. Annually analyses the inflow, transfer and outflow of women in positions of responsibility.

3.4 AREA 4: RECRUITMENT, SELECTION AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

3.4.1 Existing actions

ProDigest does not take into account gender, age, origin or in recruitment, selection and career development. The (present or possibly to be developed) competencies, experience and personality (possible match or addition of the existing team) are primary here.

ProDigest follows its recruitment and selection manual (2023)

3.4.2 Future interventions and actions

The aim of future interventions in the fourth area is to create gender equality in recruitment, selection and career development through the

- 1) Recommend changes to HR's selection and recruitment tools, and the
- 2) Offering training modules on inclusive recruitment and selection.

Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

1) Recommendations for changes to HR's selection and recruitment tools to prevent unconscious gender bias and to promote more transparency and due process.

- a. Constantly adapt recruitment and selection tools to meet international and national standards.
- b. Make recommendations for changes to existing recruitment and selection documents with a gender-based approach, to ensure that they are consistent with appropriate gender inclusive guidelines, language and terminology [2023]
- c. Make recommendations for the stricter application of defined guidelines and grading and promotion criteria in all grading and promotion decisions relating to equal compensation, so that differences in pay are prevented and reduced [2023].

2) Offering training modules on inclusive recruitment and selection for HR and executives.

- a. An (online and/or offline) training on inclusive recruitment and selection for selection managers [2023 - 2024].
- b. Introduce a training on inclusive recruitment (online, offline or a video) for all HR employees [2023].

3.5 AREA 5: GENDER DIMENSION

3.5.1 Existing actions

ProDigest makes a policy that takes into account the gender dimension is a policy in which a comparative analysis was made of the situation of women and men, any inequalities between men and women were identified and an attempt was made to limit or eliminate them.

3.5.2 Future interventions and actions

The aim of the planned actions in area five is to continue to stimulate long-term commitment to gender dimension in research and education through the:

- 1) Promote interdisciplinary collaboration between different faculties in the field of gender, the
- 2) Implement a gender justice framework.

1) Promoting interdisciplinary collaboration between different departments in the field of gender.

- a. Build an inclusive, interdisciplinary and cooperative team by establishing a steering committee [end of 2023];
- b. Develop a workshop for employees on promoting gender inclusion curriculum [2024].

Gender Equality Plan (GEP)

4. ORGANISATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The organizational infrastructure related to gender equality within ProDigest ensures that future actions will be adequately implemented. The infrastructure provides sufficient specific resources in the form of budget for gender equality positions or teams and/or allocated hours in which other employees gender equality can work.

4.1 RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS

ProDigest has a robust network of various internal and external stakeholders engaged in the development, implementation and evaluation of gender policies and interventions. This does not necessarily mean that all stakeholders always agree on the proposed direction and actions, but they do play an important role in the continuous dialogue about the development and implementation of the interventions. The following page contains an overview of all stakeholders within the wider community on ProDigest who are actively involved in the development and adjustment of this plan during the entire implementation period.

Stakeholders: CEO and HRD, Management team - HR

4.2 FINANCIAL RESOURCES

ProDigest provides financial and work resources specifically designed to promote and support the plan. These resources are crucial not only to be able to carry out the actions, but also to:

- ensure that gender justice in the company receives continuous attention;
- to be able to develop and implement new actions for the future;
- to keep abreast of new insights in this area and to use these insights as input for new or adapted policies;
- network with other officials and promote mutual learning;
- to combine the strengths of all departments;
- and, last but not least, to recognize that diversity policy requires experts who have the knowledge, skills, time and resources to meet these requirements.

ProDigest currently has an HR Director who takes on the responsibility of Chief Diversity Officer.