

Brussels, 16 January 2025

GENDER EQUALITY PLAN (GEP)

The Trans European Policy Studies Association (TEPSA) is a transeuropean research network of leading research institutes in the field of European affairs across Europe. Established in 1974, TEPSA is an international non-profit association under Belgian law (AISBL), with a Secretariat in Brussels.

Gender equality has for years been at the heart of TEPSA's mission. As statistics in this document show, the almost entirety of TEPSA's activities perform above average when it comes to fostering equal participation. Therefore, the objectives of this GEP are to formally and annually renew TEPSA's commitment to gender equality and ensure equal representation as well as the inclusion of diverse voices in TEPSA's projects as well as recruitment processes and managerial structures.

TEPSA recognises the need to continuously progress towards more equality and diversity, including through systemic methodologies and awareness-raising. TEPSA aims to partner with relevant organisations and experts to foster mutual learning and sharing of best practices. The organisation actively encourages and welcomes feedback on the inclusiveness and diversity of its activities. To this end, staff contact information is transparent, publicly available, and easily accessible on TEPSA's website.

TEPSA's GEP builds on definitions prescribed in the relevant national legislative framework. Since 2002, the Belgian Constitution explicitly affirms the principle of equality between women and men (Article 10). At the federal level, Belgium adopted three anti-discrimination acts in 2007: the General Anti-Discrimination Federal Act, the Racial Equality Federal Act, and the Gender Act. Moreover, the Employee Welfare Act of 4 August 1996 prohibits violence, bullying and sexual harassment in the workplace. On 22 May 2014 a law against discrimination and sexism in public spaces was introduced, and in March 2022 Belgium adopted a new law on sexual crimes and violence.

TEPSA recognises the imperative of fostering inclusion beyond the gender spectrum and acknowledges that EU policy debates are lacking various dimensions of diversity. Moving forward, TEPSA remains dedicated to actively promoting an intersectional approach to addressing under-representation and discrimination. This approach ensures that ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, and socio-economic background are equally considered in all endeavours aimed at fostering genuinely inclusive activities and projects.

Gender equality efforts at TEPSA

1. Governance

TEPSA strives to maintain gender balance in its managerial structures, also recognising the ripple effects of diversity in leadership positions on organisational culture and change. Two out of three main leadership positions (Executive Director and Chairperson of the Board) have been held by women since 2019. As of 2022, female representation on the TEPSA Board stands at 50%; while in managerial positions within the Secretariat at 75%. These will remain the key metrics to measure gender equality in governance.

2. Recruitment

TEPSA is an inclusive and equal employer, which applies a non-discriminatory recruitment policy. Hiring decisions are made on the basis of qualifications and merit. Nevertheless, TEPSA is aware that systemic conscious and unconscious biases can foster a gender gap in recruitment.

To mitigate these challenges, TEPSA carefully drafts its calls for vacancies to encourage a diverse pool of candidates, also by paying particular attention to the use of gender-neutral language. TEPSA's gender representation in managerial positions translates into balanced interview panels, and the organisation strives to select a diverse shortlist of applicant. TEPSA does not offer unpaid internships, in order to be inclusive of all socio-economic backgrounds.

At the time of writing, staff in the TEPSA Secretariat is 78% female and 22% male. TEPSA will strive to continue keeping a fair balance in the years to come. It is worth noting that TEPSA is currently a micro-enterprise, counting 9 staff members within its Secretariat in Brussels. Thus, small changes in the team composition may have a larger impact on such statistical balance.

3. Retainment, flexible work and wellbeing

Flexible working arrangements can increase employees' wellbeing. TEPSA values work-life balance and allows flexibility in working hours within a reasonable limit as well as part-time arrangements. In all matters relating to parental leave and childcare benefits, TEPSA is fully compliant with national legislation.

Since the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions, weekly working time is split between presence in the office and teleworking arrangements. Short and reactive communications channels with the hierarchy further allows for personalised adjustments, if needed.

TEPSA's commitment to inclusive leadership combined with the small size of the Secretariat allows for open communication and channels to express any concerns to the hierarchy without delays.

4. Events and activities

The Open Society Foundation [showed](#) that between 2012-2016, women accounted for only 25% of speaking roles at high-level conferences (data collected from 23 conferences in Europe over 4 years). The issue of underrepresentation of women experts reflects a failure in providing the space for expressing European diversity of expertise and experiences. This negatively affects the quality of public debate, hindering the potential for innovative thinking and solutions.

TEPSA strives for gender balance in all its activities. This includes active efforts to involve women experts in its panels as well as designing activities appealing and accessible to audiences of different genders. Besides its own internal database, TEPSA makes use of publicly available platforms such as the Brussels Binder to identify relevant experts for its events.

Participation in TEPSA trainings and seminars, when subject to an application process, is based on merit and qualifications. Underrepresented genders can be prioritised, all other things equal.

TEPSA, in line with European Commission guidelines and funding reporting requirements, has for years been tracking gender balance in event participation, via registration forms and attendance sheets. Recently, TEPSA has added a 'other' and 'prefer not to say' options to its standard questionnaire.

Participants in TEPSA events are always encouraged to provide feedback for the improvement of its activities, as well as report misconduct through the clear designation of a contact person in all events' public materials. Policies are also in place, establishing consequences for perpetrators (see section 5 below).

As of 2023, TEPSA has been conducting comprehensive internal audits to measure the gender balance of its activities. Events organised in 2024 by TEPSA within the framework of its projects (CERV Operating Grant, Horizon Europe, Framework Contracts with the European Parliament) included 52% of women as panellists. TEPSA featured 32% women in its audiovisual products and 43% female authors in its written outputs. When it comes to activities involving an application process, TEPSA involved 56% women.

TEPSA remains committed to advancing gender balance across its activities, as evidenced by notable improvements in some categories. However, adjustments in the implementation of the work programme may result in significant statistical variations. TEPSA will persist in its efforts to address systemic underrepresentation of women in specific categories, striving for greater equity in the years ahead.

When relevant and appropriate, specific initiatives targeting gender issues are included in TEPSA's projects from the inception and application phases.

5. *Sexual Harassment, discrimination and hate speech*

TEPSA does not tolerate sexual harassment, discrimination or hate speech in any form, within the workplace or in the context of any TEPSA activity. These behaviours

are not only prohibited by TEPSA but also by Belgian and European law. Misconduct of these kinds will result in the immediate removal from the premises and, in the context of multiple-day activities, expulsion from the programme. From June 2022, TEPSA includes specific warnings and clauses in all its terms and conditions for participation in activities, reiterating the zero-tolerance policy towards discriminatory and violent actions. TEPSA raises awareness among its employees to sexual harassment and discrimination in view of creating a safe environment for incident reporting and facilitates access to the needed support.

6. Research

Academia and the think tank world are fields where the gender gap is particularly visible. Notwithstanding women representing almost half of EU doctoral graduates, they still stop short at around 26% of higher-academic positions (Grade A – Full professor) and tend to publish less than men, a [gap](#) which exponentially increases with age.

TEPSA consciously selects authors for its publication to promote diverse voices. Within its flagship publications (TEPSA book, TEPSA Briefs), in the past years TEPSA has actively been working to reduce the gender bias, now reaching 41% of female authors.

As not directly employed by TEPSA, researchers follow guidelines of their own institutes/employers and enjoy high degree of freedom in their research collaboration with TEPSA. Nevertheless, TEPSA fosters the inclusion of gender perspectives across all areas of research as well as the production of specific gendered analyses.

7. Communication

The commitment to using an intersectional lens to portray diversity and foster equality (including an explicit attention to age, (dis)ability, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, and gender) is part of TEPSA's overarching goals. These objectives are mainstreamed in all dissemination and communication activities to ensure equal participation and widespread impact. Moreover, TEPSA is committed to enabling access to its content to an audience as diverse as possible. For this reason, all our videos are subtitled, in order to facilitate people with audio-visual impairments.

All communication and dissemination activities benefit from a gender-sensitive approach to create a safe space for exchange, including the use of a gender-inclusive behaviour and language during their implementation. TEPSA monitors the success of these inclusivity policies at every step, including by proof-reading all communication materials and through the continuous tracking of relevant KPIs. Currently, TEPSA's audience on social media and via our newsletter and website is made up 58% women and 42% men.

Furthermore, TEPSA encourages all staff members and partners to use inclusive language in conversations, work, projects, and written communications – both

internal and external – to promote an environment that is welcoming and inclusive for all.

8. Implementation and accountability

TEPSA's Executive Director has the ultimate responsibility for systematic action to promote and ensure gender mainstreaming within TEPSA and in all its activities as well as to ensure that the plan is disseminated to all relevant parts of the organisation. Project Managers share operational responsibility.

Furthermore, in 2023 TEPSA has appointed an Equality & Inclusion Contact Point with a view to conduct comprehensive annual audits as well as further encouraging inclusivity in TEPSA's network and activities. Dedicated working time has been allocated to the E&I Contact Point to ensure the effective implementation of these efforts.

TEPSA will continue monitoring the statistics here presented and improving its data collection, keeping in mind that numbers often do not reflect the full picture. It is not enough for women to be involved, meaningful participation is needed to foster organisational and societal change. TEPSA will continue the efforts outlined in the previous sections and produce a yearly update of its Gender Equality Plan.

For further information, please contact TEPSA's Diversity & Inclusion contact point: Eva Ribera, Project Manager, eva.ribera@tepsa.eu.

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Lucia Mokrá, Chairperson of the Board